



Wednesday, March 12, 2003

Oakland comeback falls short in Mid-Con final

Trailing by nine at the half, the **Oakland women's basketball team** clawed its way back into the Mid-Continent Conference Tournament championship game but came up short as they fell 46-48 to Valparaiso in a rematch of last year's title game. Oakland, the lowest seeded team ever to reach the Mid-Con women's tournament final at No. 6, ends its season at 13-16.

Valparaiso held Oakland to just 14 first-half points, establishing a tournament record for fewest points allowed in a half. OU senior guard Katie Wolfe (Cedar Springs, Mich.), who averaged 31.0 points per game in the first two games of the tournament, scored just two points in the first half of the final and went 0-for-8 from the field.

Oakland, which was appearing in its third straight Mid-Con Tournament championship game, led the first nine minutes of the contest. However, Valparaiso outscored the Golden Grizzlies by a 17-6 count over the last 12:52 of the half and took a 23-14 lead into the locker room. Oakland made just 5-of-23 shots (.217) in the first 20 minutes of play.

Valparaiso took control of the game in the opening stages of the second half, increasing its lead to as many as 14 points (30-16) at the 16:23 mark. Oakland closed the gap in a hurry, scoring 22 of the next 31 points to pull within one, 39-38, with eight minutes remaining. OU senior guard Romica Clint (Toledo, Ohio) scored eight points in that span.

A pair of Wolfe freebies with 2:29 left cut Valpo's lead to one again, 45-44, and after Valpo's Kathryn Knoester made 1-of-2 free throws, Oakland knotted the game at 46-46 on two Sarah Yaksich free shots.

Valpo missed a free throw and a jumper after an offensive rebound, and Clint missed a jumper at the other end for Oakland. After a Valpo rebound, Oakland's Nicole Randolph (Lathrup Village, Mich.) fouled Katie Boone, who was named the Mid-Con Tournament MVP, while trying to make the steal. Boone calmly sank both free throws with eight seconds left, and after a pair of timeouts, Oakland never got a shot off.

Three different players scored in double figures for the Crusaders, led by Boone's 13. Jeanette Gray doubled her point production in the second half to finish with 12 points. She also pulled down 10 rebounds for the double double. Valparaiso finished the game at 32.7 percent shooting and 66.7 percent from behind the arc.

Oakland shot 30.6 percent from the floor and 28.6 percent from three-point range. Clint's 15 points, 12 of which she scored in the second half, paced the Golden Grizzlies. Freshman guard Jayme Wilson (Shawnee, Kansas) had 11, and Wolfe was held to just nine points (12 below her average) on 2-of-16 shooting. OU sophomore forward Amanda Batcha (Waterford, Mich.) led all players with 16 rebounds, which ties for third on the Mid-Con Tournament single-game list. She also had two blocks and two steals.

Oakland entered the Mid-Con Tournament with its lowest seed in four appearances, but still managed to reach the championship game for the third straight season.

Valparaiso was making its fourth appearance in the Mid-Con Tournament title game, but won its first league tournament crown. Oakland and Valparaiso have met in the tournament each season since OU joined the league in 1999-2000 — Valpo beat Oakland in the 2000 semis, and Oakland won in the 2001 quarterfinals and the 2002 championship game.

Wolfe and Wilson were selected to the all-tournament team, joining Boone and Gray and Western Illinois' Zane Teilane.

For rosters, schedules, statistics and detailed game notes, visit OU's **women's basketball** pages on the **OU Athletics** Web site.

SUMMARY

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