

Kirkwood women iron out some bugs

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Kirkwood Eagles have been a mystery during the early part of the women's basketball season.

Normally a high-powered outfit, they scored only 30 points in their first game of the year. Three games later, they lost by 45 points and saw their record fall to 1-and-3.

It's hardly what you expect from Kirkwood, which won the national title in 2017 and finished second last year, but there were signs of hope Friday night at Johnson Hall.

The Eagles blitzed McCook Community College of Nebraska, 97-55, in their home opener in the first round of the Kirkwood Classic.

"It's a step," said KCC Coach Kim Muhl. "It's not a plunge, but it's a step."

Muhl was not happy with his club's energy, effort and execution during the 1-and-3 start, but he saw signs of life against McCook.

"The bottom line is how hard they want to play," he said. "You either get it done or you won't play here very long."

"It's about being accountable for what you're supposed to do. Do your job. You're accountable for your teammates. And when you can't get that done, we're going to struggle."

Muhl dug into his players the entire game, despite a 53-27 bulge at halftime and leads that reached 44 points. He wanted them to hustle, pay attention and do the little things that make a difference.

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"I was extremely hard on them tonight, but that's what we're trying to get through their heads," he said. "And if I have to go crazy for awhile, I guess I'll do it."

Mackenzie Jenkins led Kirkwood with 13 points, seven rebounds, five assists and two steals. Ju Gaston contributed 12 points, four assists and four steals. Paige Bradford and Johanna Myers scored 11 points and Brianna Mensen added 10.

"We have good talent," said Muhl. "They have to have the right mind-set, how they come ready to play the game and that type of thing."

Nikki Cross and Anna Sanjuan scored 11 points apiece for McCook (4-2).

Kirkwood will face Triton College in the second round Saturday at 3 p.m. Triton lost to Southeastern, 79-58, in the first round Friday.

MCCOOK (55): Tiles 0 6-9 6, Hinkle 1 3-4 6, Cross 2 6-8 11, Goerke 2 1-1 5, Bodette 0 0-2 0, Cheatham 2 2-2 8, Sanjuan 2 6-8 11, Jones 1 0-0 2, Mata 0 0-0 0, Davis 1 1-2 3, Sandford 1 0-0 3. Totals 12 25-36 55.

KIRKWOOD (97): Jenkins 6 1-2 13, Gaston 4 3-5 12, Hurst 4 0-0 9, Mullinnix 1 4-6 7, Tull 2 2-2 6, Bradford 5 1-2 11, Kennedy 2 0-0 5, Myers 4 0-0 11, Johnson 1 0-3 2, Tomaszewski 2 0-0 4, Robinson 3 1-2 7, Mensen 4 0-0 10. Totals 38 12-22 97.

Halftime - Kirkwood 53, McCook 27. 3-point goals - McCook 6 (Cheatham 2, Hinkle 1, Cross 1, Sanjuan 1, Sandford 1), Kirkwood 9 (Myers 3, Mensen 2, Gaston 1, Hurst 1, Mullinnix 1, Kennedy 1).