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UW-Green Bay defeats Akron in CBI opener, 70-66

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Special to the Press-Gazette

AKRON, Ohio -- University of Wisconsin Green Bay advanced to the second round of the College Basketball Invitational tournament with a 70-66 victory over Akron Wednesday at James A. Rhodes Arena.

With the win, The Phoenix will play against St. Louis 8 p.m. Monday in St. Louis.

They can thank senior guard Troy Cotton for that.

Cotton scored 17 points over the final five minutes and 20 seconds to bring the Phoenix back from a seven point deficit. During that span he hit four 3-pointers. He also hit three free throws after being fouled on another 3-point attempt.

Additional information

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It was all part of a career-high 36 point game for Cotton, who also set career highs by hitting nine 3-pointers and attempting 16.

Cotton's previous career high was 25 points, which he last did Nov. 15 at Kent State. A school located about 10 miles away from Akron.

"He likes the water in the (Akron) area," Green Bay coach Tod Kowalczyk said. "I told him before the game 'will your team to win.' I thought his will tonight was outstanding."

Cotton had 25 points in the second half alone, Wednesday.

The Phoenix trailed 24-23 at halftime, and quickly fell behind at the start of the second half when Akron junior Darryl Roberts started the quarter with two quick 3-pointers of his own.

Roberts scored nine of his 14 points within the first eight minutes of the half to push the Zips out to a 37-31 lead.

But every time the Zips appeared to pull away, Green Bay (22-12) found a way to come back. An 8-0 run, with four points coming from Pat Nelson, brought them right back.

The Zips (24-11) quickly went on a 10-2 run to reclaim the lead at 47-41.

But this time, Cotton began his assault.

No other Green Bay player scored in double figures. Junior guard Bryquis Perine finished with eight points and five assists. Rian Pearson and Nelson each finished with six points. Nelson contributed seven rebounds too.

Rahmon Fletcher, who entered the game averaging 16.1 points a game, struggled from the field as he shot 1-8 and finished with four points.

But with Cotton shooting the ball so well Wednesday, the focus on offense became more about finding an open Cotton than knocking down shots.

Cotton finished the game 11-21 from the field. The rest of the team was 13-27 and 0-10 from 3-point range. But they did pick up 13 assists against just six turnovers.

"Troy is one of the best shot makers in the country," Kowalczyk said. "I thought our guys did a great job of finding him tonight."
