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Recommended Citation
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EMU Bats Produces 35 Runs to Pick Up Two Victories Over UT Martin

Eagles win game one 17-3 before taking the second game, 18-6, over the Skyhawks

2/22/2014 9:18:00 PM

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (EMUEagles.com) – The Eastern Michigan University baseball team brought their red-hot bats to Nashville, Tenn. as the Eagles outscored the University of Tennessee at Martin, 35-9, in two games to collect a pair of wins Saturday evening, Feb. 22, at Rose Park. The two squads finished the conclusion of game one from Friday night, a 17-3 win by Eastern, before starting the second game that ended, 18-6, in favor of EMU.

The pair of victories clinches the series for the Green and White, moving them back over the .500 mark at 3-2. Meanwhile, UT Martin is still in search of its first win of the 2014 campaign, falling to 0-6.

Game One

Four Eagles recorded a multi-hit game as John Rubino, Lee Longo, Adam Sonabend and Nick Rotola each tallied two hits apiece. Longo, the reigning Mid-American Conference West Player of the Week, went 2-for-4 at the dish with two runs and two RBI, including a solo home run for the first EMU dinger of the season. Sonabend added a team-best three RBI on a 2-for-5 performance while also scoring a pair of runs. Meanwhile, starting right fielder Sam Ott failed to get a hit, but he did find other ways to reach base by drawing three walks and crossing the plate four times. The Green and White not only notched 13 hits, but they also scored 17 runs due in part to eight errors and eight walks issued by UTM.
Making his second start as an Eagle, junior college transfer Jake Andrews (1-1) went seven innings, punching out eight Skyhawks. Throwing 104 pitches, Andrews allowed three runs (two earned) on three hits and three walks. EMU pitching held UT Martin to just three runs on five hits as Ben Upton’s two-run homer was the only big hit of the game for the Skyhawks.

Both teams failed to get a hit through the first three innings, but that all changed in the top of the fourth. Ott and Austin Wilson each drew full counts in their respective at-bats before reaching base on ball four. With two on and nobody out, Longo reached on an error as UT Martin tried to turn a double play as everyone was safe to bring Sonabend up with the based loaded. The EMU catcher produced in the clutch, doubling down the left field line to score Wilson and Ott. Adam Dennison then added a sacrifice fly that scored Longo, increasing the advantage. Capping off the four-run fourth inning, Rotola singled to bring Sonabend across the plate and give the Eagles a comfortable margin.

Leading by three, 4-1, the Eagles played long ball in the sixth. Longo started the inning off with a blast to right center field, the first home run of the season for EMU, pushing the cushion back to four runs. Two batters later, Dennison joined in on the fun, belting a ball that cleared the fence in left center field. The two solo shots grew the lead to five, 6-1.

One inning later, Longo tallied another RBI by knocking in Ott with a double in the left center gap. However, UT Martin answered with a pair of runs in the bottom half of the seventh. After a leadoff walk, Upton delivered a pinch-hit two run bomb to cut the difference to four, 7-3. Despite the shaky start to the inning, Andrews settled down to retire the next three batters and finish the second start of his EMU career.

The Eagles added four runs in the ninth before play was stopped in the top half of the inning with two runners on base and two outs. With runners on the corners, Sonabend singled to left to plate Wilson. He would later come around to score on a single by Jackson Martin that also brought around Marquise Gill.

When play resumed Saturday afternoon, Eastern continued to keep its foot on the throttle, scoring six more runs to total 10 in the inning. Starting off Saturday’s play, Rubino doubled to right field to bring in Sorise. Back-to-back walks scored another Eagle, and EMU took advantage of four errors by the Skyhawks to increase the lead to 14, 17-3.

The double digit ninth, where the Eagles scored 10 runs on five hits and four UTM errors, was the most runs scored in an inning by the Eagles since April 11, 2012. On that date, the Green and White put a 12-spot in the third inning of a 13-5 victory over Michigan State University.

Making his EMU debut, freshman Tyler Russell closed out the ball game with a perfect ninth inning, retiring the side to officially give Eastern the victory.

Game Two

The Eagles tallied as many hits as runs (18) in game two, including 11 extra-base hits. Rubino and Longo each collected three hits and two runs on a pair of 3-for-4 showings. Rubino tied for a team-high three RBI alongside Tony DiLeo and Mitchell McGeein as those two hit their first home runs of the season. Dennison, Longo and Ott also earned a multi-RBI game as each knocked in two runs. EMU pegged UTM starting pitcher Dalton Potts for 10 hits and 10 earned runs in just 2.1 innings.

After coming out of the bullpen last week, senior Steve Weber (1-0) got the start and the victory on the mound for
Eastern. In his first start since recovering from Tommy John surgery, Weber lasted four innings by allowing two runs on hits while also striking out five. Relieving Weber were a pair of freshmen taking the field for the first time as Eagles. Layne Gusler pitched the fifth inning while Matthew Beaton tossed the sixth and seventh innings; both freshmen surrendered two earned runs.

Serving as the home team and keeping the Skyhawks off the board to begin the second game, the Eagles bats remained on fire with six runs on five hits in the bottom of the first. Rubino and Wilson recorded base hits before both Eagles scored on a triple to right center by Ott. The EMU right fielder later scored on a single by Dennison. With Dennison on base as well as Sonabend, McGeein sent a three-run bomb on a 3-1 offering over the left field fence, rounding out the fast start for Head Coach Jay Alexander’s ballclub.

EMU did not let up, scoring two runs in both the second and third innings. Sonabend doubled down the left field line to plate a pair of Eagles in the second. After UT Martin scored its first two runs of the game in the top of the third, Eastern answered with a pair of its own due to three doubles. Two-base hits by McGeein and Rotola put runners in scoring position for Rubino, and the shortstop decided to join the doubles club as well. His double down the line in left scored McGeein and Rotola to increase the margin back to eight, 10-2.

The Green and White chalked up four runs in the fifth to build the lead to 11, 14-3. Rotola began the inning with a triple to right field before Rubino’s single knocked the sophomore in. Following a Rubino steal and an Ott walk, Longo scored the two Eagles with another two-bagger for the EMU first baseman. The MAC West Player of the Week later crossed home plate on a single by Dennison.

In the bottom of the sixth, Michael Mioduszewski doubled to right field to record his first RBI of his collegiate career as Sorise tapped the plate to make it 15-4 in favor of the Eagles.

The Eastern scoring finished in the bottom of the eight as a Bowden double and John Montgomery’s hit by a pitch set the stage for DiLeo. Entering the game in the top half of the inning to replace Sonabend, the sophomore showed off his power at the dish with a three-run shot to left field for his first hit of the 2014 campaign. The homer sent the margin back to double-digits at a dozen, 18-6, as Zane Birchler threw the final two innings while keeping the Skyhawks off the scoreboard.

EMU will look to complete the sweep against UT Martin with a 4 p.m. CT matchup, Feb. 23. Freshman Sterling Sharp will make the second start of his young collegiate career while the Skyhawks are projected to send out junior right-hander Alex Martin.