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Ohio Mounts Late Rally to Sneak Past Eastern, 58-56
Karrington Ward recorded his third double-double of the 2013-14 season

YPSILANTI, Mich. (EMUEagles.com) — Eastern Michigan University’s men’s basketball team dropped its second consecutive cross-divisional contest to Ohio University, 58-56, Jan. 25, in the Convocation Center. Despite leading for all but the final 1:36 of the contest, the Eagles were unable to hold off the Bobcats in the closing minutes of the afternoon’s matchup. With the setback, the Eagles fall to 11-8 (3-3 MAC), while Ohio advances to 14-5 (4-2 MAC).

The Eagles were led by Glenn Bryant (Detroit, Mich.-Oak Hill Academy (Arkansas)) and Karrington Ward (Lockport, Ill.-Lockport Township (Moraine Valley C.C.)). Bryant tossed in 14 points for the Green and White and pulled down seven rebounds. Ward notched his third double-double of the 2013-14 season, putting up 13 points and a team-high 10 boards. Da’Shonte Riley (Detroit, Mich.-Detroit Country Day (Syracuse)) led all players with three blocks, while pulling down nine rebounds.

As a team, the Eagles shot 19-of-55 for 34.5 percent from the field, well below the 45.8-percent clip they usually boast within the friendly confines of the Convocation Center. The squad also hit just two shots from three-point range. Conversely, the Bobcats hit 10 triples en route to their victory, as half their field goals came from beyond the arc. Ohio was 20-of-60 on the afternoon for a 33.3 shooting percentage. The team also bested the Eagles in rebounding (45-42), assists (14-10), and steals (8-2).

A bout of staunch defense from the Eagles prevented the squad from surrendering the opening points of the game.
Ward opened up the scoring by nailing a pair of free throws after being fouled on a drive down the lane, after which Anthony Strickland (Ypsilanti, Mich.-Dearborn Heights Robichaud (Adrian)) put an easy two after faking out Ohio’s center and going off the glass from the right low post.

The Eagles forced three turnovers on consecutive possessions, the third of which was converted thanks to Darell Combs (Chicago, Ill.-Thornwood (Blinn)) throwing up a shot from just inside the arc to draw the foul and sink the additional free throw. The Green and White quickly built up a 7-0 lead in just three minutes before a block by Riley defied Nick Kellogg’s attempt to put the Bobcats on the board. The ball was recovered by Ward, who made a cross-court launch to Mike Talley (Detroit, Mich.-Melvindale ABT (Duquesne)) for the easy layup, forcing Ohio head coach Jim Christain to call a timeout.

Javarez Willis answered the call to ignite the Bobcat offense, as the junior hit a three-pointer to end four minutes of scoreless play for OU. Still boasting an early six-point advantage, the Green and White quickly expanded on its lead as Ward swished a triple from the sideline and Riley stepped into the center of the key to hit a hook shot.

Ohio mustered a slight four point run, but its effort was thwarted as Bryant rose well above the rest of the field to sink a turnaround jumper. Bryant then teamed up to send the crowd into an uproar as Ward faked a layup and directed the ball off the glass into the hands of the high-flying senior, who threw down a two-handed dunk to bring the Eagles up, 20-9, with 8:40 remaining in the half.

Stevie Taylor brought the Bobcats within five points after hitting back-to-back three-pointers, but the Green and White adjusted and slowed the recent scoring outburst, holding Ohio to just one point over the next 4:30. EMU remained somewhat stagnant as well, as its next sextet of points came solely from the charity stripe.

Taylor hit another trey to prevent EMU from retaining its double-digit lead before Mo Hughley (Queens Village, N.Y.-Martin Van Buren (CSU Bakersfield) drove down the left side of the paint to beat the expiring shot clock by powering through two Bobcats en route to a last-second layup. Strickland sunk another buzzer-beater with a turnaround sideline jumper, increasing the lead to 30-19 with just over one minute remaining in the opening 20 minutes.

The Bobcats made an extra three points after a handful of free throws found their way through the rim. As T.J. Hall attempted to close the gap with a full-court trip to the hoop, but Strickland would not allow for it as he swatted the ball away, allowing the Eagles to head into the locker room with a 30-22 edge.

At the half, the Eagles were led by Ward, who led in both points and rebounds with seven and 10, respectively. The Green and White dispersed its points across the board, as Talley contributed six points to the lead while Strickland and Bryant chipped in two apiece. The team went 10-of-30 from the floor for a 33.3 percent clip. Ohio was held to just 6-of-30 from the field, four of which came from three-point plays, for a 20.0 percent success rate. Ohio did have the upper hand on rebounding, as they boasted three more boards than the Eagles with 26.

Coming into the second half, the Eagles were granted a bit of luck, as Hall missed what could have been an impressive dunk off a fastbreak play. The Bobcats picked up their defensive strategy considerably, as the Green and White was unable to put up a shot for over two minutes. Bryant nailed back-to-back jump shots to put up the first couple points for Eastern, keeping the margin at 10, 34-24.

Bryant proved to be an offensive force in the second half, as he poured in the vast majority of the points for the Eagles in the opening seven minutes. The senior rose up for a high post jumper and quickly reacted to rebound his own shot for a tip-in, bringing the score to 39-27.
Each team rattled off a five-point run, as Taylor and Kellogg combined a fastbreak layup and a three-pointer while Daylen Harrison (Akron, Ohio-St. Vincent-St. Mary (Wyoming)) hit a trey followed up by a pair from the charity stripe by Raven Lee (Detroit, Mich.-Romulus).

The Eagles and the Bobcats went back-and-forth on scoring, as Harrison brought the Eagles to 46-35 with a reverse layup, but Willis hit a triple to bring Ohio within nine points. A jumper from Lee brought the Green and White back to its considerable lead and the team followed up with a statement play as Ward charged in from the sideline, taking off well outside the key to fly in for an alley-oop from Jalen Ross (Greensboro, N.C.-Greensboro Day), which he explosively jammed through the rim for a rip-roaring dunk.

As Ohio pushed back, closing in to a 51-44 deficit, the Bobcats suffered a considerable setback after their most efficient three-point shooter, Taylor, fouled out with five minutes remaining in the contest. The squad did not seem fazed by the loss of their key player, as OU took off on a 9-2 run, coming within two points of the Eagles at 55-53 with 2:34 to go.

A mid-range jumper from Maurice Ndour would knot the contest up at 55-55 at 1:36, and a three from Willis allowed Ohio to pull ahead with 27 seconds remaining. The Eagles turned to fouling in order to draw out the clock, and were granted an opportunity to score but failed to drop in an extra bucket as the clock ran down with the Eagles on the losing end of a 58-56 score.

The Eagles will remain at home for their next contest, as they host Bowling Green State University Wednesday, Jan. 29. Tipoff is slated for 7 p.m. inside the Convocation Center.