

Final Home Stand A Big One For CSU

Written by {ga=neoleo}

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Cleveland State is set to host the Wisconsin schools, Milwaukee on Thursday and Green Bay on Saturday, in the final home stand of the season. The Vikings (17-8, 8-5) are on a four-game winning streak and have pulled into a fourth place tie with Wright State in the Horizon League, just a game behind Milwaukee for third and three games back and within striking distance of second place Green Bay. In his latest, Ryan Aroney previews the Vikings contests against their division foes from Wisconsin.



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The all-important two seed, which guarantees a double-bye and a place in the tournament semi-finals, may be out of reach for CSU as Green Bay plays Horizon bottom feeders Youngstown State, Valparaiso and Detroit along with CSU and Wright State. The most likely scenario for the Vikings to catapult to the two seed would be to win out and see Green Bay also lose at Wright State. The Phoenix would then have to be upset by one of the other three. The best chance comes Thursday when Green Bay plays at Youngstown State, as the Penguins already proved to CSU fans what they are capable of at home as an underdog. YSU knocked off CSU 64-60 on January 23rd in what has become the Vikings only bad loss of the season. Throwing a wrench into the equation is the fact that CSU still must travel to first place Butler for the regular season finale.

The Vikings, however, have a much better chance to take over the third seed and it starts Thursday night with Milwaukee. With a win, the Vikings would be in a three-way tie for third place. The 3-6 seeds host first round tournament games in the Horizon League, but the three seed is important for two reasons. First, it matches up with the two seed in the semi-finals on the court of the top seed,

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meaning CSU would play Green Bay at Butler instead of matching up with the home school in the semi-finals. The second note of importance is the three seed has a good shot at hosting the championship. In the same scenario, if 3rd seeded CSU defeated 2nd seeded Green Bay in the semi-finals and top seeded Butler lost in the other semi-final match-up, the championship game would be played in Cleveland.

It may seem like a lot, but CSU stood 8-5 in the conference at this same time last year and went on to capture the 2nd seed and advance all the way to the conference finals.

The Vikings are led, as always, by J'Nathan Bullock. The 6-5 senior is averaging a career best 15.3 points to go along with a team-high 6.9 rebounds per game. Even with the marvelous play of Bullock, CSU has received a jolt from the return of sophomore D'Aundray Brown. The 6-4 Youngstown native missed a month with a stress fracture of the rib cage and the Vikings went 5-4 in his absence. Brown returned for two games in Chicago and responded by averaging 5 points and 10 rebounds per game in the two CSU victories.

Thanks to Brown's contributions, the Vikings are back in the thick of things in the Horizon League. It may say mid-February on your calendar, but March madness starts this week for the Vikings.