

Rockets win historic fourth MAC title on MacLeod goal

By Jay Skebba
IC Sports Writer

The Toledo women's soccer team captured their league-record fourth Mid-American Conference tournament championship with a 1-0 victory over Western Michigan Sunday at Scott Park.

Sophomore forward Rachel MacLeod scored the lone goal of the contest and senior goalie Vicki Traven needed only one save to register the shutout.

"It was a long journey to get here and obviously the non-conference schedule humbled us a little bit," said head coach Brad Evans. "All credit goes to our players for finding a way and sticking to the game plan."

Neither team gave an inch in a physical first half. The best scoring opportunity came in the 16th minute, but Traven made a nice save despite a tricky bounce from a shot off the head of a Bronco.

UT had many chances deep in WMU territory, but had trouble connecting on their crossing passes in front of the net, and the score remained 0-0 after the first 45 minutes.

In the second half, the physical play continued. Players from both sides commonly ended up on the ground and the Broncos picked up two yellow cards.

Western Michigan's sophomore goalie Michelle Watson started to get tested more often by the UT offense.

The Rockets had back-to-back corner kicks in the 56th minute, but Watson was able

to get a piece of both of them.

"You just have to keep probing and looking for ways to find it," Evans said. "Take stock of your opponent, what she's good at, what she's not good at. We moved players around a bit too to exploit different things."

In the 69th minute, Toledo was finally able to break through with a score.

After a cross from freshman forward Rio James, MacLeod came up with an acrobatic header to find the back of the net from close range for her team-leading 11th goal of the year.

"You just don't know when or where she'll show up but she has that knack and that's what makes dangerous offensive players," Evans said. "Stay composed because the winner is out there. We've been talking a lot this season about constantly scheming in your mind to find a way."

UT outshot WMU 14-6 and held a 6-1 advantage in shots on goal. Toledo had seven corner kick opportunities compared to just one for Western Michigan.

The match saw a total of 19 fouls and two yellow cards.

MacLeod, the MAC Player of the Year, led the Rockets with a goal on her only shot of the game while senior midfielder Danielle Case and James each picked up an assist. Traven was credited with her eighth shutout of the season.

"We talked a lot about delivery, we talked about attacking the ball, and the mentality for restarts, and



Nick Kneer/IC

The Rockets soccer team hoisted their fourth Mid-American Conference tournament trophy yesterday with a 1-0 win against Western Michigan. The Rockets received an automatic berth into the NCAA tournament.

they did a great job with it," Evans said. "Western's a very good team, and at the end of the day, this was a game about making a play, and we made a play."

MacLeod was named to the all-tournament team along

with senior forward Kristen Lynn, senior midfielder Ana Reynolds, and junior defenseman Natalia Gaitan.

With the win, Toledo received an automatic bid to the NCAA tournament.

The seeds and pairings will

be announced today at 4:30 p.m. on NCAA.com.

Since 2006, UT has won three conference championships and four tournament championships, more than any MAC program.

"We continue to get

opportunities to do this, but you're never guaranteed that," Evans said. "I thought the kids did a great job grinding and sticking to the game plan. They're the responsible parties, they did a great job with this last series of games."

... and Toledo get ready