Cleveland State was looking pretty good with a 20-4 start, but they dropped five in a row and then lost in their conference semi-final game.

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Contributing Writer

Former Brush High star Natachia Watkins scored 25 points and had the key assist as Eastern Michigan edged Central Michigan 72-71 to win the Mid-American Conference title at the Quicken Loans Arena, last Saturday.

Eastern Michigan gets an automatic bid to the women's tournament. Watkins was 11 out of 16 from the field. She also grabbed seven rebounds, three steals and two assists.

"Playing in front of my hometown was surreal. We lost the title game last year, but this year we were determining to win this game," said Watkins, who was named to the MAC All-tournament team.

The win did not come easy. Central Michigan was trying to define longevity. This was their fourth game in as many days. The Chippewa's feature three freshmen and man did they ever perform.

The Chips (20-15) looked like they were going to do it. A basket by freshman Crystal Bradford, gave them 71-70 lead with 14 seconds left. Bradford had 16 points, eight rebounds, six assists, three blocked shots and two steal in 32 minutes of action. "I thought that was the game clincher," said a very distraught Bradford. "I thought we were going to win."

However, they would need a defensive stand to get the victory. After a time-out, Watkins had the ball and fired a pass to the streaking senior Paige Redditt. Redditt made a spin-move on Chips' sophomore Taylor Johnson, a hit the shot with 1.5 remaining.

"At the timeout, I told my coach I got this," said Redditt, who had 18 points and six rebounds, we are going to win this game."

For the Eagles (23-8), getting to the championship game was a mystery. The second-seed in the tournament only led one time in their 59-57 victory over fourth-seed Toledo Rockets. And that lead was the game clincher.

For Toledo, they were kicking themselves as they committed 27 turnovers and they lost by two points. The Eagles shot just 31 percent from the field, but they had 19 more shot attempts then Toledo and they had 12 more free-throw shots.

On Saturday, that was a huge problem in the victory.

The Eagles were 19 out of 25 from the charity stripe and the Chips were only five out of seven.

“I think that was horrible,” said Chips’ head coach Sue Guevara. “We did not get the calls down the stretch.”

The Chippewa’s played five games in seven days. They beat Ball State 86-62 in the first-round of the MAC tournament on March 3. They beat Ohio 58-55 on Wednesday. Then they beat Miami 78-64 on Thursday. They beat top-seed Bowling Green 69-66 on Friday.

Johnson led with 20 points and seven assists. Freshman guard Jessica Green had 12 points, five assists and three steals.

For the Eagles, the tournament’s MVP senior Tavelyn James had 23 points. However, she missed 13 shots from the field.

In the men’s tourney:

D.J. Cooper’s 23-point performance helped the Ohio University Bobcats to a 64-63 victory over top-seed Akron, to take the MAC title.

In front of 10,301 fans at the Q, the game see-sawed back-and-forth. Zips led 29-28 at the half. The Bobcats (27-7) was awesome from the three-point arch connecting on nine out of 21. Cooper hit four of them.

For the Zips (22-11), point guard Alex Abreu led with 19 points and seven assists. Brian Walsh had 10 points.

How did the locals do?

Natachia Watkins (Brush) she was tied with the game-high of 19 points in helping second-seed Eastern Michigan to a 59-57 victory over third-seed Toledo Rockets. Watkins also had four rebounds and three steal in 30 minutes of action. Watkins followed that game up with 25 points, seven rebounds, three steals and two assist performance. Watkins, who was named MVP of the game, helped her team to win the MAC title with a 72-71 victory over Central Michigan. Watkins, a sophomore, earned All-MAC third-team.

Mahogany Green (Cleveland State) – Green is the assistant coach for Central Michigan. The Chippewa's almost won the MAC tournament. They played four games in as many days.

Randal Holt (Glenville, Bedford) had 13 points, five assists and three rebounds in their 76-72 victory over Western Michigan. Holt followed up that performance with a game-high of 21 points in their semifinal loss to rival Akron 78-74. Holt sank four three-point field goals.

Demetrius Treadwell (Euclid) had six points in 12 minutes of action as the Zips advanced to the MAC final with a 78-74 victory over rival Kent State. Treadwell had three points in their 64-63 loss to Ohio University.

Nick Harney (Benedictine) Harney had 12 points of the bench and helped to lead Zips past Kent State 78-74. Harney also had six rebounds and a steal in 14 minutes of action. Harney had two points in their 64-63 loss to Ohio University.

Reggie Keely (Cleveland Heights, Bedford) was the key man in their 77-74 victory over Buffalo. Keely had 14 points, seven rebounds and a steal in 19 minutes of action. In their 64-63 victory over Akron, Keely had eight points off the bench.

Other college news:

Ohio University, the 13th seed, will take on fourth-seed Michigan in the Midwest Region, Friday in Nashville, Tenn. Last time the Bobcats were in the NCAA tournament, they upset Georgetown.

Ohio State is the second-seed in the East Region. The Buckeyes (27-7), who lost in the Big Ten Championship game to Michigan State on Sunday, will take on Loyola (MD) (24-8) on Thursday at Pittsburgh.

Cincinnati, a Big East Conference at-large bid, is the sixth seed and they will take on Texas Longhorns. The Bearcats (24-10) game will be on Friday at Nashville, TN.

It is NIT tourney for some locals:

Cleveland State was looking pretty good with a 20-4 start, but they dropped five in a row and then lost in their conference semi-final game. The Vikings will be playing in the National Invitation Tournament. The Vikings (22-10) traveled to take on Stanford, yesterday.

Akron, the runner-up in the MAC championship took on hosting Northwestern (18-13), yesterday.

Dayton (20-120 took on hosting Iowa (17-16), yesterday.