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EMU Women's Basketball: Women's Basketball Shuffles Off to Buffalo January 17, 2014

Eastern Michigan University

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WOMEN'S BASKETBALL SHUFFLES OFF TO BUFFALO: The Eastern Michigan University women's basketball team hits the road again Saturday, Jan. 18, for a game against the University at Buffalo. Tip-off for the Mid-American Conference cross-divisional contest is scheduled for 2:30 p.m. at Alumni Arena. The game is the first leg of a doubleheader with the UB men's team playing host to Kent State University at 6 p.m.

The Eagles enter the game with a mark of 12-3 (2-2 MAC) in a five-way tie for second place in the MAC West Division. Meanwhile, the Bulls are 8-7 (1-3 MAC) after upending the University of Toledo, 51-46, at Alumni Arena, Jan. 15.

Neither WEMU nor Eagle All-Access will be making the trip to broadcast the game. Fans wanting to follow the Eagles can find live stats and links to the video broadcast at UBBulls.com.

ALL-TIME AGAINST BUFFALO: The Jan. 18 contest marks the 20th meeting between the Bulls and Eagles, who first met during the 1993-94 season. EMU leads the series, 13-6, including winning 10 of the last 12 meetings between the two schools. The teams met only once during the 2012-13 regular season with UB claiming a 79-63 decision at the EMU Convocation Center.

The last time the squads played at Alumni Arena in Buffalo, N.Y. was during the 2011-12 regular season when EMU notched a 72-54 victory.
APPROACHING 900: Senior Natachia Watkins has scored 892 points in her career and ranks 23rd all-time. There are currently 21 players in the 900-point club for EMU women's basketball. Over the last eight games, the South Euclid, Ohio native is averaging 12.5 points and 6.6 rebounds. During that stretch she has also reached double figures in points in seven games, including a season-best 21 point effort at Detroit, Dec. 15.

CHECKS AND BALANCES: In EMU's latest victory, a 83-77 win over in-state rival Western Michigan University, Jan. 15, five Eagles reached double figures in the scoring column. That balanced offensive attack marks the fifth time this year that five different players have scored double digits, and the Green and White are a perfect 5-0 in those contests. Coach Tory Verdi's squad also had five score 10-or-more points against Loyola-Chicago (Dec. 4), Detroit (Dec. 15) and Monmouth (Dec. 22). In addition, seven Eagles tallied double figures versus Marygrove (Nov. 30).

'GET A T-O BABY!': Unlike Dick Vitale's famous catchphrase where he lets coaches know they need a timeout during ESPN broadcasts, EMU Head Coach Tory Verdi and his team need to force more turnovers than they give away; so far this season, the Eagles have done a great job buying into this system. EMU has had fewer turnovers than its opposition in 14 of its 15 games this season. The only time Eastern coughed up the basketball more than its competition was in a setback to Northern Illinois, Jan. 12. Moreover, the Green and White has forced 30 or more turnovers three times throughout the 2013-14 campaign in wins versus Marygrove (Nov. 30), Wagner (Dec. 21) and Monmouth (Dec. 22).

SHARING AND STEALING THE ROCK: Aside from averaging double figures in scoring, EMU senior guard Desyree Thomas finds scoring opportunities for her team in other ways. She leads the conference in steals with 49 on the season while also tallying 70 assists good for third in the MAC. Moreover, the 119 combined assists and steals are the second most out of any player in the league, trailing only Toledo's Andola Dortch, who ranks second in both categories, by one (74 assists, 46 steals).

LAST YEAR AGAINST UB: In the only meeting between the two programs last year, EMU was unsuccessful at defending home court in a 79-63 loss to Buffalo, Feb. 16, 2013, at the EMU Convocation Center. A first half run by the Bulls and early foul trouble for playmaker Desyree Thomas were too much for the Eagles to overcome despite a 13 point, 13 rebound performance from senior center India Hairston. The Eagles shot 23-of-71 for 32.4 percent, their three triples all coming from Bianca Cage who scored nine for the game. Buffalo shot 28-of-56 for 50 percent. The visiting Bulls were led by the play of their speedy point guard Margeaux Guplian, 13 points and nine assists, and the scoring of Detroit native Cheridy Thornton, who led all scorers with 16.

CLIMBING THE ASSIST CHARTS: Senior Desyree Thomas is currently fifth in the EMU record book with 407 career assists. Stephanie Smiley (1998-02) holds the EMU standard with 577 helpers.

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 22.4 points in victories ... Eight of the Eagles’ 12 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.

LEADING THE MAC: The Eagles sit atop the Mid-American Conference in six categories as well as ranking in the top-five in nine others. The Green and White lead the league in scoring margin (+15.2), rebounding offense (46.8), turnover margin (+9.1), steals (12.5), turnover margin (1.2) and offensive rebounds (18.1).

INTERESTING STATS ABOUT EMU: In its 12 victories this season, EMU has scored 87.2 points while the
opposition has posted 64.8 points. In those games, opponents shot 36.8 percent from the field compared to 41.8 percent for the Eagles. In the defeats, the Eagles have only posted 65.0 points, while giving up 78.7. Another factor in the Eagles' success has been the ability to control the glass. EMU has grabbed 48.8 rebounds in the wins while forcing opponents to turn the ball over 23.8 times. In the losses, the Green and White are -8.0 on the glass (38.7 to 46.7).

**FOUTY TURNING INTO A DOUBLE-DDOUBLE MACHINE:** Forward Olivia Fouty has 14 career double-doubles, which ranks sixth most in program history since the stat began being tracked during the 1999-2000 campaign.

**EMU SUPPORTS PLAY4KAY BY WEARING PINK:** EMU will show its support of the Women's Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA) breast cancer awareness and fundraising program, "Play4Kay" (formerly known as WBCA Pink Zone), by sporting pink uniforms Sunday, Jan. 26, in its home game against the University of Akron. Game time is scheduled for 2 p.m. at the Convocation Center.
The annual Play4Kay initiative provides coaches and student athletes around the country the opportunity to "come together as one" to raise awareness for breast cancer research on the court, in their communities and beyond. Throughout February, high schools, universities and local organizations are dedicated to raise funds and awareness to support the Kay Yow Cancer Fund's (KYCF), mission of supporting scientific research focused on women's cancers, as well as projects assisting the underserved community.

**MAGIC NUMBERS:** When the Eagles have scored at least 70 points, their record is 11-3. Under Head Coach Tory Verdi's leadership, Eastern Michigan is 16-3 when leading at the half and 17-1 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 375 three-point attempts in 2013-14, making 107 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 750 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 15 games, the newcomers have combined for 52.9 percent (656 points) of the squad's offense.

**BOWLING GREEN ON THE HORIZON:** The Jan. 23 contest marks the 62nd meeting between the Bowling Green Falcons and Eastern Michigan Eagles, who first met during the 1976-1977 season. BGSU has dominated the all-time series, 47-14, including winning the last 11 meetings between the two schools. Last season, the Falcons captured a 61-47 victory at the Convocation Center, Jan. 27, 2013. EMU's last victory in the series occurred Feb. 19, 2005, when the Eagles notched a 57-52 win at the Convocation Center.