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Men's Basketball Preview: Eagles Play Home Finale Against UTA Monday

Georgia Southern University

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Men's Basketball Preview: Eagles Play Home Finale Against UTA Monday

GS is tied for second in the SBC, UTA is in first

Marc Gignac



Dominique Bullock (left) and James Holder (right) play their final home game Monday.

Men's Basketball | 2/19/2017 12:37:00 PM

Story Links

Georgia Southern (17-10, 10-4) vs. UTA (20-6, 10-3)

Monday, Feb. 20 - Hanner Fieldhouse (3,897) – Statesboro, Ga. - 7 p.m.

Television: American Sports Network / [ESPN3](#)

[Tickets](#) | [Live Video](#) | [Live Audio](#) | [Live Stats](#)

Promotions: Men's Basketball Senior Day - Join us as we honor seniors [James Holder](#) and [Dominique Bullock](#) and student manager Joy Bonner for their hard work and dedication in the classroom and on the court. It's also Southern Explosion Dance Team Senior Day.

Radio: WMCD 107.3 FM (Statesboro), 105.5 FM WIFO (Jesup), 100.9 FM WLYU (Lyons), 103.7 FM WBMZ (Metter), 900 AM WJLG (Savannah)

Series Record: GS leads 3-2, W1

Last meeting: W, 83-72, 2/4/16 (Hanner)

Probable Starters:

#2 [Mike Hughes](#)

#3 [Ike Smith](#)

#4 [Tookie Brown](#)

#5 [B.J. Gladden](#)

#14 [Coye Simmons](#)

Georgia Southern Information:

[\[Stats \(PDF\)\]](#) [\[Roster\]](#) [\[Schedule\]](#) [\[Game Notes \(PDF\)\]](#)

UTA Information:

[\[Stats\]](#) [\[Roster\]](#) [\[Schedule\]](#)

Setting the Scene

- Georgia Southern plays its home finale against UTA Monday night in Hanner Fieldhouse.
- The game will be broadcast live on the American Sports Network and ESPN3.
- It's the first and only regular-season meeting between Georgia Southern and UTA.
- The Eagles are in a two-way tie with Arkansas State for second place in the Sun Belt standings. UTA is in first place, a half game ahead, and Georgia State is a game behind the Eagles, in fourth. The top four teams get a bye in the upcoming Sun Belt Tournament March 8-12 in New Orleans.
- Georgia Southern is 10-1 at home this season and has won nine in a row in Hanner Fieldhouse. The Eagles are 40-13 under head coach [Mark Byington](#) in the facility and own a 23-5 all-time record in Sun Belt games there.
- GS is 3-2 in its last five and coming off a 70-67 home win over Texas State Saturday evening. GS is 13-5 in its last 18 contests.
- The Eagles are in a stretch in which they finish the season with five of their last seven games on the road.
- Georgia Southern features the Sun Belt's top two scorers in sophomores [Ike Smith](#) (19.5 ppg) and [Tookie Brown](#) (18.2 ppg). They were the third-highest freshman scoring duo in the country last year (1-Rice's Marcus Evans and Marquez Letcher-Ellis, 2- FSU's Dwayne Bacon and Malik Beasley).
- UTA has won four in a row and eight of its last nine. The Mavericks are coming off a 68-67 road win at Georgia State Saturday afternoon.
- The Mavs are 9-6 on the road and 3-3 in road league games.
- Kevin Hervey leads the team in scoring (16.7), rebounding (8.1) and free throw percentage (.784). He has 10 double-doubles this season (18 career).

- Erick Neal leads the Sun Belt and ranks among the top-10 nationally in assists at 6.7 per game. He has three double-doubles on the season (pts/assists) and has handed out a career-high 13 assists twice.
- Currently sitting at No. 44, UTA has owned an official NCAA RPI as high as 17 this season and is 2-3 against teams ranked in the top-100. Four of UTA's five contests against top-100 teams were on the road.
- UTA won its 20th game of the season at Georgia State, marking the first time in program history the Mavericks have surpassed the 20-win mark in consecutive seasons.

The Series vs. UTA

- This is the sixth meeting in the all-time series, which began in 1972.
- The Eagles are 2-2 against the Mavs since joining the Sun belt in 2014, and both teams are 2-0 at home during that time period.
- The Eagles are 3-0 against UTA in Hanner Fieldhouse, which includes a 73-69 win in the first meeting in 1972.

More Team Storylines

- Georgia Southern has no seniors in its rotation and starts three sophomores and two juniors. Walk-ons [James Holder](#) and [Dominique Bullock](#) are the team's lone seniors.
- GS is averaging 78.1 points a game this season, the most since the 2004-05 campaign, when the Eagles scored at an 80.8 clip. The Eagles have scored over 80 12 times, including six straight games from 12/20-1/14, and have scored over 90 five times, including two in a row Jan. 21 and 23. It's the first time the Eagles scored 90-plus points in back-to-back Division I games since Feb. 11 and Feb. 13, 2006.
- Georgia Southern ranks 48th nationally and second in the Sun Belt in fewest turnovers and ranks 41st nationally and second in the SBC and 37th in the country in turnovers per game. The Eagles have logged single-digit turnovers in eight games and posted a season-low six vs. Troy (1/7).
- The Eagles are off to their best start in league play since the 2014-15 season. The Eagles started 7-0 in league play for the first time since the 1991-92 campaign. GS won its first nine games in the Trans America Athletic Conference that year.
- GS posted an eight-game win streak from Dec. 2-Jan. 23. It's the Eagles' longest since the 2005-06 season.
- Three Eagles have been named Sun Belt Player of the Week - [Tookie Brown](#) (Jan. 3), [Ike Smith](#) (Jan. 24) and [Mike Hughes](#) (Feb. 7).
- GS is ranked 20th in this week's ColleagueInsider.com Mid-Major Top-25.
- Georgia Southern's top-3 seasons in 3-pointers made and attempted have all come during [Mark Byington](#)'s tenure. GS ranks first in the SBC in threes per game (9.3) and 33rd in the country this season, and the Eagles have made 10 or more threes 13 times.
- The Eagles won their first two conference road games for the first time since the 2002-03 season.
- The Eagles have shot 50 percent or better in a half in 19 games this season, including 60 percent or better three times. The Eagles have shot 50 percent or better in both halves of a game twice (GSU, 12/31 and CCU, 1/23). The Eagles have shot 50 percent or better in six games.

- GS ranks third in the Sun Belt in made free throws and second in free-throw attempts. The Eagles have attempted 30-plus free throws in five games and made 20-plus free throws in six contests.
- GS has a combined record of 33-15 in Sun Belt games played in January and February since joining the league in 2014-15.
- Georgia Southern returned all five starters and 11 lettermen from last season's squad. Ninety-four percent of the Eagles' scoring and rebounding is back in uniform.
- Georgia Southern was picked fourth in the Sun Belt Preseason Coaches Poll, [Tookie Brown](#) was named preseason first-team all-league and [Mike Hughes](#) earned second-team honors.
- [Mark Byington](#) is coaching in his 135th career game today and his 124th at Georgia Southern. His 51 wins in his first three seasons at Georgia Southern are the best of any coach in the modern era. He posted a 7-4 record at College of Charleston in 2012, filling in as the interim coach for Bobby Cremins.
- Under [Mark Byington](#), Georgia Southern is 47-8 in games when leading at half and 57-4 when leading with five minutes to go.
- Georgia Southern is 33-7 in Hanner Fieldhouse in its last 40 contests there and 40-13 under [Mark Byington](#).
- GS has reached double digit wins in conference play in each of its three seasons in the Sun Belt.
- Since joining the Sun Belt in 2014, 27 Georgia Southern games against Sun Belt schools have been decided by five points or less, and the Eagles are 19-8.
- The Eagles are 25-2 in Sun Belt games when leading at halftime. GS is 26-0 when leading with five minutes to go.
- Georgia Southern's comeback from 16 points down at ULM (1/16) is the Eagles' largest since a 17-point rally vs. UTA March 5, 2015.
- GS finished the non-conference portion of its schedule with a 7-6 record, its first winning record in non-conference play since 2014-15 when the Eagles went 8-3. It's just the second time in the last eight seasons that the Eagles were above .500 in non-conference games.
- Georgia Southern played six non-conference games against five teams that are currently in the top-110 in the NCAA RPI (Akron - 48, FGCU - 86, Minn - 23, NC State - 110, Winthrop - 78).
- The Eagles played 10 of their first 12 games away from home. The stretch ended Dec. 20 at Winthrop, which also capped a four-game road trip that covered 4,120 miles of travel as the Eagles went from Minnesota to Ft. Myers to Miami to South Carolina and back home.
- GS played three contests in Savannah this season and won all three. The Eagles defeated Florida A&M (83-72) and Radford (65-64) in the Savannah Invitational and won 94-75 at Savannah State.
- The Eagles picked up the 1,200th win in the history of the program, which began play in 1926-27, when they topped Coastal Georgia 92-43 Nov. 14.
- GS held Coastal Georgia to 23.1 percent shooting from the field, the lowest for an opponent since holding North Georgia to 22.7 percent in 2003.
- Georgia Southern used 11 different combinations of starting lineups last year. GS has used six this season.

Talking 1K

- Sophomore [Tookie Brown](#) scored his 1,000th career point at Appalachian State Feb. 13.
- He is the first Eagle in the program's modern era to reach the mark as a sophomore. Two Eagles did it in their second seasons at Georgia Southern (Elton Nesbitt and Johnny Mills).
- Junior [Mike Hughes](#) has 954 points, and sophomore [Ike Smith](#) has 877.
- Three Eagles reached the mark in the same season once. Nesbitt, Terry Williams and Jean Francois scored their 1,000th point in 2004-05.
- The 2004-05 trio and Jelani Hewitt, Eric Ferguson and Trent Wiedeman in 2014-15 are the only times Georgia Southern had three 1,000-point scorers on the same team (Wiedeman scored 886 points at College of Charleston before transferring to GS).

Next Up

- The Eagles play their final three games of the regular season on the road, starting with a swing through Arkansas next week. GS takes on Arkansas State Saturday and Little Rock Monday.

Georgia Southern Athletics provides up-to-date information on all its sports through its official website, GSEagles.com, through social media channels facebook.com/GSAthletics, twitter.com/GSAthletics, iOS app Georgia Southern Eagles and Android app Eagles GATA. For tickets to Georgia Southern athletics events, visit GSEagles.com/tickets.

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In order to expedite entry and provide a safe environment for all patrons and participants, Georgia Southern Athletics has implemented a Clear Bag Policy for all ticketed sporting events, effective Aug. 1, 2017. Fans can find the complete policy as well as an FAQ section at GSEagles.com/ClearBag.