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Eagles Head to Akron for a Cross-Divisional Rematch

Wednesday, Feb. 5, 2014 » 7 p.m. » James A. Rhodes Arena (5,500) » Akron, Ohio



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YPSILANTI, Mich. (EMUEagles.com) - Following a disappointing, 65-61, loss on the road to Miami University, Feb. 1, the Eastern Michigan University men's basketball team continues its road schedule, Feb. 5, with another matchup against a Mid-American Conference East Division Foe, University of Akron. Eastern dropped a contest with Akron earlier this season when the Zips came into the Convocation Center and knocked off EMU, 78-68.

LOOKING FOR SOME REVENGE: The Eagles played host to Akron, Jan. 22, when the Zips came into the Convocation Center and walked away with a 78-68 win. The Green and White is looking to reverse the roles in the Feb. 5 matchup, as EMU will head into James A. Rhodes Arena in anticipation of coming away from the JAR with its third win of the season versus a MAC East opponent.

Since [Rob Murphy](#) took over as EMU's head coach, Eastern is 3-0 when losing the first of two regular season games versus its opponents. In 2011-12, the Eagles got revenge on Central Michigan, while they lost to Ball State and Western Michigan in their first go around in 2012-13. However, EMU was able to get vengeance against both the Cardinals and Broncos the next time they hit the hardwood.

FINDING THE GAME AT HOME: The Eagles' contest with the Zips will hit the airwaves of 89.1 FM (WEMU). In addition to the WEMU broadcast, the game will be televised on Time Warner Cable Sports, while also being available on ESPN3 and the WatchESPN app. Comcast Michigan will also carry the broadcast.

Veteran "Voice of the Eagles" Chad Bush will serve as EMU's play-by-play announcer for the WEMU broadcast, while Assistant Director of Athletic Media Relations, [Sean Hostetter](#), will handle the analyst duties for the Wednesday evening contest, while Michael Reghi and Tony White will be on the television broadcast for Time Warner Cable.

ALL-TIME AGAINST THE ZIPS: The Eagles are behind in the all-time series with Akron, 19-22. Since taking over the EMU basketball program, [Rob Murphy](#) has seen Akron on three different occasions and has yet to top the Zips. The Green and White dropped their last decision with the Zips, 78-68, earlier this season, Jan. 22. Akron is one-of-two MAC East teams that the Eagles will square off with two times, as they already saw Bowling Green twice this season.

The Eagles were led by [Karrington Ward](#), who put up 16 of his 20 points in the second half. The junior also finished with six rebounds, tied with [Da'Shonte Riley](#) for the team-high. Riley tied his career-high with seven blocks, notching all but one in the second 20 minutes of play. Also on the leaderboard offensively were [Darell Combs](#) and [Mike Talley](#), who contributed 12 and 10 points, respectively. Jake Kretzer was the catalyst for Akron, as he scored 25 points thanks in large part to seven three-pointers, while Demetrius Treadwell was a threat across the board, producing a double-double with 18 points and 11 rebounds.

MURPHY VERSUS THE MAC: Third-year Head Men's Basketball Coach [Rob Murphy](#) holds a 20-20 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 6-12 against the East Division which Murphy looks to improve during the 2013-14 season.

LEE GETS BACK TO HIS OLD WAYS: Redshirt-freshman [Raven Lee](#) had his best offensive showing, since he scored 38 points versus UT Arlington, tallying 18 points in the Eagles 65-61 loss to Miami, Feb. 1. After that game against the Mavericks, Nov. 23, 2013, Lee's points per game average steadily declined from an average of 18, down to 9.9 points per contest. Since that 38-point explosion, the Detroit, Mich. native has only broken the 15-point plateau twice, including his best, 18 points, which made him the Green and White's leading scorer in the loss to the RedHawks.

THAT'S QUITE THE IMPROVEMENT: EMU forward [Glenn Bryant](#) has improved heading into his final season donning the Green and White, but most notably his free throw shooting. A year ago, he shot just 64.7 percent from the charity stripe. This year he has hit 75.4 percent of his free ones.

IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE'VE SEEN THAT: Eastern was finally able to get things going from beyond the arc versus Miami, Saturday, Feb. 1, when they shot a cool 41.7 percent from three point land. That was the first time broke the 40 percent mark, not to mention shooting better than 33.3 percent, since they defeated Green Bay 12 games ago, Dec. 10, 2013. EMU shot at a 42.9 percent clip in the 67-58 win over Green Bay.

MILLETT CONTINUES TO PLAGUE THE EAGLES: The 2013-14 EMU men's hoops squad was unable to turn the tide at Millett Hall in Oxford, Ohio after a 65-61 loss to the Miami RedHawks, Feb. 1. An Eastern Michigan men's basketball team has not won in Millett since the 1995-96 season when the Green and White knocked off the RedHawks, 73-60, Jan. 24, 1996. The 1995-96 Eagles team won the 1996 Mid-American Conference Tournament Championship before knocking off legendary basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski and his Duke Blue Devils in the first round of that season's NCAA Tournament.

KENT STATE ON THE HORIZON: Eastern Michigan has Kent State on the schedule for its next contest. The Green and White will host Head Coach [Rob Murphy](#)'s former employer Saturday, Feb. 8, at the Convocation Center. Murphy

is 0-2 versus the Golden Flashes in his career and the Eagles have not been able to defeat Kent State in the last 17 times they have met on the hardwood.

A TOUR OF THE EAST: The Green and White is in a current six-game streak of playing teams from the MAC East. So far it has not boded well for the Eagles, as they are 1-3 versus those opponents. EMU will complete its schedule against MAC East opponents Saturday, Feb. 8, when it takes on Kent State, following its rematch with the Zips of Akron, Feb. 5, at James A. Rhodes Arena.

RETURNING TO THE TOP ROTATION: Head Coach [Rob Murphy](#) has been doing some tinkering with the starting lineup this season. So far, we have seen six different starting rotations, but it seems as though Murphy has decided to go back to his original 2013-14 starting lineup of [Daylen Harrison](#), [Raven Lee](#), [Da'Shonte Riley](#), [Mike Talley](#) and [Karrington Ward](#). That lineup has gone 4-4 this season. However, three of those losses came against teams that play in high major conferences, including 3/4 Kentucky, No. 21/22 Massachusetts and Purdue.

FEARING THESE FOUR: For the first time since the 2004-05 season, Eastern has four of its student-athletes averaging 10-or-more points this season. Currently, [Glenn Bryant](#) (11.0 ppg), [Raven Lee](#) (10.3 ppg), [Mike Talley](#) (10.2 ppg) and [Karrington Ward](#) (13.4 ppg) are averaging double-digit point totals. The members of the 2004-05 team that posted double-digit point totals were **Markus Austin** (13.8 ppg), **John Bowler** (13.0 ppg), **Darryl Garrett** (11.9 ppg) and **Michael Ross** (10.6 ppg).

THE ORDER OF THE THIEVES: Eastern is currently averaging 8.8 steals per game, which is not only the most in the Mid-American Conference but that number is also tied for the 16th-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 seven 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 24th highest strength of schedule in the nation. Furthermore, CBSSports.com has the Green and White's strength of schedule as the 28th-highest in the country.

In addition to the EMU strength of schedule, the Eagles hold the 82nd-best RPI according to ESPN.com and ranked 76th 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.

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. 31, 2014, the Eagles rank 39th in scoring defense, allowing 63.8 ppg, while they're No. 17 in the country in blocks at 6.1 per contest. The Green and White was swiping the ball 8.8 times per game, which is tied for the 16th-most steals per game, and holding teams to just a 30.2 percent three point field goal percentage, good for 35th in the country. The Eagles' most impressive stat is that they are holding teams to a 37.2 field goal percentage. This number ranks as the fifth-best in the nation.