The final four are the top four as the semifinal round of the MAC Tournament is scheduled to tip off at 6:30 p.m. on Friday night. One of the four teams will pick up the conference's automatic bid to March Madness on Saturday, but there is still plenty of work to be done to get to the finals. The two teams in the early game have plenty of history with each other while the two teams in the late game have far fewer chapters written about their head-to-head meetings.

On Thursday night, Kent State and Buffalo played a seesaw affair, with both teams getting big efforts from their top players. Kent State hung on for a 70-68 win to set up another meeting with the Akron Zips. Golden Flash Chris Evans led all scorers with 25 points and also recorded a season-high 15 rebounds, all on the defensive end. Randal Holt chipped in 17 to help the cause. For the Bulls, Javon McCrea scored 20 to set a school-record for points in a season with 593, but Tony Watson III led the Bulls with 23 in his final college game.

It was a highly entertaining game and a tremendous effort from the Bulls, who were playing their third game in four days and didn't look at all like the 20-loss team they ended up being. The Bulls only committed eight turnovers, but it was the Flashes' commitment to rebounding in the defensive end that really hurt the Bulls' chances. The Bulls pulled down 24 offensive rebounds in their first two tournament games, but managed just seven against the Flashes.

In the late game, the Western Michigan Broncos pulled away late against a fatigued Eastern Michigan squad and took advantage of their free points at the free throw line to advance to the semifinals with a 70-55 win. The Broncos were 24-of-29 at the charity stripe and 17-of-21 in the second half. Shayne Whittington led the way with 23 points and eight boards and three other Broncos were in double figures. Daylen Harrison was the only Eagle in double figures with 14.

The Eagles cut a 10-point lead down to a one-point deficit with just under nine minutes to play, but the Broncos put together an 8-0 run to stop the momentum and that signaled the end for the

tired Eagles, playing their third game in four days. J.R. Sims and Derek Thompson combined to go just 5-of-23 from the floor. It was particularly disappointing for Thompson, the team's leading scorer, to go just 3-of-10 in his final college game.

The cream of the MAC crop remains as Akron, Ohio, Western Michigan, and Kent State – the four top seeds – are all left standing. Akron and Ohio have not played a game yet in the tournament. Western Michigan and Kent State got the jitters out on Thursday night. It should be a great night of basketball from Quicken Loans Arena.

In 2011, Kent State and Akron faced off in the championship game of the MAC Tournament. Akron ended Kent's season with a thrilling 66-65 overtime win. In 2012, the two rivals met again, this time, in the semifinal round. Akron ended Kent's season with a 78-74 win. Is the third time in three years a charm? Kent State surely hopes so.

With a week of practice to adjust to life without point guard Alex Abreu, suspended for drug violations, the Zips are hoping to avenge March 8's loss to the Golden Flashes and punch their ticket to a seventh straight tournament final. The Zips have not lost prior to the finals since 2006.

Kent State's March 8 win at Rhodes Arena snapped a five-game losing streak against the Zips. The Zips fired 72 shots in that game and made just 34.7 percent of them. If the Zips take 72 shots again, it'll be hard for the Flashes to win the game. It'll be a very intense atmosphere at the Q, with fans of both teams representing their respective schools en masse.

Since an overtime loss to Ohio on February 16, the Flashes have not lost, reeling off six straight victories. The Zips had a 19-game win streak snapped on March 2 in Buffalo and then lost to the Flashes less than a week later, immediately following the Abreu news and suspension. Coach Keith Dambrot has had time to reassess his team's situation and will have his boys ready to play.

It should be a high-octane environment right from the 6:30 p.m. tip that will make for great entertainment.

In the later game, the Ohio Bobcats will take the first step towards defending their title as the reigning MAC Champions when they take the floor against the Western Michigan Broncos. Western Michigan is looking to advance to the title game for the first time since 2004, when they beat Kent State to go to the dance for the second time since 1976.

The Bobcats and Broncos only played once during the regular season, a 61-59 Bobcats road victory in Kalamazoo. The Broncos shot just 28 percent from the field in that loss, but were 26-of-34 from the free throw line. The teams combined for 49 fouls and 27 turnovers.

The teams last met in the MAC Tournament in 2009 when Ohio, the #9 seed, beat Western Michigan, the #8 seed, 62-55. With a win, the Bobcats would tie Ball State for most MAC Tournament wins with 37. A win would also give the Bobcats the chance to tie Ball State for most tournament championships with seven. A Western Michigan win would give them the chance at their second MAC title.

The Bobcats have lost just three times since the start of January, twice to Akron and once on the road at Belmont during BracketBusters week. The Broncos went just 4-4 over their final eight regular season games.

The game is scheduled to start at 9 p.m.

Both games will be broadcast on SportsTime Ohio.