

Bulls Hitting Their Stride

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The Buffalo Bulls have made an early statement in the MAC East. And, if coach Reggie Witherspoon's team keeps playing like it has over its last three games, the rest of the conference could be in for trouble.

Buffalo didn't start its conference schedule the way it would have liked to...losing its first two games. But now the Bulls are riding a three-game winning streak that has them sitting atop the East standings, tied with Bowling Green at 3-2 in the conference.

It is quite simple to figure out why Buffalo has turned things around. The trio of Byron Mulkey, Mitchell Watt and Zach Filzen have taken control of the Bulls on the court on both ends of the floor, and their teammates have played the most aggressive basketball the MAC has seen this season.

In this three-game stretch (a 73-70 home win over Akron, a 79-54 home blowout over Kent and a 73-70 road win over Ohio) the Bulls have out-rebounded their opponents 102-83. They have shot a blistering 50.3 percent from the field (76-151) while holding their opponents to 43.5 percent from the floor (68-156). They have also been exceptional from the 3-point line, hitting 45 percent (23-51) to their opponents 39.5 percent (19-48).

Mulkey has been unconscious from 3-point range, hitting 5-of-6 against Akron, 5-of-7 against Kent and 2-of-5 against Ohio for a combined percentage of 66.6 in the three games. He scored a career-high 27 points against Kent.

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Watt has been dominant as well by controlling the defensive paint, averaging almost five blocks (4.6) per game over the three-game stretch, including a career-high eight rejections against Kent.

One statistic that really tells the story of how well the Bulls have been playing together is how many field goals have come via an assist in the three games. Buffalo scored 76 baskets over this span, and 50 of those had assists attached to them. In the three games its opponents have just three blocked shots as well.

The Bulls schedule will get a bit more difficult in the coming weeks. First they will travel to Western Michigan (10-8) Tuesday before hosting Northern Illinois (6-11) and Toledo (4-15) on Jan. 29 and Feb. 2. They will then have a big test against West-leading Ball State (13-4) on Feb. 5.