Michael Porrini proved to not be that adept a prognosticator.

Following his Golden Flashes' loss to Akron in the regular season finale for both teams, Porrini, Kent State's senior point guard, guaranteed the Zips would not beat Kent for a third time in the same season when the teams met in the First Energy MAC Championship Tournament semifinals.

Akron was unimpressed.

On the strength of a 14-0 run early in the second half, the Zips knocked off Kent for the fourth consecutive time with a 78-74 win at Quicken Loans Arena.

It was a back-and-forth contest. Kent's largest lead of the game was three points early in the first half while Akron enjoyed a 13-point bulge later in the opening 20 minutes. Kent opened the second half on a 6-0 run to take a one-point lead followed immediately by Akron's 14-0 spurt.

The Zips took a nine-point lead with just over two minutes remaining in the game, following an Alex Abreau 3-pointer with the shot clock winding down, then missed four consecutive free throws to allow the Golden Flashes to climb back into the game. Randal Holt connected on a pair of 3-pointers in the final 27.9 seconds of the game to pull Kent within a basket at 76-74, but Abreau cashed out a pair of charity tosses with 15.2 seconds to put the game away.

It was a wild final two minutes, but the Zips were able to hold on to the lead and advance to their sixth consecutive MAC title game.

"Obviously this is a tough game," Kent coach Rob Senderoff said. "It was a hard-fought game both ways, they just made a couple of plays than we did. Whether it was an offensive rebound or a big shot ... our team battled and fought their butts off. I couldn't be more proud of the way they played. At the end of the day Akron made a couple more plays than us. Credit goes to Akron, we just came up a little short."

Kent and Akron share the most bitter rivalry in the conference as just 12 miles stand between the two campuses. However, there is a great deal of respect between the programs. Following the game, Akron coach Keith Dambrot had high praise for graduating senior forward and 2010-11 MAC Player of the Year Justin Greene of Kent.

"I thought they came out with a lot of energy, a lot of respect for Kent state and their players," he said. "I thought Justin Greene in particular was not going to get 'Zeeked' again. He had a terrific game. It was a good basketball game. I think our little guy controlled the action for us, made some big plays when it mattered."

Akron senior forward Nikola Cvetinovic, who has banged bodies with Greene for four seasons, said he is going to miss playing against the Kent State big man.

"It's been a pleasure competing against that guy. He's a high quality guy, high class guy," Cvetinovic said. "We went at it for four years. I have a tremendous respect for him. I think we have a very good friendship and we developed a very good relationship for four years. We just had our battles and like I said, I have a tremendous respect for their team and their program. It's kind of sad it's over."

Cvetinovic paced the Zips with 15 points while Abreau, a sophomore point guard, added 13 points, four assists and a pair of steals while hitting three-of-four from 3-point range. Akron's bench out-scored Kent's, 26-12, with Nick Haney leading the way by scoring 12 points and grabbing six rebounds in just 14 minutes off the pine.

"They did a great job offensive rebounding," Senderoff said of the Zips. "They got long ones and they got put-backs. Our kids played hard ... about as hard as we can play. Akron beat us at their place, they beat us at our place and on a neutral court so you have got to hand it to them, their team, and their coaches."

After the game there was nothing but class coming from the Zips towards Porrini.

"They just told me don't hang our heads, and that we played real hard," Porrini said. "But most important we told them good luck. For a team to be able to come and beat us three times, that's tough and hats off to them. Hopefully they can go along way and represent the MAC well." ""