

No. 7 KCC women cruise in opener

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Kirkwood women's basketball team went for a stroll in the park Tuesday night in the opening round of the Region XI tournament at Johnson Hall, but it figures to get a lot harder from here.

The seventh-ranked Eagles scored 27 straight points in the first half and demolished Ellsworth, 75-30, with stringent defense and a productive bench.

Kirkwood (26-5) will host Iowa Central (20-11) in the semifinals Thursday at 5:30 p.m., with a possible date with No. 6 NIACC in the finals here Saturday afternoon.

Kirkwood is the No. 1 seed for the tournament and will host all the games it plays.

The Eagles got off to a relatively slow start against Ellsworth, but they loosened up and tormented the visitors with their trapping defense and quick hands.

"I thought we were a little tight early," said Kirkwood Coach Kim Muhl. "I thought our second group came in and did a nice job. They came in and just played. They hit shots and started pressing (on defense).

"Players have to play this time of year. Losers go home," he said.

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The game was the 900th of Muhl's illustrious career at Kirkwood and raised his record to 760-140.

Kirkwood got 48 of its 75 points from its substitutes, who saw plenty of action against Ellsworth (6-24). Casey Miles, who has battled injuries this season, scored 12 points off the bench and hit three 3-pointers. Aliyah Isaac contributed 11 points off the bench and starting center Cassidy Clark had 12 points.

"I thought our bench did a great job," said Muhl.

ELLSWORTH (30): Greenfield 1 0-0 3, Thigpen 4 0-0 8, Lehman 0 0-0 0, Gates 1 3-4 5, Lewis 0 0-0 0, Rumph 5 1-3 12, Smith 0 0-0 0, Weatherspoon 0 0-2 0, Birkenholz 0 0-0 0, Jones 1 0-0 2. Totals 12 4-9 30.

KIRKWOOD (75): Silva 2 0-0 5, Larson 10-0 2, Hutchins 11-2 4, Martensen 2 0-0 4, Clark 5 1-2 12, Sneed 2 2-4 7, Miles 3 3-3 12, Downs 1 0-0 2, Isaac 3 3-4 11, Oberman 0 0-0 0, Sudduth 3 0-0 8, Bockholt 2 0-0 4, Kalenberger 0 0-0 0, Wood 2 0-0 4. Totals 27 10-15 75.

Halftime - Kirkwood 38, Ellsworth 16. 3-point goals - Ellsworth 2 (Greenfield 1, Rumph 1), Kirkwood 11 (Miles 3, Isaac 2, Sudduth 2, Silva 1, Hutchins 1, Clark 1, Sneed 1).