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Eastern Michigan University

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Eagles Return to the Nest Thursday to Host the Cardinals

Thursday, Jan. 9, 2013 » 7:06 p.m. » Convocation Center (8,784) » Ypsilanti, Mich.

Looking to extend its five-game winning streak, the Eastern Michigan University women's basketball team returns home to the Convocation Center Thursday, Jan. 9, to battle Ball State University. The Mid-American Conference tilt is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. EMU enters the game with an 11-1 (1-0 MAC) record after downing Kent State University, 88-70, to open MAC play in Kent, Ohio, Jan. 4. With a victory, the Eagles will become the first squad in program history to notch a 12-1 mark to open a season. Meanwhile, the Cardinals are 5-7 (0-1 MAC) after coming up short at the University of Akron, 87-78, Jan. 4.

Veteran broadcasters Chad Bush and Greg Steiner will have the call on WEMU (89.1 FM) beginning at 6:50 p.m. Live video of the game can also be found on Eagle All-Access (subscription-based).

ALL-TIME VERSUS BSU: The Jan. 9 contest marks the 66th meeting between the 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 a 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.

LAST TIME VERSUS THE CARDINALS: EMU could not overcome a late offensive surge by Ball State, falling, 56-
in a Mid-American Conference contest, Feb. 20, 2013, at Worthen Arena. The Eagles controlled the lead, 28-25, at the 12:28 mark of the second half, but the Cardinals ended the contest with an offensive barrage of 31 points over the game's final stretch.

Eastern held a 15-13 advantage at the half, but the Cardinals were able to outscore the Eagles 43-19 in the second stanza behind 16 points and 12 rebounds from Nathalie Fontaine. The Eagles were led in scoring with eight points from both senior Taylor Bird and freshman Bianca Cage.

Both teams nearly shot identical from the floor as Eastern made 16-of-58 from the field, including 2-of-7 from beyond the arc, for a 27.6 shooting percentage. Ball State shot 27.7 percent from the floor, converting 18-of-65 buckets, including 6-of-20 from long range. The Cardinals were able to control the boards, 58-37, while also going 14-22 at the charity stripe. In contrast, EMU struggled with a 0-of-6 effort at the line.

EMU QUICK HITTERS: The Eagles surpassed their entire win total from the 2012-13 season in just nine games ... The Eagles are out-scoring opponents by 23.9 points in victories ... Eight of the Eagles' 11 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 14.2 points per game over the past five games ... During EMU's current winning streak, they are shooting 80.4 percent (86-of-107) from the free throw line ... EMU last defeated BSU, 74-43, at the Convocation Center, Feb. 25, 2012.

FOLLOW THE LEADER: Through the first 12 games of the season, there have been four (Madonna, Marygrove, Loyola and Kent State) contests in which EMU never trailed and fifth (Lawrence Tech) in which the Eagles were behind for only 58 seconds.

This year to date, EMU has led for a total of 390:93 – 80.6 percent of the time – and trailed for just 64:32 (14.5%).

LEADING THE MAC: The Eagles sit atop the Mid-American Conference in seven categories as well as ranking in the top-five in eight others. The Green and White lead the league in scoring offense (86.5), scoring margin (+20.8), rebounding offense (48.3), turnover margin (+10.9), assist-to-turnover ratio (1.3), steals (13.0) and offensive rebounds (19.3).

APPROACHING 900: Senior Natachia Watkins has scored 863 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 fifth in the EMU record book with 401 career assists. Stephanie Smiley (1998-02) holds the EMU standard with 577 helpers.

MAGIC NUMBERS: When the Eagles have scored at least 70 points, their record is 10-3. Under Head Coach Tory Verdi's leadership, Eastern Michigan is 15-3 when leading at the half and 16-1 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 310 three-points attempts in 2013-14, making 89 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 775 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 12 games, the newcomers have combined for 52.7 percent (547 points) of the squad's offense.

EMU IN MAC OPENERS: Eastern Michigan opened its 33rd Mid-American Conference slate with an 88-70 victory at
Kent State University, Jan. 4. The Green and White are 16-17 all-time in league openers dating back to 1981-82. EMU has won 10 of the last 12 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 VERSUS THE MAC: This is EMU's 33rd season competing in the Mid-American Conference. The Eagles hold a 238-292 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.

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.

REACHING FOR 75: Eastern Michigan has posted 75-or-more points in 10 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.

INTERESTING STATS ABOUT EMU: In its 11 victories this season, EMU has scored 87.5 points while the opposition has posted 63.6 points. In those games, opponents shot 36.7 percent from the field compared to 41.5 percent for the Eagles. In the defeat, the Eagles only posted 75 points, while giving up 89. Another factor in the Eagles' success was the ability to control the glass. EMU has grabbed 49.2 rebounds in the wins while forcing opponents to turn the ball over 24.5 times.

HOME COURT ADVANTAGE: The Eagles have won 44 of the last 63 home games dating back to the 2008-09 campaign. Eastern Michigan has racked up a solid home court advantage inside the friendly confines of the Convocation Center since the doors opened during the 1998-99 campaign. The Green and White has won 68.7 percent of the contests played in the building, piling up a 138-63 all-time mark.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS ON THE HORIZON: The Jan. 12 contest marks the 40th meeting between the Northern Illinois Huskies and Eastern Michigan Eagles, who first played during the 1981-82 season. Eastern leads the overall series, 30-9, and has won 25 of the last 28 games over the Cardinal and Black. The Huskies' last victory in the series occurred Jan. 17, 2009, when NIU notched a 69-62 overtime victory in DeKalb.

In the first meeting last season in Ypsilanti, Mich., Eastern Michigan held off a feisty Northern Illinois squad, 67-62, inside the Convocation Center, Jan. 31, 2013. The Eagles surrendered a substantial second-half advantage, but posted several critical defensive stops in the waning moments to hold on for the win.

Then in the season finale in DeKalb, the Eagles defeated the Huskies, 54-45, at the NIU's Convocation Center, Feb. 28, 2013. Desyree Thomas scored a then-career high 17 points to go along with five rebounds to lead the Green and White. Chelsea Hite also grabbed five boards while recording her career-high of 13 points. The Eagles outscored the Huskies, 26-12, in the paint en route to 22-of-57 shooting from the floor for a 38.6 percentage.