Two minutes and 27 seconds into the game, Ball State's Malik Perry hit a lay-up that gave the Cardinals a 6-4 lead over home-standing Western Michigan. Only 23 seconds later, Nate Hutchison connected on a 3-pointer to give the Broncos their first lead of the game.

They would never trail again.

Mike Douglas scored a career-high 25 points and had a perfect night shooting the basketball while Flenard Whitfield, Juwan Howard Jr. and Hutcheson also scored in double-figures for Western Michigan, who took sole possession of first place and clinched at least a share of the MAC West title with a convincing 87-70 win over the Cardinals.

Douglas was unconscious. Everything he tossed in the direction of the hoop found the bottom of the net as he connected on eight-of-eight from the field (including 3-of-3 from 3-point range) and hit all of his seven free-throws as the Broncos built a big early lead and were never really challenged. The Cardinals got as close as five points early in the second half, but WMU was able to extend the lead to as many as 21 points in steamrolling to the win.

Ball State defeated Western Michigan 72-63 when the teams hooked up on Jan. 12 in Muncie, shooting 50 percent from the field and attempting 35 free-throws to the Broncos' 14, but this time the shooting touch wasn't there for the Cardinals...especially in the second half. Ball State

shot just 27.6 percent from the floor in the final 20 minutes of action (8-of-29) and just over 41 percent for the game.

With the win the Broncos have now won six of their last seven games and have clinched a bye in the first round of the First Energy MAC Championship Tournament. Their season record improved to 18-11 overall and 10-5 in the conference. Ball State, losers of eight of their last 12, fell to 17-12 overall, 9-6 in MAC play. To gain a share of the MAC West title Ball State must beat Northern Illinois in Muncie Saturday and root for Central Michigan to pull off a home upset over Western Michigan, also Saturday. Both games tip off at 2 p.m.

The Broncos were not the only team to clinch at least a share of a division title Wednesday night. Kent State, who defeated Bowling Green in Anderson Arena Tuesday, moved into sole possession of the MAC East and gained the inside track on the overall No. 1 seed in the MAC Tournament when Miami stumbled in Buffalo, losing 59-49.

Someone might want to check the rims at Alumni Arena in Buffalo as Miami and Buffalo shot terribly from the floor. Miami hit just 33.3 percent from the floor and 30.4 percent from 3-point range. The Bulls were not much better, shooting at a 35 percent clip from the floor and 35.3 percent from 3-point range. Combined, the teams were 40-of-117 (34.1%) from the floor and 13-of-40 (32.5%) from beyond the arc.

Buffalo's inside presence of Mitchell Watt and Javon McCrea dominated down low, holding Miami's leading scorer, Julian Mavunga, to just six points, 8.5 below his average. Mavunga hit just three-of-14 from the floor to get those six points. Nick Winbush, the RedHawks' second-leading scorer, scored 14 points, but had to hoist up 15 shots to get there. Watt blocked four shots while McCrea swatted away three.

Miami can still clinch a share of the MAC East title with a win at home over Ohio Saturday and a loss by Kent at home against Akron.