

WEEK FIFTEEN
MIAMI, OH vs CENTRAL MICHIGAN

Miami, Ohio holds off CMU 26-21 in MAC title game

DETROIT -- As long as Miami of Ohio kept the game close, coach Chuck Martin could feel reasonably confident.

"I told the kids at halftime, down 14-10, I said, 'It feels kind of at home guys,'" Martin said. "Kind of a little bit ugly, make a couple plays here and there. They probably feel like they should be up by more, but they're not up by more."

Brett Gabbert threw a 31-yard touchdown pass to Jack Sorenson early in the third quarter, and Miami controlled most of the second half, beating Central Michigan 26-21 in the Mid-American Conference title game Saturday. The RedHawks won a record 16th MAC championship despite doing little on offense in the first half.

Trailing 14-10 after two quarters, Miami took the lead on Gabbert's screen pass to Sorenson, and the RedHawks (8-5) held off CMU (8-5) the rest of the way to win their first conference title since 2010.

Five of Miami's last six victories this year have been by seven points or fewer.

Sam Sloman kicked four field goals, including a 48-yarder with 4:06 remaining to give Miami a 23-14 lead. CMU's Tommy Lazzaro scored on a 4-yard run with 1:24 remaining, and the Chippewas recovered an onside kick -- but were called offside. CMU was offside again on the re-kick, but it went out of bounds anyway, and Miami took over.

Sloman added a 42-yard field goal with 28 seconds left.

"I was ready for those last 30 seconds to be over," Sloman said.

A Hail Mary by CMU fell incomplete on the final play of the game.

Miami managed just 61 yards of offense in the first half but stayed in the game thanks to a couple big plays on special teams. Maurice Thomas returned the opening kickoff 97 yards, setting up a 1-yard touchdown run by Jaylon Bester.

CMU equalized on a 21-yard scoring run by Lazzaro, but in the second quarter, the Chippewas had a fake punt stopped at their own 19. That allowed the RedHawks to take a 10-7 lead on Sloman's 41-yard field goal.

"As I told the team coming into the game, it wasn't like we were going to carry anything and not use it. We were going to empty our bags," CMU coach Jim McElwain said of the unsuccessful trick play. "We had the look. Credit them, they defended it. The numbers were good. We just didn't get it done."

CMU went ahead for the first time on Quinten Dormady's 11-yard touchdown pass to Tyrone Scott with 30 seconds left in the half.

The Chippewas were trying to win their first MAC title since 2009. This was their first loss in a MAC championship game. CMU had won its previous three appearances.

Down 20-14 in the fourth quarter, the Chippewas drove to the Miami 27, but Dormady's pass was intercepted by Travion Banks.

Banks appeared to run the interception all the way back for a touchdown, but a penalty during the return brought the ball back to the Miami 11. Soon after that, CMU's Troy Brown was ejected for targeting, and the RedHawks were able to drive into field goal range.

THE TAKEAWAY

Miami: The RedHawks needed a strong defensive performance to win, and they got one -- plus plenty of help on special teams. Miami seemed to be in trouble at halftime, but the RedHawks were much sharper offensively in the final two quarters.

CMU: The Chippewas did well just to make the championship game after going 1-11 last season, but this was a winnable game that got away during the second half.

"I thought up front, they did a really good job handling what we were trying to do," said McElwain, who is in his first season as CMU's coach. "They had a good plan. They just beat us."

EMOTIONAL WEEK

CMU radio broadcaster Don Chiodo died in a car crash Wednesday.

"I know Don had a huge impact on, just not the football team, but all of Central Michigan," receiver Kalil Pimpton said. "We was out there playing for him. Regardless of whether we lost, I know he was proud of us."

Final	1	2	3	4	T
M-OH	7	3	7	9	26
CMU	0	14	0	7	21

Scoring Summary -----

	MIA	CMU
FIRST QUARTER		
MIA TD 13:59 Jaylon Bester 1 Yd Run (Sam Sloman Kick)	7	0
2 plays, 2 yards, 1:01		
SECOND QUARTER		
CMU TD 11:46 Tommy Lazzaro 21 Yd Run (Ryan Tice Kick)	7	7
14 plays, 90 yards, 7:07		
MIA FG 8:26 Sam Sloman 41 Yd Field Goal	10	7
4 plays, -4 yards, 0:58		
CMU TD 0:30 Tyrone Scott 11 Yd pass from Quinten Dormady (Ryan Tice Kick)	10	14
8 plays, 46 yards, 2:27		
THIRD QUARTER		
MIA TD 12:05 Jack Sorenson 31 Yd pass from Brett Gabbert (Sam Sloman Kick)	17	14
4 plays, 67 yards, 1:07		
FOURTH QUARTER		
MIA FG 11:38 Sam Sloman 33 Yd Field Goal	20	14
12 plays, 54 yards, 5:18		
MIA FG 4:06 Sam Sloman 48 Yd Field Goal	23	14
10 plays, 59 yards, 6:01		
CMU TD 1:24 Tommy Lazzaro 4 Yd Run (Ryan Tice Kick)	23	21
9 plays, 75 yards, 2:42		
MIA FG 0:28 Sam Sloman 42 Yd Field Goal	26	21
4 plays, 6 yards, 0:56		

Team Stats	MIA	CMU
First Downs	15	20
Passes for First	10	11
Rushes for First	4	8
Penalties for First	1	1
Third Down Efficiency	5-16	7-17
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-1	2-3
Total Yards	272	355
Total Plays	62	74
Avg Gain Per Play	4.4	4.8
Net Yards Rushing	76	99
Rushes	35	31
Yards Per Rush	2.2	3.2
Net Yards Passing	196	256
Comp-Att	14-27	27-43
Yards Per Pass	7.3	6.0
Times Sacked	3	3
Yds Lost To Sacks	-25	-15
Interceptions	0	1
Punts	6	7
Punt Average	40.2	43.6
Penalties	7	11
Penalty Yards	51	75
Fumbles	1	0
Fumbles Lost	0	0
Time of Poss	30:05	29:55

Individual Stats

RUSHING

MIAMI, OH	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
Jaylon Bester	20	66	3.3	1	22
Tyre Shelton	7	34	4.9	0	8
Brett Gabbert	5	2	0.4	0	8
James Maye	1	-4	-4.0	0	0
AJ Mayer	1	-10	-10.0	0	0
Jalen Walker	1	-12	-12.0	0	0
CENTRAL MICH	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
Tommy Lazzaro	6	48	8.0	2	21
Jonathan Ward	10	26	2.6	0	7
Kobe Lewis	7	24	3.4	0	13
Kalil Pimpton	1	7	7.0	0	7
Oakley Lavallii	1	0	0.0	0	0
Quinten Dormady	6	-6	-1.0	0	4

PASSING

MIAMI, OH	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Brett Gabbert	1	27	196	7.3	1	0	44.2
CENTRAL MICH	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Quinten Dormady	26	41	232	5.7	1	1	47.6
Tommy Lazzaro	1	1	24	24.0	0	0	99.9
Team	0	1	0	0.0	0	0	--

RECEIVING

MIAMI, OH	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
Jack Sorenson	8	123	15.4	1	31
James Maye	2	42	21.0	0	35
Jalen Walker	2	21	10.5	0	11
Davion Johnson	1	13	13.0	0	13
Tyre Shelton	1	-3	-3.0	0	0
CENTRAL MICH	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
JaCorey Sullivan	7	64	9.1	0	24
Kalil Pimpton	6	52	8.7	0	12
Tyrone Scott	4	48	12.0	1	19
Tony Poljan	3	38	12.7	0	24
Jonathan Ward	5	38	7.6	0	15
Da'Quaun Jamison	1	9	9.0	0	9
Kobe Lewis	1	7	7.0	0	7