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Recommended Citation
Eastern Michigan University, "EMU Women's Gymnastics: EMU Gymnasts Open 2014 Home Slate Against No. 19 CMU" (2014). Eastern Michigan University, Department of Intercollegiate Athletics. EMU Archives, Digital Commons @ EMU (http://commons.emich.edu/sports_scr/717)
EMU Gymnasts Open 2014 Home Slate Against No. 19 CMU

Eagles and Chippewas will match up in Bowen Field House, Feb. 7, at 7 p.m.

2/4/2014 3:45:00 PM

YPSILANTI, Mich. (EMUeagles.com) - Nearly one week after earning its highest score in a decade, the Eastern Michigan University gymnastics team will host its first meet of the 2014 season as the Eagles battle the No.19-ranked Central Michigan University Chippewas for the second straight week, Feb. 7. The Mid-American Conference dual will begin at 7 p.m. inside Bowen Field House.

What A Score!: After not reaching the 193-point mark in their first two meets, the Eagles broke out a 194.800 at the Michigan/Illinois Challenge, Feb. 1. EMU partnered with in-state rival and host Central Michigan, combining for a score of 391.400 to top Illinois institutions Illinois State University and the University of Illinois-Chicago, who totaled a 384.450.

The Green and White recorded season-bests on all four apparatuses with a 48.625 on vault, a 48.525 on bars, a 48.775 on beam and a 48.875 on the floor. Eastern's team score was the best mark in a decade. The Eagles tallied a 195.550 at the Mid-American Conference Championship, March 19, 2004. Coincidentally, the conference championship meet that year was hosted at CMU.

There's No Place Like Home: The matchup between the Eagles and Chippewas will be the first of four home meets for Eastern this season. Following the dual against CMU, Head Coach Steve Wilce and his squad host Western Michigan, Feb. 15, in Bowen Field House. The Eagles wrap up their home slate in the venerable building, March 8, hosting the Air Force Academy, Northern Illinois University and Temple University for the Eagle Invitational. Then,
EMU Gymnastics will serve as host of the 2014 MAC Championships, March 22, with the action taking place inside the Convocation Center.

**Meyers Makes Her Mark:** EMU gymnast Kaylee Meyers led the Eagles to a team total of 194.800 at the Michigan/Illinois Challenge, Feb. 1, the program's highest mark in 10 years. The redshirt junior earned a personal-best 9.875 from the judges in the floor exercise, tying for the 10th-best mark in EMU history. Meyers also found success on the balance beam, recording a mark of 9.775 to finish seventh in the quad meet. So far this season, the Saint Joseph, Mo. native has competed for the Eagles on beam and floor for each meet.

**Chip Dip:** After earning the top spot at the Michigan/Illinois Challenge, Feb. 1, with a score of 196.600, CMU moved up four spots in the national rankings. The Chippewas are ranked No. 19 in the country, averaging a team total of 195.120 to go along with their undefeated 7-0 record. Central is the highest-ranked team out of all seven MAC institutions that sport gymnastics teams.

Senior Brittany Petzold leads the squad, touting the 21st-best all around average in the country at 39.175 while also leading the MAC on bars with a 9.831 performance average. Brittany, along with her younger sister Kirsten, are currently the top two vaulters in the MAC with the elder Petzold holding the top spot by one one-thousandth of a point at 9.831. CMU’s Halle Moraw is the conference’s best thus far when it comes to the floor exercise, averaging a 9.855 per routine. She is also second in the MAC on beam, just behind a 9.780 average by teammate Taylor Noonan.

**Top O’ The MAC:** After receiving all-conference accolades a season ago, two Eagles have quickly soared to the top of the MAC charts to begin the season. Sophomore Khadijah Hudson is currently the third best vaulter in the MAC with a 9.808 average and a season-high 9.850. Teammate Anna Willette, the top vaulter in the MAC a season ago, is now rising to the top of the conference on beam. The Eastern junior is ranked fourth through the early portion of the 2014 campaign, boasting a 9.717 average that includes a 9.775 against Bowling Green, Jan. 25. Both Eagles were All-MAC Second Team honorees in 2013.

**Facing the Nation’s Best:** Head Coach Steve Wilce and his squad have had their hands full to start the 2014 season. Four of the first seven opponents on the schedule are nationally-ranked. The Eagles opened up the season with a quad meet at Kent State, when the Golden Flashes were ranked No. 21 in the country. In addition to KSU, No. 16 Rutgers University competed in the meet. Eastern partnered with No. 23 Central Michigan for the Michigan/Illinois Challenge, Feb. 1, and will host the now-No. 19 Chippewas, Feb. 7, at Bowen Field House for a MAC dual.

**Ebeyer Emerges for Eagles:** After competing in five meets as a freshman, primarily on beam, sophomore Kimberly Ebeyer is looking to make a greater impact for her sophomore season; she got off to a great start at the Kent State Quad, Jan. 17. The Greenwood, Ind. native received a solid 9.775 from the judges in her first collegiate appearance in the floor exercise. Ebeyer also scored a 9.700 on the beam for ninth-place overall as well as a 9.675 on the vault. The scores on beam and floor were the second-best on the team for each event.

Through three meets this season, Ebeyer has tallied scores of 9.700 or better in 5-of-9 routines. In fact, only two of those routines have been lower than 9.675. She reached a new career-high on beam at the Michigan/Illinois Challenge, Feb. 1, earning a 9.750 from the judges.

**Freshmen Factor in Michigan/Illinois Challenge:** A pair of EMU freshmen had career days at the Michigan/Illinois Challenge in Mt. Pleasant, Mich., Feb. 1. Natalie Gervais earned a personal-best 9.800 for the best mark on the team and a fifth-place showing out of 24 gymnasts in the event. Fellow freshman Bianca Jordaan also recorded new career-highs on vault and bars at the quad meet, notching scores of 9.725 and 9.600, respectively.
The Streak Must End: When Eastern hosts CMU, Feb. 7, the Green and White will look to snap a nine-meet losing streak within the conference. The last time the Eagles won a MAC regular season matchup was March 10, 2012, when EMU topped Northern Illinois, 193.850-192.075. However, despite the struggles during the regular season, Eastern has not finished last at the MAC Championships the previous two season. In 2012, Eastern finished tied for fifth, ahead of Ball State. Last season, the Eagles also placed ahead of the Cardinals at the conference meet.

Another Home Meet, Another Rival: Following the contest between Central and Eastern, EMU will remain at home while hosting another rival in Western Michigan University, Feb. 15. The MAC meet will start at 7 p.m. at Bowen Field House, and the 2014 EMU Gymnastics senior class will be honored that night.