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## Georgia Southern University



PREVIEW: GS Men's Soccer Hosts Mercer For Intra-State Showdown On ESPN3

Eagles and the Bears will hit the pitch for the 48th time in series history; GS leads 24-23

Men's Soccer

Posted: 9/22/2017 3:00:00 PM

**STATESBORO, Ga.** - The Georgia Southern men's soccer team puts its three-match win streak on the line when the Eagles host in-state rival Mercer on Saturday at 7 p.m. at Eagle Field. ([ESPN3 Stream](#))

The three-match win streak for the Eagles (4-3) is the longest since 2014 and head coach [John Murphy](#)'s squad will be looking to earn the program's first four-match win streak since 2005. Standing in the way are the Bears (1-4-2), who are the opponent that Georgia Southern has faced the most times in school history. Saturday's meeting will be the 48th between the two teams, and the Eagles hold a slim 24-23 series lead.

Last season, the two teams met in Macon and [Blake Wilson](#)'s pair of goals sent the Eagles to the 2-1 win over the Bears. Despite their 2017 record, Mercer has played an incredibly tough schedule to open the season and their one win was an impressive 2-1 overtime win at then-No. 16 Washington on Sept. 10. Will Bagrou, who leads Mercer offensively with four goals this season, tallied the game-winner over the Huskies less than a minute into the first overtime period.

"We're never going to underestimate Mercer," Coach Murphy said. "They're a fantastic program. Their coach, Brad Ruzzo, is someone I have a great deal of respect for. We understand the level of play that they've been operating at. To get Washington on the road is a fantastic result, that's as good as any team in the country. We're expecting a tough game. But again these are the games we want to play. To grow as a program locally, regionally and eventually nationally, you can't avoid playing top local opposition that creates kind of a derby atmosphere and mentality."

The three-game winning streak for Georgia Southern has come with well-deserved accolades. Junior midfielder/forward [Javier Carbonell](#) and freshman [Gonzalo Talavera](#) were named the Sun Belt Conference's Offensive and Defensive Players of the Week on Tuesday, and Carbonell was also named to the College Soccer News Team of the Week on Monday.

Carbonell continued his top form on Tuesday, garnering a goal and an assist in the Eagles' 2-1 win at Winthrop. His assist on [Blake Wilson's](#) game-winning goal with 38 seconds left was his Sun Belt-leading fifth of the season, and he now ranks among the Top 10 nationally in that category. Wilson's game-winning goal was his third of the season which also ranks the senior in the Top 10 nationally.

"I think our connections are getting better within the team, and that's coming off the back of good defending," Murphy said. "Everything's intertwined. I think when you can start from a defensive base, you're winning the ball more, getting the ball into better areas - and when you get the ball into better areas, you create scoring chances. The encouraging thing is we're finding a way to get results while we are still on our way of reaching our full potential, which we haven't done yet."

Saturday's match will be [broadcast live on ESPN3](#). Fans coming to the game are also encouraged to bring Hurricane relief items as Georgia Southern is [collecting items through October](#) to help victims of the recent storms in Texas, Florida and all over the Southeast. The match will also be Military Appreciation Night. The Color Guard will perform the National Anthem before the game, and the Armed Forces Salute will play at halftime to recognize all current and former members of the military. All military members will receive free admission to the match with a valid military ID and family members can purchase discounted tickets for \$3.

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