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Women's Cross Country/Track and Field Adds 13 to 2014-15 Recruiting Class

Head Coach Sue Parks rounds out the Eagles with additions across the board

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YPSILANTI, Mich. (EMUeagles.com) — Eastern Michigan University's women's cross country and track and field Head Coach Sue Parks has announced the addition of 13 new members to her program. The group will look to strengthen the Eagles' squad even further, as the Green and White boasted one of the most consistent overall campaigns in the Mid-American Conference throughout the 2013-14 seasons, taking fourth at the 2013 MAC Cross Country Championships and third at both the 2014 MAC Indoor and Outdoor Track and Field Championships.

"I am very pleased to welcome this new class of incoming student-athletes to our program," said Parks. "We needed to continue to add both top athletes along with improving our depth and I believe that we achieved that with this group. This is a well-rounded, hard-working group that wants to be a part of the great EMU tradition and help our team strive to win conference titles."

The first new face on the squad will be Rebekah Branham, who is a graduate of Circleville High School in Ohio. Branham was the district and region champion in the 400m dash, and went on to take sixth in the Ohio Division II State Meet. She boasts a personal record of 56.52 seconds in the event, and is also a talented 800m runner with a high school best of 2:14.50. "Rebekah is a very versatile and talented runner," commented Parks. "We're excited to see how she responds to the training at the college level; we look for her to make an impact for us in the middle distance."
A Michigan product from Seaholm High School, Danielle Bentzley will see action in the cross country and track seasons for the Eagles. She holds a 5000m personal record of 18:39 in cross country, while her track times in the 1600m and 3200m stand at 5:07.79 and 11:16.66, respectively. Parks looks forward to training the incoming recruit, explaining, "Danielle is an untapped talent who hasn't put in a lot of miles. Once she gets a good block of training behind her, I believe that she will thrive at the college level. She has been part of a state championship program in cross country, so she knows what it is like to compete for a team title."

Eastern will see the addition of a pair of international standouts in Marion Chaveau and Sofie Gallein. Chaveau comes to the team from the University of Montpellier, which is the same university from which two-time MAC champion and First Team All-American Sarah Chauchard transferred. With a personal best of 14.11 in the 100m hurdles and a long jump distance of 5.45 meters/17 feet 10.75-inches, assistant coach Jon Debogory is excited to train the French native. "Marion is a talented athlete who has international experience. We look for her to provide immediate help in the hurdles," remarked the second-year coach.

Gallein will be an athlete that should score exceptionally well in the 1500m and 3000m steeplechase and push senior Victoria Voronko to further improve upon her outstanding EMU record times. The Belgian transfer, who comes to Eastern from the University of Leuven, has recorded times of 4:29.08 in the 1500m and 10:11.75 in the steeplechase. Parks is eager to put the pair into action alongside each other, saying, "Sofie is a proven distance runner with international experience in both cross country and track. She is an exciting addition to our distance program, and we're looking forward to having a great 1-2 punch in the steeplechase with her and Victoria."

The program will add sprinter Jasmine Jones to the lineup for the 2014-15 season, who was ranked No. 5 in the 200m and No. 14 in the 100m in the state of Pennsylvania for the 2014 outdoor season, as well as No. 9 in the state in both the indoor 60m and 200m. A graduate of Hempfield High School, Jones will bring fast times to the Eagles' program in the 100m (12.15), 200m (24.69), and 400m (57.70). "Jasmine is a powerful sprinter who was part of a state championship team," commented Parks. "She is a tough competitor who is used to running multiple races, and will provide much needed depth for us in the sprints and relays."

Joining the distance group will be Jordan McDermitt, who prepped at Davison High School. "Jordann is an outstanding addition to our distance group," explained Parks. "She had a breakthrough senior track season and I'm very excited about working with her and helping her continue to improve. She is a hard worker and a tough competitor and I believe that she will make an immediate impact at the college level." McDermitt holds times of 4:48.43 in the 1600m and 10:26.80 in the 3200m on the track, while her personal-best 5000m cross country mark stands at 18:06. Her time in the 1600m set the Davison school record and was earned McDermitt runner-up in the state of Michigan while also earning the 26th-fastest time in the nation. She went on to stand on the podium at the state meet in the 3200m, clocking in at 10:28.58 for third.

With the graduation of EMU hammer throw record holder Lydia Gomez-Diaz, the Eagles will look to Megan Pendleton to join the Eagles after her prep career at Woodmoore High School in Ohio. Pendleton will add depth in the discus as well, as the incoming recruit was the No. 7 thrower in Ohio and was ranked at No. 83 in the nation with a throw of 43.53 meters/142 feet 10-inches, earning her a district and regional title. Pendleton also excels in the weight throw during the indoor season, earning a national ranking of No. 69 with a throw of 12.55 meters/41 feet 2.25-inches. Coach Debogory will mentor the incoming thrower, stating, "I'm really excited about working with Megan this coming year. She has had limited practice with the hammer, so I'm sure that she'll improve significantly."

Lauren Pottschmidt is no stranger to the Eastern Michigan family, as her father Shawn Pottschmidt also donned the Green and White in the early 1990's under the tutelage of Parks's father and legendary EMU Head Coach Bob Parks. The incoming freshman graduated from Penn High School in Indiana, and has a cross country personal best of 19:01 in the 5000m and holds a standard of 11:22.68 in the 3200m on the track. "Lauren comes from a running family and a very good high school program," explained Parks. "She is very motivated to do well at the college level, and I know that she will be willing to put in the work necessary to improve. We're excited that she followed in her dad's footsteps and chose to run at EMU."
The Green and White will add another Michigan native in Chante Roberts from Waverly High School. A talented 200m and 400m sprinter at the high school level, Roberts also competed at the 2013 AAU Junior Olympic Championships, taking 24th in the 200m with a time of 25.33. She holds a personal record of an even 25.00 in the event, and has a personal best of 56.34 in the 400m. Parks commended Roberts on her work ethic and potential within the team, saying, "Chante has the desire to be a part of a good team and will work hard to improve. She will give much needed depth in the 400m area."

The 2014-15 team will also feature Tifani Byrd, Natalie Cizmas, Darcie Marion, and Claire Mesa. Byrd will look to give depth in the jumps and hurdles, as Parks explained. The Toms River North High School graduate hailing from New Jersey holds solid marks in the 55m hurdles (8.33), 100m hurdles (14.60), long jump (5.48 meters/18 feet), and triple jump (10.52 meters/34 feet 6.5-inches). Cizmas will join the Eagles after prepping at Chippewa Valley High School. She competes on the track and during the cross country season, holding personal records of 2:23.99 in the 800m and 19:17 in the cross country 5000m. "Natalie is a versatile runner who will add depth to our middle distance group. She is working hard this summer to try to make an impact," remarked Parks. The final Michigan native to join the team, Marion was ranked first in the state in the weight throw and 41st in the nation, throwing a distance of 14.08 meters/46 feet 2.50-inches. The Madison High School graduate also competes in the shot put, earning a runner-up finish in the MITCA D3 Team State Championships with a throw of 11.50 meters/37 feet 9-inches. Mesa took seventh in the Illinois 1-A State Championship as a representative of Rockford Lutheran High School, holding a personal-best 2:20.26 in the 800m. "Claire has improved a lot throughout this track season. I'm excited to see her continue to improve once she has a strong group to work with," explained Parks.