

UMHB Men's Basketball in Review

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In a season filled with ups and downs, the UMHB Men's Basketball team seems to have found their groove at the perfect time. After starting the season with a pair of wins over the University of Wisconsin-Stout and Illinois Wesleyan University at the Sikma Hall of Fame Invitational in Illinois, the Cru would go on to drop five of their next seven games.

The Crusaders would start 2-2 in ASC play, picking up wins against LeTourneau and ETBU while dropping games to Howard Payne and Concordia. The Cru would continue to struggle in conference play after a three game stretch of non-conference opponents, going 2-2 in their next stretch of ASC games, with the Cru winning their matchups against the University of the Ozarks and McMurry, while falling to UT-Dallas and Hardin-Simmons. Going into the second round of matchups, the Crusaders did not seem any closer to finding their form from years prior, as they once again split their next two games, beating Concordia in their rematch but losing to ETBU in their second meeting with the Tigers.

The Crusaders would drop to 5-6 in conference play with a heartbreaking 93-92 loss to LeTourneau in their next outing, but this would mark the end of UMHB's struggles. The Crusaders seemingly turned the corner over the course of their next five conference games, with a pair of double-digit margins of victory over Howard Payne and UTD, and a pair of overtime victories against Ozarks and McMurry.

The Cru would punctuate their strong end to the regular season with an emphatic victory over conference leaders Hardin-Simmons in a 110-91 victory at home, which secured UMHB's right to host their matchup against ETBU in the ASC semifinals. Over that five game stretch, the Crusaders' star guards Josiah Johnson and Eli Beard absolutely exploded offensively, with Johnson averaging 32 points per game on 42.7% shooting and Beard averaging 23.8 points per game on 52.1% shooting in that period.

The Crusaders would once again lean on the shoulders of Johnson and Beard in their quarterfinal matchup against ETBU, with the duo combining for 45 points to propel UMHB to a 71-65 victory over the Tigers. The Crusaders will look to extend their winning streak and keep their conference championship hopes alive when they travel to Abilene on Friday, Feb.23 to take on Hardin-Simmons in the conference semifinals. The tournament will have concluded at the time of publication, for results, please visit our website <https://www.umhb.edu/thebells> where results will be posted Monday morning.