

# the final



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## Eagles stumble: Fall one game short

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The longest winning streak in Division II women's college basketball has come to an end as the Central Missouri Jennies pulled off the upset of the year when they defeated Ashland 66-52.

Central Missouri won its second National Championship in program history and they did so as a No. 6 seed. Things started out well for the defending champions and it looked as if they were well on their way to a repeat.

AU got it started early as their leading scorer, Laina Snyder, scored to put Ashland in front—and that was just the beginning.

The Eagles hit their first seven shots, capped off by a three ball by Renee Stimpert to make it a 16-6 Ashland lead. Unfortunately for the Eagles, UCM was able to respond and they did so in a big way.

The Jennies went on a 9-0 to cut the AU lead back to just one at 16-15.

The Eagles held the lead at the end of the first quarter as they lead 20-15, but that was just the beginning of their struggles. In the second quarter, Snyder hit the first bucket to push the lead back to seven, but that was the largest lead the Eagles would see for the rest of the game.

Central Missouri's game plan was to slow the game down and work deep into the shot clock, and that is exactly what they did.

"Obviously, our goal was to control the pace of play," Central Missouri head coach Dave Slifer said. "Kelsey (Williams) did a wonderful job of making sure that had low possessions and defensively I thought we were just outstanding."

They began to slowly chip away at the lead and with 5:37 to go in the second when Paige Redmond made a layup to give the Jennies a 23-22 lead.

They pushed that lead to four at the halftime break as they held Ashland to a season low, 31 points in the first half and went into the break leading 35-31.

"Tonight I wish the ball bounced our way a few more times, but it didn't and that's the way the game goes," head coach Robyn Fralick said. "So it's this bittersweet feeling because I'm so proud of them and what they've been able to do over such a long period of time."

The third quarter saw much of the same from both teams as the Eagles could not solve the puzzle of the 2-3 zone defense of Central Missouri and could not get the lead back.

The Jennies charged forward and hit big shot after big shot, bringing their lead to 49-44 heading into the final quarter of play.

The defending champions got the deficit all the way down to just

55-52 with 2:21 left to play, but they could not get over the hump.

"What we've relied on all season was the team and whether it was to me or to Andi or any of the other girls we've always relied on the team," Snyder said. "I think that's something that we stuck to, to the very end. We came up short tonight."

Megan Skaggs went down the floor and layed it in to push the lead back to five and the Jennies crowd could feel what was about to happen.

After multiple failed desperation shots the Eagles resorted to fouling and free throws and open runouts sealed the win for Central Missouri as they handed Ashland their first loss in over two years, and snap the longest winning streak in Division II history.

The Jennies closed the game on an 11-0 run.

"Big congratulations to Central Missouri," head coach Robyn Fralick said. "I thought they played great on the big night. What talked about it in locker room after the game was, one game does not define us. The things that are purpose are bigger than winning and losing. My hope is my team can hold on to that."

On the season, Ashland has averaged nearly 25 points per quarter, but tonight the Jennies held AU to just 24 in the second and third combined and just eight in the fourth.

The last time the Eagles were held to this few number of points came on March 12, 2016 when they scored 60 points against Drury in what happened to be the last time they lost a game.

Laina Snyder and Andi Daugherty finished their Ashland career as two of the best to put on the Purple and Gold Uniforms. They now make up two-thirds of the top three on the all-time scoring list with Snyder at No. 1.

"I'm not going to think of this game," Daugherty said about how she will remember her four years. "I'm gonna think of the pregame dance parties and the amount of time I spent cornrowing Renee's hair the past two years. I am going to remember my teammates, period."

Snyder had 16 points and nine rebounds in her final outing while Daugherty chipped in six points and four rebounds.

Renee Stimpert had 10 points on 4-15 shooting while also grabbing five boards and dishing out seven assists.

Central Missouri did everything in its power to limit Ashland and they succeeded in a way that no other team has done in the past two years.

Redmond led the way for the Jennies with 22 points on 8-13 shooting. Megan Skaggs had 13 points,

while Kayonna Lee had eight points and 11 rebounds.

But perhaps one of the biggest keys for the Jennies was senior guard Kelsey Williams who was able to handle the basketball and break Ashland's pressure while scoring ten points and dishing out five assists earning her a spot on the All Tournament team.

"It's something incredible," Williams said. "I feel like I left it all out there. These last two years with these girls have been nothing but everything that I have ever dreamed of. Life couldn't be better right now."

For Ashland, Snyder and Daugherty were named to the All-Tournament team for the second season in a row.

This marks the close of an era that will not soon be forgotten, not just for what these women accomplished on the court but the impact they were able to have on the community and everyone they encountered.

"I tell my girls, being good at basketball doesn't make you a role model, but being good at basketball does give you a platform to impact and I'm proud of them because if they've impacted in so many, so many ways," Fralick said.

"We talked about it after the game in the locker room," Daugherty said. "When you look back on the season, I hope people don't remember this game. I hope they remember just the love that we have for one another and the purpose we played with, which is to glorify God in heaven, and we left it all on the court tonight."



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Ashland scored a women's college basketball record 3,644 points this season and finished ranked No. 2 in the final rankings.



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Jodi Johnson was named the National Player of the Year as just a sophomore for the Eagles.