

Robinson gives No. 2 Eagles a boost

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 01 March 2018 05:30 -



Kirkwood Coach Kim Muhl never saw Leah Robinson play in high school and never saw her play in any spring or summer tournaments.

In fact, he cannot remember if Robinson played in any pick-up games when she visited Kirkwood on a recruiting trip last year.

It didn't matter.

The coach at Kentucky State University thought Robinson could use a little seasoning at a junior college before attending a four-year school, so he called Muhl and recommended his friend take a look.

Muhl also sought a second opinion from another college coach and got another strong recommendation.

"It's all about having friends," Muhl said Wednesday night with a smile. "She visited, liked it here and we signed her."

It turned out to be a great piece of recruiting, even though Muhl barely had to lift a finger.

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Robinson has been a key reserve for the second-ranked Eagles all season and showed her worth again in a 78-42 stroll past Ellsworth in an ICCAC conference game at Johnson Hall.

Robinson, a lanky 6-foot-1 freshman from Evanston, Ill., contributed 11 points and nine rebounds as the Eagles (27-3, 13-0) coasted to their 17th straight victory.

Robinson has made 62 percent of her shots this season, which ranks fourth in the nation in NJCAA Division II. She's given the Eagles a big boost off the bench and does not mind being a reserve. In fact, she's used to it by now.

Robinson attended Evanston Township High School, a girls basketball power in the Chicago suburbs, and she did not start as a senior on a talented team that finished 27-3 as conference champs.

"For my entire high school career I came off the bench," she said. "My senior year in high school, I was the first player off the bench.

"It's still the same here. I can contribute to my team as well as being a starter."

All five of the seniors on the girls basketball team at Evanston Township last year are now playing in college. "We had a really good team," she offered modestly.

Robinson is averaging 8.4 points and 4.1 rebounds on a balanced and deep ballclub at Kirkwood. She does most of her damage around the basket with good moves and a nice touch.

"Leah has kind of turned the corner a little bit," said Muhl. "She's finishing more shots. She's really athletic."

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Robinson's father passed away last year, which would be tough for any teen-ager to deal with.

"She's had some adversity and she struggled through that," said Muhl. "Great kid. You can tell that by talking to her. Very intelligent. She gets it."

You can always tell where Robinson is on the court. She likes to roll her long shorts to about the middle of her thighs, but it has nothing to do with making a fashion statement.

"No, it's just more comfortable for me," she explained. "I don't like my shorts dangling around my knees."

Megan Axcell and Awal Ajak also scored 11 points for Kirkwood against Ellsworth. Christmas Puok had 10 points.

Kirkwood finishes the regular season at DMACC on Saturday and will host an opening-round game in the regional tournament next Wednesday.

Ellsworth, which dressed only seven players, fell to 8-20 overall and 2-11 in the league.

ELLSWORTH (42): Nulty 1 0-0 2, Lincoln 3 0-0 7, Ferrier 5 3-5 13, Limones 6 0-0 13, Tahahwah 1 0-0 2, Viet 1 0-0 2, Nystrom 1 0-0 3. Totals 18 3-5 42.

KIRKWOOD (78): Wilson 3 0-0 8, Puok 5 0-0 10, Axcell 4 0-0 11, Ajak 4 0-0 11, Usher 0 1-2 1, Jenkins 3 0-0 6, Brown 1 0-0 2, Hurst 1 0-0 2, Taylor 2 0-0 4, Robinson 5 1-1 11, Mullinnix 0 0-0 0, Mensen 3 0-0 7, Wooldridge 2 1-1 5. Totals 33 3-4 78.

Halftime - Kirkwood 36, Ellsworth 16. 3-point goals - Ellsworth 3 (Lincoln 1, Limones 1, Nystrom 1), Kirkwood 9 (Axcell 3, Ajak 3, Wilson 2, Mensen 1).