EMU Women's Softball: Eagles Ready for Senior Weekend in Ypsilanti

Eastern Michigan University
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EASTERN RETURNS HOME FOR SENIOR WEEKEND: The Eagles will return to the friendly confines of Varsity Field for a weekend doubleheader against Western Michigan University, April 18, before taking on Northern Illinois University in two single games, April 19-20.

Sunday's contest between the Eagles and Huskies will honor three seniors who have played key roles for EMU softball the past four seasons. The three seniors set to be honored before first pitch are Lindsay Smith, Amanda Stanton and Lauren Wells.

FINDING THE GAME AT HOME: Fans can follow along with the action from Varsity Field by heading to EMUEagles.com. The Eagles will provide live stats for fans as well as radio for game one against Western Michigan Friday, April 18, while Saturday and Sunday's single games against Northern Illinois will have live stats provided by EMUEagles.com.

Fans are also encouraged to follow @EMUSB on twitter for live updates and can join in on conversation using #timetoshine.

MSU SILENCES EASTERN BATS IN NON-CONFERENCE CONTEST: The Eastern Michigan University softball team dropped its fifth-straight game, falling at the hands of Michigan State University, 1-0, in a mid-week non-conference contest. The Eagles could not manage a hit off of senior pitcher Kelly Smith who tossed her first career...
no-hitter and 21st in MSU softball history. Freshman Sarah Gutknect led the Spartans, going 2-for-2 at the plate, while Nielsen tallied the only RBI of the contest.

Despite tossing 5.1 innings and giving up only three hits, senior Lauren Wells suffered the loss in the circle for EMU, while Abbie Minsker pitched 0.2 innings for the Green and White.

CLIMBING THE ALL-TIME RANKINGS: The pitching duo of Lauren Wells and Lindsay Rich is making its way up the Eastern Michigan all-time pitching lists.

Wells's 332 career strikeouts rank fourth all-time at Eastern Michigan, while her 356.1 innings of work rank 12th in EMU laurels. The senior left-handed hurler needs just 46 strikeouts in the Green and White's final 14 contests to break into the top three in strikeouts and tie with former EMU ace Jenna Ignowski.

Rich has been making a name for herself this season as the Eagles’ ace pitcher with a team-high 28 appearances and 12 starts. The junior right-hander has thrown 109.1 innings this season and has tallied 63 strikeouts to bring her career total to 187. Those 187 strikeouts rank 11th all-time in EMU laurels.

SCOUTING WESTERN MICHIGAN: The Broncos (13-26, 4-6 MAC) come into the doubleheader against the Eagles sitting in the fifth-place spot in the West Division of the Mid-American Conference.

Sophomore Melissa Palmer leads the WMU offense with a .370 batting average, while her 45 hits not only lead the Western offense but tie for second in the conference. The lefty batter has tallied three doubles, one home run and scored a team-high 24 times, while junior outfielder Jenny Rohn is the only other Bronco hitting .300 or better as she has a .333 batting average with 38 hits. Junior Megan Stamm and sophomore Sabrina Gamboa have knocked in a team-high 19 RBI in the 2014 campaign, while Rohn has drove in 15 RBI and Mackenzie Ritsema has brought in 13 runs. As a team, Western Michigan is hitting at a .254 clip which ranks ninth in the conference, while its 253 hits rank seventh in league standings.

Left-handed pitcher Allyson Kus (10-13) has become the WMU ace in her sophomore season with the Broncos, making 31 appearances and 23 starts in the circle. Kus posts a team-best 3.89 ERA, tossing 151.1 innings and 18 complete games with 74 strikeouts. The sophomore hurler will be just the second southpaw the Eagles have faced this season, the first being when EMU faced Notre Dame, March 26.

ALL-TIME SERIES: Western Michigan holds the 59-42-1 all-time series record over Eastern Michigan having swept the Eagles the past two seasons. The last time EMU came up with a win over the Broncos was in the 2011 season when Jenna Ignowski tossed her first career no-hitter in the Green and White's 16-0 victory. Eastern was unable to keep the momentum on its side in game two, falling 4-3.

Last season, Western's Becca Shemberger tossed a five-hitter in the Bronco win, while three different WMU players notched a RBI in game one. Amanda Stanton led the EMU offense, going 2-for-4 at the plate with two RBI and Lindsay Rich suffered the loss in the circle pitching 4.1 innings. In game two of the series, the Eagles battled back to come within one of the Broncos in the third inning but a grand slam from then-freshman Loren Nagy allowed WMU to take the 7-2 victory. Stanton and Amanda Herron each had a multi-hit game for EMU, while Lauren Wells suffered the loss.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS AT A GLANCE: The Huskies enter the weekend series with a 17-20 overall record and a 5-5 record in Mid-American Conference play, sitting third in the West.

Northern Illinois’s .308 team batting average ranks second in the league but their pitching staff has struggled carrying a 4.28 ERA which ranks ninth overall. The powerful NIU lineup has seven starters hitting at a .300 clip or above with freshman Kayti Grable holding the team standard. Grable carries a team-best .373 batting average in her first season donning a NIU uniform with 41 hits, nine doubles, one triple and seven home runs. Grable's .373 batting average ranks fifth in the MAC while her .461 on-base percentage is second in the league. Senior Nicole Gremlion's 44 hits are a team-best at NIU and ranks sixth in the conference, while Emily Naegele has driven in a team-high 27 runs which ranks eighth in the league.
Junior southpaw Jessica Sturm (11-10) headlines the Huskie pitching staff having thrown a team-high 113 innings in 23 appearances and 15 starts. Sturm has tossed 10 complete games for Northern Illinois, fanning 38 batters and posting a team-best 2.54 ERA while keeping opposing batters to a .247 batting average.

**LAST TIME AGAINST THE HUSKIES:** Northern Illinois holds the 32-24 all-time series record against the Eagles, having swept EMU in the 2013 campaign. Eastern will be looking for its first win against the Huskies since the 2012 campaign when EMU shut out NIU, 2-0, in game one before falling 4-0 in game two.

Last season in DeKalb, Ill., the Eagles got out to the early 2-0 lead, but a double knotted the score at 2-2 in the bottom of the third inning. EMU again found a lead in the top of the fourth, but the Huskies put the game away in the bottom of the sixth to take a 6-3 victory.

The following day, NIU took a 1-0 lead over Eastern before the Eagles used a Huskie error, three-straight singles and a home run from **Aoife Duffy** to get out to a 7-1 lead in the third inning. The Huskies slowly started to chip away at the deficit, tallying one run in the third, fourth and seventh innings while adding two runs in both the fifth and sixth to claim an 8-7 win on their home field.

**ON DECK:** Eastern will be back in action Friday, April 25 when it heads to Toledo, Ohio to take on the Rockets of the University of Toledo in a 1 p.m. doubleheader.

The Eagles will conclude their weekend in Ohio when they go up against Bowling Green State University Saturday and Sunday, April 26-27. Saturday's game is set for a 2 p.m. start, while the series will conclude Sunday with a 1 p.m. first pitch.