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PREVIEW: GS Women's Basketball Travels To Mercer For Thursday Night ESPN3 Clash
Eagles face a Bears squad that won 25 games last year, returns all five starters in a stiff test
Women's Basketball

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STATESBORO, Ga. - The Georgia Southern women's basketball team faces a stiff road test on Thursday, when the Eagles travel up I-16 to Macon to take on Mercer in a 7 p.m. clash at Hawkins Arena. The game will be televised on ESPN3. [Watch Live](#) | [Live Stats](#) | [GS Sports Network Audio](#)

The Eagles (1-1) enter the matchup off of a come-from-behind 68-63 win over Coastal Georgia on Monday in their home opener. [Nakol Franks](#) scored all of her game-high 13 points in the second half and sparked a 15-2 second-half run that carried Georgia Southern to its first win of the season.

Franks will be a big storyline since in the meeting last year between the Eagles and Mercer (2-0), the sophomore hit 8-of-11 three-pointers en route to a game-high 26 points, tying the school record for three-pointers in one game. Mercer still won that matchup, though, by a 77-56 score.

"Mercer feeds off of turnovers," Head Coach [Kip Drown](#) said about the matchup. "They're a team that likes to run. Last year, we gave up 77 points, but 34 of those points came off of our turnovers. It was 6-6 at first time out in the first quarter, and by the end of quarter it was 23-6. A 17-0 run, and we got beat by 21. So if you take out that

stretch, you see we had points where we played very well. Nakol had a career night, which really helped us. But we've got to limit turnovers against Mercer, we can't let them get out and run. You have to keep them in front of you and hope to rebound the basketball some. Making shots is crucial against them, but you have to get to that point."

The Bears have done that again in 2017-18, forcing 51 turnovers total in their two wins so far this season, beating UCF 73-64 and Florida Atlantic, 66-55. Mercer is led by 2017-18 SoCon Preseason Player of the Year Kahlia Lawrence, who is averaging 21.5 points per game, and the Bears return all five starters from last season's 25-win club that reached the WNIT. Mercer is one of five teams Georgia Southern faces this year that advanced to the postseason in 2016-17.

"I was looking at their scouting report from two years ago, and they started four freshmen and a sophomore," Coach Drown said. "Now they're starting all these juniors and a senior, and they've got a couple more seniors. I've watched them grow up over the course of time, this is the third year playing them since I've been here. They'll be one of the best teams we play this year."

Early on, the Eagles are led by junior [Rhein Beamon](#) (10.5 ppg, 5.0 rpg) and senior [Sierra Butler](#) (8.5 ppg, 8.0 rpg). Beamon has excelled getting to the line through the first two games, going 13-of-17 from the charity stripe and already shooting as many free throws as she did all of last season.