



EASTERN MICHIGAN EAGLES

2023 Record: 6-7

Mid-American Conference

Ypsilanti, MI

FBS Ranking

110

Can Creighton and Co. guide Eagles to another postseason bid?

HC: Chris Creighton
(10th Year, 52-69)

OC: Sean Coughlin
(4th Year)

DC: Ben Needham
(2nd Year)

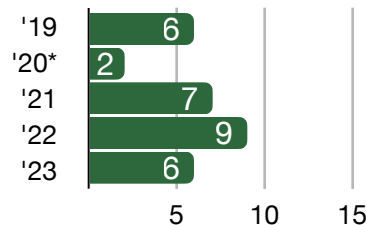
2024 Class Rankings

Recruiting
94

Transfer Portal
79

Via 24/7 Sports

EASTERN MICHIGAN WIN TREND



2023 Results (6-7)

Howard (W 33-23)
@ Minnesota (L 6-25)
UMass (W 19-17)
@ Jacksonville St. (L 0-21)
@ C. Michigan (L 23-26)
Ball State (W 24-10)
Kent State (W 28-14)
@ No. Illinois (L 13-20)
W. Michigan (L 21-45)
@ Toledo (L 23-49)
Akron (W 30-27 2OT)
@ Buffalo (W 24-11)
@ South Alabama (L 10-59)
68 Ventures Bowl

EASTERN MICHIGAN

5thandGoalSports.com

When Chris Creighton inherited the Eastern Michigan program, the Eagles were routinely one of the worst programs in the FBS. EMU has seven bowl appearances in their 50-season history and Creighton has been responsible for all but one of those appearances. He again guided the Eagles to six wins, breaking the school record with a third-straight postseason appearance. A fourth straight bowl trip is a distinct possibility even with an overhauled offense and challenges in the schedule.

Creighton has the most wins in program history, the only thing he has left to accomplish is to take the Eagles to Detroit to play for a MAC championship. That may not happen this year, but Creighton did bring in one of the better portal classes in the conference and if there's a team that can overachieve, it very well might be the Eagles.

OFFENSE

All three quarterbacks who played last season depart and Creighton snagged Buffalo QB **Cole Snyder** out of the portal. Snyder enters his sixth and final season of college football and he has two years of starting experience under his belt in his time with the Bulls. His 2022 season was actually superior to his 2023 campaign but in any case his arrival means that quarterback play should be better in Ypsilanti than it was last season.

The Eagle offense won't particularly adept at any one thing last season (only 19.5 points per game) but if there was a strength, it was the one-two punch at running back with Samson Evans and Jaylon Jackson. Unfortunately, Eastern Michigan must now replace both backs who combined for 1,282 yards and 14 touchdowns (Evans leaves EMU with the program all-time touchdown record). **Dontae McMillan** is the only player who brings back rushing production for the Eagles and it's likely he'll get the starting nod. Michigan native **Elijah Jackson-Anderson** could see some carries and **Delbert Mimms** transfers in from NC State.

Transfers litter the wide receiver position, too, including **Oran Singleton** who returns to Eastern Michigan for the first time since 2020. **JB Mitchell** is the top "WR1" candidate after 35 catches for 398 yards last season. **Blake Daniels** caught 13 passes from the tight end position. Opposing teams weren't threatened by the pass catching options of the Eagles in 2023 which in turn made it difficult for Eastern Michigan to run the ball. That must change.

The offensive line struggled their way through the 2023 season and the Eagles too frequently lost the battle in the trenches. On five separate occasions Eastern Michigan was held to less than 100 yards rushing (and not for a lack of carries). The 2024 edition of the O-line is less experienced, but Creighton has previously developed lineman like Sidy Sow into NFL draft picks (Patriots) so expect improvement as the season moves along as long as injuries don't take too much of a toll.

DEFENSE

The Eagle defense had some great moments and some not great moments in 2023. In the win over Ball State, Eastern Michigan allowed only two third-down conversions and earned a turnover on downs on three separate occasions. The Eagles also gave up 45 points and 49 points in back-to-back weeks to Western Michigan and Toledo, respectively and gave up 59 points and 627 total yards in the bowl game loss to South Alabama. Despite the inconsistencies, Eastern Michigan actually improved their scoring defense for a third straight season.

Can they do it a fourth-straight time? It will be a tall task with the losses of linebackers Chase Kline (143 tackles) and Joe Sparacio (136 tackles), but it's not impossible. It's defensive coordinator Ben Needham's second season in the program which will hopefully stabilize the team despite the talent lost. Needham pulled linebacker **JT Killen** out of the transfer portal after two strong seasons as a starter at Coastal Carolina. **Justin Jefferson** has experience and the ability to reach the quarterback frequently from the "bull" position.

Daiquan White led the team with 12 pass-breakups despite starting as a freshman. One of the reasons White was thrust into action was the early season-ending injury to corner **Joshua Scott**. Safety **Quentavious Scandrett** is the leading returning tackler and he claimed two interceptions last year from his safety position.

JESUS GOMEZ – R

Photo via Our Esquina

2024 EMU Schedule

Wk		
1	Sat, Aug 31	@ UMass
2	Sat, Sept 7	@ Washington
3	Sat, Sept 14	vs. Jacksonville St.
4	Sat, Sept 21	vs. Saint Francis
5	Sat, Sept 28	@ Kent State
7	Sat, Oct 12	vs. Miami (OH)
8	Sat, Oct 19	vs. C. Michigan
9	Sat, Oct 26	@ Akron
10	Sat, Nov 2	vs. Toledo
12	Wed, Nov 13	@ Ohio
13	Wed, Nov 20	vs. Buffalo
14	Sat, Nov 30	@ W. Michigan

Home Away

Key Games

vs. Jacksonville State: The Eagles were dominated at the line of scrimmage on both sides of the ball and couldn't muster a single point against new-FBS foe Jacksonville State. EMU has a chance for revenge at Ryneearson.

vs. Central Michigan: Last year's competition was a wild back-and-forth affair that featured numerous lead changes, a blocked-extra-point-for-two and missed a field goal to send the game to overtime. Time for EMU to respond at home

@ Western Michigan: The Eagles had their four-game win streak snapped when the Broncos rammed the defense for 59 carries and 252 yards. Eastern will need to be the more physical team.

Player Spotlight

Photo via Brother Rice Football



JUSTIN JEFFERSON – DE

The Eagles will sorely missed their star linebacker duo of Chase Kline and Joe Sparacio, but that loss won't be as painful if Jefferson steps up his production like he did in 2023. He plays the "bull" position in Ben Needham and fills the role of a hybrid linebacker/defensive end at 5'11", 230 pounds. The Eagles won't care what position he plays as long as he continues to impact the game in his senior season.

2023 Stats: 46 TKL, 7.5 TFL, 3.5 SACK, 1 FF

Photo via The Ypsilanti Eleven



JB MITCHELL

Mitchell had his best games as the season moved along. Against Western Michigan, he caught five passes for a career-high 99 yards including a beautiful run after the catch for 50 yards. He had two 7-catch, 70+ yard contests against Ball State and Buffalo. Mitchell could very well become Snyder's primary target especially with the inexperience elsewhere in the wide receiver room.

2023 Stats: 35 REC, 398 YDS, 1 TD

Photo via Ohio Football Stadiums



Rynearson Stadium (30,000)

Photo via @blake_daniels1 on Instagram



Blake DANIELS

SPECIAL TEAMS

Creighton places special emphasis on special teams, and it shows. Kicker **Jesus Gomez** is not only accurate (26/33 in the last two seasons with only two misses from inside 39 yards) but he's got a big leg. He has twice tied the school record with a 55-yard bomb and he connected for a 53-yarder against Ball State. He did miss three PATs last season, but he went a perfect 47 of 47 the year prior. Not only do the Eagles boast the best kicker but they have the first-team All-MAC punter in **Mitchell Tomasek**. They'd prefer to not use him as much in 2024, but he booted the ball 45.7 yards per punt and is a real weapon. Hamze El-Zayat and Jaylon Jackson each return a kickoff for a touchdown but both players are gone so replacements will need to be found.

THE BOTTOM LINE

A trip to Washington will obviously be challenging, but the remaining three non-conference games are winnable even though Jacksonville State blanked the Eagles 21-0. Eastern Michigan avoids both Northern Illinois and Bowling Green and gets both Miami and Toledo at "The Factory".

A fourth-straight bowl appearance is certainly possible, but it is far from a guarantee. The Eagles really need elevated quarterback play from Cole Snyder and they also need a few impact players to emerge on defense. In 2023, the Eagles didn't have a win against a bowl-eligible team, they won't reach a bowl in 2024 without beating such a team.

Appointment Television



vs.



Saturday, October 19

Eastern Michigan went 0-2 in the Michigan MAC rivalry games last season and they have their first opportunity to remedy last year's disappointment at home against Central Michigan. Last year's contest featured nine lead changes, a blocked extra point for a 2-point conversion, and nearly 800 yards of combined offense. The Eagles claimed the last meeting at Rynearson to snap a three-game Central winning streak.

2023 Statistics

Offense			Defense		
Statistic	Per Game	FBS Rank	Statistic	Per Game	FBS Rank
Points	19.5	117	Points	26.7	67
Rushing	110.8	112	Rushing	188.6	119
Passing	152.0	122	Passing	213.0	46
Total	262.8	129	Total	401.6	92
Sacks	32	92	Sacks	22	105

2024 Projection
6-6
8th in MAC

Trophy Case



XO



XO



1987

X1