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## College basketball: OC women need to get turned around quickly

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Coach speak and cliches come into play tonight.

>> We've had this game circled since the schedule came out.

>> If you can't get up for this game, something's wrong.

>> It's still just one game and we have to continue to improve each game.

Funny thing, though, is that it's not just one game and for one team, tonight could be a watershed moment in its season.

That's because when the Odessa College and Midland College women's basketball teams face off at 5:45 p.m. at Midland College's Chaparral Center, the contest features a pair of teams going in different directions.

Odessa College (18-5 overall, 2-3 Western Junior College Athletic Conference) has lost its past three games to South Plains, New Mexico Junior College and Howard College, the first two in the final minute and the last one after leading at halftime.

"I don't know what's been happening," Lady Wranglers coach Ara Baten said. "We've had our chances, but haven't been able to finish and you have to be able to do that in this conference because every team is very good.

“Midland College is playing very well right now and we are going to have to do everything right.”

The Lady Chaparrals (20-3, 4-1) have been doing everything right since a conference-opening loss at Frank Phillips College.

Winners of four straight, including Thursday at Western Texas College, Midland College is rounding into form at just the right time for head coach Ron Jones, who won his 400th game at the helm of the program in the season opener.

Jones, though, has been through enough of the Permian Basin battles to know that how either team is playing heading into the game has little bearing on what happens on the court.

“You really can throw the records out when Midland and Odessa meet,” Midland College coach Ron Jones said. “They are well-coached and we know they are going to be ready to play when they come over here.

“Our players don’t need any extra motivation and we are playing better each night. As a coach that’s all you can ask for. This is a big game for both schools.”

Last year, the Lady Chaparrals, currently ranked 12th in the nation, won both regular-season games — 83-58 and 77-61 — before the rivalry took a turn in the postseason.

The Lady Wranglers shocked the Lady Chaparrals 79-74 in the semifinals of the Region V Tournament.

Tonight’s game will be the first meeting since then and both coaches expect a loud, partisan crowd.

“It’s going to be very loud,” Baten said. “We are really going to have to focus and concentrate on what we need to do to be successful. We can’t worry about everything going on around us.”

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