It's BracketBusters week, so the teams in the Mid-American Conference will get to break the monotonous cycle of conference play and take on non-conference opponents from across the country. With 13 BracketBuster matchups on tap, this week's look at the MAC slate will be broken up into two parts.Some of these games are really interesting matchups, especially with the three top teams in the conference, Akron, Ohio, and Western Michigan.

First, a look back at last weekend. Akron extended the nation's longest winning streak to 17 games with a 17-point win over Bowling Green by a 67-50 score. Ohio and Kent State set a good tone with their 11 a.m. tip, with the game going to overtime in Athens. Ohio prevailed 78-75 and kept pace with Akron in the MAC East Division, trailing by just a game, with their big matchup set for next Wednesday. Western Michigan struggled early, allowing 37 points to Northern Illinois in the first half, before buckling down defensively and winning by eight. Toledo got back in the win column with a 73-64 win over Central Michigan. Buffalo is clicking at the right time, winning their third straight, with a 79-71 triumph of Miami of Ohio. Eastern Michigan finally snagged that first road win, beating Ball State 56-50.

The BracketBusters week kicks off in Bowling Green with a matchup between the Bowling Green Falcons and the New Orleans Privateers, an independent Division I school. This should be a good chance for the Falcons to beat up on a team after playing a lot of close, low-scoring games in conference. The Privateers are 8-15 on the season, but only four of those wins are against Division I opponents. The Privateers are also 0-9 on the road.

The Privateers are the 331st ranked scoring defense out of 345 teams, but they do average 71 points per game, so the Falcons will have to establish what kind of pace they want to play the

game at. In college basketball stat guru Ken Pomeroy's adjusted tempo rankings, the Privateers are 23rd, while Bowling Green is 268th. Two contrasting styles will be on display in the Stroh Center and the Falcons will have to be prepared.

Friday night features a big time tilt in Rhodes Arena on the campus of the University of Akron. The North Dakota State Bison of the Summit Conference head into town to take on the Zips, with Akron's 17-game win streak on the line. This is a game that the Zips need to win and look good in the process. The Bison rank 83rd in the RPI rankings and the Zips have just two top 100 RPI wins, something that the selection committee looks closely at.

Like the Zips, the Bison are a good defensive team, holding opponents to 55.8 points per game. The Zips are a better offensive bunch, averaging 72.7 points per game to NDSU's 66.2 points per contest. It's not the big name opponent that the Zips were hoping for in BracketBusters, but it's a chance to beat a quality opponent and extend the winning streak before next Wednesday's clash with Ohio.

Saturday features 11 of the MAC's 12 teams in action with a full day of non-conference games. The day for the MAC starts off in Ypsilanti, where the Eastern Michigan Eagles, fresh off their first road win of the season, will host the Missouri State Bears out of the Missouri Valley Conference. It's been a rough season for the Bears, with just eight wins in 28 games and six of them are in conference. The Bears are just 1-11 on the road this season, so they do have some similarities to the Eagles.

This could be a very low scoring contest. The Bears rank 323rd out of 350 teams in scoring with just shy of 60 points per game. The Eagles are even worse at 57.1 points per game, which ranks 338th. Defensively, the Eagles are holding opponents to 60.2 points per game, while the Bears allow 64.9 points per contest. The Bears enter Saturday's noon tip-off as losers of nine out of their last 12. The Eagles are 11-3 at home and have a shot here to continue their winning ways at the Convocation Center.

In one of Saturday's more intriguing contests, the Western Michigan Broncos host the Pacific Tigers out of the Big West Conference. Like the EMU/Missouri State game, the MAC team has a big home court advantage, as the Broncos are 10-1 at home and Pacific is just 2-8 on the road. Western Michigan could be ripe for an upset if Pacific can deal with the 10 a.m. Pacific Time Zone tip-off and make shots. The Tigers live and die by the three, ranking 37th in the country as a team at 37.6 percent from behind the arc. They also rank 336th in the country at

defending the three, allowing the opponent to make 37.6 percent of their three-point attempts. Western Michigan is a poor three-point shooting team, so they'll either need to make shots or defend them in order to defend home court.

Pacific last traveled to the Eastern Time Zone on November 22 when they upset Xavier. Since, they have only left the state of California twice, once to play at Gonzaga and once to play at Hawaii. This will definitely be a test for them. Western Michigan and Pacific last met in 2007, with Pacific winning 90-76.

Buffalo hosts the Manhattan Jaspers of the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference on Saturday at 2 p.m. The 10-16 Jaspers struggled out of the gate this season, losing 11 of their first 15, but have an 8-8 record in conference play. Like the Bulls, the Jaspers have been plagued by inconsistency this season, specifically on the offensive end of the floor, where they average just 59 points per game, along with being one of the worst free throw shooting teams in the country.

Both teams enter this game playing pretty well. The Bulls are carrying a modest three-game winning streak into this one, while the Jaspers just had a four-game win streak snapped against Niagara on Sunday. The Bulls have won six of their last 10. In terms of common opponents, Buffalo played neighboring schools Canisius and Niagara earlier in the season, losing to Canisius by seven and beating Niagara by 10. The Jaspers are 1-1 against Canisius and 0-2 against Niagara.

In the other 2 p.m. tip-off, the Toledo Rockets host the McNeese State Cowboys of the Southland Conference. The Rockets are playing good basketball right now, winners of five out of six, while the Cowboys have lost six of 10. Overall, these two teams appear to be pretty comparable statistically, with one major difference that will benefit the Rockets. The Cowboys are 279th in the country, converting 65.7 percent of free throw attempts. The Rockets are fourth at 77.1 percent.

These two teams met last season in the CollegeInsider.com Tournament and Toledo won 76-63 on their home court. It was an evenly-matched game where the Rockets had a big free throw advantage, which could be the case again this season. With a big game against Western Michigan on tap next Wednesday, the Rockets may fall into the trap of looking past the Cowboys, since they are ineligible for MAC Tournament and postseason play, though they can be crowned the MAC West Division champions.

There are seven more games on tap for Saturday, which will be included in Friday's article previewing the rest of the BracketBusters slate, including a very big matchup in Nashville between Ohio and Belmont.