

Home against the Minutemen

Toledo's bye week is over and it is time for the Rockets to get back to work.

Not that they have been simply kicked back relaxing during their time off. The University of Toledo's players and coaches have been busy preparing for this week's Homecoming matchup against the University of Massachusetts (2-6, 2-2 in MAC), a contest that will give Toledo a chance to go 4-0 in Mid-American Conference play this season.

UT (4-3, 3-0 in MAC) is the only MAC West team without a conference loss this year, but for head coach Matt Campbell and his players, it is far too early to start celebrating anything.

"We're not even halfway into playing our conference schedule; we've only played three conference games up until this point," Campbell said. "What we understand is we understand how competitive this conference is right now. We've got to continue to worry about us.

"The moment we take our eyes off of that, we are in deep trouble."

Toledo's loss two weeks ago at Iowa State may have been the sobering moment Campbell needed to keep his players even-keeled about the Rockets' success this season.

But Toledo's head coach doesn't even want his guys to remember the 37-30 defeat to the Big 12 Cyclones.

"Win or lose, we do a really good job of flushing it on Sunday," Campbell said. "I think we did a really good job of getting back to what we have done well and what we haven't done well over the first seven weeks of the football season and really get into that over the last three or four

practices. We knew we had to get better.”

Heading into a crucial stretch of the season, the Rockets are atop the MAC mountain. UMass, on the other hand, is hoping to build off their first two wins of the season, which have come against Kent State and Eastern Michigan over the past two weeks.

The Minutemen haven't racked up wins, but junior quarterback Blake Frohnafel is keeping them dangerous with the strength of his arm.

The upperclassman currently leads the MAC in passing yards per game with a 310.4 per contest average, a performance that can certainly be partially credited to the teachings of UMass head coach and former NFL assistant coach Mark Whipple.

“What you've seen is a team that has really gained confidence,” Campbell said. “Coach Whipple comes back to UMass after a really storied tradition of him coaching there when they were a powerhouse at the FCS level. Whipple went on to the National Football League, he's been with the Steelers and he's been with the Browns and has really done some great things as a quarterback coach.

“What you've seen is you're seeing it all start to come together for this UMass football team.”

The Minutemen won't just attack the Rockets offensively. UMass features a defense that has also earned respect from UT's players.

“We are going to have to put points on the board,” said Toledo sophomore quarterback Logan Woodside. “UMass, they're really good on defense just like they are on offense, so we are going to have to be able to put points on the board to be able to keep us in the game.”

Woodside, like his head coach, isn't getting caught up in

where Toledo stands at just a little over halfway through the football season.

“I really don’t think that we are the frontrunner right now,” he said. “We really can’t look at it that way even though we are undefeated in the conference. We can’t take it that way, we’ve got to keep preparing like we have all year and see how it plays out.”

Whatever the Rockets want to say, even top tier rivals like Northern Illinois and Bowling Green have suffered conference losses this season. Toledo is currently in charge of the MAC, and only they can decide how the rest of the season plays out.

“All we’ve really had the ability to look at is us,” Campbell said. “We really haven’t had the ability to see what everyone else is doing or how they’ve played or what has happened. We’ve certainly changed, certainly from what we thought we would be at the beginning of the season to who we are right now.

“I think that’s part of football though. It’s not only in our conference or our own football team, but also over the landscape of college football. I think that is what draws us all in to college football and makes college football really special.”

Toledo kicks off against UMass at 2 p.m. in the Glass Bowl.