As the final survivors of the long Mid-American Conference season descend upon downtown Cleveland this week for the final rounds of the league tournament, you can almost see the glimmer of possibility in the eyes of each player and coach.

Take care of business in C-Town and they're off to the dance, with grand expectations of planting an upset on the lips Prince Charming and becoming this year's Cinderella.

And why not? The MAC has provided more than its fair share of glass-slippered beauties over the years, which is particularly impressive considering its long history of receiving little respect from the selection committee.

Since tournament seeding began in 1979, only once has a MAC team entered an NCAA tournament game as the higher seed. And that was by accident - when 12th-seeded Eastern Michigan and No. 13 seed Penn State both somehow tumbled into the second round in 1991.

While perpetually climbing uphill, the MAC has fared surprisingly well, collecting 30 tournament victories over the past half century, led by Ohio's seven, Miami's six, and Kent State's four.

Even in defeat, the MAC has made some waves. Near-upsets of No. 1 seeds come to mind (principally Ball State's two-point loss to eventual champ UNLV in 1990 and OU's overtime thriller with North Carolina last year), as well as individual showdowns like Ron Harper vs. Len Bias in 1985.

In the MAC's rich history of March success, here are the 10 games that helped put the conference on the map:

10. 1975 first round:

Central Michigan 77, Georgetown 75

In one of the most controversial finishes of any NCAA tournament game, the Chippewas and Hoyas appeared headed for overtime when Georgetown's Jonathan Smith launched a 30-foot desperation shot at the buzzer. The shot missed, but Smith was called for a charge, sending CMU's Leonard Drake to the line for a one-and-one.

He made both - his only free throws of the game - sending the Chippewas to the regional semifinals, much to the chagrin of furious third-year Georgetown coach John Thompson.

9. 1996 first round:

Eastern Michigan 75, Duke 60

Technically, this wasn't much of a surprise. Led by flamboyant point guard Earl Boykins, Eastern Michigan bounded into the tournament as a nine seed and were paired with a rebuilding Duke team that posted a modest 18-12 record. But still, even if seeded eighth, Duke is Duke.

In Indianapolis, where Duke had won its first national title five years before, the Blue Devils were dominated by EMU, who were led by Boykins' 23 points, including 10 in the final seven minutes to stave off a late Duke rally. It marked Duke's first opening-round loss in 41 years and a milestone victory for the MAC.

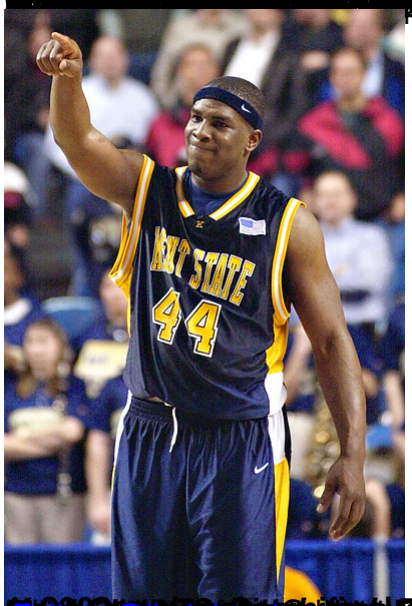
8. 1995 first round:

Miami 71, Arizona 62

Playing just 40 miles away from home in Dayton, 12th-seeded Miami controlled the game and toppled Arizona, ranked No. 13 nationally going into the tournament. Dreadlocked Miami sophomore Devin Davis outscored first-team All-American Damon Stoudamire 24-18, as Stoudamire hit only 6 of 18 shots in his final college game.

The Redskins then nearly did it again in the second round, taking a 10-point lead in the second half against No. 4 seed Virginia before falling in overtime.

7. 2010 first round:



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