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Georgia Southern University

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Men's Basketball Preview: Eagles Open Road Trip at Georgia State

Tipoff is 7:30 p.m. on ESPN3.

Marc Gignac



Jeremy Wilburn

One point is on the line in the Southern vs. State Rivalry Series.

Men's Basketball | 1/18/2016 4:15:00 PM

Story Links

Georgia Southern (6-10, 2-4) vs. Georgia State (11-4, 4-2)

Tuesday, Jan. 19 - GSU Sports Arena (3,455) – 7:30 p.m.

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

Television: [ESPN3](#)

Radio: 103.7 WBMZ-FM (Statesboro/Metter/Swainsboro), 102.1 WZAT-FM (Savannah), 1370 WLOP-AM (Jesup)

Series: Georgia Southern leads 40-16, L2

Last meeting: 3/15/2015, L 38-36 (Sun Belt Championship)

Probable Starters:

#2 Mike Hughes

#3 Ike Smith

#4 Tookie Brown

#10 Jake Allsmiller

#14 Coye Simmons

Layup Line

- Georgia Southern opens a four-game road trip with a 7:30 p.m. contest at cross-state rival Georgia State Tuesday.
- The game will be broadcast live on ESPN3.
- One point is on the line in the Southern vs. State Rivalry Series. The Panthers lead the Eagles 5.0-2.0.
- It's the first of two meetings against the Panthers this season and the third game in five days for both teams.
- Georgia Southern is 2-3 in its last five contests and coming off a 66-51 home win over ULM Saturday evening.
- Georgia Southern freshman Tookie Brown is ranked in the top-15 in the Sun Belt in scoring (6th, 17.0 ppg), assists (7th, 3.4 apg), free-throw percentage (15th, .756), steals (2nd, 2.1), 3-point percentage (13th, .366) and assist/turnover ratio (5th, 1.8).
- Brown has scored 20-plus points in five games and reached double figures in 15 of 16 contests, including the last 14.
- Georgia Southern is 1-7 on the road this season and has lost its last four on the road.
- 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.
- Georgia State is 4-1 in its last five and coming off an 87-54 loss to UL Lafayette Saturday afternoon. The loss ended a 15-game home win streak for Georgia State, which is 8-1 at home this season and 33-2 since the beginning of the 2013-14 campaign.
- The contest against the Eagles caps a five-game homestand for the Panthers.
- Georgia State was picked second in the Sun Belt Preseason Coaches Poll and garnered two first-place votes. Markus Crider (2nd team), Kevin Ware (2nd team) and Jeremy Hollowell (3rd team) were named preseason all-conference.
- Hollowell leads the team in scoring with 15.3 points a game to go along with 4.3 rebounds. Ware averages 13.4 points, 4.3 rebounds and 3.1 assists.

The Series

- Georgia Southern leads the all-time series, which began in 1948, 40-16, but the Panthers are 7-3 in the last 10 meetings and have won the last two.
- Georgia State topped the Eagles 38-36 in the Sun Belt Championship last season.
- The Eagles' last three wins in the series have all been by four points or less, and two were in overtime.
- Georgia Southern was 16-3 against the Panthers from 1985-1992, when both schools were members of the TAAC.
- The Eagles are 10-9 against Georgia State on the road and have lost five in a row.
- **Last Meeting - 3/15/2015 - Lakefront Arena - SBC Tourney:** R.J. Hunter sank two free throws with 21.6 seconds left, and [Eric Ferguson](#)'s long 3-point try from the wing was off the mark as the buzzer sounded as Georgia State outlasted Georgia Southern 38-36 in the Sun Belt Conference Men's Basketball Championship.
- Hunter pump faked and got an Eagle defender in the air, drawing contact and the foul call with five seconds on the shot clock. After the free throws, [Mike Hughes](#) took a 3-pointer from the right wing for the Eagles, and [Curtis Diamond](#) dug out the rebound and called timeout with five seconds remaining.
- Hughes inbounded to [Trent Wiedeman](#), who threw the ball back to Ferguson on the left wing. The senior took a dribble to his left and fired over Kevin Ware, but the shot rimmed out.
- Wiedeman finished with eight points and seven rebounds for the Eagles, and [Jelani Hewitt](#) scored eight points. Hughes tallied seven points and a game-high nine boards. Wiedeman and Hewitt earned all-tournament honors.
- Ware was named the tournament MVP after scoring 18 points for Georgia State. Hunter had nine points and five rebounds, and Markus Crider tallied eight points and seven boards.
- It was a defensive struggle throughout – the Eagles shot 23 percent for the game, while the Panthers shot 33 percent. Georgia Southern had trouble solving the Panthers' zone and made 5-of-26 from 3-point range.
- **Last time in GSU Sports Arena - 3/7/2015:** R.J. Hunter tallied 35 points and six rebounds, and Georgia State captured the Sun Belt Conference men's basketball regular-season title by topping Georgia Southern 72-55.
- [Jelani Hewitt](#) led the Eagles with 17 points, five assists and four rebounds, and [Trent Wiedeman](#) netted 15 points to go along with three rebounds for Georgia Southern.
- Hunter was 8-of-17 from the floor and made 16-of-16 from the free-throw line for the Panthers (22-9, 15-5), who earn the league's automatic bid to the NIT and the top seed in next week's tournament. Curtis Washington finished with 12 points, and Markus Crider had eight.
- After Georgia Southern trailed by 11 at the break, Hewitt and [Curtis Diamond](#) hit triples in an 8-0 Eagle run to cut a 13-point lead to four early in the second half. But Hunter answered with a 10-0 run of his own, scoring all 10 points and capping the stretch with consecutive triples to open a 48-34 advantage with just over 12 minutes to play.
- The cushion stayed in double digits the rest of the way, and a Markus Crider layup with 5:23 to play gave the Panthers a 61-46 cushion. The Eagles were held to 40 percent shooting and managed to make 10-of-19 from the free-throw line in the game.

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 (12.3) and rebounds (5.0).
- Sophomore Mike Hughes has started 46 of 47 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 2.1 a game.
- Georgia Southern has just 33 turnovers in its last 165 minutes of game time (4 games).
- The Eagles have never lost a Sun Belt game when leading at the half (11-0).
- Under Mark Byington, Georgia Southern is 30-4 in games when leading at half and 38-1 when leading with five minutes to go.
- Since joining the Sun Belt in 2014, 11 Georgia Southern games have been decided by five points or less, and the Eagles are 7-4.
- Georgia Southern is 12-8 in games decided by six points or less since 2014 and 3-5 games decided by three points or less.
- The Eagles are averaging 77.4 points a game this season and have scored 80-plus points in six 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 17-5 in Hanner Fieldhouse in its last 22 contests there.
- 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.
- Georgia Southern posted a 4-6 record in the non-conference portion of its schedule.
- Georgia Southern has used nine 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-most in school history (West Georgia, 1/2/1992).