



UMKC ATHLETICS

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UMKC's Late Comeback Falls Short in WAC Opener

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – The UMKC men's basketball team (5-12, 0-1 WAC) came within six points of the visiting UT Rio Grande Valley Vaqueros (9-8, 1-0 WAC) in the closing minutes on Saturday – after being down by as many as 17 points – but ultimately fell, 73-61.

Both defenses stood firm in the opening minutes of the game, as the Vaqueros hit a single jumper, and **Broderick Robinson** (Grand Junction, Colo.) dropped in a free throw, for a UTRGV 2-1 lead at the first media break. Coming out of the timeout, freshman **Marco Smith** (Kansas City, Kan.) checked into the game and hit a jumper to give UMKC some life.

A 3-pointer by Robinson off of an assist from **Robert Knar** (Mundelein, Ill.) at the 12-minute mark knotted the game at 12-all. The Vaqueros responded with back-to-back treys to take a six-point lead.

Aleer Leek (Juba, South Sudan) knocked down a pair of free throws to bring the Roos back within four points to go along with his first block in six games. The junior would finish with a team-high three for the game.

UTRGV closed the first half on a 13-3 run over the span of five minutes to take the 31-19 lead over the Roos going into the locker room. Robinson led the team with six points, while Leek matched a season-high six rebounds to go with his pair of free throws.

Three quick fouls issued to Leek to open the second half put the forward in foul trouble, forcing him to sit until the 13:14-mark. Both sides continued to pressure the basketball, while each team went without a field goal for nearly four minutes.

Going into the first media break of the second half, **Jordan Giles** (Tuscaloosa, Ala.) slammed it home to bring some life back into the Roos. UMKC forced back-to-back turnovers with a shot clock violation and an illegal screen by the Vaqueros.

Sophomore **Isaiah Ross** (Davenport, Iowa) stepped up to the charity stripe and went 1-for-2 to chip away at UTRGV's lead. Five quick points by Robinson at the midway point cut the Vaqueros lead down to eight after the Roos were down by as many as 17 at the 16:08-mark. A fast break 3-point play by Ross and the Roos brought it down to a five-point game.

Back-to-back 3-pointers by the Vaqueros at the other end helped UTRGV go back up by 11 points with just under 10 minutes remaining in the game. The Roos kept chipping away, as back-to-back buckets from downtown by Giles and Ross brought UMKC back within six points going into the final media break. Three straight free throws from the Vaqueros pushed them back up by nine, as UTRGV secured the 73-61 win to open conference play.

Robinson led the way for UMKC, notching his second-consecutive 20-point game, as he finished with 20 to go along with five rebounds, a pair of assists and a steal. Ross and Giles each contributed 12 points, while Giles dished out a team-high three assists. Leek led the way on the boards, matching a season-high six rebounds, while Giles and Robinson each secured five.

UMKC will continue Western Athletic Conference play next week with trips to Utah Valley and Seattle U.

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