

Wilson stars as Eagles tame NIACC

Written by Jim Ecker

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Doug Wilson was an All-American for the Kirkwood Eagles last season as a freshman, but he's making a strong bid for All-World honors this time around.

Wilson, a gifted 6-foot-7 forward from Des Moines, has gotten better in just about every category this year.

He's averaging 20.6 points and 8.2 rebounds, compared to 14.1 points and 6.6 boards last year when he was named a second team JUCO All-American.

His ballhandling is better. His passing is better. And his free throws, a bugaboo last year at 46.2 percent, have climbed all the way to 66.1 percent after going 5-for-5 Saturday.

And his defense? Spectacular.

"I think he's probably the best defender in the country," said Kirkwood Coach Bryan Petersen, not prone to hyperbole.

Wilson stuffed the stat sheet again Saturday as the fourth-ranked Eagles tamed 15th-ranked NIACC, 83-65, in an ICCAC conference game at Johnson Hall.

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He finished with 25 points, five rebounds, four assists, three blocks, two steals. He had three splendid dunks in the first four minutes to set the tone, two on terrific lobs from Luke Appel.

Wilson is not a big talker, but he's happy with the way he's been playing this season.

"I feel like my game has gotten a little better overall," he allowed. "I'm still working every day on everything. Free throws were something I really wanted to get good at in my sophomore year here."



Wilson is 20 of 26 at the foul line in the last four games, hitting 76.9 percent during that span.

Wilson led all NJCAA Division II players in the nation last season when he hit 69.2 percent of his shots from the floor, mostly right around the rim where he does most of his damage. His percentage has slipped a tad this year to 68.4 percent, good for sixth-best in the country. He was 10 for 13 from the floor against NIACC.

"He's been awesome," said Petersen. "He's been a big-time leader for us. Probably the most important thing, he sets the tone for us every day in practice. When he's hooked up and ready to go, we have really good practices."

And the Eagles have enjoyed some really good games, raising their records to 16-2 overall and 5-0 in the league.

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Wilson is a tremendous leaper with strong hands and a genuine love for the game. He'll be playing NCAA Division I basketball at South Dakota State next season.

"He's got some extremely good gifts that God blessed him with," said Petersen. "He's long, he's athletic.

"He's got the length, he's got the speed and athleticism, but I think upstairs - mentally - he really wants to get it done."

The NIACC Trojans were averaging a healthy 97.7 points when the day began, but they struggled to get into the 60's against Kirkwood. The Eagles clamped down on defense and attacked NIACC's zone traps with reckless abandon.

"That was a good win. We did a lot of good things," said Petersen.

"We feel really good about it," added Wilson. "Coming in, we knew they were a pretty good team. We did a really good job of executing and following the game plan."

Allante Pickens and Connor Kasperbauer both hit three 3-pointers and scored 11 points. Appel finished with 13 rebounds, seven assists and seven points. Brady Sartorius contributed nine points off the bench.

James Harris scored 11 points for NIACC (12-3, 3-1).

NIACC (65): Harris 4 3-4 11, Hamilton 0 0-0 0, Hardrict 3 1-2 8, Matthews 4 1-2 9, Dean 1 1-5 4, Lang 2 3-3 9, Roberson 3 1-2 8, Wanjara 0 1-2 1, Jo. Walker 0 2-2 2, Ja. Walker 1 2-4 4, Sampson 3 0-1 6, Kelly 1 0-0 3. Totals 22 15-27 65.

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KIRKWOOD (83): Sims 1 4-6 6, Pickens 4 0-0 11, Kasperbauer 4 0-0 11, Wilson 10 5-5 25, Appel 3 0-0 7, Thedford 0 3-4 3, Sartorius 4 0-0 9, Dee 1 0-0 3, Clark 0 0-0 0, Stephenson 1 0-0 2, Biernacki 0 0-0 0, Gosnell 0 3-4 3, Arrington 1 0-0 3. Totals 29 15-19 83.

Halftime - Kirkwood 45, NIACC 31. 3-point goals - NIACC 6 (Lang 2, Hardrict 1, Dean 1, Roberson 1, Kelly 1), Kirkwood 10 (Pickens 3, Kasperbauer 3, Appel 1, Sartorius 1, Dee 1, Arrington 1).