

Cleveland State Blows Golden Opportunity For No. 1 Seed

Written by {ga=tommieskoski}

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What a difference a week makes.

A week ago, Cleveland State controlled its own destiny for the No. 1 seed and homefield advantage in next month's Horizon League tournament.

The Vikings held a 1 1/2 game lead on Valparaiso after CSU defeated the Crusaders (76-65) last Thursday at the Wolstein Center.

But things quickly changed. CSU (21-5, 10-4 Horizon League) lost back-to-back games at home to Butler (73-61) on Saturday and at Detroit (81-78) on Monday.

Heading into Saturday's Horizon League games first-place Valparaiso (10-3 Horizon League)

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leads CSU by a 1/2 game and Wright State (10-5) by a game. Butler and Milwaukee, both 9-5, are 1 1/2 games back.

"We blew it," CSU coach Gary Waters said at his weekly media gathering on Wednesday. "Our goal now is to win out and tie for the league. Right now we are playing for second place because if we tie with Valparaiso they have the tie breaker.

"We hold our own fate if we win our final four games we will take at least second place."

According to Waters, Valpo needs to lose two games in order for CSU to win back the No. 1 seed and homefield advantage in next month's tournament.

In the Horizon League the top two seeds get a bye into the semifinals.

CSU has a favorable schedule down the stretch with three of its final four league games are at home, where the Vikings are 13-1 on the season. They have home games remaining against Youngstown State (Saturday), UW-Milwaukee (Feb. 24) and UW-Green Bay (Feb. 26). Their only road game is at WSU on Feb. 16. The Raiders are 12-1 at the Nutter Center this season.

Valpo still has five league games left. They have home games remaining with WSU (Saturday), Loyola (Feb. 24) and Illinois-Chicago (Feb. 26). Their final two road games are at Milwaukee (Feb. 16) and Green Bay (Feb. 21).

Waters says he does not think Valpo will lose another game this season.

WSU has three league games left and have the toughest schedule remaining. They are at Valpo (Saturday) and have home games remaining against CSU and Detroit (Feb. 25).

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Butler has four league games left. Their remaining home games are against Detroit (Saturday) and Loyola (Feb. 26). Their final two road games are at Green Bay (Feb. 15) and UIC (Feb. 19).

Milwaukee will play three of its final four league games on the road. Their remaining road games are at UIC (Saturday), CSU and YSU (Feb. 26). Their only home game is against Valpo.

"You have to win the games you are supposed to win," said Waters. "The game we were supposed to win was the Butler game.

"If we played any defense we win that game against Detroit."

CSU self destructed against Detroit allowing three offensive rebounds, turning the ball over twice and missing three lay-ups all in the final five minutes.

"We didn't follow the game plan at all (against Detroit), " said Waters. "The game plan was when the shot goes up somebody has to put a body on Eli (Holman). Everytime Holman got an offensive rebound (in the final five minutes) there was a guy standing there looking at the ball.

"We didn't hit him one time. If we would have put a body on him we probably would have won by eight points."

The Vikings will try to snap its two game losing streak against YSU (8-16, 1-12) on Saturday. The Penguins are 0-11 on the road this season.

"We got to get it started (against Youngstown State). Any blemish and you are over with," said Waters. "You got to take it one game at a time and you got to take care of your business."