

Olson nets 20 as Kirkwood belts SCC

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 09 January 2013 23:24 -

Taylor Olson had a lot to deal with during his first semester at Kirkwood this fall.

First he hurt his ankle before practice began, hindering his preparation for the season. A former girlfriend was tragically killed in a car accident Oct. 15, dealing him a deep personal setback. And he was thrust right into the starting lineup at point guard as a freshman, given the responsibility of running the team.

"The first semester is always a big-time adjustment anyway," Kirkwood Coach Doug Wagemester noted Wednesday night. "That was heavy."

Olson did okay during the first semester, but the Cedar Rapids Jefferson grad was more of a complementary player than a star in November and December. That could be changing.

Olson drilled six 3-pointers Wednesday and poured in 20 points as the Eagles thumped Southeastern Community College, 75-62, at Johnson Hall.

Olson averaged 4.7 points in Kirkwood's first 14 games, but he's scored at a 17.7 clip in January. He's made twelve 3-pointers in the last three games after hitting only five 3-pointers in the first 14 contests.

Happy New Year, T.O.

"During the break, I worked on my shot a lot," he said. "Before the break, my shot wasn't falling the way I'd like it to. So I just worked on it.

"I talked to Coach and we decided I needed to be more aggressive."

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Olson was shaken by his friend's death in October. He took a few days off from basketball, but did not miss any games while dealing with his grief.

"It was really hard for me and I had a tough time up until the break," he said. "But over the break I was able to sit down and kind of think about that and recover from that."

Wagemester thinks the holiday break came at a good time for the 6-foot-1 freshman.

"Those 10 or 12 days really gave him a chance to recharge his batteries and reflect. And he's found another gear," the coach said.

"I'm proud of him, I'm happy for him. It's been a grind. He stayed the course."

Olson hit three triples in the first half Wednesday as Kirkwood (9-8) raced to a 43-24 lead at intermission. He hit three more 3-pointers in the second half as the Eagles took command and sent Southeastern (17-3) back to West Burlington with just its third loss in 20 games.

Kirkwood opened a commanding 28-point lead at 56-28 with 15 minutes left and cruised to the victory.

"That was as close to 40 minutes of how we want to play," said Wagemester. "I liked our approach defensively, I liked our approach offensively. And of course it helps to make shots."

The Eagles shot at a blistering pace in the first half, making 18 of 26 attempts for 69.2 percent. They finished at 50 percent for the game, but there wasn't much drama at Johnson Hall in the second half.

Olson finished 6-of-9 from behind the 3-point arc. He scored 18 points on 3-pointers and had

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two points at the foul line for 20, matching his career-high. He also had four assists.

Olson scored 20 points against Malcolm X College Jan. 4 and had 13 points against Parkland College Jan. 5. Prior to his recent outburst, his best scoring night was an 11-point effort against Southeastern on Dec. 1, the only time he reached double figures during the first semester.

Olson was hesitant to shoot during the first semester, but he's confident now and looking for his shot.

"I'm feeling a lot better," he said. "My teammates have more confidence in me and I can lead the ballclub even better."

Southeastern arrived in Cedar Rapids with a brand-new team from a year ago. The school canceled the second part of the 2011-12 campaign after 10 players were dismissed for disciplinary reasons, and Coach Terry Carroll showed up Wednesday with nine freshmen and one sophomore on his 10-man travel squad.

The Blackhawks had won eight straight, but the Eagles took command midway through the first half and kept building the lead. Mike Lang, a 6-8 freshman from Chicago, scored seven straight points to fuel a 9-0 surge as Kirkwood grabbed a 25-14 advantage.

Gage Heffernan finished with 13 points, nine rebounds, four assists and three steals for Kirkwood. Devan Douglas scored six points in the first two minutes of the game and finished with 14.

Jordan Stevens led Southeastern with 23 points.

Eagle Item: Sophomore guard Kasey Semler from Marion plans to play Saturday when Kirkwood hosts Clinton at 3 p.m. He has been sidelined for a month with a broken bone in his right hand.

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SOUTHEASTERN (62): Jones 2 0-0 4, Scott 1 2-3 4, Stevens 9 2-2 23, Harris 1 2-3 4, Lyon 1 3-4 5, Jackson 4 1-3 10, Fejokwu 0 0-2 0, Smith 0 0-0 0, Orosco 2 0-0 4, McCauley 3 2-2 8. Totals 23 12-19 62.

KIRKWOOD (75): Hunter 2 1-2 5, Heffernan 5 2-2 13, Fuller 3 2-2 8, Olson 6 2-2 20, Douglas 5 3-4 14, Butler 0 1-2 1, Manego 1 0-0 3, Witt 0 0-0 0, Currie 2 0-0 4, Lang 3 1-1 7. Totals 27 12-15 75.

Halftime - Kirkwood 43, Southeastern 23. 3-point goals - Southeastern 4 (Stevens 3, Jackson 1), Kirkwood 9 (Olson 6, Heffernan 1, Douglas 1, Manego 1). Fouled out - Scott, Hunter.