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Eagles Head to Mount Pleasant for MAC West Battle

Saturday, Jan. 18, 2014 » 7 p.m. » McGuirk Arena (5,300) » Mount Pleasant, Mich.



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YPSILANTI, Mich. (EMUEagles.com) -- After topping Western Michigan University in a decisive 56-37 win at the Convocation Center Tuesday evening, Jan. 14, the Eastern Michigan University men's basketball team will hit the road again for a Mid-American Conference tilt with another in-state rival Saturday, Jan. 18. The Green and White travel a few hours north to Mount Pleasant, Mich. for a matchup with Central Michigan University. Tip-off is slated for 7 p.m. at McGuirk Arena.

BRYANT MAKES THE #SCTop10 WITH HIS THUNDEROUS THROW DOWN: With 13 minutes to go in the first half of EMU's win over Western Michigan, Jan. 14, [Glenn Bryant](#) poked away a pass on the perimeter and raced alone toward the other end of the court. When he and WMU freshman Tucker Haymond met at the other basket, Bryant rose above him and threw down a one-handed dunk that sent the Convocation Center in a frenzy. ESPN's Sportscenter soon picked up the highlight on its Twitter feed, saying Bryant channeled Blake Griffin with the dunk. The play came in at No. 4 on the show's Top 10 plays that night. [Watch the Dunk.](#)

FINDING THE GAME AT HOME: The Eagles' contest with the Chippewas will hit the airwaves of 89.1 FM (WEMU). In addition to the WEMU broadcast, the game will be streamed on a web-based service by the CMU Media Relations office. The stream is a pay-per-view service that can be found at [CMUChippewas.com](#).

Veteran "Voice of the Eagles" **Chad Bush** will serve as EMU's play-by-play announcer for the WEMU broadcast,

while [Sean Hostetter](#) will handle the analyst duties for the Saturday evening contest.

ALL-TIME AGAINST THE CHIPPEWAS: The Eagles are behind in the series with Central Michigan, 87-98, and CMU is Eastern's most common opponent since starting varsity basketball in 1897-98. Since taking over the EMU basketball program, [Rob Murphy](#) has seen Central on four different occasions, winning just one of them. That win came Jan. 15, 2013, with a 58-52 victory last season.

In the last matchup between these two teams, they squared off at McGuirk Arena, March 5, 2013. That game saw the Eagles on the losing side of a 61-59 decision. Eastern (14-16; 7-8 MAC) was led offensively by [Derek Thompson](#) with 14 points, while [Glenn Bryant](#) had 13 and [Daylen Harrison](#) posted 12. Bryant led EMU on the glass, pulling down seven rebounds while Harrison and [Da'Shonte Riley](#) each had five caroms. As a team, Eastern shot 25-of-54 (46.3 percent) from the floor, while hitting 6-of-16 (37.5 percent) from beyond the arc. EMU also out-rebounded the Chippewas, 36-24, in the loss.

MURPHY VERSUS THE MAC: Third-year Head Men's Basketball Coach [Rob Murphy](#) holds a 18-17 all-time record against Mid-American Conference opponents in his third MAC season. The Detroit, Mich. native won the MAC-West Division Title in 2011-12 during his first season as the head man at EMU, before going 7-9 last season. Murphy and his squads have seen most of their success against teams from their own divisions, going 13-8, while they are just 5-9 against the East Division which Murphy looks to improve during the 2013-14 season.

TRY FOR 20: The Eastern Michigan defense has been quite stingy, as usual, this season. Overall, the Green and White has held its opponents to less than 20 points in a single half on four separate occasions. The Eagles opened up the season by allowing just 11 points to Albion in the first 20 minutes, Nov. 8, before holding Concordia to 17 points in the first half, Nov. 12. Next the EMU defense held the then-No. 12-ranked mid-major program, Green Bay, to just 18 points in the opening frame, Dec. 10. Finally, Western Michigan scored just 14 points in the first half of the Jan. 14 contest.

THAT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME: Eastern Michigan held Western Michigan to just 37 points in the 19-point victory, Jan. 14. That is the lowest point total by an EMU opponent since the Eagles held Northern Illinois to just 25 points last season, Jan. 26, 2013. In fact, since [Rob Murphy](#) took over the EMU men's basketball program, he has been able to hold teams to 50 points or less three times.

TRY AND HIT ONE: The Eagles held Western Michigan to just four field goal makes in the first half of the 56-37 win at the Convocation Center, Jan. 14. That is the fewest field goals allowed to an NCAA Division I team since the Green and White held Northern Illinois to just one field goal in the opening 20 minutes last season, Jan. 26, 2013.

THE ORDER OF THE THIEVES: Eastern is currently averaging 9.1 steals per game which is not only the most in the Mid-American Conference but that number is also the 15th most at the NCAA Division I level. So far this season, the Green and White has picked the opposition's pocket 10-or-more times in six different games, including a season-high 18 in the Eagles' 56-37 win over Western Michigan, Jan. 14. Those 18 steals are the most since EMU stripped Davidson 18 times during the 2006 season, Nov. 10.

HARRISON'S HIGHWAY ROBBERY: Senior forward [Daylen Harrison](#) was extremely stealthy in the EMU win over Western Michigan, picking up a team-high five of the Green and White's 18 steals. That number is not only a career-high for the Akron, Ohio native, but the most steals by a single EMU hoopster since fellow senior [J.R. Sims](#) swiped the ball away from Bowling Green five times last season, Jan. 12, 2013.

PUTTING A PRETZEL IN YOUR HEAD: The Eastern Michigan 2-3 zone defense has really perplexed offenses

since [Rob Murphy](#) implemented it prior to the 2011-12 season. A perfect example of this is when the Green and White forced Western Michigan into 26 turnovers, Jan. 14. Those 26 miscues are the most EMU has forced since the Green and White forced Davidson into 32 turnovers, Nov. 10, 2006.

NEVER SCARED: Outside of the tough Mid-American Conference schedule that EMU drew this season, the Eagles did not shy away from playing top notch competition. According to ESPN.com's rankings the Eagles own the 10th highest strength of schedule in the nation. Furthermore, CBSSports.com has the Green and White's strength of schedule as the fifth-highest in the country.

In addition to the EMU strength of schedule, the Eagles hold the 56th best RPI according to ESPN.com and the 52nd best by way of CBSSports.com. The Green and White look to use those numbers to their advantage come tournament time, as they try to make a push to the big dance.

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.

TRIPLE TROUBLE: Eastern Michigan has seen its three-point shooting percentage drop significantly over the past six games. Since EMU's win over Green Bay, Dec. 10, 2013, the Green and White has not shot better than 28.6 percent from beyond the arc, except for in one contest, and have shot just 24.8 percent from three-point land over that span.

GIVE ME SOME MORE #MACTION: Heading into the 2013-14 season, it was announced that the Mid-American Conference would be expanding its regular season. Instead of the previous 16-game schedule, the member institutions will now play an 18-game conference slate. In order to fill those extra two games, each team will another pair of cross-divisional contests. EMU's two extra games will be filled by Bowling Green and the 2013 MAC Tournament Champion, Akron.

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. To this point, EMU has blocked 99 shots and they average 6.2 per contest which is the 21st-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 47 blocks already this season. The Detroit, Mich. native is also earning his spot in the EMU record books. The seven-footer has blocked 143 shots in his career, good for the third-most in Eastern Michigan history. He is 24 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 tied in the No. 20 spot in the country with his three per game this season.

[Glenn Bryant](#) has been no slouch at turning away the opposition. He is averaging two blocks per contest. His 73 career blocks have him tied with **Tyson Radney** as the eighth-best shot blocker in EMU history.

THE QUICKEST HE'S GOTTEN TO 10: With the win in the Eagles' game with Western Michigan, EMU Head Coach [Rob Murphy](#) got his 10th win of the year in just 16 games which is much quicker than his first two seasons as the head man. In 2011-12 it took 21 games to get the 10th, while it took 20 last season.

FREE ONES STARTING TO FALL: After shooting 64.1 percent from the free throw line in the first 12 games of the season, the Green and White has started to get the feel from the charity stripe. Since the 12th game of the year, Eastern is knocking down 73 percent of their free ones, including a season-best 83.3 percent (15-of-18) in their road loss at Buffalo, Jan. 11.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION: After recording a 7-5 record during the 2013 portion of this season's schedule, Head Coach [Rob Murphy](#) hopes to post a much better record in the month of January than he did in the 2012-13 campaign. Last season's squad managed just a 3-5 record during the first month of the season last year. He is off to a 3-1 start after topping Rochester, 92-54, on Jan. 4, and defeating Bowling Green, 56-51, Jan. 8. His lone loss came to Buffalo, Jan. 11, in a 76-66 final.

TALLEY FINDS HIS GROOVE: After averaging just 6.5 points per game through the first eight games this season, [Mike Talley](#) has found his step offensively. Since that mark, the transfer has been posting 13.3 points per game, including a pair of 20-plus point performances and since double-digit scoring affairs.

DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE: Redshirt-freshman guard [Raven Lee](#) has shown some up-and-down play during the 2013-14 season. Lee scored in doubled figures in four out of the first five games this season, including a 38-point outburst against UT-Arlington, Nov. 23. Since that performance, the Detroit, Mich. native has not eclipsed the 20-point mark and has been in double figures just four times in 11 games.

ON THE ROAD THIS YEAR: Eastern Michigan has really struggled in games on the road this season. Overall, the Eagles are 2-5 away from Ypsilanti and are averaging just 62.4 points per contest, while allowing 72.6.

Individually, we have seen a dropoff in offensive production in EMU's two top-scorers away from home. Both [Karrington Ward](#) and [Raven Lee](#) average over 15 points per game inside the Convocation Center. However, when on the road, Ward notches just 11.1 points per contest, while Lee scores 7.0 points per tilt.

A BLOCK A DAY: Senior center [Da'Shonte Riley](#) has played in 69 career games for the Green and White. During that time, he has accumulated 143 blocks, which ranks as the third-most in EMU history. In 69 career games, the Detroit, Mich. native has swatted at least one shot in all but 17 contests. This season, he has recorded a block in all but three games, while he missed out in eight games last season and six during the 2011-12 season. Overall, he has managed to stuff the opponent at least once in 75.3 percent of the games he has appeared in for EMU.