

Men lose in MAC semifinal

The University of Toledo men's basketball team headed into the Mid-American tournament looking to redeem some regular season mistakes and send their senior class out with a memorable ending.

The Rockets were able to fend off the Bowling Green Falcons in the first round by a score of 77-62, but then fell to the Ohio Bobcats in the semi-finals by a score of 67-66.

The first matchup of the tournament was against Bowling Green State University, a team that UT had split wins with in two regular season matchups. When the Rockets saw BGSU in the regular season, they had a Rocket victory at home, 85-73, but their second meet-up in BG led to a 104-100 Falcon victory in double-overtime.

The team's first tournament game was held in its home of Savage Arena, much to the benefit of the Rockets.

The Rockets were led by fourth-year guard Jonathan Williams with 18 points in the game, followed closely by redshirt first-year center Luke Knapke and second-year guard Jaelan Sanford, both recording 12 points.

The Rockets started off with an early 14-8 lead due to seven points from Knapke and a big three-pointer from fourth-year guard Jordan Lauf heading into the first media timeout. Bowling Green managed to claw back from the deficit, and the two teams headed into halftime with the Rockets leading 32-28. Jordan Lauf and the Rockets opened up their second half lead early due to a corner three from Lauf, making the score 40-30 with 18:18 remaining in the half.

The Rockets held onto their lead, outscoring BGSU 43-34 in the second half to take the victory and head on to the semifinals. "I thought it was a really good win for us; first half I thought we played really hard and did some good things defensively," said Toledo basketball head coach Tod Kowalczyk in a post-game conference.

Fresh off their win, the Rockets headed to Cleveland to face

off against the Ohio University Bobcats in the MAC tournament semifinals.

Despite an eight-point lead at halftime, the Rockets fell to the Bobcats 67-66 . Williams led Toledo again this game, putting up 18 points for the Rockets. Trailing behind him was Lauf, who recorded 12 points in the Toledo loss.

Toledo came out strong in the first half, connecting on 52 percent of shots (13-of-25) and six of 11 from three, while holding the Bobcats to only 36.4 percent shooting (12-of-33). Their shooting percentages gave Toledo a strong 37-29 lead heading into halftime.

The second half spelled a different story, as the Bobcats came roaring out of the half to score the first 12 points and take a 41-37 lead with 16:14 left. After some back-and-forth scoring from both teams, a Lauf layup cut the lead to 50-47 with just 9:46 left.

The game progressed back and forth for the next nine minutes, until second-year forward Nate Navigato nailed a huge three to tie the score 64-64 with 48 seconds left.

In the following possession, Williams snagged a great steal and transition layup to give Toledo a 66-64 lead. The Bobcats answered when Kaminski hit a massive three to give Ohio the lead and knock the Rockets out of the tournament.

"We battled back; we certainly had chances to win the game. I don't regret one bit not calling timeout," Kowalczyk said in a post-game interview

Looking forward, the Rockets will take on George Washington University in the first round of the College Basketball Invitational at 7 p.m. on March 15.