

Kirkwood rolls at NJCAA tourney

Written by Metro Sports Report

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OVERLAND PARK, Kan. - Cassidy Clark scored 14 points and grabbed nine rebounds Wednesday as Kirkwood rolled by North Arkansas, 77-45, in the opening round of the NJCAA Division II women's basketball tournament.

The sixth-ranked Eagles (29-5) will play seventh-ranked Monroe Community College (27-1) in the quarterfinals Thursday at 8 p.m.

Kirkwood trailed early in the game at 9-7, but Ariel Sneed hit a 3-pointer to ignite a 9-0 run and the Eagles cruised from there. Kirkwood led 34-22 at halftime, then began the second half with an 8-0 spurt for a 42-22 advantage.

"The kids played well. I thought we'd be a little stale, but we weren't," said Kirkwood Coach Kim Muhl, whose club had not played since winning the regional title 11 days ago.

Kirsten Larson and Sneed finished with nine points apiece. Anna Martensen and Aliyah Isaac had eight points. Peyton Bockholt finished with seven points and seven rebounds.

Taylor Silva, the MVP of the regional tournament, contributed six points, six assists, six steals and four rebounds for Kirkwood.

Kaitlin Powell scored nine points for North Arkansas (20-10). Kirkwood held North Arkansas to 25 percent shooting (12 for 48) and forced 22 turnovers. North Arkansas made nine 3-pointers, but hit only three other field goals in the game.

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"They did a nice job defensively," Muhl said about his players. "They played hard and were really scrambling."

Monroe (N.Y.) Community College defeated Waubensee, 69-63, in the opening round Wednesday afternoon. Kirkwood has played Monroe before, but not this season.

"They're athletic, they're disciplined, they've got some shooters," said Muhl. "They'll cause some problems. They'll be hard to guard."

Kirkwood is hard to guard, too. Seven different players have led the Eagles in scoring this season in a balanced attack.

"It's been like a different person every day," said Muhl. "I think it would be hard to scout us. You don't know where the points are coming from."

This is Muhl's 16th trip to the national tournament and he thinks the title is up for grabs.

"It's pretty balanced," he remarked. "I thought 12 to 14 teams could beat anybody else. A lot of teams could win the title. It's a battle of attrition now."

The other quarterfinal games feature No. 1 Parkland vs. No. 20 Chesapeake, No. 2 Owens vs. Monroe College, and No. 4 Johnson County vs. No. 9 Guilford Tech. Monroe College and Monroe Community College (Kirkwood's opponent in the quarterfinals) are two different schools.

The semifinals are scheduled for Friday and the finals are Saturday. If Kirkwood wins Thursday, it will face top-ranked Parkland or Chesapeake in the semifinals. Parkland nipped Kirkwood, 62-59, at a tournament in Peoria, Ill., in November.

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Kirkwood is seeking its seventh national title in school history.

NORTH ARKANSAS (45): Barrett 1 2-2 4, Cottengim 2 0-0 5, Ko. Powell 2 2-2 8, Craise 2 2-2 8, Summers 1 0-0 2, Ka. Powell 3 0-0 9, Boring 1 1-2 4, Graves 0 5-6 5, Jones 0 0-0 0. Totals 12 12-14 45.

KIRKWOOD (77): Silva 1 4-4 6, Larson 3 0-0 9, Hutchins 0 2-2 2, Martensen 4 0-0 8, Clark 6 0-0 14, Sneed 4 0-0 9, Miles 1 1-2 4, Downs 1 1-2 3, Isaac 1 5-6 8, Oberman 1 0-0 3, Sudduth 1 0-0 3, Bockholt 2 3-4 7, Kallenberger 0 1-2 1, Wood 0 0-0 0. Totals 25 17-22 77.

Halftime - Kirkwood 34, North Arkansas 22. 3-point goals - North Arkansas 9 (Ka. Powell 3, Ko. Powell 2, Craise 2, Cottengim 1, Boring 1), Kirkwood 10 (Larson 3, Clark 2, Sneed 1, Miles 1, Isaac 1, Oberman 1, Sudduth 1).