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Eastern Michigan University

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Spend Super Bowl Sunday With the Eagles and RedHawks

Sunday, Feb. 2, 2014 » 2:04 p.m. » Convocation Center (8,784) » Ypsilanti, Mich.

SPEND SUPER BOWL SUNDAY WITH THE EAGLES AND REDHAWKS: The Eastern Michigan University women's basketball team hosts Miami University Sunday, Feb. 2, in a Mid-American Conference cross-divisional tilt. The opening tip is scheduled for 2:04 p.m. at the Convocation Center. Eastern Michigan enters the game with a 12-7 (2-6 MAC) record, after an 82-67 road setback to Central Michigan University, Jan. 30. The RedHawks are 6-13 (2-6 MAC) on the season following a 58-56 loss to the University at Buffalo, Jan. 30. Veteran broadcasters Chad Bush and Greg Steiner will have the call on WEMU (89.1 FM) beginning at 1:50 p.m. Live video and statistics of the game can also be found on EMUEagles.com.

ALL-TIME AGAINST MIAMI: The Feb. 2 contest marks the 53rd meeting between the Miami RedHawks and Eastern Michigan Eagles, who first met during the 1979-80 season. Miami has dominated the all-time series, 37-15, but the Eagles have won three of the last four meetings. A year ago, Miami rolled to a 70-48 win in Oxford, Ohio, Jan. 20, 2013.

SUPER BOWL = EMU WIN?: For just the fourth time in the program's 38-year history, the Eagles will play on the same day as the National Football League's Super Bowl. EMU has posted victories on two occasions, only dropping last year's matchup to Ball State, 56-41. Each time EMU has played on the date though, the American Football Conference (AFC) Champions have walked away with victories. So, if EMU's winning tradition holds true to form, the
Denver Broncos will also defeat the Seattle Seahawks in Super Bowl XLVIII. The then-Hurons notched a 79-74 overtime victory against Pittsburgh at venerable Bowen Field House, Jan. 20, 1980, while the Pittsburgh Steelers were capturing a 31-19 decision over the Los Angeles Rams in Super Bowl XIV. Then on Feb. 5, 2005, Eastern Michigan finished off Central Michigan, 60-48, in Mount Pleasant, Mich. as the New England Patriots edged the Philadelphia Eagles, 24-21, in Super Bowl XXXIX.

TOP OF THE MAC: Although the Eagles have seen its struggles on finding wins in league play this season, the team remains at the top of the MAC in three offensive categories, while Miami has been unable to climb the charts in league standings. The RedHawks rank above the Eagles in only 5-of-21 offensive categories, while the Green and White sit atop the list in rebounding offense (46.0 per game), steals (11.7) and offensive rebounds per game (17.8).

Although Miami has had a hard time putting big numbers on the board, the team can make the free shot from the charity stripe. The RedHawks rank second in the league as they post a 75.5 free throw percentage on the team, while Eastern is shooting 70.6 percent from the line.

MAC FRESHMAN OF THE YEAR CANDIDATES: Freshmen Cha Sweeney and Janay Morton are both making a strong candidacy for the MAC Freshman of the Year award. The two are the only freshmen ranked inside the league's top 20 in scoring, Sweeney is sixth in the MAC averaging a team-best 15.6 points a game while ranking ninth in both steals (1.9 spg) and assist-to-turnover ratio (1.3). Meanwhile, Morton cracks the ranking in three-pointers made (3rd - 2.3), scoring (7th - 15.37 ppg), free-throw percentage (14th - 75.9) and steals (15th - 1.5 spg).

No EMU student-athlete has won the award since Alyssa Pittman claimed the honor following the 2006-07 campaign.

TOP FRESHMEN SCORERS: Cha Sweeney and Janay Morton are one of just 14 freshmen ranked nationally in the NCAA's top 250 scorers. The first-year players include: Kelsey Plum, Washington (20.0), Malia Tate-DeFreitas, Hampton (19.1), Sara Dickey, Evansville (18.1), Kaela Davis, Georgia Tech (17.6), Raven Bankston, Delaware St. (17.5), Larryn Brooks, Indiana (17.4), Kaylah Keys, High Point (16.8), Fanni Szabo, Dartmouth (16.5), Diamond DeShields, North Carolina (16.3), Nia Coffey, Northwestern (16.1), Sweeney (15.6) Erica Williams, Winthrop (15.3), Morton (15.3) and Natalie Butler, Georgetown (14.6).

TOO SHORT?: Standing at just 5-foot-2, Cha Sweeney might have been labeled coming out of high school as someone too short to play Division I basketball. The Toledo, Ohio product has so far proved those critics wrong, as she ranks 190th nationally in scoring and is the shortest player ranked nationally inside the top 250 scorers. Sweeney joins Longwood's Daeisha Brown (15.9 ppg), Ole Miss' Valencia McFarland (16.4 ppg) and Nicholls State's Emani White (18.8 ppg) as the only four players nationwide to average 15-or-more points a contest and be 5-foot-4 or shorter.

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 19 games, the newcomers have combined for 55.9 percent (853 points) of the squad's offense.

LOOKING TO GET BACK ON TRACK: After a stellar non-conference start to the season, the Eagles have found the Mid-American Conference portion of the schedule to be much more frustrating. EMU has dropped six of its first eight league affairs and has seen its offensive numbers change dramatically. The Green and White's point production has slowed by more than 14 points per contests (86.4 to 72.1), while giving up 13 more a game (65.4 to 79.0). Rebounding has also been a concern, as opponents are grabbing nearly 10 rebounds more a contest than the Eagles in MAC play.

REBOUNDING WOES: Heading into the season the Eagles knew they might be at a disadvantage on the glass with just one Eagle tipping the 6-foot mark. Despite the size differential, Eastern continues to lead the Mid-American Conference in rebounding offense with 46.0 caroms per contest. However, the Green and White have been out-
rebounded by more than 13 boards a game during the current four-game losing skid. In the setback to Akron, Jan. 24, the Zips dominated the glass with 65 rebounds including 22 by reigning MAC Player of the Year Rachel Tecca.

**NORTHWEST OHIO COMES TO YPSI:** Eastern Michigan has long had a history of pulling student-athletes from Northwest Ohio, but Head Coach Tory Verdi has taken it to a whole new level. The Eagles feature three products from the Toledo area including Olivia Fouty (Sylvania Northview), KaBria Walker (Toledo Rogers) and Cha Sweeney (Toledo Rogers). The three have combined for 28.9 percent of the team’s rebounds and 34.3 percent of its offense.

**SEEKING 20/20 VISION:** One of Head Coach Tory Verdi’s goals with the team’s uptempo offense is to create more possessions and to put up 20-or-more shots than the opposition. The Eagles have accomplished that feat on four occasions, including taking a season-best 33 more shots than Marygrove, Nov. 30. The Eagles have been close to the goal in three other games, most recently taking 18 more field goal attempts than Buffalo, Jan. 18.

**WATKINS BECOMES PART OF THE 900 CLUB:** Senior Natachia Watkins notched her 903rd career point Thursday, Jan. 23 at Bowling Green State University. Watkins currently ranks 20th all-time in EMU laurels.

**STOP, THIEF!** With her three steals at Buffalo, Jan. 18, senior Desyree Thomas became the EMU all-time leader in steals in a career with 267. Thomas passed Ryan Coleman’s previous standard of 265 swipes which has stood since the 2006 campaign. The Mid-American Conference’s active leader in steals, Thomas, ranks sixth nationally among current players in steals. Overall, Thomas’ total ranks 17th in league history. Toledo’s Kim Knuth (1995-99) holds the MAC standard with 368 steals.

**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 68.7 points, while giving up 82.0 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 -11.3 on the glass (41.1 to 52.4).

**SHE SHOOTS AND SCORES:** Freshman Janay Morton posted a career-high 34 points and seven three-pointers in the Eagles’ overtime loss at Buffalo, Jan. 18. Morton became part of an elite group, as she now ranks 15th in the EMU laurels for most points scored in a single contest. Her seven three-pointers also put her in a tie for fifth-most made in a single game, and are the most by an EMU student-athlete since Tavelyn James drained a record 10 treys against Kent State University, Feb. 11, 2012. Furthermore, her 63.6 percent (7-of-11) from beyond the arc ranks 12thbest in EMU history.

**LAST YEAR IN OXFORD:** EMU dropped a 70-48 road decision to Miami, Jan. 20, 2013, inside Millett Hall. The Eagles led by as many as eight points in the later stages of the first half, but the RedHawks began the second frame on a 15-3 run and ultimately cruised to victory.

Following an opening half shooting 50 percent from the floor, the Green and White’s offense went silent in the second. EMU started the final 20 minutes shooting 1-of-16 and finished the game 20-of-58 (34.5 percent) including 3-of-17 (17.6 percent) from long range. From the free-throw line, Eastern Michigan was a disappointing 5-of-17 (29.4 percent).

Bianca Cage used a 3-of-9 effort from long distance to rack up 15 points and lead the EMU scoring charge. India Hairston posted 11 points and Natachia Watkins had 10 despite fouling out with just over 12 minutes left in the contest.

For the game, the EMU defense forced 18 Miami turnovers and recorded 14 steals. Six Eagles were credited with at
least one takeaway including Desyree Thomas who had six.

Miami put up steady offensive numbers throughout the game, finishing 22-of-57 (38.6 percent) from the field. Three RedHawks' players hit double figures with Courtney Osborn scoring 18, Hannah Robertson putting in 13 and Kirsten Olowinski chipping in with 12.