

NIACC spoils party for Muhl & Eagles

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 07 February 2015 19:36 - Last Updated Saturday, 07 February 2015 20:19



A sensational player with the presidential last name of Sierra Ford-Washington spoiled the party for Kim Muhl and the Kirkwood Eagles Saturday afternoon.

Unfortunately for Kirkwood, the Eagles contributed mightily to their own demise as well.

Ford-Washington stuffed the stat sheet with 35 points, nine rebounds, seven assists and six steals as the eighth-ranked NIACC Trojans tripped the third-ranked Eagles, 84-71, at Johnson Hall.

Kirkwood honored Muhl before the game for his 750th victory at the school, but the post-game reception for the Hall of Fame coach was not as sweet after NIACC snapped Kirkwood's 15-game winning streak and pulled into a tie with the Eagles for first place in the ICCAC.

The Eagles had no answer for Ford-Washington, a 5-foot-7 guard who has committed to Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She did much of her damage at the foul line, cashing an incredible 21 of 23 free throws as Kirkwood struggled to guard her.

NIACC spoils party for Muhl & Eagles

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 07 February 2015 19:36 - Last Updated Saturday, 07 February 2015 20:19

"Give them credit. They out-played us. There's no question about it," said Muhl. "Their All-American stepped up."

Muhl has compiled a flashy 753-140 record in 26 years at Kirkwood with six NJCAA Division II national titles, but it was an uphill struggle Saturday as his club committed 24 turnovers and did not make any 3-pointers for the first 33 minutes of the game. Many of those turnovers were the result of careless passes and sloppy ballhandling that led to 26 points by the visitors from Mason City.

Kirkwood played poorly and Ford-Washington was sensational as she led both teams in points, rebounds, assists and steals.

"She's had that before, but not against this kind of team," said NIACC Coach Todd Ciochetto. "I said before the year began that she's going to be the best player to ever play at NIACC and people didn't believe me."



NIACC spoils party for Muhl & Eagles

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 07 February 2015 19:36 - Last Updated Saturday, 07 February 2015 20:19

"She's just so strong and so mentally tough, and that's why I think she's as good as she is."

Ford-Washington leads the ICCAC in scoring at 22.5 points per game and has scored 38 in a game for the Trojans. "We knew this was the best team in our conference that we had to come in and beat," she said. "We knew we had to come out and want it more than they did."

Muhl thought that was part of the problem.

"They played hard and they were just the better team. There was no question about it," he said. "They played extremely well. A lot better than us."

"We didn't play hard. Some of them did, but some of them did not."

Logan Anderson, who ranks third in the conference in scoring, pitched in 21 points for NIACC. The Trojans killed the Eagles at the foul line, hitting 30-of-36 compared to 15-of-23 for Kirkwood.

Anna Martensen led Kirkwood with 15 points. Taylor Silva, Tyra Polite, Cassidy Clark and Ariel Sneed scored 10 points apiece.

Kirsten Larson, who hit nine 3-pointers for the Eagles in a game last week, played 17 minutes Saturday and was not able to attempt a single shot due to NIACC's tight man-to-man defense.

Kirkwood trimmed NIACC, 73-71, when they met in Mason City earlier this season. Both clubs are now tied for first place in the ICCAC with 7-1 records. Kirkwood is 19-5 overall and NIACC is 18-4.

NIACC spoils party for Muhl & Eagles

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 07 February 2015 19:36 - Last Updated Saturday, 07 February 2015 20:19

Both teams have six games left in the regular season. If they tie for the conference title, NIACC would be the No. 1 seed for the regional tournament and would host the championship game that will determine the league's only spot in the national tournament. NIACC has the tiebreaker over Kirkwood, based on point differential in their two meetings.

A dozen of Muhl's former players attended Saturday's game to honor their coach. There was a reception at Johnson Hall after the game and Muhl did not let the setback spoil the entire day.

"It's not about one game," he remarked. "The season is more than one game. Six more games. We'll play them again. We beat them once at their place. Now you have to see what happens."

There are no at-large bids to the national tournament. Only the regional champion will advance.

"It's a shame, isn't it?" said Ciochetto.

NIACC (84): Anderson 6 6-7 21, Ford-Washington 6 21-23 35, Onaca 3 0-0 6, Eckert 0 0-0 0, Miller 4 2-2 10, Boyd-Lockett 1 1-2 4, Lentz 2 0-0 6, Adamich 1 0-2 2, Peterson 0 0-0 0. Totals 23 30-36 84.

KIRKWOOD (71): Silva 5 0-3 10, Polite 3 3-6 10, Larson 0 0-0 0, Martensen 6 3-4 15, Clark 3 3-4 10, Sneed 3 4-4 10, Miles 0 0-0 0, Downs 2 0-0 4, Isaac 2 1-1 5, Sudduth 0 0-0 0, Hutchins 0 0-0 0, Bockholt 2 1-1 5, Wood 1 0-0 2. Totals 27 15-23 71.

Halftime - NIACC 42, Kirkwood 38. 3-point goals - NIACC 8 (Anderson 3, Ford-Washington 2, Lentz 2, Boyd-Lockett 1), Kirkwood 2 (Polite 1, Clark 1).