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Eastern Michigan University

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Eagles Travel West to Square off With League-Leading Broncos

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2014 » 2 p.m. » University Arena (5,421) » Kalamazoo, Mich.



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YPSILANTI, Mich. (EMUEagles.com) - Following a disappointing 59-61 double-overtime loss at the hands of Northern Illinois University Thursday, Feb. 20, the Eastern Michigan University men's basketball team will jump back on the horse and head to Western Michigan University for a re-match with the Broncos. Eastern owned the first game between the two in-state rivals, 56-37, in a Jan. 14 contest at the Convocation Center. The Eagles (15-11, 7-6 MAC) look to sweep the series with the conference-leading Broncos (17-8, 10-3 MAC) in a Sunday matinee at University Arena in Kalamazoo, Mich. Tip is slated for 2 p.m.

EASTERN OUTLASTED BY NIU IN DOUBLE OT: Eastern Michigan played in its first double-overtime game since the 2010 campaign in the 59-61 loss at Northern Illinois. Both teams struggled offensively. However, the Green and White led by as many as nine in the game before losing that lead. In addition to that lead, the Eagles held a four-point lead in the final overtime, but it was a put-back layup by NIU's Jordan Threlhoff that proved to be the eventual demise of Eastern at the NIU Convocation Center.

FINDING THE GAME AT HOME: The Eagles' contest with the Broncos will hit the airwaves of 89.1 FM (WEMU). In addition to the WEMU broadcast, fans can watch the game live on the Western Michigan live stream which can be found at WMUBroncos.com.

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.

ALL-TIME AGAINST THE BRONCOS: The Eagles are behind in the series with Western Michigan, 56-45. Since taking over the EMU basketball program, [Rob Murphy](#) has seen WMU on six different occasions, winning four of them, including a win on the road that clinched the Eagles their first ever MAC West Division title in 2011-12.

Last time out, the Eagles were led by [Darell Combs](#), who had 14 points on 4-of-9 shooting from the field, and [Mike Talley](#), whose 14 points came from going 3-of-5 from three-point range and hitting five free throws. Talley also led the team in assists with three and notched an additional three steals. Despite Talley's effort on defense, the leader in steals was [Daylen Harrison](#), who had a career-high five steals in the contest. The Green and White notched a season-high 18 steals, the most since the opening game against Concordia University, Nov. 12, when the team snatched the ball 14 times against the Cardinals. It was also the most since EMU posted 18 steals in a loss to Davidson back on Nov. 10, 2006. The Eagles also forced 26 turnovers which was the most since they forced 32 against Davidson in that same game.

MURPHY VERSUS THE MAC: Third-year Head Men's Basketball Coach [Rob Murphy](#) holds a 23-22 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 16-9, 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 4-1 record against MAC West opponents, after defeating, Ball State, Central Michigan, Toledo and Western Michigan.

TOTAL BUZZKILL: Northern Illinois snapped a three-game winning streak for the Eagles as EMU shot a season-low 27 percent. It was the lowest percentage since it shot 24.2 percent at Kentucky a year ago.

A LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE: Despite dropping its contest with Northern Illinois, there were a lot of bright spots that came from the game on the defensive side of the ball. Eastern forced the Huskies into 23 turnovers, which was the fifth time this season that EMU has forced 20-or-more turnovers in a game. In addition, Eastern held NIU to just 29 percent from the floor and 7.7 percent from beyond the arc. It was the sixth time that the Green and White has held a team under 30 percent from the field this season. The 7.7 three-point percentage was the lowest a team has shot since NIU shot just three percent from downtown back on Jan. 26, 2013 at the EMU Convocation Center. Finally, Eastern recorded 14 steals, which makes it the eighth time during the 2013-14 season that the Eagles have picked the opposition's pocket 10-or-more times.

A SLOPPY FIRST HALF: Eastern Michigan and Northern Illinois played a very sloppy first half of basketball in the Thursday, Jan. 20, contest in DeKalb, Ill. Eastern scored a season-low 16 first half points while both teams shot lower than 18 percent. EMU came into the break with a 17.4 shooting percentage, while NIU went 5-of-28 for a 17.9 mark.

RILEY EARNS MAC WEEKLY DISTINCTION: Senior center [Da'Shonte Riley](#) was named Co-MAC West Player of Week for the period ending Feb. 16. Overall on the week, despite averaging just three points per contest, Riley pulled down 6.5 rebounds per game, while posting an assist and a pair of steals per game. Most impressive was his work in the paint defensively. The senior averaged 6.5 blocks per game, which is more than twice as many as any season average within MAC play as well as nearly two blocks better than the NCAA leader averages on the season.

AGAINST MICHIGAN SCHOOLS: In their 117-year history, the Eagles have squared off with all six current NCAA Division I institutions, seeing Central Michigan the most times. Overall, the Green and White hold a 165-274 record against those teams, which include Central Michigan, Detroit, Michigan, Michigan State, Oakland and Western Michigan.

JUST AS MANY AS BEFORE: Last season, Eastern Michigan won just seven conference games all year. The Eagles have already matched that total. If EMU can win three of its final five contests, Head Coach [Rob Murphy](#) will have surpassed his career-best in conference wins after winning nine MAC games during the 2011-12 season on his way to EMU's first ever MAC West Championship.

THE BEST AT WHAT WE DO: Eastern Michigan prides itself on its defense. With that being the case, it should come as no surprise that EMU holds teams to one of the lowest shooting percentages in the country. Actually, according to NCAA.com's Feb. 17 update, the Eagles have the best shooting percentage defense in the country. After holding Toledo to a sub-26 percent performance, EMU moved into first in the category at 36.8 percent. Southern University is the next closest in the category at 37 percent.

THE BLOCK KING: [Da'Shonte Riley](#)'s seven blocked shots versus Toledo moved him into second all-time in blocks in Eastern Michigan history. In addition to his 171 career blocks, Riley currently has 79 blocks this season, which is 17 shy of Theron Wilson's top-mark of 96, which he set during the 1992-93 season. If Riley stays at his current pace of three per game, he will jump Wilson by just one block, with 97.

DEFENSE WINS CHAMPIONSHIPS: Despite their woes versus teams from the MAC East, the Eagles are 4-1 versus MAC West opponents due in large part to their defensive efforts. Eastern allows an average of just 52.6 points per game in contests against the MAC West. Versus Toledo and Western Michigan, the teams selected to the top-two spots in the division prior to the season, EMU has allowed just 40.5 points per game. Those wins are against two teams who are currently 10-3 in MAC play. Currently, the Green and White sit three games out of a tie for the top of the MAC West.

CENTRAL MICHIGAN ON THE HORIZON: Eastern Michigan has Central Michigan as its next opponent on the grueling 18-game MAC schedule, Feb. 26. The Green and White will host CMU for a 7 p.m. evening contest. The Eagles are looking to sweep the season series against the team who currently is just 2-11 in Mid-American Conference play. EMU defeated the Chippewas, 72-59, at McGuirk Arena earlier this year, Jan. 18.