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Eastern Michigan University

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Cardinals Halt Eagles' Winning Streak at Five With 70-66 Decision

EMU women's hoops drops its first contest in six games despite Fouty's sixth double-double of the season

YPSILANTI, Mich. (EMUEagles.com) – The Eastern Michigan University women's basketball team saw its five game winning streak come to an end at the hands of Ball State University, Jan. 9, as the Cardinals came away with a 70-66 decision over the Eagles. The setback for EMU (11-2, 1-1 MAC) was the first in MAC play for the Green and White while Ball State (6-7, 1-1) secured its first victory of the conference season.

Olivia Fouty (Toledo, Ohio-Sylvania Northview) led the way for the Eagles, posting her sixth double-double of the 2013-14 season with 16 points and 13 rebounds. Cha Sweeney (Toledo, Ohio-Rogers) and Janay Morton (Brooklyn Park, Minn.-Osseo) each contributed 13 points, while Natachia Watkins (South Euclid, Ohio-Brush) chipped in with eight points and eight boards. As a team, Eastern shot 35.3 percent from the floor (24-of-68), including 7-of-24 from three point land. The Eagles found most of their success in the paint, scoring 30 points in that area. Forcing 22 Ball State turnovers, EMU was able to score 26 points off the miscues, including 16 on the fastbreak.

Three Cardinals reached double figures in scoring, led by 18 points from Brittany Carter. Shelbie Justice notched a double-double with 15 points and 12 rebounds, while Nathalie Fontaine tallied 12 points and corralled seven boards.
Ball State made it to the charity stripe nearly twice as much as the Green and White, shooting 18-of-33 for 54.5 percent. From the floor, BSU made 37.5 percent of its attempts (21-of-56), including 10-of-26 from beyond the arc. The Cardinals controlled the boards throughout the night, outrebounding EMU, 51-40.

Carter began scoring with a three-ball on the Cardinals' first possession, giving BSU a quick 3-0 lead to start the game. Nathalie Fontaine followed Carter's triple with one of her own, putting the Cardinals up 6-0, but a pair of fastbreak layups from Fouty and Morton brought EMU within two, 6-4, at the 15:04 mark. Fontaine then bested Morton's bucket, giving BSU a five point advantage at the first media timeout, 9-4.

Out of the break, Ball State went on a 7-1 run, pushing their lead to 11, 16-5, before Haley Moore (Milford, Neb.-Milford) stopped the run with a triple from the left wing. The Eagles shot just 27.3 percent from the floor through the first 10 minutes of play, and the offensive woes continued as the Cardinals scored the next four points and EMU missed its next four shots in the same stretch, forcing Head Coach Tory Verdi to use his first timeout of the game.

Watkins scored EMU's first field goal in nearly three minutes when she followed her shot and scored a putback layup to bring the Green and White within 10, 20-10, with 9:30 to play in the half. After a Ball State free throw, Fouty knocked down a pair of three throws and Morton converted on a triple, giving EMU a six point deficit. Jill Morrison then scored the next five-straight points for the Cardinals, putting BSU back on top by 11, 26-15, with 7:29 left in the half.

Sweeney answered for EMU, scoring five points in just over thirty seconds by way of a three-ball and a transition layup. Phillis Webb (Brooklyn Park, Minn.-Osseo) continued EMU's run, extending it to seven in-a-row. With Easter looking at a four point deficit, Justice pushed Ball State's lead back up to seven after converting on an old fashioned three-point play with just over four minutes remaining.

After the final media break the Eagles went on a quick five point spree to come within two points, 29-27, at the 3:07 mark, but the Cardinals used another three-pointer to get back on top by five. The Green and White responded with a nice second chance layup from Webb, however the Cardinals wouldn't be deterred as Katie Murphy was fouled on three occasions and converted 4-of-6 from the charity stripe to keep the Cardinals ahead 36-31 heading into the half.

Eastern was led by Sweeney's eight points in the opening half, while Fouty and Webb each added six. The Eagles struggled from the floor, knocking down just 11 shots in 30 attempts for a 36.7 percent clip. Eastern knocked down 50 percent of its triples, but went just 5-of-11 from the charity stripe. Conversely, Ball State hit 40 percent of their shots from both three-point land and in field goal attempts. The big difference was that the Cardinals knocked down 71.4 percent of their free throws (5-of-11) to giving them a 36-31 lead at the break. Both the Eagles and Cardinals coughed up the rock on multiple occasions; the Green and White forced 13 BSU turnovers, while they flipped the ball over nine times.

Fouty started the scoring in the second half with a jumper in the paint, but Carter responded with a jumper of her own to keep the Cardinals ahead by five. After trading buckets, Desyree Thomas (Waterford, Mich.-Mott) hit a floater in the paint to cut the EMU deficit to two, 39-37, with just under 17 minutes to play in the half.

With Ball State leading 44-41 at the 13:22 mark, Fouty converted the old-fashioned three-point play to knot things up at 44. In the ensuing BSU possession, Sweeney picked the Cardinals' pocket and took the ball coast to coast, dropping in the layup while getting fouled. Sweeney knocked down the free throw after a Ball State timeout, giving the Eagles their first lead of the game, 47-44, with 13:08 on the clock.

After falling behind, BSU scored seven straight to regain the lead, 51-47, at the 11:23 mark. Following a nearly three
minute scoring drought from both teams, Morton poured one in from downtown, and Webb had a quick steal on the other end resulting in a fastbreak layup for Thomas to give them a slight 52-51 lead with under 10 minutes to play.

The Cardinals wouldn't go away quietly, pouring in the next eight points, taking a 59-52 lead. Both teams continued to trade buckets until the Cardinals scored four in-a-row to extend the BSU lead to nine, 65-56. EMU brought the margin to within six when Fouty knocked down a triple from the wing, making it 67-61. After sloppy play up and down, Watkins brought the Green and White within four, 67-63, on a putback layup with just 55.7 seconds left on the clock.

The Eagles had to resort to fouling down the stretch, and Woody knocked down the front end of a one-and-one, putting the Cardinals up five. The next time down the floor, Morton struck on a three-ball to make it a two point game, 68-66, for Eastern. Ball State would convert a pair of free ones with 13 seconds on the clock to ice the game for the Cardinals, giving the Eagles their first conference loss of the season, 70-66.

Eastern hits the road for its next game. The Green and White will travel to DeKalb, Ill. for a MAC contest with the Huskies of Northern Illinois University. Tip for the ladies’ game is scheduled for 2 p.m. CT at the NIU Convocation Center.