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Men’s Basketball Preview: Eagles Take on Troy Saturday

Georgia Southern University

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Men's Basketball Preview: Eagles Take on Troy Saturday

Georgia Southern is in the midst of a four-game homestand.

Marc Gignac
Last meeting: 2/19/15, L 65-62 (Hanner)

Probable Starters:
#0 Montae Glenn
#2 Mike Hughes
#3 Ike Smith
#4 Tookie Brown
#10 Jake Allsmiller

Layup Line
• Georgia Southern continues a four-game homestand by hosting Troy Saturday.
• It's the first of two meetings against the Trojans this season. Both teams are searching for their first Sun Belt win.
• Georgia Southern is 1-5 in its last six and coming off a 64-58 home loss to South Alabama Thursday night.
• Freshman Tookie Brown was named the Sun Belt Player of the Week by College Sports Madness Dec. 28. He averaged 24 points, 4.3 assists, three rebounds and two steals in three games from Dec. 15-22. Brown shot 51 percent from field and 56 percent from 3-point range.
• Brown is ranked in the top-12 in the Sun Belt in scoring (6th, 17.0 ppg), assists (6th, 3.5 apg), free-throw percentage (11th, .783), steals (2nd, 2.1), 3-point percentage (5th, .407) and assist/turnover ratio (6th, 1.7).
• Brown has scored 20-plus points in four games and reached double figures in 12 of 13 contests.
• Georgia Southern is 23-10 under head coach Mark Byington in Hanner Fieldhouse and posted a 13-2 record in the building last season. The Eagles are 3-2 this season.
• With 11-of-12 scholarship student-athletes who are freshmen, redshirt freshmen or sophomores (92 percent), Georgia Southern has the highest percentage of underclassmen on its current roster of the 345 NCAA Division I squads. Liberty (91 percent), Ohio State (85 percent), Fairleigh Dickinson (85 percent) and Wyoming (80 percent) round out the top-5.
• Georgia Southern lost 76 percent of its scoring and 72 percent of its rebounding from last season.
• The Eagles were picked 10th in the Preseason Sun Belt Conference Coaches Poll.
• Troy has lost its last four and is coming off a 72-68 road setback at Georgia State Thursday night.
• The Trojans are 2-2 on the road and 0-1 in Sun Belt games on the road.
• Troy was picked 11th in the Sun Belt Preseason Coaches Poll.
• Wesley Person leads the Trojans and ranks fourth in the league in scoring with 17.6 points to go along with 3.6 rebounds a game. He is the son of Wesley Person Sr. and nephew of Chuck Person, both standouts at Auburn who went on to have successful NBA careers.
• Freshman Jordon Varnado averages 16.4 points and a team-leading 8.0 rebounds a game.
The Series
• Georgia Southern leads the all-time series, which began in 1932, 10-6.
• Eight of the Eagles' wins were recorded before 1964 as the teams played 13 times between 1932 and 1964.
• The series was renewed in 1991 with the Eagles earning a 102-94 home win.
• Troy won both contests last season, posting a 75-71 victory in Trojan Arena and a 65-62 triumph in Hanner Fieldhouse.
• Last Meeting and last meeting in Hanner (2/19/15):
  • Musa Abdul-Aleem posted 25 points and 12 rebounds and scored the go-ahead basket with 32.7 seconds left as Troy hung on to defeat Georgia Southern 65-62.
  • Trailing 65-62 with 1.5 seconds to go, Georgia Southern had a last chance to tie the score off a sideline out-of-bounds play. The Eagles inbounded to Jelani Hewitt, but the senior's 25-foot, 3-point try from the wing was off the mark as the buzzer sounded.
  • Mike Hughes tallied 14 points and seven rebounds to lead Georgia Southern, while Hewitt posted 12 points and five assists. Angel Matias collected 11 points and 10 boards, and Curtis Diamond tallied nine points and six rebounds.
  • Kevin Thomas contributed 11 points and nine rebounds for Troy, and Chris Bilbo tallied 10 points and four assists.
  • Matias tied the score 62-62 with a layup with just over a minute to play after two offensive rebounds for the Eagles. Abdul-Aleem answered by driving into the lane and hitting a tough turnaround jumper to give the Trojans a 64-62 lead with 32.7 seconds to go.
  • Matias drove the lane on the Eagles' trip down the floor, but Abdul-Aleem stepped in front and took the charge with 21.2 seconds left. The Eagles had to foul and hacked Bilbo after trying to steal the inbounds pass.
  • Bilbo missed two from the charity stripe, but Thomas pulled down the rebound for Troy and was fouled. He made the second end of the two-shot foul for a 65-62 lead.
  • Hewitt tried a contested 3-pointer from the wing with the clock running down, and Hughes was there to collect the rebound as the bench called timeout with 1.5 seconds remaining, setting up Hewitt's final try.

Quick Hitters
• The Eagles are led in scoring by a pair of freshmen in Tookie Brown and Ike Smith. The last time a freshman led Georgia Southern in scoring was the 1999-2000 season, when the school's all-time scoring leader Julius Jenkins led the Eagles with 15.5 points a game. Elton Nesbitt averaged 15.7 points a game to lead the Eagles in scoring as a newcomer to the program in 2003-04, but it was his sophomore season after spending a year at Compton Community College.
  • Ike Smith is one of two freshman in the league ranked in the top-20 in both points (12.2) and rebounds (5.0).
  • Sophomore Mike Hughes has started 43 of 44 games in his career.
  • Hughes' six steals vs. Stetson Dec. 22, were a career high and two shy of the school record. He leads the Sun Belt in steals with 2.2 a game.
  • The Eagles are averaging 78.1 points a game this season and have scored 80-plus points in five games. Georgia Southern scored 80-plus points in just six contests last year.
• Eleven different Eagles have scored 10 or more points in a game this season.
• Devonte Boykins has been named one of 154 nominees for the NABC Allstate Insurance Good Works Team.
• Georgia Southern is 16-4 in Hanner Fieldhouse in its last 20 contests there.
• Georgia Southern posted a 4-6 record in the non-conference portion of its schedule.
• Georgia Southern has used seven different combinations of starting lineups this season.
• The Eagles played their Sun Belt opener on the road for the second straight season. Georgia Southern is 0-2 in Sun Belt openers.
• Georgia Southern played its first ranked opponent since 2008 when the Eagles traveled to No. 7/6 Duke Dec. 15. Their last game against a ranked opponent was also at Duke Nov. 11, 2008.
• Georgia Southern’s 21 steals against Bob Jones (11/30) was one shy of the school record set against Little Rock in 1981 and tied against The Citadel in 2004.
• After not playing an SEC opponent since a 78-75 loss to Auburn Dec. 30, 2011, the Eagles have faced two this season. Georgia Southern fell 82-72 at Ole Miss Nov. 16 and 92-62 at Auburn Nov. 20.
• Georgia Southern’s 116 points in a 116-49 season-opening win over Webber International Nov. 13 were tied for the 16th most all-time and the most since a 116-73 neutral site win over UC Davis Nov. 12, 2006, which was the 2006-07 season opener.
• The Eagles’ 40 3-point attempts tied for the second-the most in school history (West Georgia, 1/2/1992).

Boarding the Mothership
• Thirteen Georgia Southern games will be broadcast on the ESPN family of Networks this season.
• Games at Duke (12/15) and vs. Georgia State at home (2/23) will air on ESPN2.
• Eight Sun Belt contests will be broadcast live on ESPN3, and the Eagles’ game at USC Upstate Nov. 27 was shown on ESPN3.
• The matchups at Ole Miss and Auburn were shown on the SEC Network +.

Inside Georgia Southern Basketball is Back
• Inside Georgia Southern Basketball, presented by Gnat’s Landing, will make its 2016 debut Monday, Jan. 4., from 7-8 p.m. live from Gnat’s Landing at 470 South Main Street, just across from Beautiful Eagle Creek in Statesboro.
• Men’s basketball coach Mark Byington and women’s basketball coach Kip Drown will sit down with the Voice of the Eagles, Danny Reed, each week throughout the remainder of the season to review the recent games and talk about upcoming contests.
• Fans can enjoy the show live from Gnat’s stage, listen on the radio via affiliates (103.7 WBMZ-FM Statesboro, 102.1 WZAT-FM Savannah, 1370 WLOP-AM Jesup) or online for free at GSEagles.com. Fans can also interact live during the show by tweeting their questions to @GASouthernRadio or by joining the audience in the restaurant.