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Eastern Michigan University

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Eagles Finish Homestand with Re-Match Versus Falcons

Wednesday, Jan. 29, 2014 » 7:06 p.m. » Convocation Center (8,874) » Ypsilanti, Mich.



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YPSILANTI, Mich. (EMUEagles.com) - After a pair of disappointing losses to MAC East foes, University of Akron and Ohio University, the Eastern Michigan University men's basketball team will attempt to right the ship Wednesday, Jan. 29, when it hosts Bowling Green State University in a re-match of the Eagles' conference-opening contest, Jan. 8. Eastern will welcome the Falcons into the Convocation Center for a 7 p.m. tip.

A SCARY SKID: The Green and White kicked off MAC play with an exciting 3-1 start after defeating Bowling Green, Western Michigan and Central Michigan in three of its first four contests. In their three MAC wins, the Eagles are holding their opposition to just 49 points per game. Conversely, in the losses, Eastern has surrendered 70.7 points per contest. Perhaps the most surprising thing about the conference losses is that two of them have come inside the Convocation Center where the Eagles have generally been very successful. In fact, Eastern went 8-1 in the non-conference portion of the schedule. The only loss at the Convocation Center came against nationally-ranked Massachusetts.

FINDING THE GAME AT HOME: The Eagles' contest with the Falcons will hit the airwaves of 89.1 FM (WEMU). In addition to the WEMU broadcast, fans can follow the game online via Eagle All-Access. All-Access is a live web stream available over the internet and can be viewed for a small fee. Subscriptions start at just \$6.95.

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 Wednesday evening contest.

ALL-TIME AGAINST THE FALCONS: The Eagles are behind in the series with Bowling Green as Eastern trails by a tally of 47-39, while the Falcons own that cushy nine game lead in the history of these programs. In their most recent tango, the Green and White got the best of Bowling Green, topping the Falcons, 56-51, at the Stroh Center. It was EMU's first win over BGSU since the 2011-12 season, and it was the first time that Eastern got the best of the Falcons in Bowling Green, Ohio since the 2008-09 season.

Last game, point guard [Mike Talley](#) led the Eagles in scoring with 14 points while teammate [Karrington Ward](#) added 13 to go along with seven rebounds and a career-high four steals. [Glenn Bryant](#) pulled down a team-best eight boards and scored all nine of his points in the second half. As a team, the Green and White shot just 34.7 percent from the field (17-of-49), including one-of-seven from beyond the arc. However, the Eagles made up for their shooting at the charity stripe, sinking 21-of-30 for a 70 percent clip. Looking to get the ball inside, Eastern tallied 28 of its 56 points inside the paint.

MURPHY VERSUS THE MAC: Third-year Head Men's Basketball Coach [Rob Murphy](#) holds a 19-19 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 14-8, while they are just 5-11 against the East Division which Murphy looks to improve during the 2013-14 season.

IT'S A LOCKPORT THING: Junior college transfer [Karrington Ward](#) along with Richaun Holmes of Bowling Green played their high school ball at Lockport Township High School in Lockport, Ill. The duo played together for four years, while growing up as childhood friends. Both Ward and Holmes have blossomed into talented NCAA Division I basketball players. The two childhood friends lead their respective teams in scoring and in rebounds.

Not only did the two play together in high school, but the duo had similar roads to the Mid-American Conference. Both Holmes and Ward played junior college ball at Moraine Valley Community College. However, they did not play on the same squad as Ward spent his first year after high school at Kanakee Community College.

THE ROAD MOST TRAVELED?: Both Eastern Michigan's [Karrington Ward](#) and Richaun Holmes of Bowling Green most recently played at Moraine Valley Community College before joining the ranks of the MAC. In 2011-12, Holmes was an NJCAA DII All-American, an All-Region IV First-Team selection, an All-Region IV Tournament Team member, as well as being named the Skyway Conference Player of the Year. In the following season, Ward earned all of the same accolades, except he was named the All-Region IV Tournament MVP, rather than just to the All-Tournament team.

KEEPING THE BENCH AT BAY: In the Eagles' last contest with the Falcons, Jan. 8, the Green and White allowed four members of the BGSU squad to score in double-figures. However, the Eagles did a stellar job of keeping the players off of Bowling Green's bench at bay. In total, EMU allowed just one point to the bench players of BGSU.

DID THAT JUST HAPPEN?: The Eastern Michigan hoops squad seemed to have the game handled against Ohio, Jan. 25. The Eagles held a 13 point lead with 7:45 remaining in the contest. However, the Green and White saw that edge dwindle away through the final minutes as Ohio completed the game on a 20-5 run, taking what looked to be Eastern's fourth conference win of the season.

GETTING THE NOD: Senior forward [Anthony Strickland](#) earned his way into the starting lineup against Ohio, Jan.

25. The Ypsilanti, Mich. native made his first start of the 2013-14 season and the 6-foot-5 senior played a season-high 21 minutes. Coincidentally, it was also his first start since the Eagles last squared off with Ohio during the 2012-13 campaign.

CAN'T FIND THE RIGHT MIX: Head Coach [Rob Murphy](#) has been doing some tinkering with the starting lineup this season. So far, we have seen six different starting rotations, with the lineup of [Glenn Bryant](#), [Raven Lee](#), [Da'Shonte Riley](#), [Mike Talley](#) and [Karrington Ward](#) having the most starts (7).

THE ORDER OF THE THIEVES: Eastern is currently averaging 8.7 steals per game, which is not only the most in the Mid-American Conference but that number is also the 17th-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.

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 fifth highest strength of schedule in the nation. Furthermore, CBSSports.com has the Green and White's strength of schedule as the seventh-highest in the country.

In addition to the EMU strength of schedule, the Eagles hold the 64th-best RPI according to ESPN.com and ranked 60th 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.

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 13.2 points per game, including three 20-plus point performances and seven double-digit scoring affairs.

DEFENSIVE EXPERTISE: The EMU squad has shown that it is one of the elite defensive units in college basketball this season. According to the NCAA statistics as of Jan. 27, 2014, the Eagles rank 41st in scoring defense, allowing 64.1 ppg, while they're No. 19 in the country in blocks at 6.1 per contest. The Green and White was swiping the ball 8.7 times per game, ranking as the 18th-most steals per game, and holding teams to just a 30 percent three point field goal percentage, good for 33rd in the country. The Eagles' most impressive stat is that they are holding teams to a 37.3 field goal percentage. This number ranks as the sixth-best in the nation.

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.

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 72.6 percent of their free ones, including a season-best 83.3 percent (15-of-18) in its road loss at Buffalo, Jan. 11.

TRIPLE TROUBLE: Eastern Michigan has seen its three-point shooting percentage drop significantly over the past 10 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 has shot just 23.1 percent from three-point land over that

span.

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 115 shots and they average 6.1 per contest which is the 19th-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 57 blocks already this season. The Detroit, Mich. native is also earning his spot in the EMU record books. The seven-footer has blocked 153 shots in his career, good for the third-most in Eastern Michigan history. He is 14 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 two seasons for the Green and White, while Wilson appeared on the EMU roster for four seasons (1992-96). Riley is the No. 15 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 1.7 blocks per contest. His 73 career blocks have him tied with Tyson Radney as the eighth-best shot blocker in EMU history.

CHECK THE SPECIALTY STATS: The Eagles are averaging 29.3 points per game in the paint, 22.9 points off the bench, 17.4 points per game off turnovers, 9.6 second-chance points and 11.3 fast break points per game.