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Eagles and Blue Devils to Appear on ESPN2 Saturday Afternoon

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2013 » 2:05 p.m. » Cameron Indoor Stadium (9,314) » Durham, N.C.



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YPSILANTI, Mich. (EMUEagles.com) - The Eastern Michigan University men's basketball team will square off with No. 9/9 Duke University Saturday, Dec. 28, for the first time since the 1995-96 season when EMU topped the Blue Devils, 75-60, in an NCAA Tournament game in Indianapolis, Ind. The Eagles were the ninth seed in the Southeast region and defeated the No. 8 seeded Blue Devils before falling to the No. 1 seeded Huskies of Connecticut, 95-81, in the second round of that tournament.

CLOSING OUT THE YEAR: Eastern Michigan continues its road trip to end the 2013 calendar year with games against a pair of Associated Press and USA Today Top-10 programs. The Eagles will square off with No. 9/9-ranked Duke University Saturday, Dec. 28, at 2 p.m. in

Durham, N.C. before heading to upstate New York to take on the No. 2/2-ranked Orange of Syracuse University in a New Year's Eve clash at the Carrier Dome Tuesday, Dec. 31, at 3 p.m. Both games will be nationally televised on the ESPN family of networks. The contest at Cameron Indoor Stadium will be aired on ESPN2, while the game with Syracuse can be viewed on ESPNU. Both tilts will be streamed online via the WatchESPN app or ESPN3.

FINDING THE GAME AT HOME: The Eagles' contest with the Blue Devils will hit the airwaves of 89.1 FM (WEMU). In addition to the WEMU broadcast, the game will be televised on ESPN2.

Veteran "Voice of the Eagles" Chad Bush will serve as EMU's play-by-play announcer for the WEMU broadcast. On ESPN2, Rich Hollenberg will do play-by-play while Len Elmore will serve as the game's analyst.

WHAT'S TO COME: Following its contest with Duke, the Green and White will complete the 2013 calendar season with its final non-conference road game of the year, which will not be a cake walk for the Eagles. EMU will head out of Michigan to Syracuse, N.Y. for a New Year's Eve battle with the No. 2/2 Orange of Syracuse, Dec. 31.

ALL-TIME AGAINST DUKE: The Eagles and Blue Devils have only met on the hardwood one time prior to the Dec. 28 contest. EMU won that game, 75-60, which was played in Indianapolis, Ind. at the RCA Dome as part of the 1996 NCAA Tournament. It was March 14, 1996 when these two teams squared off at the RCA dome in the first round of the "Big Dance". The Duke Blue Devils entered the game seeded No. 8 while the Ben Braun led Eagles of Eastern Michigan were seeded No. 9. Playing before a crowd of 31,373 along with a national television audience, the Eastern backcourt tandem of Earl Boykins (23 points) and Brian Tolbert (20) dominated, while Derrick Dial added 12 up front to lead the Eagles to a 75-60 decision in the first round. EMU however lost to the No. 1-seed in the Southeast region, Connecticut, 95-81, in the second round of that NCAA Tournament appearance.

TALLEY TEARS UP OAKLAND AT THE O'RENA: Redshirt-junior guard [Mike Talley](#) had a breakout performance in the 81-79 victory at Oakland, Dec. 21. The Detroit, Mich. native posted career-highs in both points (21) and assists (9). He also picked the Golden Grizzlies' pockets a pair of times, all while having zero turnovers in the contest. The performance earned Talley the distinction of being named the week's College Madness MAC Player of the Week.

PROTECTING THE ROCK: In the win over Oakland, Dec. 21, the Green and White turned the ball over a season low five times, which is the least amount in a single game since Feb. 6, 2013, when the Eagles coughed up the rock just four times in a 65-46 win over Buffalo at the Convocation Center. The 2013-14 EMU squad is turning the ball over at an 11.7 per game clip, which is over two turnovers less than the previous two seasons under Head Coach [Rob Murphy](#).

A lot of that ball protection has come by way of [Mike Talley](#) who leads the Mid-American Conference in assist/turnover ratio at 2.7.

A WIN ON THE ROAD: Wins on the road are hard to come by at the NCAA Division I ranks. The Eagles did just that Saturday, Dec. 21, with their victory at Oakland. It was EMU's first road win of the year and the first time it defeated Oakland at the O'rena since Nov. 14, 2009.

AT THE TOP OF THE MAC: The Eagles are leading the esteemed Mid-American Conference in multiple categories this season. EMU posts the best field goal percentage defense (36.7 percent), most blocked shots (7.6 bpg) and greatest turnover margin (+4.8). EMU ranks second in scoring defense (65.3 ppg), steals (8.4 spg), and third in three-point field goal percentage (35.8 percent), assists (13.4 apg) and scoring margin (+7.5).

Individually, [Da'Shonte Riley](#) leads the way in blocks, averaging 3.8 per contest, while [Glenn Bryant](#) is fourth, turning away 2.4 per game. [Karrington Ward's](#) 15.4 points per game is good for the fifth-best in the MAC and Bryant is hitting 60.7 percent of his shots which is the second highest percentage in the conference. Additionally, [Mike Talley](#) has an assist/turnover ratio of 2.7, which is the best in the MAC.

ALL-TIME AGAINST THE ATLANTIC COAST: When facing teams who are currently in the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), the Green and White has posted a dismal record of 3-9 through 12 contests. EMU has defeated three different teams in the ACC. Those schools are Duke, Pittsburgh and Syracuse. EMU has never played any ACC team more than three times in the history of the men's basketball program.

65 OR BUST: The Eagles seem to have found a magic number that they need to strive for this season. The Eagles are 7-0 when they score 65-or-more points this season. In their three losses they have not been able to eclipse that mark. Eastern scored 63 versus Kentucky, 57 in the setback to UMass and 64 in the game with Purdue.

ROAD TRIP: Eastern hits the road for two more contests and will not return to Ypsilanti and the Convocation Center until its Jan. 4, 2014 matchup with Rochester College.

IN THE NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT: Eastern Michigan has a pair of big time games on coming up. EMU's games with No. 9/9 Duke, Dec. 28, and No. 2/2 Syracuse, Dec. 31, will both be televised on the national scale. The contest with the Blue Devils will be aired on ESPN2, with the tip-off slated for 2 p.m. Following their game with the Dukies, the Eagles will square off with the Orange on New Year's Eve at 1 p.m. and that game will be available nationally on ESPNU

A LONG DECEMBER: Head Coach [Rob Murphy](#) has not had much luck in the month of

December since taking over the reins of the men's basketball team at EMU. So far this season, the third-year head coach is 2-2. In all three seasons as the head man, Murphy's teams have struggled, posting just a 5-12 record over the past three seasons. In 2011-12 Murphy managed a 1-6 record in the final month of the calendar year, while he went just 2-4 last season.

HAPPY AT HOME: The Eagles have enjoyed much success within the friendly confines of the Convocation Center this season. With a 6-1 record, EMU has shot 46.8 percent from the floor, while hitting 42.2 percent of its shots from three-point land. Eastern is scoring 74.3 points per contest, while holding its opponents to 60.6 points per game.

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 28-10 record inside the Convocation Center.

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 76 shots and they average 7.6 per contest which is the fourth-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 38 blocks already this season. The Detroit, Mich. native is also earning his spot in the EMU record books. The seven-footer has blocked 134 shots in his career, good for the third-most in Eastern Michigan history. He is 33 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. 7 spot in the country with his 3.8 per game this season.

[Glenn Bryant](#) has been no slouch at turning away the opposition. He is averaging 2.4 blocks per contest, good enough to be tied for the 42nd-most in the nation. His 66 career blocks have him tied with John Bowler as the 12th-best shot blocker in EMU history.

ROAD WOES: Since [Rob Murphy](#) took over as the head coach of the Eagles, the team has struggled on the road. Overall, Murphy's teams are 8-27 on the road in his first three seasons. In non-conference play, the Green and White holds a 3-16 record away from the Convocation Center.

CHECK THE SPECIALTY STATS: The Eagles are averaging 29.0 points per game in the paint, 26.7 points off the bench, 18.3 points per game off turnovers, 10.4 second-chance points

and 10.2 fast break points per game.

BENCH WORK: The Eagles' bench is providing 26.7 points per game through the first nine contests. Those 27.6 points per game account for 36.7 percent of the Green and White's scoring this season.

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.

DEEP GREEN SEA: Head Coach [Rob Murphy](#) has the luxury of being "too deep". Murphy has 10 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 14 minutes of action per contest.

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 eight games this season, the Eagles are averaging 72.8 points on the offensive side, while allowing just 65.3 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 10 contests. The Eagles have knocked down 54 three-pointers in their first nine games of the season, but what is more impressive is that they are shooting third-best in the MAC at 35.8 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 13.4 assists per game this season, which is tied for third in the conference, 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 4.0 assists per game, while [Darell Combs](#) posts 2.2 and [Raven Lee](#) averages 1.8.

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 15.4 points a game, while also pulling down a team-best 6.2 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.

JUST A STONE'S THROW AWAY: Eastern embarked on its second shortest road trip of the 2013-14 season Saturday, Dec. 21, when it travels to Oakland University in Rochester, Mich. It is just a 52.1 mile trek from the Convocation Center to Athletics Center O'rena. The shortest jaunt for the Eagles this season is not much closer, but when the Eagles head to Savage Arena to take on Toledo, they will travel just 48.5 miles south.

AGAINST MICHIGAN SCHOOLS: In their 117-year history, the Eagles have squared off with all six current NCAA Division I institutions, seeing Central Michigan the most times. Overall, the Green and White hold a 164-274 record against those teams, which include Central Michigan, Detroit, Michigan, Michigan State, Oakland and Western Michigan.