



Eastern Michigan 58, Norfolk State 54

First Round: Tuesday March 18, 2014

YPSILANTI, Mich. -- In its first postseason contest in 16 years, the Eastern Michigan University men's basketball team came out victorious over the Norfolk State University Spartans, 58-54, in the first round of the CollegeInsider.com Tournament, March 18, at the Convocation Center. The win marks the first postseason victory in program history since the 1995-96 campaign as well as the most wins for the Eagles (22-14) in a season since they totaled 22 wins in 1996-97.

With the victory, the Eagles will advance to the second round of the CIT, playing a team yet to be determined. The site and date of the game will also be announced at a later date following the complete conclusion of the opening round.

EMU drained 19-of-46 (41.3 percent) from the field as well as 7-of-17 (41.2 percent) from three point land. Mike Talley (Detroit, Mich.-Melvindale ABT (Duquesne)) had a team-high 14 points, including 11 in the first half. Raven Lee (Detroit, Mich.-Romulus) added 12 on 5-of-11 shooting. The Eagles shot 13-of-19 (68.4 percent) from the free throw line, making just enough down the stretch to secure the four-point win. On the opposite side of the floor, the nation's number one field goal percentage defense forced 17 turnovers that led to 18 points.

Malcolm Hawks notched a game-high 16 points in the loss for the Spartans (19-15) as teammate Brandon Goode followed with a dozen. RaShid Gaston grabbed a team-high 12 boards to go along with eight points. NSU etched a 41.7 shooting percentage behind a 20-of-48 performance from the floor. The Spartans made the same amount of three as the Eagles, while shooting one more than the Green and White for a 7-of-18 (38.9 percent) showing.

The Eagles got off to a slow start, scoring just six points in the first seven minutes of the contest. Norfolk State scored six of the first eight points of the game before back-to-back buckets by Lee and Talley tied the game. The Spartans responded with five-straight points before a pair of treys on two-straight possessions made it a one-point game in favor of the visitors. The Green and White took its first lead of the game, 14-13, scoring for the third consecutive possession on two free throws by Darell Combs (Chicago, Ill.-Thornwood (Blinn College)) at the 11:35 mark of the first half.

EMU's run blossomed to 11-2 with a three by senior J.R. Sims (Fort Wayne, Ind.-Snider) to make it a four-point game. NSU ended the streak with a three, but Karrington Ward (Lockport, Ill.-Lockport Township (Moraine Valley C.C.) kept the margin at four with a corner triple of his own. However, that was the only basket Eastern scored in three minutes as the Spartans tied the game at 20, forcing EMU Head Coach Rob Murphy to call timeout.

The game continued back-and-forth for the remainder of the first half with both teams taking shots from long range. A Talley three-ball broke the tie, but a late bucket by the Spartans cut the EMU lead to one, 31-30, going into the locker room.

Talley led all Eagles in the first half with the team's best individual shooting performance. The EMU point guard scored 11 points on 3-of-4 shooting, including a perfect 2-of-2 from the perimeter as well as 3-for-3 at the foul line. As a team, the Green and White shot 38.5 percent (10-of-26) from the floor while knocking down 6-of-13 (46.2 percent) from beyond the arc. The Eagles were also a perfect 5-of-5 from the line in the opening 20 minutes.

Norfolk State was led in scoring by Hawkins, who tallied 11 first half points with assist of three successful triple tries. In the post, Gaston grabbed eight rebounds to help give the Spartans a 22-12 advantage on the boards. NSU made 12-of-29 for a 41.4 shooting percentage that including a 5-of-12 showing from three.

The Green and White defense held Norfolk State without a bucket for the first 4:38 of the second half with the help of a pair of blocks at the rim by Harrison. Lee scored EMU's first five points of the half to increase the lead to five. With 14:52 to go in the game, both teams were shooting 13-of-34 from the field, and the home Eagles held a 38-36 advantage. The difference grew to six as Bryant threw down one of his trademark thunder slams following a steal by Talley.

The margin remained between two and four points before EMU recorded six of the contest's next seven points to build a seven-point lead, 56-49. However, the Eagles went cold from the floor for three minutes as the Spartans brought it back to a one possession game, 56-53, with just 1:23 left. Talley missed a rare free throw on the front end of a one-and-one, and Olalekan Ajayi (Winston-Salem, N.C.-Quality Education Academy (Collin College)) missed a pair as well. On the other side of the floor, the Spartans split a pair at the line to cut the lead to two with 27 seconds remaining. With NSU still forced to foul, Talley made one-of-two in the double bonus before a Spartan three bounced off the back iron as Ward corralled the rebound with three seconds to go. The Lockport, Ill. native put the game away with one free throw to put the contest on ice and give EMU the 58-54 victory.