

Hard-working Heffernan leads Eagles

Written by Guy Martino

Friday, 16 November 2012 23:36 -

Gage Heffernan admits that he isn't the guy who is going to jump out of the gym, or drain a barrage of 3-pointers.

But what he might lack in those offensive qualities, he makes up for in hustle.

Heffernan willed his way to 17 points and 14 rebounds on Friday night, helping his Kirkwood Eagles blow past Elgin, 88-51, at Johnson Hall.

The opportunistic Heffernan made a living under the hoop, scoring the majority of his points within a two-foot radius of the basket. He scooped up missed shots and loose balls, and simply outworked Elgin players down low.

"I pretty much just go in and work hard," said Heffernan. "Setting good screens and rebounding well is one of the main ways I can come in and contribute."

He isn't the Eagles' primary, or even secondary scoring option, so there is a potential for opposing teams to overlook him on the offensive end.

"He's a guy that other teams don't really scout for because he a little further down the line," said Kirkwood Coach Doug Wagemester. "But he'll getcha because he plays so hard. He hustles and is sneaky athletic, and he has a nose for the ball."

Kirkwood sped out of the gate, jumping to a 14-4 lead in the first five minutes. This put the game firmly in the Eagles' command. Elgin had a hard time putting together any relevant runs.

Getting that quick start is something that is stressed by Wagemester and his coaching staff.

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“A fast start always helps to set the tempo. We are a young team, trying to learn our identity so we are constantly on them about warming up well and getting good starts.”

Kirkwood never really took its foot off the gas. After the first half, the Eagles were in front 35-19, posting a good defensive showing.

“Overall, the energy was where it needed to be on the defensive end, but we just have to be a little more sound technique wise,” said Wagemester.

The second half was highlighted by Heffernan’s scrappiness, which led to an extension of the lead. Kirkwood also got an athletic spark from springy Devan Douglas, who recorded 15 points and six rebounds. Kevin Hunter was a force down low for the Eagles, scoring 10 points and grabbing eight boards.

The Eagles committed 14 turnovers in the game, which is 14 too many for Wagemester’s liking.

“We do some really good things at times,” said Wagemester, “then there are those dips. It’s all about trying to level that off and be consistent throughout the entire game.”

Despite the dips, Heffernan feels good about the win and the team’s standing.

“We played as a team tonight more than we ever have. We are getting there.”

Kirkwood (3-3) hosts Dakota County Tech, Minn., Saturday at 3 p.m.

ELGIN (51): Justin Fields 4-13 0-1 8, Brandon Tyson 3-12 4-6 11, Zach Cooper 1-4 0-0 2, Brandon Cork 2-3 0-0 5, Shyler Ralphs 3-6 0-0 8, Vytautas Jaras 0-1 1-2 1, Ryan Willing 0-2 0-0 0, Kenny Hughes 1-2 0-0 3, Troy Gudino 0-2 0-0 0, Brock Ralphs 1-6 1-4 4, Alan Walker

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1-2 0-0 2, Brent Buchanan 0-6 0-0 0, Brandon Smith 2-3 0-0 4, Jonathan Leigeber 1-6 0-0 3. Totals 19-61 6-13 51.

KIRKWOOD (88): Kevin Hunter 3-8 4-6 10, Gage Heffernan 6-11 5-7 17, Taylor Olson 3-5 2-3 9, Devan Douglas 7-10 0-0 15, Kasey Semler 3-6 1-2 9, Najeal Young 0-6 5-6 5, Demetrius Butler 0-2 0-0 0, Shaun Manego 3-4 1-1 8, Derek Witt 1-1 0-0 2, J.C. Fuller 3-11 2-2 9, Jalen Currie 1-5 0-0 2, Mike Lang 1-4 0-0 2. Totals 31-73 20-27 88.

Halftime - Kirkwood 35, Elgin 19. 3-point goals - Kirkwood 6-16 (Semler 2-5, Olson 1-2, Douglas 1-3, Manego 1-2, Fuller 1-2), Elgin 7-31 (Sh. Ralphs 2-4, Tyson 1-3, Cork 1-2, Hughes 1-2, Br. Ralphs 1-5, Leigeber 1-6, Fields 0-3, Cooper 0-1, Walker 0-1, Buchanan 0-3, Smith 0-1). Rebounds - Kirkwood 60, Elgin 30. Assists - Kirkwood 18, Elgin 10. Total Fouls - Kirkwood 12, Elgin 20.