



## UW-Green Bay men expect CBI opponent Akron to bring pressure defense

BY TOM PELISSERO •  
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The University of Wisconsin-Green Bay men's basketball team has a good idea what to expect from Akron Wednesday night:

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Pressure, pressure and more ball pressure on a Phoenix team that committed 16 turnovers in its Horizon League Tournament exit 12 days ago.

"They're a very aggressive team on defense. They like to get up," junior guard Bryquis Perine said of the Zips (24-10), who will host UWGB in a first-round College Basketball Invitational game at Rhodes Arena.

"We're going to counter that. We're going to use their aggression against them."

But can UWGB (21-12) counter well enough to avoid another letdown like their 62-53 loss to Detroit on March 5?

The Titans effectively stunted the Phoenix offense by limiting junior Rahmon Fletcher's touches. Though Perine scored 22 points, backcourt mates Fletcher and Troy Cotton combined for 5-of-21 shooting and six turnovers.

Guard play has been a strength for UWGB much of the season — Perine has been the go-to guy down the stretch, averaging 16 points while reaching double-figures in seven straight games — but coach Tod Kowalczyk made clear the entire group needs "to step up and play" in the postseason.

"We've really got to concentrate on what we did wrong in the Detroit game, especially our guards," Cotton said. "It's such a big part of our offense and defense. It starts with the guards. So, with me and Rahmon and Bry' and Seth (Evans) — what we try to do is we create the tempo, how we want to play. ... We know everybody's going to follow the lead."

Acron's rotation and approach bears a resemblance to another Mid-American Conference opponent the Phoenix has seen this season.

Kent State forced 17 turnovers at the Resch Center back on Nov. 15 — another of the 10 games in which UWGB has given away the ball 16 times or more — but lost 87-86 as Cotton (25 points), Perine (20) and Fletcher (17) combined for a huge night on the offensive end.

The Zips will counter that trio with 6-foot-5 swingman Jimmy Conyers (10.1 points per game, 39 steals), Steve McNees (8.3 ppg) and point guard Anthony "Humpty" Hitchens (8.5 ppg, 2.7 assists per game). They also are long and "much more athletic" than UWGB in the post, according to Kowalczyk, with 6-foot-7 Chris McKnight, his 6-foot-6 sixth-man brother Brett McKnight and 7-foot

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freshman Zeke Marshall.

But perhaps the biggest challenge will be the one UWGB couldn't overcome in its last game — which Cotton said was obvious when looking at the tape.

"I saw we was very frustrated, especially when things didn't go our way," Cotton said. "We didn't knock down the shots like we usually do. Also, on defense, (Detroit) really pounded us inside. We really got kind of distracted, I would say.

"We didn't stay together as a team and still try to get back in the game. Instead, I think we'd come up (and go) our separate ways."

The pressure will be on the Phoenix to keep its collective head Wednesday night.

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