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Eastern Michigan University

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Northern Illinois Outlasts Eastern Softball in 11 Inning Contest

After 11 full innings, NIU came away with the 8-6 victory over EMU.

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YPSILANTI, Mich. (EMUEagles.com) – After taking the early lead over Northern Illinois University, the Eastern Michigan University softball team allowed the Huskies to battle back to take the 8-6, 11 inning victory at Varsity Field, April 19.

With the loss, Eastern falls to 9-30 overall and 0-11 in MAC play, while NIU improves to 19-21 overall and 7-6 in conference play.

Sophomore Abi Clark led the EMU offense with three hits and one RBI, while Michelle Kriegshauser and Abby Davidson each notched two hits for the Green and White. Northern Illinois outhit Eastern 15-13 in the contest, but EMU’s 13 hits tied a season-best. The Eagles posted 13 hits against Towson, Feb. 8.

The Huskies got the bats going early in the contest when Kayti Grable drove a two-run home run over the center field fence to give NIU the 2-0 lead over Eastern in the top of the first inning.

Eastern started to chip away at the Northern Illinois lead in the bottom of the second when Jenn Lucas drove a double off the left field wall and advanced to third on a Lindsay Rich sacrifice bunt. Sophomore Abi Clark brought in
her fifth run of the season with a perfectly placed single to shallow left field.

Following the Clark single, EMU loaded the bases on a hit batter and a walk for freshman Taylor Wagner. After evening the count at 1-1 with a foul ball, Wagner saw three-straight balls to walk in the tying run before an error by the NIU shortstop handed Eastern the 3-2 lead.

Rich extended the Eagle lead to 4-2 in the bottom of the third inning, lining a solo shot over the left center wall. The round tripper marks the second of the season for Rich and the 10th for Eastern Michigan.

After walking the leadoff batter, Rich came up huge with an easy groundout and a strikeout but the NIU offense rallied when a short single to left field scored one run. The Huskies knotted the score at 4-4 with a second short single to the edge of the infield. With the heart of the order due up in the bottom of the seventh, Northern Illinois retired the Eagles in order to send the game into the Green and White's second extra inning contest in as many days.

Neither team was able to push a run across in the eighth inning but a bunt single put a runner on first in the top of the ninth for the Huskies before Emily Naegele launched a homer over the left center wall to give the Huskies a 6-4 lead.

With the top of the order due up, Wagner singled to left field before Kriegshauser knocked a single to the opposite field to put two runners on and no outs for senior Amanda Stanton. Stanton reached first on a fielder's choice, advancing Wagner to third base with only one out on the board. Lindsay Smith ripped a double off the right center field wall before Lucas hit a sacrifice fly to center field to knot the score at 6-6, sending the contest into the 10th inning after a fly ball to left field retired the final out of the inning.

The Huskies used four hits to score two runs in the top of the 11th inning to take the 8-6 victory as the Eagles were unable to push a run across the plate in the bottom half of the inning. Freshman Alyssa Huntley (3-4) suffered the loss in the circle, pitching two complete innings on relief, while NIU starting pitcher Rebecca Rupard re-entered the contest to grab the victory for the Huskies. Rich pitched seven complete innings for the Green and White, allowing just six hits before Abbie Minsker came on in relief for two innings and Huntley closed out the contest.

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. Game time is slated for 1 p.m.