

Hunter, Manego spark Kirkwood men

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 16 January 2013 23:57 -

The Kirkwood men's basketball team has a little ritual in the locker room after games.

Once the coaches are done talking, the players are given a chance to say something about the team. Wednesday night, sophomore Devan Douglas wanted to say a few words about the way Kevin Hunter and Sean Manego played against Iowa Central.

"He just wanted to congratulate us, to keep our confidence up," said Manego, a 6-foot-1 sophomore from Cape Coral, Fla.

Hunter muscled in 14 points and Manego canned 11 to help the Eagles dispense with Iowa Central, 68-57, in an ICCAC game at Johnson Hall.

Hunter and Manego normally produce about 12 points a game as a tandem, but Wednesday night they more than doubled their production. Hunter, an undersized starting center, and Manego, a sparkplug reserve guard, gave Kirkwood (11-8, 3-1) the spark it needed.

"That's what you've got to have. Sacrificing the 'me' for the 'we' and being ready to go," said Coach Doug Wagemester. "So yes, kudos to those guys."

Hunter, a 6-foot-6, 230-pound sophomore from Chicago, canned 6-of-8 shots from the field, none bigger than after Iowa Central had pulled within 60-55 in the final stages. Hunter spun to the basket like he did much of the night, but this time two defenders got in the way.

He flipped up a shot anyway and got it to fall.

"No, that's not the way I drew it up," he confessed. "I thought it was a foul. And-one. I was trying a hook shot, but two guys collided on me and it just went in. Crazy."

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Wagemester put Manego in the game with 1:40 left to play and it paid off handsomely. Manego broke a fullcourt press with some effective dribbling and fed J.C. Fuller for a dunk that put an exclamation point on the victory.

Manego drilled three 3-pointers and collected his 11 points in 19 minutes. He's played with confidence in recent games after struggling at times.

"I had a little slump, I guess," he said. "I'm coming back off it and just trying to get some shots to fall."

Hunter was averaging 7.1 points when the game began and Manego was sitting with a 4.6 mark. They were twice as good against Iowa Central (11-8, 1-3).

"We have to help this team out a little more so we can get more wins," said Manego. "And today I think we showed that."

Hunter thought he could use his quickness against a taller Iowa Central player. "That big man, he was kind of slow to me, so that's why I was taking it straight to them," he said.

Taylor Olson continued his string of big games for Kirkwood with four 3-pointers and a team-high 16 points. He hit a big 3-pointer after Iowa Central had pulled within 57-53.

"I just like the fact that he was ready to shoot that baby and let it go," said Wagemester.

Fuller and Douglas finished with 10 points apiece as five Eagles reached double figures.

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Wagemester expected a stiff game from Iowa Central and got it.

"They came in here slugging," Wagemester said about the guests from Fort Dodge. "Our kids were ready. We knocked some shots down, which always helps.

"We shared the basketball. And most importantly, we matched them on the glass. They're big and they can beat you around the basket, and our guys battled."

Kirkwood nailed 10 of 21 shots from 3-point land for 47.6 percent.

IOWA CENTRAL (57): Kudhot 5 2-4 14, Adekoya 3 5-6 13, Elliot 0 3-4 3, Sieren 5 0-0 11, Andersen 8 0-2 16, Rose 0 0-0 0, Tawiah 0 0-0 0. Totals 21 10-16 57.

KIRKWOOD (68): Hunter 6 2-4 14, Heffernan 3 0-0 7, Fuller 3 4-4 10, Olson 4 4-4 16, Douglas 4 0-0 10, Manego 4 0-0 11, Witt 0 0-0 0, Semler 0 0-0 0, Currie 0 0-0 0, Lang 0 0-0 0. Totals 24 10-12 68.

Halftime - Kirkwood 38, Iowa Central 34. 3-point goals - Iowa Central 5 (Kudhot 2, Adekoya 2, Sieren 1), Kirkwood 10 (Olson 4, Manego 3, Douglas 2, Heffernan 1).