

Kirkwood wins, ICCAC race tightens

Written by Mike Condon

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The big news as far as the Kirkwood men's basketball team was concerned Saturday happened in Mason City.

As the No. 9 Eagles were taking care of business with a convincing 87-52 win over Iowa Central at Johnson Hall, they got a big helping hand from Iowa Lakes in their quest for an ICCAC title.

Iowa Lakes upset league leader Southwestern, 80-77, sending the league race into a scramble for the top seed in the upcoming conference tournament.

"It's going to be a tough tournament," admitted Kirkwood coach Bryan Petersen before he knew the result from Iowa Lakes. "Obviously being the No. 1 seed and playing at home would be a huge advantage."

If Kirkwood (23-4, 8-2) can take care of business in its final two games, on the road Wednesday at Ellsworth and at home next Saturday against NIACC, a No. 1 seed is now possible.

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No. 10 Southwestern (25-4, 9-2), finishes its regular season on Wednesday at home against Iowa Central. No. 20 Iowa Lakes (21-7, 8-2) has games at home Wednesday against NIACC and on Saturday at DMACC.

Petersen said the first tiebreaker is the head-to-head series, and all three teams are 1-1 against each other this year. He said the next tiebreaker is a power ranking, similar to the RPI in Division I basketball.

"I think we have the advantage if it gets to that," he said.

The No. 1 seed not only means home-court advantage, but it would allow the Eagles to have to play either Southwestern or Iowa Lakes, but not both of them.

If the Eagles play defense like they did Saturday, they should be in good position to share the league title.

Kirkwood held Iowa Central (9-11, 3-7) to 34 percent shooting for the game and forced a whopping 22 turnovers.

"We've all been buying in to what the coaches have been saying," said sophomore forward Josh Bartlett. "It's been a real focus of ours because we know with our offense the points will come. It's our defense where we have to lock in."

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