

Lassen, Tagarelli lift Kirkwood

Written by Mike Condon

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By his own admission, Matt Lassen was having a subpar game.

The Kirkwood sharpshooter spent a good portion of Saturday's men's basketball game with Southeastern at Johnson Hall on the bench with foul trouble.

Scoreless through the game's first 36 minutes, Lassen converted a pair of clutch 3-point baskets, the second one with 1:51 remaining with the Eagles clinging to a one-point lead.

Lassen's second trey gave Kirkwood the cushion it needed. Hunter Rhodes' six free throws in the final minute sealed a hard-fought 72-63 victory in a battle of unbeatens.

"I had a tough time getting going," Lassen said. "It was just one of those games. I was in foul trouble. I wasn't guarding very well, but I always have confidence in my shot."

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"I spend a lot of time on it every day before and after practice," continued the former Linn-Mar prep. "Coach (Bryan Petersen) gave me the green light if I was open to let it fly. It felt all natural to me."

Lassen and fellow sophomore Joseph Tagarelli have emerged as the team leaders early on for Petersen. The Eagles built a 14-point lead in the first half with Tagarelli scoring 13 in the first 20 minutes. He finished with a game-high 21 and his quick cross-court pass out of a double team set up Lassen's second 3-point basket.

"Tags and Matt Lassen made some big-time plays," Petersen said. "That's what sophomores need to do. I was telling the group I really didn't know who was going to make a play, but those two sophomores stepped up and made big plays when we needed them most

Coach Terry Carroll's Southeastern squad was plagued by poor foul shooting and some questionable shot selection, yet were able to battle back into the game with their defense and some timely plays on the offensive end.

"We got off to a good start. We just didn't do a good job of sustaining it," Petersen said. "We didn't make enough stops when we needed them at critical times."

Southeastern kept chipping away in the second half and eventually cut the lead to 61-60 on a Steven Soukup baseline jumper with 2:15 remaining. That led to Lassen' trey off the feed from Tagarelli.

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"Tags is such a great passer," Lassen said. "He did a great job of getting the ball to me."

The Blackhawks would have likely taken the lead had they shot better from the foul line. They missed 10 of 24 attempts compared to Kirkwood which hit 24 of 26 from the stripe.

"That was the difference in the game, no question," Petersen said. "We've got some guys who can shoot the ball. If we get to the line, we should be able to knock them down."



Rhodes had a solid game off the bench for Kirkwood (6-0), scoring 14 points, grabbing seven rebounds and dishing out seven assists in 25 minutes from the point guard position.

Isiah Graves paced Southeastern (5-1) with 17 points. Briheam Anthony added 15.

"This was a nice win for us," Petersen said. "We've played a pretty good schedule so far, but to be at home and get this win against a team like Southeastern was big for us."

SOUTHEASTERN (63): Steven Soukup 4-11 5-8 12, Michael Soukup 1-6 0-0 2, Anthony Goss 0-1 0-0 0, Dan Ransom 0-0 0-0 0, Josh Ross 2-9, 2-4 6, Isiah Graves 6-11 5-8 17, Brandon Mosema 0-0 0-0 0, Briheam Anthony 6-8 0-1 15, Sam McDaniel 1-2 0-0 2, Robert Harris 3-3 0-1 6, Don Henderson

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0-0 0-0 0, Carl Lane 0-1 2-2 2. Totals: 23-52 14-24 63.

KIRKWOOD (72): Ronald Singleton 2-7 0-0 4, Ajay Lawton 1-7 0-0 2, Matt Lassen 2-7 0-0 6, Jordan Ashton 1-7 6-6 9, Joseph Tagarelli 7-12 7-8 21, Hunter Rhodes 2-3 10-11 14, Jacob Olsen 2-3 1-1 6, Kareem Martin 3-6 0-0 6, Chike Ukah 2-3 0-0 4. Totals: 22-55 24-26 72.

Halftime: Kirkwood 39, Southeastern 27. 3-point goals: Southeastern 3-18 (S. Soukup 0-4, M. Soukup 0-2, Goss 0-1, Ross 0-4, Graves 0-2, Anthony 3-5). Kirkwood 4-14 (Lawton 0-3, Lassen 2-4, Ashton 1-3, Olson 1-3, Martin 0-2). Rebounds: Southeastern 24 (M. Soukup 7), Kirkwood 35 (Singleton 7, Rhodes 7). Southeastern 6 (McDaniel 2), Kirkwood 16 (Rhodes 7). Steals: Southeastern 8 (Graves 4), Kirkwood 4 (Singleton 2). Turnovers: Southeastern 14, Kirkwood 18. Total fouls: Southeastern 19, Kirkwood 17. Fouled out: McDaniel. Technical fouls: none.