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Eastern Michigan University

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## Eagles Head to Muncie for a MAC West Showdown

Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2014 » 7 p.m. » James E. Worthen Arena (11,500) » Muncie, Ind.



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**YPSILANTI, Mich. (EMUEagles.com)** - Coming off of a 70-53 victory versus Mid-American Conference East foe Kent State University, the Eastern Michigan University men's basketball team has finished its portion of the schedule where it takes on MAC East opponents. Through the next eight games, EMU will take on teams within its own division starting with Ball State University Wednesday, Feb. 12, in Muncie, Ind. Tip-off at James E. Worthen Arena is slated for 2 p.m.

**GETTING THE MONKEY OFF YOUR BACK:** Heading into its contest with Kent State, Feb. 8, Eastern Michigan had not defeated KSU in 17-straight contests, dating back to the 1996-97 season. The Green and White came out hitting on all cylinders and was able to put away the Golden Flashes, 70-53, at the Convocation Center. The Eagles took as much as a 20-point lead with just over nine minutes remaining. However Kent State was able to bring the score to within seven with just five minutes left in the game. Things did not look good for EMU, but the Green and White went on a 7-0 run to regain a double-digit lead and hold on to the win over the Golden Flashes.

**FINDING THE GAME AT HOME:** The Eagles' contest with the Cardinals will hit the airwaves of 89.1 FM (WEMU). In addition to the WEMU broadcast, fans can follow the game online via BallStateSports.com or for those with Comcast Cable in Indiana and Michigan, they will be able to watch live on television.

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

**ALL-TIME AGAINST THE CARDINALS:** Wednesday evening's contest will mark the 96th all-time meeting between the Cardinals and Eagles. Eastern is 39-56 in the all-time series against Ball State. They first got together back when the Cardinals topped the then-Hurons, 73-32, Feb. 9, 1947. BSU took the first eight contests until Dec. 14, 1960, when EMU defeated Ball State, 86-81.

Last time out, Eastern got the best of BSU, 56-50, Feb. 16, 2013. The Eagles were led by [Glenn Bryant](#) who posted a then-career-high 20 points, along with four rebounds, while [J.R. Sims](#) notched a career-best 18 points. Bryant shot 8-of-14 (57.1 percent) from the floor, while Sims hit 7-of-8 (87.5 percent) including 4-of-5 (80 percent) from beyond the arc. [Austin Harper](#) chipped in six points. On the glass, [Anthony Strickland](#) posted a team-high five rebounds. As a team, EMU shot 22-of-39 (56.4 percent) from the floor, while hitting 5-of-11 (45.5 percent) from three-point land.

**MURPHY VERSUS THE MAC:** Third-year Head Men's Basketball Coach [Rob Murphy](#) holds a 21-21 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 7-13 against the East Division.

**WEST COAST SWING:** After eight games versus the East Division of the Mid-American Conference and just two against MAC West opponents, the Eagles will complete the 18-game league schedule with eight straight contests facing West Division foes. EMU will split those eight games with four being played inside the Convocation Center, while playing the other four on the road.

**THE WESTERN WAY:** Since [Rob Murphy](#) took over as the head coach at Eastern Michigan, he has enjoyed much more success against the Eagles side of the conference, including a MAC West Championship during the 2011-12 campaign. In contrast, he holds a 7-13 record versus the other side. So far this season, the Green and White maintains a perfect 2-0 record against MAC West opponents, after defeating both Central Michigan and Western Michigan.

**MUNCIE MAGIC:** Eastern Michigan typically does not have the success on the road that it does at home. However, the Eagles have been perfect at James E. Worthen Arena since [Rob Murphy](#) became the head man. In 2011-12, Antonio Green hit a buzzer beating three-pointer to win, 51-48, in Muncie, while the Green and White defeated the Cardinals last season, 56-50, on the road.

**THE BEST ONE VERSUS THE MAC:** Eastern Michigan's win versus Kent State could be considered EMU's best offensive contest since they entered Mid-American Conference play. The Eagles scored 70 points, which they have been able to do just one other time in a MAC game, versus Central Michigan, Jan. 18. The more impressive number is that the Eagles shot 44.7 percent from the floor and 41.7 percent from beyond the arc. The 44.7 clip is the best they have shot in conference play, while it is the second-highest percentage recorded by EMU on the season versus an NCAA Division I opponent.

**FEBRUARY FREEZER:** With an 8-12 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 five more chances to win games in the month after a 1-2 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 76.9 percent of his free ones.

**TOLEDO ON THE HORIZON:** Eastern Michigan has Toledo on the schedule for its next contest. The Green and White will host its MAC West rival for Head Coach [Rob Murphy](#)'s fifth contest with the Rockets Saturday, Feb. 15. Murphy is 1-3 versus the Rockets in his career and the Eagles have dropped their last three contests versus Toledo.

**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 5-5 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.

**THE ORDER OF THE THIEVES:** Eastern is currently averaging 8.6 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 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 12th-highest strength of schedule in the nation. Furthermore, CBSSports.com has the Green and White's strength of schedule as the 29th-highest in the country. In addition to the EMU strength of schedule, the Eagles hold the 78th-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 Feb. 9, 2014, the Eagles rank 28th in scoring defense, allowing 62.8 ppg, while they're No. 19 in the country in blocks at 5.9 per contest. The Green and White swipes the ball 8.6 times per game, which is the 15th-most steals per game, and holds teams to just a 29.3 percent three point field goal percentage, good for 18th in the country. The Eagles' most impressive stat is that they are holding teams to a 37.1 field goal percentage. This number ranks as the fourth-best in the nation.