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Eagles Trek to West Lafayette for Second Road Battle of the Year

Saturday, Dec. 7, 2013 » 2 p.m. » Mackey Arena (14,264) » West Lafayette, Ind.



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YPSILANTI, Mich. (EMUEagles.com) - After dropping a pair of games to nationally-ranked foes in its last two contests, the Eastern Michigan University men's basketball team will hit the road to take on a familiar foe for Head Coach [Rob Murphy](#) and his squad. The Eagles came up short in 69-57 a decision to the No. 21/22-ranked Minutemen of the University of Massachusetts, Dec. 3, and will now head to West Lafayette, Ind. for a 2 p.m. game with Purdue University at Mackey Arena. Coach Murphy has squared off with Purdue Head Coach Matt Painter in each of his first two seasons at the helm of the EMU men's basketball program, with each of the esteemed head men taking one of the first two contests. Eastern won last season's tango, 47-44, Dec. 8, 2012, at the Convocation Center.

After shooting 57.7 percent from the field in the first half against UMass, the Eagles built a four-point lead going into the half. EMU would only muster 8-of-32 shooting in the final 20 minutes of play as the Minutemen outscored the Eagles 38-22 in the second half. [Karrington Ward](#) and [Daylen Harrison](#) each recorded 11 points to lead the Eagles in scoring while [Da'Shonte Riley](#) recorded 10 points, grabbed nine rebounds and blocked five shots. Eastern struggled from the free-throw line throughout the contest, only shooting 36.8 percent (7-of-19).

FINDING THE GAME AT HOME: The Eagles' contest with the Boilermakers will hit the airwaves of 89.1 FM (WEMU). In addition to the WEMU broadcast, the game will be available for fans to watch on ESPN3 or by using the WatchESPN app for mobile devices.

Veteran "Voice of the Eagles" Chad Bush will serve as EMU's play-by-play announcer and [Sean Hostetter](#) will handle the analyst duties for the WEMU broadcast. Mike Couzens will cover the action for ESPN, with former Furman University Head Men's Basketball Coach Jeff Jackson serving as the analyst.

WHAT'S TO COME: Following its contest with Purdue, the Green and White return to the Convocation Center for its final home contest of the 2013 calendar year. The Eagles will square off with Green Bay Tuesday, Dec. 10, for a 7 p.m. game. Following the tilt with the Phoenix, Eastern will play three road contests before returning to Ypsilanti, Jan. 4, 2014, for a game with Rochester College.

ALL-TIME AGAINST THE BOILERMAKERS: The Eagles are trailing the all-time series with Purdue, 1-3, in the history of these programs. Eastern's only win came last season, when the Green and White hosted the Big Ten opponent.

Saturday's contest will be the fifth between the two universities and the fourth played at Mackey Arena in West Lafayette, Ind., with the first contest between the two squads coming back in the 1971-72 season.

The Boilermakers recorded a 94-84 win, Dec. 4, 1971, in a game played at Mackey Arena in West Lafayette, Ind. George Gervin led the then-Hurons with 35 points and 11 rebounds while Earl Dixon added 25 points and 13 rebounds. Purdue was paced in that game by William Franklin with 25 while Dennis Gamauf and Frank Kendrick added 13 each and Bob Ford scored 12.

LETS PLAY THE REPEATER: Eastern Michigan held off Purdue University, 47-44, Saturday, Dec. 8, at the Convocation Center. The Eagles' victory over Purdue was the first time they topped a Big Ten Conference opponent since an 89-83 overtime win against the University of Michigan, Dec. 17, 1997, in Ann Arbor. The win was the first home victory over a Big Ten team since a 92-76 throttling of No. 14-ranked Wisconsin, Dec. 10, 1994 at venerable Bowen Field House.

As a team, Eastern Michigan shot 17-of-55 (30.9 percent) for the game and 5-of-18 (27.8 percent) from long distance. Following a 0-for-8 mark from three-point range in the opening 20

minutes, EMU caught fire to the tune of a 5-of-10 effort in the second half. [Derek Thompson](#) had a pair of those three-pointers and led the Eagles in scoring with eight points. Saturday's win was truly a team effort as all 10 players that saw action scored at least two points. [Daylen Harrison](#) hauled in 11 boards and added four points. EMU also won the turnover battle, forcing 18 Purdue turnovers while making just five of its own. The Eagles also picked the Boilermakers' pockets 11 times, with nine players turning in at least one steal. Da'Shote Riley and [Glenn Bryant](#) each posted a pair of blocks on the afternoon.

ROAD WOES: Eastern hits the road for the second time this season when it heads to Purdue. Since [Rob Murphy](#) took over as the head coach of the Eagles, the team has struggled on the road. Overall, Murphy's teams are 7-26 on the road in his first three seasons. In non-conference play, the Green and White holds a 2-15 record away from the Convocation Center.

Murphy is looking for his team to answer the call and win on the road for the first time in non-conference play by topping one of its next four-of-five opponents. The Green and White will take on Purdue, Oakland, Duke and Syracuse on the road in the next three weeks.

Last season, the Eagles' first road win came late in the season, Feb. 16, to be exact, when the Green and White traveled to Muncie, Ind. for a contest with Ball State. EMU was a 56-50 victor at John E. Worthen Arena.

A TALE OF TWO HALVES: The EMU men's hoops squad showed off why it was on such a tear to start the season in the opening half of its game against Massachusetts, Dec. 3. The Eagles shot 57.7 percent in the first 20 minutes, while knocking down 40.0 percent of their three-point shots. EMU also held the high-powered Minutemen offense to just 31 points in the first half. Heading into the half with a four-point lead was when things turned sour for EMU.

The Green and White shot a dismal 25.0 percent from the floor in the second half, going just 8-of-32 from the floor. The Eagles hit just 2-of-9 three-point attempts, good for a 22.2 percent clip.

EMU's poor shooting continued at the charity stripe throughout the entire game. The Green and White hit just 36.8 percent of its free throws after knocking down 7-of-19.

LOOKING FOR HIS FIRST: Since becoming the Head Men's Basketball Coach at Eastern Michigan [Rob Murphy](#) has gone 0-6 against nationally ranked opponents. Last season, he fell in three contests to then-No. 4-ranked Syracuse, No. 2 Michigan and No. 23 Kentucky, while also losing to No. 4 Syracuse in 2011-12. This year, EMU has fallen twice to top-25 competition. Eastern Michigan first fell to No. 3-ranked Kentucky, before dropping a contest with No. 21 Massachusetts. The Eagles could reverse that trend this season as they have two more teams on the 2013-14 schedule that are currently ranked in the AP Top 25.

LOOK AT THE THREE-DEEP: Eastern Michigan has a dynamic scoring trio in [Glenn Bryant](#), [Raven Lee](#) and [Karrington Ward](#) this season. Ward is leading the way posting 15.3 points per contest, while Lee is scoring 13.4 and Bryant has scored 10.2 points a game, respectively. This is the first time since the 2009-10 season that the Green and White have had three Eagles average double-digit scoring. That season, Carlos Medlock led the way, posting

16.9 points per game, while Brandon Bowdry and Justin Dobbins notched 16.3 and 12.1 points per contest in 32 total games.

STRONG START FOR THE MAC THIS SEASON: The Mid-American Conference has more teams ranked in the CollegeInsider.com Top 25 than any other mid-major conference: (Toledo (No. 8), Kent State (No. 15), Akron (No. 16) and Ohio (No. 18)). The conference not only has four teams ranked in the poll, but a pair of teams, Eastern Michigan and Western Michigan, are each receiving votes. The West Coast Conference has the next most with three, while the Missouri Valley, Ohio Valley, Ivy League, Colonial League and Horizon League each have a pair of teams ranked. There are eight other conferences that have teams ranked in the mid-major poll.

DEEP GREEN SEA: Head Coach [Rob Murphy](#) has the luxury of being "too deep". Murphy has 11 players that he feels could start on any given day for the Green and White. So far this season, the Detroit, Mich. native has played 10 different student-athletes for at least 10 minutes per game, including eight that have seen at least 16 minutes of action per contest.

COMFORTABLE AT THE CONVO: Under Head Coach [Rob Murphy](#), the EMU basketball team has been comfortable opening up the season inside the friendly confines of the Convocation Center. Throughout the past three seasons. Since Murphy has taken over the EMU program, he holds a 27-10 record inside the Convocation Center.

DEFYING MURPHY'S LAW: Although defense has been Head Coach [Rob Murphy's](#) philosophy since he stepped foot on the campus of Eastern Michigan, the 2013-14 basketball team seems to be showing the third-year head coach that it might be able to win games on the offensive side of the ball as well. Since coming to Ypsilanti, Murphy's squads have averaged 53.2 and 56.6 points per game, respectively. On the other side of the ball, Murphy's Eagles have allowed just 58.7 and 59.1 points per contest in those two seasons. After seven games this season, the Eagles are averaging 73.7 points on the offensive side, while allowing just 63.9 points on the defensive side. It seems as though these Eagles are embracing the defensive philosophy while exploding on the other side of the court as well.

EMU FOR THREE!: Eastern's offense has clicked on all cylinders in its first seven contests. The Eagles have knocked down 36 three-pointers in their first three games of the season, but what is more impressive is that they are shooting second-best in the MAC at 39.5 percent from beyond the arc.

DROPPIN' DIMES: The Eagles had struggled the last few seasons to find the open man, but 2013-14 has been a different story. The Green and White is averaging 14 assists per game this season, compared to last season when they notched 10.7 per tilt. Missing a true point guard the last two seasons, it seems [Mike Talley](#) has emerged as the 2013-14 floor general for EMU dishing out 3.6 assists per game, while [Darell Combs](#) posts 2.4 and [Raven Lee](#) averages 1.7.

KINETIC KARRINGTON: Eastern Michigan's new wingman, [Karrington Ward](#), is currently leading the Eagles in scoring after the first four games of the season with 15.3 points a game, while also pulling down a team-best 5.9 rebounds per game. The junior college transfer also

posted the first double-double for an Eagle this season when he pulled down 12 rebounds and poured in 18 points against Robert Morris, Nov. 14. Ward has become a human highlight reel at EMU, as the two-time junior college All-American has shown his versatility to the fans by dunking, draining threes, rebounding and swiping the ball from the opposition.

SEND IN THE SWAT TEAM: Eastern Michigan's defensive prowess is what has allowed the team to be successful the last few years. That stealthy defense includes their shot blocking ability. In its first seven games, EMU has blocked 65 shots, the second most in the nation, while they average 9.3 per contest which is the third-best in the country.

[Da'Shonte Riley](#) has led that defensive block party. The senior who transferred from Syracuse just two seasons ago has racked up 32 blocks already this season. The Detroit, Mich. native is also earning his spot in the EMU record books. The seven-footer has blocked 128 shots in his career, good for the third-most in EMU history. He is 39 shy of [Jamell Harris](#), while he trails the all-time leader Theron Wilson by a wide margin. Wilson finished his career with 257 rejections. Riley, however, has only played just over one and a half seasons for the Green and White, while Wilson appeared on the EMU roster for four seasons (1992-96). Riley holds down the No. 3 spot in the country with his 4.6 per game this season, trailing just Khem Birch of UNLV and Chris Obekpa from Saint John's.

[Glenn Bryant](#) has been no slouch at turning away the opposition. He is averaging 2.8 blocks per contest, good for the 34th-most in the nation. His 61 career blocks rank him as the 14th-best shot blocker in EMU history.

IT AIN'T NO THING: After starting 30-of-34 games last season for EMU, senior [Glenn Bryant](#) finds himself coming off the bench for [Rob Murphy](#)'s squad. However, Bryant has embraced the role from the bench, doing whatever he can to help the team win.

Despite not starting the game on the floor Bryant is averaging 10.2 points a game, good for the third most on this highly explosive offensive attack from the Eagles.