

East Bay Women's Basketball 14 Game Win Streak Comes to an End

The team is currently 16-2 and averaging 67 points per game (ppg)

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David Phan contributed to this article.

California State University, East Bay's women's basketball's 14-game win streak ended on Feb. 3 in a 76-54 loss against California State University, San Marcos.

The loss comes after an incredible win streak that lasted over three months, with the previous loss coming against the University of California, Davis, an NCAA Division I level program. The Pioneers struggled shooting from the field, going 19-57 (33.3%) on field goals and 3-24 (12.5%) on three-pointers in the face of San Marcos' suffocating defense.

"San Marcos is a really great team; they're the standard-bearer in our league. Our girls hadn't seen defense at that level, and before we knew it, there was a substantial hole we had to overcome. They're one of those teams that's really hard to dig yourself out of a hole like that, [and] we made some changes to our offense," explained Shanelle Stires, head coach of the team.

Despite their strong defense, San Marcos only won the fourth quarter by one point as the Pioneers showed late-game fight and resolve, refusing to lay down.

This season, East Bay boasts the CCAA's top-scoring defense, limiting their opponents to a mere 54.9 points per game. The team has the second-highest average margin of victory in the conference at 12.5 ppg. The loss was met with disappointment by fans and the team Thursday night.

"We took [the loss] hard. I know the next day, a lot of us were down, but in practice, we decided to stay engaged, and the season isn't over, and sometimes it takes a loss to point out what we need to improve as a team," said sophomore guard Zhane Duckett.

Learning from their offensive mistakes against San Marcos, the team showed resolve in their next matchup. Powered by a zero turnover effort, they bounced back to win 65-62 against California State University, Los Angeles on Feb. 5.

Cal State LA "had a 10 point lead, and it started to feel like it did on Thursday with San Marcos, you know they blew us out, [so] that feeling started creeping in which is when we started turning it up on defense," Duckett recalled, adding, "When we got in the locker room at halftime we had a talk, and we said 'we're not going to let the same thing that happened on Thursday happen today.'"

Despite the loss, the Pioneers are locked in heading into the play-offs. Freshman guard Abigail Cooper attributes their confidence to their defensive strength and on-court communication.

"Every time we face adversity, we meet it and rise above it. We have had some of our teammates out, injured, and faced family issues, and at each challenge, we rely on each other and rise above it," Cooper noted.

The team's camaraderie is key to their success, backed by communication and mutual respect for one another.

"I [have] never been on a team that's closer than this team. We love each other off the court, we love each other on the court, and we have each other's back," Cooper added.

The Pioneers are currently the CCAA's second seed and are 11-1 in the conference. The team only has six more games before entering the playoffs and seems poised for a deep run to bring a national title back to Hayward, Calif.

Heading into the home stretch, Stires claims it's crucial to keep things fresh and fun as basketball has one of the longest-running seasons in all sports.

"When you get down to the last three weeks, you have to have a few tricks up your sleeve. It's about making the adjustments and thinking forward and scheming on what you know are your weaknesses, and trying to counteract [the opponents]. There's a lot of chess going on, especially down the long stretch, but we're up for that challenge," explained Stires.



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