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Roos Take Down UTRGV 54-52 in WAC Opener

EDINBURG, Texas – The UMKC women's basketball team (5-11, 1-0 WAC) opened up Western Athletic Conference (WAC) play with a 54-52 victory on the road at UT Rio Grande (10-6, 0-1 WAC) Saturday night.

The first quarter of action began with both sides trading buckets in the early going. An **India Johnson** (Overland Park, Kan.) made free throw completed an and-one to give the Roos an 8-7 lead at the 6:49 mark of the opening period.

UT Rio Grande Valley would answer quickly with an 8-4 run to close out the first quarter, taking a 16-11 lead into the break. Johnson, who tallied five of UMKC's first 11 points, finished the contest with 13 points on 6 of 15 (40%) shooting from the field on the night.

Both teams struggled to generate scoring at the start of the second quarter, combining to miss their first four shots and committing four turnovers in the first three minutes of action. UMKC would claim their first lead since 8-7 on an Aries Washington three-pointer to take a 20-18 lead just ahead of the second quarter media timeout, but UTRGV would close out the first half on a 6-2 run to take a 26-22 lead into half.

The Roos opened up the second half with a made three-pointer from **Daijane Dillard** (Los Angeles, Calif.) to bring the game back within one possession at 28-25. The bucket would be the only one of the night for Dillard but the senior guard was outstanding in distributing the ball, dishing out a game-high six assists.

"This win was huge for our team," commented head coach **Jacie Hoyt**. "We had the toughest nonconference schedule in the WAC, and part of our thought process would be that it would mold us into a better team. Our team showed that they were battle tested tonight."

After connecting on just 8 of 29 (27.6%) field goal attempts in the first half, UMKC found their rhythm in the final two quarters. The team knocked down 11 of 22 of their shots in the second half to ramp up the pressure on UTRGV.

Despite enhanced efficiency on the offensive end, the Roos were unable to find the breakthrough shot to regain the lead. Back to back buckets from **Kristen Moore** (Chicago, Ill.) and **Samantha Waldron** (Omaha, Neb.) cut the UTRGV lead to 30-29 at

the 6:54 mark of the third quarter, but the Vaqueros would continue to maintain separation throughout the period.

An **Aries Washington** (Kansas City, Mo.) layup brought UMKC to within five, giving the squad momentum heading into the final quarter of action. Washington, the leading scorer for the Roos, was again terrific in the WAC opener. She finished the night tied for a game-high with 17 points, including a perfect 7 of 7 from the foul line, and also added a game-high 7 rebounds.

Neither side was able to claim a significant run until the final media break of the contest. With a lead swaying between four and seven points, resulting in a 46-39 UTRGV lead with 6:19 to play, the Roos sparked a 15-6 run finish the contest.

A major factor in the late surge was Waldron, who knocked down a pair of shots from beyond the arc to keep the pressure on. Waldron, who made four three-pointers on the night, finished her night with a tied for game-high 17 points in addition to six rebounds and three assists.

Waldron's final make from distance gave UMKC a 51-50 lead with just under two minutes remaining in the contest. A UTRGV made basket on the ensuing possession gave the Roos a chance to claim a lead with time winding down. After drawing a foul with eight seconds remaining, Washington calmly knocked down a pair of free throws to reclaim the lead at 53-52.

Following a UTRGV timeout, UMKC came through with an impressive stop and rebound to secure the win. Waldron's 1 of 2 free throw trip following a foul on the rebound sealed up the 54-53 victory in Coach Hoyt's first career WAC game.

"I'm so proud of the hustle and heart that our girls played with for a full 40 minutes," noted Hoyt. "Aries made big-time free throws when they counted most and Sam Waldron came up with a huge rebound to help us seal the game."

UMKC will return home to host a pair of WAC opponents next week. The Roos will host Utah Valley on Thursday, Jan. 11 before matching up with Seattle U on Saturday, Jan. 13. Both games will be broadcast on the [WAC Digital Network](#) free of charge.

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