

## Pickens finds new home at Kirkwood

Written by Jim Ecker

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Allante Pickens never planned to become a scientist when he enrolled at Missouri University of Science and Technology last year, but he's obviously a smart guy.

"That was the only scholarship offer I had," he said Wednesday night. "I took the opportunity and I took advantage of it."

Now Pickens is taking advantage of a new opportunity at Kirkwood Community College.

Pickens scored 18 points and steered the fifth-ranked Eagles to an 84-71 victory over Marshalltown Community College in a non-conference game at Johnson Hall.

Pickens averaged 11.1 points at Missouri Science and Technology as a freshman, but the Miners struggled through a 3-23 campaign and he decided to transfer.

Kirkwood recruited him in high school in Chicago, so he contacted KCC Coach Bryan Petersen about the possibility of joining the Eagles. Kirkwood needed a new point guard and Pickens needed a new school.

"This is a great program," said Pickens, who plays a lot bigger than his listed size of 5-foot-8. "I'm having fun. It's the most fun I've had in a long time. It's going to be a great year."

Pickens is averaging 13 points for the Eagles, who raised their record to 4-1 with the victory. He

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collected four assists Wednesday and hit three 3-pointers.

Petersen said Pickens has been a "combo" guard most of his career as a point guard and off-guard. He wants to see Pickens continue to develop at the point and he'd also like to see him become more of a vocal leader.

"I'm on him every day," said Petersen. "He's working on it, and I think he grew up a little bit with that in the second half."

Marshalltown pulled within three points, 63-60, with five minutes remaining, but Pickens and the Eagles dominated the final portion of the game for a wire-to-wire victory.

Pickens let his performance speak for itself, even when he wasn't a vocal traffic cop.

"I'm kind of quiet, and this is my first year for really being vocal," he said. "Coach P wants me to lead the team. I'm learning to be more vocal.

"I just focus on getting my teammates the ball, and then I let the game come to me. I don't try to force anything."

Kirkwood displayed terrific balance with five players in double figures. Connor Kasperbauer scored 17 points, Luke Appel 16, Devonte Thedford 16 and Doug Wilson 12. Wilson also had 11 rebounds, four assists and three blocked shots. Appel had seven rebounds.

Thedford helped spark the Eagles in the second half, with 12 of his 16 points in the final 20 minutes.

Kirkwood jumped to an early 15-2 margin and led 33-27 at halftime. The Eagles claimed a

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14-point advantage at 49-35, but Marshalltown kept pecking away and reached 63-60 with five minutes left.

"I was proud of the guys," said Petersen. "I thought we finished the game and made free throws and found a way to get it done.

"I'm proud of the way our guys responded. They didn't get down on themselves.

"We had five guys in double figures, which was awesome," he said. "I like our team to be balanced. Our best teams have always been that way. That was great to see."

Kirkwood shot 62.1 percent in the second half and scored 51 points in the final 20 minutes.

"We have good chemistry," said Pickens. "We play like we've played with each other for years. We have a lot of weapons."

Kelton Edwards scored 18 points for Marshalltown (3-3).

**MARSHALLTOWN (71):** Coffi 3 1-2 8, Vidovic 2 0-0 5, Fleming 3 2-2 8, Ndiaye 8 0-1 16, Edwards 8 2-2 18, Foster 2 2-2 8, Lane 4 0-1 8. Totals 30 7-10 71.

**KIRKWOOD (84):** Sims 1 0-0 2, Pickens 5 5-7 18, Kasperbauer 6 3-3 17, Wilson 6 0-0 12, Appel 8 0-1 16, Sartorius 1 0-0 3, Thedford 5 6-6 16, Clark 0 0-0 0, Gosnell 0 0-0 0. Totals 32 14-17 84.

Halftime - Kirkwood 33, Marshalltown 27. 3-point goals - Marshalltown 4 (Foster 2, Coffi 1, Vidovic 1), Kirkwood 6 (Pickens 3, Kasperbauer 2, Sartorius 1).

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