NASHVILLE – That sound you heard a little after 9 p.m., a sound that echoed across the country except the small portion of Florida south of Orlando, was a simultaneous sigh of relief from every basketball fan in America.

No, we will not have to sit through a South Florida game again.

That boring, plodding, mind-numbing brand of basketball Stan Heath's Bulls used to grind through the Big East season and to a win over equally dull Temple in the second round of the NCAA Tournament has been mercifully put down for the year.

Ohio State transfer Walter Offutt scored a game-high 21 points while junior point guard D.J. Cooper added 19 points, six rebounds and seven assists for the Ohio Bobcats in their 62-56 victory over South Florida in the Bridgestone Arena.

The victory punched the Bobcats' ticket to the Sweet 16, improved their season's record to 29-7 and became the first No. 13 seed to advance to the Sweet 16 since Bradley in 2006. The Bobcats are the first MAC team to advance to the Sweet 16 since Kent State (coached, coincidentally, by Stan Heath) pulled it off in 2002.

The Bobcats trailed most of the way before Offutt sparked a 10-0 Ohio run with a 3-pointer from the left wing. The run ended with a pair of Cooper free throws at the 3:28 mark that gave Ohio a 54-46 lead.

With 1:34 remaining in the contest Cooper hit another short jumper to give the Bobcats a seven-point lead at 58-51. The Bulls would cut the lead to three points with :50 remaining, but Cooper was able to cash in three-of-four free throws in the waning seconds of the game to seal the win.

With 62 points Ohio snapped a streak of 12 consecutive games South Florida had held its opponents under 60 points.

There were a pair of huge momentum-swinging calls in the game. Both were technically the correct calls, but both allowed Ohio to take full advantage of severe penalties for seemingly minor infractions.

First, with 16:03 remaining in the game, Victor Rudd Jr. was called for a level one flagrant foul for grabbing and holding Offutt's jersey. Offutt connected on both free throws, then hit a 3-pointer from the top of the key to give the Bobcats a five-point possession.

Later in the game Jawanza Poland was whistled for a technical foul for hanging on the rim. The Bobcats trailed by five points at the time, 42-37. Nick Kellogg hit both free throws before, again, also hitting a 3-pointer on the ensuing possession to tie the game at 42-42.

Ohio trailed 27-21 at halftime, but was a different team in the second half. The Bobcats shot just 30.4 percent in the first 20 minutes (seven-of-23) before shooting 50 percent (10-of-20) in the second half. The Bulls pounded Ohio in most statistical categories, 33-25 rebounding, 32-12 points in the paint and six-to-one in blocks, but the Bobcats took advantage of each and every opportunity that came their way.

"We didn't do anything differently (in the second half)," Offutt said. "Coach told us to come out and swing aggressively from the start. We went out there and played aggressively and hit some shots. We were fortunate to beat a tough team at the end and got the win."

Rudd Jr. led South Florida with 13 points and 10 rebounds while Anthony Collins added 13 points and six assists.

"It really seemed like they hadn't missed any 3s in the second half," Collins said. "We just didn't execute our defensive assignments the right way. They got open and made the shots."

The Bobcats will now face North Carolina, the top seed in the Midwest Region, in the next round. The game will take place Friday in St. Louis.

"We know we can compete with bigger teams and stuff like that," Offutt said of his Bobcats moving on. "I think that's just our mind-set of going into the game; we expect to win the game."

North Carolina will probably be without the services of starting point guard Kendall Marshall, who fractured his right wrist in the Tarheels' third-round win over Creighton. Reports out of Chapel Hill say Marshall will have surgery on the wrist today, with the hope he will be able to play Friday. Though the injury is to Marshall's non-shooting hand, the chances of him playing in the game are very doubtful. Marshall finished the regular season tied for fifth in the nation in assists per game with 10.0.