EMU Women's Soccer: Eagles Kick Off 2014 Campaign With Pair of Exhibition Contests

Eastern Michigan University
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EMU soccer hosts Detroit, Aug. 14, before facing Butler, Aug. 16, at Scicluna Field

YPSILANTI, Mich. (EMUEagles.com) -- The Eastern Michigan University soccer team will take the pitch for the first time in 2014 with a pair of scrimmages at Scicluna Field. The preseason begins as the Green and White host the University of Detroit-Mercy on Thursday, Aug. 14, at 5 p.m. Two days later, EMU returns to its home pitch to battle against Butler University, Aug. 16. First touch against the Bulldogs is scheduled for 4 p.m.

LOFTY EXPECTATIONS: With nearly the entire team returning from 2012, the EMU soccer team came into the 2013 season with high expectations that included a Mid-American Conference championship. The Eagles accomplished that goal with a 12-7-2 (8-2-1) record for the program's third regular season conference crown and first since 2003. The Green and White lost five seniors to last year's team but return a plethora of talent that hopes to defend the team's MAC regular season title.

The Eagles will once again be led by 16th-year Head Coach Scott Hall, who has taken the squad to the conference postseason 12 times along with winning the MAC Tournament in 1999. Hall's 2014 group features 19 returning letter winners along with eight starters and six newcomers.

EMU soccer fans will have plenty of opportunity to see the 2014 Eagles in action at Scicluna Field, as the squad
plays a total of nine home games which begins with the two exhibition matchups as well as the regular season opener versus the Fordham University, Aug. 22.

**SCOUTING DETROIT:** While this contest is only a scrimmage, the Eagles will look to defeat the Titans yet again after claiming a 3-2 victory in the regular season opener, Aug. 23, the last time the two faced off against one another. The Titans posted an 11-8-1 mark in 2013, including a 4-3-0 record in the Horizon League. Detroit advanced to the Horizon League Tournament semifinals before falling to top-seeded Milwaukee, 3-0.

A solid core returns for Detroit with eight starters back for Mike Lupenec, who remains head coach for the program's 22nd season. Two seniors named Alyssa lead the way as Alyssa Lotito and Alyssa Riley will look to power the offense just like they did in 2013. Riley paced the team in scoring with six goals and 16 points, while Lotito had a knack for finding her teammates in scoring opportunities by dishing out 11 assists. Starting keeper Martha Dunbar is back as well to guard in between the posts; last season, she recorded eight shutouts and held a 1.17 goals against average.

**BATTLING BUTLER:** In the second and final scrimmage of the preseason, Eastern battles the Bulldogs of Butler. Last season, the two teams played to a 1-1 tie in Indianapolis, Sept. 8. Butler finished the 2013 campaign with a nearly identical record as the Eagles, going 11-7-2. However, the Bulldogs posted a sub-.500 4-5-0 mark in their first season competing in the Big East Conference.

After a stellar sophomore season, Sophia Maccagnone will look to pace Butler on the offensive side of the field yet again. The Shelby Township, Mich. native tallied 10 goals and eight assists in 2013, while teammate Elise Kotsakis followed closely behind as she returns for her senior season. A question mark for the Bulldogs will be in goal with the graduation of Julie Burton. Butler has three keepers on the team, but only junior Mackenzie Hopkins boasts playing experience, appearing in four games a season ago.

**REGULAR SEASON ON THE HORIZON:** Following the two scrimmages to get his team used to playing against competition, Coach Hall leads the Eagles into the regular season. Eastern begins the 2014 campaign at home against Fordham University, Aug. 22, at 4 p.m. Rounding out the opening weekend, EMU welcomes the University of Indiana, a 2013 NCAA Tournament qualifier, to Ypsilanti for a Sunday afternoon affair between two solid programs. The Aug. 24 contest is set for a 1 p.m. start time.