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Eastern Tops Rochester in Decisive 92-54 Non-Conference Finale

Five Eagles notched double-digit scoring efforts

YPSILANTI, Mich. (EMUeagles.com) - Eastern Michigan University's men's basketball team welcomed the new year with a victory in its non-conference season finale against Rochester College. The 92-54 win leaves the Eagles boasting an 8-5 record heading into Mid-American Conference competition, while Rochester falls to 11-7 overall.

The Green and White was led by Karrington Ward (Lockport, Ill.-Lockport Township (Moraine Valley CC)) with 14 points. Four other Eagles notched double-digit figures as Darell Combs (Chicago, Ill.-Thronwood (Blinn)), Raven Lee (Detroit, Mich.-Romulus), Glenn Bryant (Detroit, Mich.-Oak Hill Academy (Arkansas)) and Daylen Harrison (Akron, Ohio-St. Vincent-St. Mary (Wyoming)) all added at least 10 points for EMU. Da'Shonte Riley (Detroit, Mich.-Detroit Country Day (Syracuse)) had a career game on the boards after pulling down 14 rebounds for the team. Mike Talley (Detroit, Mich.-Melvindale ABT (Duquesne)) and Lee
set up the Eagle offense, each handing out three assists apiece while Lee grabbed an additional three steals.

As a squad, the Eagles shot 34-of-57 for a season-high 59.6 percent clip. The Green and White also sank 21-of-29 free throws for 72.4 percent. The team was dominant in rebounding, recording 43 compared to Rochester's 25 boards. The Eagles also notched 10 steals in the matchup and forced an additional eight turnovers.

Stavros Schizas paced the Warriors with 15 points and five rebounds. The Eagles were able to hold Rochester to 20-of-59 shooting (33.9 percent). The Warriors knocked down nine three-pointers to make up half of their points, but only shot at a 23.1 percent clip after taking 39 attempts throughout the course of the game.

The Eagles got on the board early after an elbow jumper from Bryant found its way through the rim, followed up by a shot well over the Rochester defenders from Ward. Schizas soon recorded the first points for the Warriors by draining a triple.

Not being one to ignore the advantages of his frame, Ward assertively rejected a shot from the elevating Kourea Hayes, which was snatched up and run down-court by Lee for a fastbreak play that would bring the Eagles to a 10-5 advantage over the Warriors.

Rochester was not silenced despite Bryant throwing down a thunderous dunk, as the Warriors were able to find consecutive success in the paint thanks to Schizas's aggressive drives to the rim. After a five-point effort from the Greek guard and an three-pointer jumper from AJ Burton, Rochester found itself just two points shy of EMU, sitting at a 16-14 disadvantaged with 13 minutes remaining in the half.

The Warriors' 7-0 run was put to an end when Harrison fought his way through the paint to notch a put-back for the Eagles. The layup sparked a 12-3 run for the Green and White, most of which came from inside the paint, ending with Paris Pereira hitting a last-second three-pointer before the shot clock expired. With five minutes remaining, the Eagles retained a solid 28-20 edge over the Warriors.

Hot off the bench, Jalen Ross (Greensboro, N.C.-Greensboro Day) came in and dropped in a quick quintet of points for EMU as the scoring gap continued to expand in favor of the Green and White. Despite building up to a 39-25 lead over Rochester within three minutes, Eastern continued to implement a full court press, the pressure of which forced a turnover out of the hands of Schizas.

The final play for the Eagles of the first half was one to remember, as Riley rose well above
those scrambling for a rebound in the paint to grab the rock and slam down a dunk. The Green and White left for the locker room with a 41-28 advantage on the scoreboard.

Bryant paced the Eagles with eight points and five rebounds, followed by Ward, who tallied six first half points. However, the points were widely distributed as nine Eagles scored over the course of the half. Riley led all players on the glass with eight rebounds. As a team, the Eagles made half of their attempts from the field, shooting 17-of-34. The squad struggled from behind the arc, taking eight three-point shots but did not make one in the first half. However, the team proved to be dominant off the glass, pulling down 25 rebounds compared to 13 from Rochester.

Rochester was led by Schizas, who was the only player in double digits at the close of the half with 13 points as well as four rebounds. The Warriors were held to 9-of-27 for a 33.3 percent clip, but they had more success from three-point range as the team hit five triples. Rochester relied heavily on attempting three-pointers in its offense, as 22-of-27 shots taken were from beyond the arc.

The Green and White came out with intensity in the second half, as Bryant nailed two free throws and immediately went into a full court pressure defense Rochester off the in-bound play, allowing Lee to swoop in for a steal and jump shot to quickly put four points on the board.

Rochester's John Irons hit his second triple of the afternoon, but the Eagles retaliated with an and-one for an old fashioned three-point play by Ward. The junior then picked Pereira's pocket on the following possession and handed off to Talley, who ran down court and dished out an assist off the backboard into the hands of the high-flying Ward for an uncontested alley-oop dunk. Within two minutes of the opening of the half, the Eagles had established a 50-31 lead.

The Eagles, however, were held scoreless over the next two minutes before Lee notched another steal and fastbreak layup and followed it up with a pull up three-ball. Rochester was not allowed to score for seven minutes while the Eagles took off on a 19-point streak with buckets from Harrison, Combs, and Anthony Strickland (Ypsilanti, Mich.-Dearborn Heights Roubichard (Adrian)).

Viktora Merkevicus finally ended Rochester's dry spell with a layup, but Combs did not allow the Warriors to string together more than two points after draining a three-pointer to score 10 consecutive points for the Green and White. The Chicago, Ill. native then showcased his awareness by finding Harrison open for an alley-oop to build the Eagles' lead to a commanding 76-37 edge.

Rochester mustered its first run of the second half with a three-pointer from Zef Deda and a layup from Evan Walker which came to a halt when Ward knocked down another mid-range
jumper. The Warriors were later able to come up with another five points thanks to a combination of inside and perimeter shots, yet they still trailed by nearly 40 points after another and-one play from Talley brought the count to 84-47 with four minutes remaining in the contest.

The Eagles continued to provide opportunities for the bench to score, as local product Ali Farhat (Dearborn, Mich.-Dearborn) hit a fade away jumper and a sideline triple to eclipse his career-high within the span of 40 seconds. The Warriors were able to add seven more points to their effort, but the Eagles ended the matchup with a dominant 92-54 win.

The Eagles will kick of MAC play Wednesday, Jan. 8, when they make the short jaunt to Bowling Green, Ohio to square off against the Falcons of Bowling Green State University. Tipoff is slated for 7 p.m. The Green and White will return to the Convocation Center the following week when it takes on MAC foe Western Michigan University in a MAC-TV broadcast at 7 p.m., Jan. 14.