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Miscues Haunt Eastern in 5-3 Loss to the Skyhawks

Eagles drop back to .500 (3-3) on the season



Photo by Walt Middleton Photography

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (EMUEagles.com) – For the second straight week, fielding mistakes in the eighth inning by the Eastern Michigan University baseball team proved costly as the Eagles fell, 5-3, to the University of Tennessee at Martin Sunday evening, Feb. 23, in the series finale at Rose Park in Nashville, Tenn. The setback drops EMU to an even 3-3 on the 2014 season while the Skyhawks earn their first win of the year, improving to 1-6.

Each team recorded eight hits, but three EMU errors led to three unearned runs for UT Martin. [Lee Longo](#) and [Michael Mioduszewski](#) each picked up two hits apiece to pace the EMU bats. As the reigning MAC West Player of the Week, Longo made a case to be awarded the honor in back-to-back weeks after hitting 7-of-13 for the series. He tallied one of the two Eastern RBI while Mioduszewski recorded his third double of the season. The Eagles left 10 on base throughout the game.

On the rubber, freshman [Sterling Sharp](#) made the second start of his career, lasting 3.1 innings while giving up three runs (two earned) on four hits and a pair of walks. The righty also struck out three Skyhawks before exiting the game in the fourth. [Charlie Land](#) replaced Sharp, doing a phenomenal job in his 3.1 innings of scoreless work. The junior college transfer sent down four opposing batters while allowing just three hits. Picking up the loss was sophomore [Devon Bronson](#) (0-1), who surrendered two runs (one earned) in his one inning on the mound.

UT Martin designated hitter Ben Upton had a big day for the Skyhawks at the dish, putting together a 3-for-4

performance. Stu Jones recorded the win (1-1) in relief, and senior John Houston entered in the ninth to earn the save by retiring the Eagles in order to end the game.

Eastern wasted no time getting on the scoreboard in the top of the first. [Austin Wilson](#) recorded the Eagles' first hit of the contest before stealing second base to get into scoring position. With one out in the inning, Longo continued to be a RBI machine he has been throughout the season thus far with a single to center field that scored Wilson. One inning later, Mioduszewski doubled down the left field line to put himself into scoring position. Back-to-back singles by [Nick Rotola](#) and [John Rubino](#) brought him around to score, but mistakes by the two Eagles on the base path ended the big inning threat.

In the bottom half of the second, EMU was able to prevent a huge inning for the Skyhawks. After Sharp retired the first two batters, a double and a walk quickly got the freshman hurler into trouble. UT Martin's Drew Erie followed with a single up the middle, but Wilson showed off his arm from center field to throw out a runner at home for the third out of the inning, keeping UTM off the board.

The Skyhawks put a run up in the bottom of the third by playing small ball. Shortstop Max Balter walked to begin the inning and immediately stole second base. A sacrifice bunt advanced the Skyhawk to third before he crossed the plate on a groundout to Rotola at second base. UT Martin continued its scoring with a pair of runs in the fourth to take a 3-2 advantage. Three hits set up the opportunity to take the lead, and a Rubino error with two outs allowed the go-ahead run to score.

After surrendering the lead, the Eagles had two prime chances to regain the lead by loading the bases in both the fifth and sixth innings. In the fifth, EMU had all of the ducks on the pond with just one out; however, Martin was able to send Longo down on strikes before popping up [Adam Sonabend](#) to end the inning. Eastern started a two-out rally in the sixth with a base hit and back-to-back walks to force Martin out of the game. Nonetheless, UTM reliever Chris Ross got Wilson to fly out to right field on a diving catch by Nico Zych.

Eastern tied the game at three in the top of the seventh. Ott started the inning with a double, and a Longo single put Eagles on the corners with nobody out. The Skyhawks prevented any major damage by getting Sonabend to ground into a double play on the first pitch of the at-bat; however, the play allowed Ott to score the tying run. In the bottom half of the inning, UTM placed a runner on third with one out after a double and sacrifice bunt. EMU pitching came up big as Land issued a groundout before the lefty Bronson came on to strike out left-handed batter Chase Young, leaving a Skyhawk stranded 90 feet from home.

Things unraveled for the Eagles in the field during the bottom half of the eighth. After punching out the first hitter of the inning, Bronson plunked the next batter to put the go-ahead run on base. UT Martin used a pinch runner to get speed on the bases, and a failed pickoff attempt by the EMU lefty advanced the runner to second base. Following another out, an infield single combined with a throwing error by Rubino allowed the Skyhawks to take the lead for good. UTM added an insurance run after two wild pitches by [Sam Delaplaine](#), and the EMU bats went quiet in the top half of the ninth to give UT Martin its first win of 2014.

EMU will have one day off before returning to action Tuesday, Feb. 25. The Green and White remain in the Volunteer State with a two-game set against Austin Peay in Clarksville, Tenn. First pitch for the series opener, as well as the Feb. 26 contest, is set for 3:30 p.m. CT.