

## No. 9 Eagles surge past Marshalltown

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 07 January 2015 23:05 -

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The Kirkwood men's basketball team went from awful to awesome during the course of a single game Wednesday night.

The result was a satisfying 74-64 victory for the ninth-ranked Eagles over Marshalltown at Johnson Hall.

Kirkwood (12-3) shot 28.6 percent from the field and scored only 22 points in the first half, but the Eagles sizzled in the second half with 62.5 percent marksmanship and 52 points.

"We played kind of tentative and scared in the first half," said Jordan Ashton, who led Kirkwood with 21 points. "We weren't attacking them, they were attacking us more. And the second half we definitely took it to them."

Marshalltown (16-4) led 44-33 early in the second half when the Eagles caught fire for a 15-3 spurt, turning their 11-point deficit into a 48-47 advantage. Ashton nailed two 3-pointers and scored eight straight points during the surge to help get his team untracked.

Ashton shot 5-for-7 from the field in the second half, including a 3-for-4 showing from 3-point range after struggling to find openings in the first 20 minutes.

"They were denying me all over, so it was kind of hard in the first half," he said. "The coach just said to stay calm and work to get open and the shots will fall. And they did."

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Ashton, a 6-foot-4 sophomore, has become a marked man for Kirkwood this season as their leading scorer and a possible NCAA Division I recruit. It's harder now to get open shots with opponents chasing him around.

"Teams are guarding him differently," said KCC Coach Bryan Petersen. "Obviously he got off to a hot start in November. He played extremely well. The scouting report is out and it's hard for him to get open looks.

"He got the ball going a little bit. He made a couple of big ones for us tonight."



Joseph Tagarelli got his shots to drop near the basket in the second half and finished with 17 points, nine rebounds and four assists. Matt Lassen hit a big 3-pointer for a 55-51 lead, then the Eagles used a 9-0 spurt to open a 70-59 cushion and seal the deal.

"When we made our runs we got some stops," said Petersen. "So that opened up some opportunities for us. I think seeing the basketball go in sparked us. Obviously we had a hard time finishing plays and making shots in the first half."

The Eagles missed all three of their 3-point attempts in the first half, then were 6-of-9 in the second half.

Lassen finished with 12 points and Hunter Rhodes had 10. Kirkwood outscored Marshalltown, 52-30, in the second half.

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Mike Rodriguez, a talented point guard who is being recruited by major Division I schools, led Marshalltown with 21 points. The Tigers played without head coach Brynjar Brynjarrson, who reportedly was serving the second game of a two-game suspension for a violation of school rules.

**MARSHALLTOWN (64):** Rodriguez 9 2-2 21, Miller 1 1-1 3, Green 2 2-2 6, Sakinis 1 0-0 2, Maddred 0 0-0 0, Smith 2 0-1 4, Stewart 2 2-5 6, Shelby 3 5-7 12, Malalu 1 3-4 5, Lasley 2 1-3 5. Totals 23 16-25 64.

**KIRKWOOD (74):** Lassen 4 2-2 12, Rhodes 1 8-10 10, Ashton 8 2-2 21, Ukah 2 0-0 4, Tagarelli 6 5-9 17, Singleton 0 1-1 1, Lawton 2 2-4 7, Weeks 0 0-0 0, Olson 0 2-2 2, Martin 0 0-2 0. Totals 23 22-32 74.

Halftime - Marshalltown 34, Kirkwood 22. 3-point goals - Marshalltown 2 (Rodriguez 1, Shelby 1), Kirkwood 6 (Ashton 3, Lassen 2, Lawton 1).