EMU Women's Gymnastics: Eagles Ready to Protect Home Floor as MAC Championships Host

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Eagles Ready to Protect Home Floor as MAC Championships Host

EMU Gymnastics host conference championships, March 22, at the Convocation Center

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YPSILANTI, Mich. (EMUEagles.com) -- The Eastern Michigan University gymnastics team will look to protect its home floor as all seven Mid-American Conference gymnastics teams will converge on the Convocation Center in Ypsilanti, Mich. with EMU hosting the 2014 MAC Gymnastics Championships, March 22. The conference championship meet is set to begin at 2 p.m.

Where We Stand: Following a 194.075-193.600 conference road victory over Ball State, March 14, the Eagles enter the conference championship with a 2-4 MAC record, finishing the regular season in fifth place. Kent State took down the six other schools for a perfect 6-0 mark. Central Michigan followed with a 5-1 mark with its only loss coming to the hands of the Golden Flashes. Bowling Green placed third at 4-2 while Northern Illinois split its conference meets at 3-3. After EMU, Western Michigan and Ball State round out the standings with marks of 1-5 and 0-6, respectively.

Hoping For The Same Outcome: EMU will be the site of the conference championship meet for the first time since 2007. That year, the Eagles protected their territory by claiming the program's first conference crown in 26 years. The Green and White was led by all around champion and All-MAC First Team honoree Jolene Worley, edging out second-place finisher Kent State University by less then three-tenths of a point. EMU posted a season-high team score of 194.525.
EMU Gymnast Willette Earns First Team All-MAC Honors: EMU junior Anna Willette has been named to the All-Mid-American Conference First Team, the league office announced, March 19. The All-MAC teams were voted on by the conference's head coaches. Willette earns All-MAC accolades for the second straight season after being second team All-MAC one season ago. She is the first Eagle in program history to earn first team honors since the regular season All-MAC teams began in 2013.

Willette has been a focal point in the EMU lineup all season long in three of the four events. Through her 27 routines, 21 of them have been a 9.700 or higher, including seven at 9.800 or higher. Willette earned a career-high 9.850 on beam to finish third at the Eagle Invitational, March 8, a quad meet hosted at EMU. She ranks fifth in the conference on beam with an average score of 9.767. Along with her impressive scores all season long, four of those scores led to individual titles with two on vault and two on beam.

Sister Act: When the Eastern Michigan and Ball State competed Friday night, March 14, it was a special meet for one Eagle and one Cardinal. EMU sophomore Kimberly Ebeyer saw her younger sister, Sarah, on the opposing side. Although they are not identical twins, the two sisters recorded identical scores in the two events that they both were in their respective team's starting lineup. The two Ebeyers earned 9.650 on vault before tallying a pair of 9.750s on floor. Kimberly also competed on the beam for the Eagles, receiving a 9.650 from the judges.

Taking the Floor: In the Eagles' victory over Ball State, March 14, Head Coach Steve Wilce's squad outscored the home Cardinals in three out of the four apparatuses, including on floor where the Green and White tallied a season-high 49.025. Redshirt-juniors Chantelle Loehner and Kaylee Meyers tied for the floor title as each recorded a 9.850. Moreover, Loehner's mark was a career-high for the Cary, Ill. native. Team co-captain Paulina Miller followed with a 9.800 for third place, and senior Shawna Ciaramella notched a new personal-best 9.775. Tying her sister Sarah who competes for Ball State, Kimberly Ebeyer added a 9.750.

Catching Them at the Wrong Time: Head Coach Steve Wilce and his team have been unfortunate to catch opponents in their peak form during the season. Out of the Eagles' nine losses throughout the 2014 campaign, seven of the setbacks have been due to the opposition notching season-high marks in meets against the Green and White. One of the two foes who did not record a season-best was Central Michigan, and that was because the Chippewas already tallied their high mark in a previous meet against the Eagles.

The Floor Queen: Redshirt-junior Chantelle Loehner has claimed the floor titles in three of the past four EMU meets. She won the exercise in both meets against Air Force, Feb. 26 and March 1, tying the top mark with a score of 9.800 on each routine. Then against the Ball State Cardinals in the Eagles' last meet before the MAC Championships, March 14, Loehner tied teammate Kaylee Meyers for the top score as she earned a career-high 9.850. The personal best also led Eastern to a season-high team total of 49.025 in the event.

Last Year's Conference Championships: The Eagles ended its 2013 season in sixth place at last year's MAC Championships, March 23, 2013 at University Arena in Kalamazoo, Mich. EMU tallied a team score of 193.675 on the afternoon. Central Michigan University and host Western Michigan University finished the meet tied at 194.800 to become MAC co-champions. Kent State University, the regular season MAC champions, placed third (194.775) followed by Northern Illinois University (194.050), Bowling Green State University (193.750), EMU (193.675) and Ball State University (192.500).

Kent State's Marie Case took the all-around competition with a score of 39.250. Second team All-MAC EMU gymnast Khadijah Hudson received a 37.750 from the judges to take 11th in the meet. The Eagles’ other All-MAC Second Team honoree, Anna Willette, led the Green and White in all three events she competed in. The Pylesville,
Md. native finished second on the balance beam, scoring a 9.800. She took ninth on both the vault and the uneven parallel bars, with marks of 9.800 and 9.750, respectively.