EMU Women's Basketball: Eastern Travels to Kent State to Open MAC Play January 2, 2014

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Eastern Travels to Kent State to Open MAC Play

Saturday, Jan. 4, 2013 » 2 p.m. » Memorial Athletic and Convocation Center (6,327) » Kent, Ohio

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EASTERN TRAVELS TO KENT STATE TO OPEN MAC PLAY: The Eastern Michigan University women’s basketball team, off to a 10-1 start, begins Mid-American Conference play Saturday afternoon, Jan. 4, at Kent State University. Game time is set for 2 p.m at the Memorial Athletic and Convocation Center. With the new 18-game league schedule, this will be the first of two meeting with the Golden Flashes this season. KSU will come to Ypsilanti on Feb. 6 for a television affair on Time Warner Cable Sports Channel.

EMU enters the game with a 10-1 record after running past the Blue Devils of Lawrence Tech, 95-62, on New Year’s Eve at the Convocation Center. The Golden Flashes, who will be hitting the court for the first time in 15 days, are 3-8 on the season following a 61-46 setback versus St. Bonaventure University, Dec. 20.

With the EMU men’s basketball team also in action that day, the game will not be broadcast on WEMU (89.1 FM). Instead, fans can catch the game on Eagle All-Access beginning at 1:50 p.m. with Adam Kuffner on the call of the conference lid lifter.

ALL-TIME VERSUS KSU: The Jan. 4 contest marks the 56th meeting between the Golden Flashes and Eagles, who first met during the 1980-81 season. Kent State leads the series, 34-21, including winning 24 of the last 35 meetings between the two schools. However, EMU is currently riding a program-best five-game winning streak in the series.

LAST TIME VERSUS THE FLASHES: The Eagles posted a 64-45 victory in the lone regular-season meeting last year in Kent, Ohio, Jan. 24, 2013. Bianca Cage scored 19 points to lead the Eagles. Desyree Thomas was the other
EMU player in double digits, tallying 12 points. Natachia Watkins padded the statistical categories with nine points, nine rebounds, four steals, and two assists on the night. The 19-point victory in Kent was a rare one for the Eagles, as EMU holds just a 5-20 all-time record in the M.A.C. Center.

**EMU IN MAC OPENERS:** Eastern Michigan opens its 33rd Mid-American Conference slate Saturday afternoon, Jan. 4, versus the Golden Flashes of Kent State University. The game marks just the fourth time that the two programs have squared off in a conference lid-lifter and the first since the 2001-02 campaign. KSU notched a 71-54 victory at the Convocation Center, Jan. 5, 2002, while the Flashes turned in an 86-73 victory at the M.A.C. Center, Nov. 15, 1998. EMU's lone win was a 73-54 decision in Kent, Ohio, Jan. 6, 1990. The Green and White are 15-17 all-time in league openers dating back to 1981-82. EMU has won nine of the last 11 MAC-opening tilts going back to the 2002-03 season, including a 56-52 win last year over Western Michigan University, Jan. 5, 2013.

**NON-CONFERENCE SUCCESS:** The Eagles won 10 games during the non-conference portion of the schedule, posting a double-digit win total for the third time in school history. All three such instances have come in the last 10 seasons. Only four other MAC programs have ever posted seasons with 10 or more non-conference wins. Bowling Green has accomplished the feat seven times (2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2013-14), Toledo has done it twice (2009-10, 2012-13) while Kent State (2008-09) and Miami (2011-12) have each done it once.

**EMU QUICK HITTERS:** The Eagles surpassed their entire win total from the 2012-13 season in just nine games ... EMU is 10-1 on the season as January begins ... The Eagles are out-scoring opponents by 24.5 points in victories ... Seven of the Eagles 10 victories this season have come by double figures ... EMU and Toledo are the only teams in the league that feature four players that average double figures in points ... Natachia Watkins is averaging 15.3 points per game over the past four games ... During EMU's current winning streak, they are shooting 79.8 percent (71-of-89) from the free throw line.

**FOLLOW THE LEADER:** Through the first 11 games of the season, there have been three (Madonna, Marygrove and Loyola) contests in which EMU never trailed and fourth (Lawrence Tech) in which the Eagles were behind for only 58 seconds. This year to date, EMU has led for a total of 351:79 – 79.1 percent of the time – and trailed for just 64:32 (14.5%).

**EMU VERSUS THE MAC:** This is EMU's 33rd season competing in the Mid-American Conference. The Eagles hold a 237-292 record against conference foes and have posted winning seasons in the MAC in 11 of the last 13 campaigns. EMU has had the most success against Northern Illinois, going 30-9, and the least versus Bowling Green, 14-47. Western Michigan has been the Green and White's most frequent opponent with 73 meetings, while Buffalo holds the distinction of the fewest conference games against the Eagles with 20.

**APPROACHING 900:** Senior Natachia Watkins has scored 853 points in her career and ranks 23rd all time. There are currently 21 players in the 900-point club for EMU women's basketball.

**CLIMBING THE ASSIST CHARTS:** Senior Desyree Thomas is currently eighth in the EMU record book with 393 career assists. Stephanie Smiley (1998-02) holds the EMU standard with 577 helpers.

**LEADING THE MAC:** The Eagles are currently sitting atop the Mid-American Conference in eight categories as well as ranking in the top-five in seven others. The Green and White lead the league in scoring offense (86.4), scoring margin (+21.0), rebounding offense (49.7), turnover margin (+10.8), assist-to-turnover ratio (1.3), steals (13.1),
offensive rebounds (19.5) and defensive rebounds (30.2)

**QUICKEST TO 10 VICTORIES IN EMU HISTORY:** With a 33-point victory over Lawrence Tech, Dec. 31, this year’s EMU squad tied the program’s record for the quickest to 10 victories. The 2004-05 squad also bears the standard of reaching its 10th victory in game No. 11.

**MAGIC NUMBERS:** When the Eagles have scored at least 70 points, their record is 9-3. Under Head Coach Tory Verdi’s leadership, Eastern Michigan is 14-3 when leading at the half and 15-1 when holding a lead with five minutes to play in the game.

**FOR THREE!** The Eagles are on a torrid pace from the outside this season. EMU has already posted 290 three-point attempts in 2013-14, making 82 of them. The Green and White tossed out a season-high 37 three-point tries against UMKC, Dec. 7, the second-most in program history. EMU is on pace for 790 attempts, which would shatter the single-season record of 630 set during the 1999-2000 campaign. Last season, EMU made 98 of its 358 three-point attempts.

**YOUTH BEING SERVED:** Heading into the 2013-14 campaign, Head Coach Tory Verdi knew he would be leading a very young team this season as the Eagles welcomed eight newcomers to the roster. In 11 games, the newcomers have combined for 52.3 percent (497 points) of the squad’s offense.

**REACHING FOR 75:** Eastern Michigan has posted 75-or-more points in nine games this season. The 1981-82, the 2000-01 and the 2003-04 squads lead the way with 14 games of reaching the three-quarters of a century mark.

**BALL STATE ON THE HORIZON:** The Jan. 9 contest marks the 66th meeting between the Ball State Cardinals and Eagles, who first played during the 1979-80 season. Eastern Michigan leads the series, 36-30, but BSU got the better of EMU both times last season. The Cardinals notched 56-41 victory in the team’s first meeting this season at the Convocation Center, Feb. 3, 2013, before following up with a 56-34 win in the finale at Worthen Arena, Feb. 20, 2013. The Eagles’ 34 point output is the lowest in the program’s 38-year history, surpassing the previous mark of 40 set earlier in the year against Toledo, Jan. 13, 2013.