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Eastern Michigan University

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## Eastern Set to Host Kent State in Final Cross-Divisional Matchup

Saturday, Feb. 8, 2014 » 2:04 p.m. » Convocation Center (8,874) » Ypsilanti, Mich.



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**YPSILANTI, Mich. (EMUEagles.com)** - After going just 2-5 in games versus the Mid-American Conference East Division this season, the Eastern Michigan University men's basketball team will square off with Kent State University Saturday, Feb. 8, at 2 p.m. in the final EMU hoops game against a MAC East foe. The game will serve as [Rob Murphy](#)'s third crack at defeating the Golden Flashes.

**A LATE RUN SINKS EMU:** The Eagles dropped a 52-48 decision to the University of Akron Wednesday, Feb. 5, on the road in Akron, Ohio. EMU led from the first bucket until there was just 2:42 left in the contest. An old fashioned three-point play from Akron's Carmelo Betancourt knotted things up, before Akron scored the next five points, taking a 51-46 lead. Combs converted on a layup with seven seconds left, but it was too late as the Zips walked away with the four-point, 52-48, win after Treadwell knocked down a free throw in the final seconds. The Green and White led by as many as 13 in the contest, including having a 12 point advantage with just over 10 minutes to play at James A. Rhodes Arena.

**FINDING THE GAME AT HOME:** The Eagles' contest with the Golden Flashes 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 Saturday afternoon contest.

**ALL-TIME AGAINST THE GOLDEN FLASHES:** Saturday evening's contest will mark the 70th all-time meeting between the Golden Flashes and Eagles. Kent State holds the all-time series edge, 39-30. EMU and KSU first met during the 1973-74 campaign when Allan Freund was serving his second year as the team's head coach. The then-Hurons dropped a road contest against Kent, 60-56, Jan. 2, 1974. Later that season, EMU avenged its loss with a 60-54 home win, Feb. 13, 1974.

[Derek Thompson](#) dropped 17 points to lead Eastern in the loss, while [Glenn Bryant](#) posted nine. [Austin Harper](#) added eight and [Matt Balkema](#) chipped in with eight as well. On the glass, [Jamell Harris](#) nabbed six boards, while Bryant pulled down five and [Da'Shonte Riley](#) and [J.R. Sims](#) each added four.

**MURPHY VERSUS THE MAC:** Third-year Head Men's Basketball Coach [Rob Murphy](#) holds a 20-21 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 division, going 14-8, while they are just 6-13 against the East Division which Murphy looks to improve during the 2013-14 season.

**HARRISON PERFORMS IN HOMETOWN:** Although he is averaging just 5.2 points per game on the season, senior [Daylen Harrison](#) showed up to play versus Akron, Feb. 8. Harrison is a native of Akron, Ohio and the 6-foot-6 forward had one of his best performances of the 2013-14 campaign versus the Zips. Harrison put up 10 points on 4-of-7 shooting, while filling up the rest of his stat line with five rebounds, two assists, a block and a steal in his hometown.

**CAN WE GET A W?:** Despite just a nine game gap in the all-time series between Eastern Michigan and Kent State, the Eagles have struggled in the most recent meetings. In fact, EMU has not defeated the Golden Flashes since the 1996-97 season when Eastern walked away on top of a 73-59 decision in Kent, Ohio. Over that span, the Eagles have lost 17 straight games at the hands of the Golden Flashes.

Another interesting stat about those games is that EMU's last win at home versus Kent State came a season prior when they topped the Flashes, 84-72.

**GIVING IT UP:** Eastern Michigan has had troubles closing out games this season. Most recently, the Eagles held a 12-point lead with just over 10 minutes remaining versus Akron, and were unable to hold on for the victory, Feb. 5. EMU held as much as a nine point lead against Miami before falling, Feb. 1, while also giving up a 13 point lead with just under eight minutes remaining versus Ohio, Jan. 25. In addition to that, the Green and White lost a game to Buffalo in which they led by eight in the second half.

**FEBRUARY FREEZER:** With a 7-12 career record in games in February, Head Coach [Rob Murphy](#) has never won more than four games in the second month of the year. The third-year head man has six more chances to win games in the month after an 0-2 start.

**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.

**BALL STATE ON THE HORIZON:** Eastern Michigan has Ball State on the schedule for its next contest. The Green and White will travel to Muncie, Ind for Head Coach [Rob Murphy](#)'s fifth contest with the Cardinals Wednesday, Feb. 12. Murphy is 3-1 versus the Cardinals in his career and the Eagles have defeated BSU both times they've played at James A. Worthen Arena under Murphy.

**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 1-4 versus those opponents and 2-5 against the East overall. EMU will complete its schedule against MAC East opponents Saturday, Feb. 8, when it takes on Kent State.

**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 4-5 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](#)(10.6 ppg), [Raven Lee](#) (10.1 ppg), [Mike Talley](#) (10.0 ppg) and [Karrington Ward](#) (13.1 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 8.7 steals per game, which is not only the most in the Mid-American Conference but that number is also tied for the 13th-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 11th highest strength of schedule in the nation. Furthermore, CBSSports.com has the Green and White's strength of schedule as the 24th-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 78th 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 Feb. 2, 2014, the Eagles rank 37th in scoring defense, allowing 63.8 ppg, while they're No. 15 in the country in blocks at 6.0 per contest. The Green and White was swiping the ball 8.8 times per game, which is the 12th-most steals per game, and holding teams to just a 30.2 percent three point field goal percentage, good for 46th in the country. The Eagles' most impressive stat is that they are holding teams to a 37.4 field goal percentage. This number ranks as the fifth-best in the nation.