

2-13-2014

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## Recommended Citation

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## The Rockets Come to Town on Hall of Fame Day

Saturday, Feb. 15, 2014 » 2:04 p.m. » Convocation Center (8,784) » Ypsilanti, Mich.



2/13/2014 4:07:00 PM

**YPSILANTI, Mich. (EMUEagles.com)** - Riding a two-game winning streak, the Eastern Michigan University men's basketball team returns home Saturday, Feb. 15, to host the University of Toledo. Game time is scheduled for 2 p.m. inside the Convocation Center. The game is the first leg of a doubleheader with the EMU women's basketball team, which tangles with Bowling Green State University at 4:30 p.m. Eastern Michigan enters the game with a 14-10 (6-5 MAC) record, while Toledo is 21-3 (9-2 MAC).

**PERFECTION IN MUNCIE:** Heading into its contest with Ball State University, Feb. 12, EMU Head Men's Basketball Coach [Rob Murphy](#) had gone 2-0 in his only two contests that he had coached inside James E. Worthen Arena in Muncie, Ind. Murphy continued his streak Wednesday night with another victory over the Cardinals at Worthen Arena by a score of 73-62. In his tenure, Murphy has not won at any other venue more on the road than Ball State. In fact, Murphy has not even won more than one time at any other arena. Also, he has already recorded three road MAC victories this season, whereas he only had two in the 2012-13 season.

**FINDING THE GAME AT HOME:** The Eagles' contest with the Rockets 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 on EMUEagles.com. Eagle All-Access subscriptions start at just \$6.95 and can be purchased on a 24-hour basis, up to a yearly membership.

Veteran "Voice of the Eagles" Chad Bush will serve as EMU's play-by-play announcer for the WEMU broadcast, while [Sean Hostetter](#) will join the broadcast as the analyst and [Greg Steiner](#) will handle the on-site engineering duties.

**ALL-TIME AGAINST THE ROCKETS:** Saturday evening's contest will mark the 92nd all-time meeting between the Rockets and Eagles. Toledo holds the all-time series edge, 48-43. EMU and UT first met during the 1917-18 campaign when Eastern Michigan E-Club Hall of Fame Member Elton J. Rynearson was serving his first season of his first stint as the team's head coach. The Eagles were victorious in a road contest against Toledo, 49-20, Feb. 13, 1918.

Last time out, the Rockets got the best of EMU, 78-67, in the 2012-13 season finale, March 9, 2013. Eastern Michigan shot 22-of-53 (41.5 percent) whereas UT shot 27-of-53 (50.9 percent). [Derek Thompson](#) led all scorers with a season-high 25 points including the Eagles' final four buckets. [Glenn Bryant](#) chipped in 15 points and eight rebounds, while [J.R. Sims](#) tallied 13 for the Green and White. Toledo's Dominique Buckley led the visitors in scoring with 21 points. Four Rockets scored in double digits.

**MURPHY VERSUS THE MAC:** Third-year Head Men's Basketball Coach [Rob Murphy](#) holds a 22-21 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 15-8, 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 in the first 10 games of the conference schedule, the Eagles are in the midst of completing the 18-game league schedule with eight-straight contests facing West Division foes.

**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 3-0 record against MAC West opponents, after defeating, Ball State, Central Michigan and Western Michigan.

**100 STRONG:** Redshirt-senior guard [J.R. Sims](#) appeared in his 100th game as an Eagle in the EMU win over Ball State, Feb. 12. He is the only active player on the Eagles' roster to complete that feat.

**PUTTING HIS DEFENSE ON DISPLAY:** Senior center [Da'Shonte Riley](#) is well-known for his defensive prowess. However, in the Eagles' win over Ball State, the 7-footer was playing on another level. In addition to altering shots and forcing multiple turnovers, the Detroit, Mich. native blocked six shots and swiped the ball a team-high three times. The shot-blocking display from the senior gave him five-or-more blocks in six games this season, as well as five-or-more in 11 games during his career at Eastern.

**TIC-TAC-TURNOVER:** Eastern Michigan is forcing its opposition into nearly 16 turnovers per game this season. The Eagles out-did that trend by over 35 percent, Feb. 12, when they subjected Ball State to their intense 2-3 zone, forcing the Cardinals into 21 turnovers. That was the fourth time this season that EMU has caused 20-or-more turnovers in a game. It was also the second-most this season versus an NCAA Division I institution, other than when the Green and White forced Western Michigan into 26, Jan. 14.

**SHORT TRIP:** Saturday's game will be the first of a pair that the Eagles will take on their MAC West foe. The Rockets will be making the quick 49-mile jaunt from Savage Arena, Feb. 15, while the Green and White will turn around and make the same trek down US-23 to Toledo, Ohio on a date to be that is to be determined. That game will be the final regular season contest for the Green and White and will be played either Friday, March 7, or Saturday March 8,

inside UT's Savage Arena.

**HALL OF FAME WEEKEND AT EASTERN:** The Eastern Michigan University E-Club Alumni Chapter, a group of former EMU varsity athletic letterwinners, welcomes seven new members into the E-Club Athletic Hall of Fame this weekend. The Class of 2013 will be honored at the Hall of Fame ceremony Saturday, Feb. 15, 2014, in the EMU Student Center on campus.

The Class of 2013 includes: Dennis Betts (men's swimming), Earl Boykins (men's basketball), JoyAnn Clarke (women's track and field), Wondella Devers (women's basketball/track), Derrick Dial (men's basketball), Eugene Smith (administrator) and Donald Stewart (men's basketball and football).

In addition to the Hall of Fame inductees, the E-Club will present Ken Behmer with the Ron Oestrike Distinguished Service Award. The award, named after former EMU baseball-coaching legend Ron Oestrike, was first presented at the 2008 Hall of Fame ceremony to Oestrike. The award was developed to reward outstanding service to the Athletic Department, E Club and Athletic Club.

**HIS TRIUMPHANT RETURN:** Redshirt-senior guard [J.R. Sims](#) made his return to the floor for the first time since the Jan. 4 contest with Rochester College when he took the floor against Ball State, Feb. 12. Coincidentally, Sims is from Fort Wayne, Ind. which is just over 75 miles away from Muncie, Ind. Sims was sitting out due to an academic issue, but was able to return in front of family and friends from his hometown. Sims contributed three points in the Green and White's 73-62 win, while also blocking a shot.

**NORTHERN ILLINOIS ON THE HORIZON:** Eastern Michigan has Northern Illinois slated as its next contest. The Green and White will travel to DeKalb, Ill. for Head Coach [Rob Murphy](#)'s seventh contest with the Huskies Thursday, Feb. 20. Murphy is 5-1 versus the Huskies in his career and has never lost a game to NIU other than in the first round of the 2012 MAC Tournament. Also, Murphy has never lost a game in DeKalb.

**THE KEY IS 70:** Eastern Michigan is using 70 points as a mark to where you can nearly guarantee an EMU victory. The Eagles are a perfect 9-0 on the season when scoring 70-or-more points, including going 3-0 in Mid-American Conference games that they have broken the 70-point plateau. Conversely, when EMU has scored less than 70 points, it has dropped 10 games, going 5-10 overall and 0-5 in conference play.

**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 75.0 percent of his free ones.

**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 6-5 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.

**IF IT WAS TOURNAMENT TIME:** If the 2014 FirstEnergy Mid-American Conference Men's Basketball Tournament were to begin today, the Green and White would sit as the No. 6-seed and would host Ball State Monday, March 10. For complete seedings, turn to page 12 of these notes.

**THE ORDER OF THE THIEVES:** Eastern is currently averaging 8.5 steals per game, which is not only the most in the Mid-American Conference, but that number is also 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.

**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.

**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 24 points in the Eagles 73-62 win over Ball State, Feb. 12. 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. However, over the last five contests, the Romulus High School product has averaged 14.4 points per game, while scoring in double-digits in four of those tilts.

**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 144 shots and they average six per contest which is tied for the 19th-most 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 68 blocks this season. The Detroit, Mich. native is also earning his spot in the EMU record books. The seven-footer has blocked 158 shots in his career, good for the third-most in Eastern Michigan history. He is just three shy of [Jamell Harris](#) for the second-most, 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).

[Glenn Bryant](#) has been no slouch at turning away the opposition. He is averaging 1.6 blocks per contest. His 80 career blocks make him the sixth-best shot blocker in EMU history.