

2-10-2016

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Georgia Southern University

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### Recommended Citation

Georgia Southern University, "Men's Basketball Preview: Eagles Start Road Trip at Troy" (2016). *Athletics News*. 1489.  
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# Men's Basketball Preview: Eagles Start Road Trip at Troy

*Georgia Southern plays two games in Alabama this week.*

Marc Gignac



Men's Basketball | 2/10/2016 4:36:00 PM

## Story Links

**Georgia Southern (10-12, 6-6) at Troy (7-16, 2-10)**

**Thursday, Feb. 11 - Trojan Arena (5,200) – 8:30 p.m. ET**

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

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

**Series Record:** GS leads 11-6, W1

**Last meeting:** 1/9/2016, W 93-88 OT (H)

**Probable Starters:**

#2 [Mike Hughes](#)

#3 [Ike Smith](#)  
#4 [Tookie Brown](#)  
#10 [Jake Allsmiller](#)  
#14 [Coye Simmons](#)

### **Georgia Southern Information:**

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

### **Troy Information:**

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

### **Layup Line**

- Georgia Southern opens its two-game road swing through Alabama with an 8:30 p.m. ET meeting at Troy Thursday.
- It's the second meeting of the season against the Trojans. Georgia Southern topped Troy 93-88 in overtime in Hanner Fieldhouse Jan. 9 in the season's first meeting.
- The Eagles are tied for sixth place in the Sun Belt standings, one game out of third and two games ahead of eighth. Troy sits in 11th. The top-8 teams make the Sun Belt Championship March 9-13 at Lakefront Arena in New Orleans.
- Following the Eagles' game at South Alabama Saturday, Georgia Southern plays four in a row in Hanner Fieldhouse from Feb. 18-25.
- Georgia Southern is 4-1 in its last five contests and coming off a 66-62 win over Texas State Saturday night in Hanner Fieldhouse. The Eagles have won six of their last nine.
- Georgia Southern freshman [Tookie Brown](#) is ranked in the top-10 in the Sun Belt in scoring (4th, 18.2 ppg), assists (7th, 3.5 apg), steals (2nd, 1.9) and assist/turnover ratio (6th, 1.6). He ranks sixth among freshmen in NCAA Division I scoring.
- Brown has scored 20-plus points in eight games and reached double figures in 21 of 22 contests, including the last 20.
- Brown (18.2 ppg) is half of the second-highest scoring freshman duo in the country. He and [Ike Smith](#) (12.4 ppg) combine to average 30.6 points a game.
- Troy is 1-4 in its last five and coming off a 71-70 win at Arkansas State Saturday.
- The Trojans are 3-7 at home and 1-5 in home Sun Belt games.
- Wesley Person leads the Trojans and ranks sixth in the league in scoring with 16.8 points to go along with 3.2 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 14.3 points and a team-leading 7.5 rebounds a game.

### **The Series**

- Georgia Southern leads the all-time series, which began in 1932, 11-6.
- The Eagles won the first meeting of the season 93-88 in overtime in Hanner Fieldhouse back on Jan. 9.
- Each of the last four meetings have been decided by five points or less.
- Troy won both contests last season, posting a 75-71 victory in Trojan Arena and a 65-62 triumph in Hanner Fieldhouse.

- 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.
- **Last Meeting - 1/9/2016 - Hanner Fieldhouse:** [Ike Smith](#) hit the go-ahead basket in overtime, and Georgia Southern held Troy scoreless on its final four possessions of the game to hang on for a 93-88 win.
- Smith drove the lane and hit a right-handed runner with 1:02 left in the extra session, and after Jeremy Holliman was whistled for a travel, [Coye Simmons](#) made 1 of 2 from the foul line to give the Eagles a three-point lead with 31.1 to play.
- Wesley Person's 3-point try with Eagle freshman [Tookie Brown](#) in his face hit nothing, and the Eagles dug out the rebound. Brown connected on a pair from the charity stripe with 13.3 seconds left, and Troy missed two desperation 3-point tries on their final trip down the floor.
- [Mike Hughes](#) led the Eagles with a game-high 22 points, and Brown finished with 19 points, four assists and four steals. Smith posted 16 points and six rebounds, and [Jake Allsmiller](#) chipped in 16 points and three assists. Simmons finished with 10 points.
- Person had 19 points to lead Troy, and Jordon Varnado collected 18 points and nine rebounds. B.J. Miller tallied 17 points and three assists, while John Walton III notched 14 points and nine boards.
- Georgia Southern shot a season-high 53 percent from the floor and forced 14 Troy turnovers while only committing six. Troy shot 54 percent from the field but was held to 5 of 22 from 3-point range.
- The Eagles led 80-71 with 4:08 left in the game when Simmons was whistled for a foul after Walton III's shot missed the mark, and Georgia Southern was also assessed a technical foul for protesting the call. The Trojans cashed in on three points from the free-throw line, sparking an 8-0 run, and Miller's fast-break layup cut the margin to 80-79 with 3:11 remaining. Both teams went cold from the floor over the next two minutes with Hughes providing 1-of-2 from the free-throw line to make the score 81-79. Person hit a runner with 23.5 seconds left to tie the game, and Brown's 3-point attempt after drawing some contact was wayward, sending the game into overtime.
- **Last time in Trojan Arena - 1/22/2015:** Kelton Ford scored 26 points, and Troy used a late 8-0 run to push by Georgia Southern 75-71.
- [Jelani Hewitt](#) led all scorers with 28 points and added six rebounds for Georgia Southern, which saw its four-game win streak come to an end. [Curtis Diamond](#) scored 12 points, and [Kyle Doyle](#) collected nine points and six rebounds.
- Ford, who came into the game 6-for-34 from 3-point range, nailed 6-of-9 from downtown, and Musa Abdul-Aleem netted 23 points off the bench for Troy. Kevin Thomas tallied 10 points and 12 rebounds.
- Hewitt gave the Eagles a one-point cushion with 2:57 to go after accelerating to the basket, drawing contact and dropping the ball off the window and in. The senior added the free throw to make the score 65-64 and got a steal on the Trojans' possession, but [Mike Hughes](#) missed a triple from the wing.
- That started a stretch in which the Eagles went cold the next two-plus minutes, while Troy got to the free-throw line at the other end and made eight straight from the charity stripe.
- Down 72-65, [Jake Allsmiller](#) hit a 3-pointer with 17 seconds left, and after Ford went 1-

for-2 from the line, Hewitt got a triple to go to make the score 73-71 with 6.1 seconds remaining. The Eagles tried to get one more steal but had to foul Abdul-Aleem with 3.7 seconds left, and the senior made two free throws to ice the game.

### Team Storylines

- 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.
- Brown and Smith average 30.6 points a game combined, making them the second-highest freshmen scoring duo in the country. Dwayne Bacon and Malik Beasley of Florida State (33.5 ppg) lead the nation, and Rice's Marcus Evans and Marquez Letcher-Ellis are third (30.1).
- Three Eagles are in the top-15 in the Sun Belt in 3-pointers made per game. [Mike Hughes](#) (6th, 2.0), [Jake Allsmiller](#) (11th, 1.8) and [Tookie Brown](#) (13th, 1.7) are in the top-15.
- [Tookie Brown](#), [Ike Smith](#) and [Mike Hughes](#) all scored 20-plus points in the win over UT Arlington Feb. 4. The last time three Eagles scored 20-plus points in a game was Jan. 16, 2014, an 88-81 overtime over Furman in Hanner Fieldhouse. [Angel Matias](#) (21), [Jelani Hewitt](#) (21) and Tre Bussey (26) all scored 20-plus points.
- Georgia Southern's 11 blocked shots against UT Arlington Feb. 4 were one shy of the school record, set against Texas San Antonio in 1989.
- [Mark Byington](#) is coaching in his 99th career game today.
- Under [Mark Byington](#), Georgia Southern is 32-5 in games when leading at half and 41-1 when leading with five minutes to go.
- Since joining the Sun Belt in 2014, 17 Georgia Southern games against Sun Belt schools have been decided by five points or less, and the Eagles are 11-6.
- The Eagles are averaging 76.9 points a game this season and have scored 80-plus points in eight games and 100-plus in three contests. Georgia Southern scored 80-plus points in six contests last year.
- The Eagles have played every team in the league at least once and posted a 4-6 record through the first half of conference play.
- Eleven different Eagles have scored 10 or more points in a game this season.
- Georgia Southern is 19-5 in Hanner Fieldhouse in its last 24 contests there.
- Georgia Southern posted a 4-6 record in the non-conference portion of its schedule.
- 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.
- [Devince Boykins](#) is the lone scholarship senior on the Eagles' roster, but this is his first year in the program.
- 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.
- Three student-athletes who redshirted last season - [Jonathan Sanks](#), [Aubrey McRae](#) and [Shawn O'Connell](#) - are making their debuts this season.
- Georgia Southern has used nine different combinations of starting lineups this season.
- The Eagles lost their first Sun Belt game after leading at halftime at Georgia State Jan. 19 (13-1).
- The Eagles' 101-100 win over Appalachian State Jan. 25 was their first win when allowing 100 points since a 112-104 triumph over Old Dominion Jan. 7, 1978. It was just the third time Georgia Southern has won a game when conceding 100 points (135-109 vs. Piedmont, 2/24/1951 and 110-106 vs. Samford, 1/20/1975). It was the first time the Eagles put up 100 points against a Division I opponent since a 116-73 victory over UC Davis Nov. 12, 2006.
- 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.
- The Eagles played their Sun Belt opener on the road for the second straight season. Georgia Southern is 0-2 all-time in Sun Belt openers.
- The Eagles played six of their first eight games on the road, a stretch that included contests at Ole Miss, Auburn and No. 6 Duke.
- 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).

### **In-Season Honors**

- [Tookie Brown](#) was named the Sun Belt Conference Men's Basketball Student-Athlete of the Week Feb. 8.
- Brown averaged 25.5 points, five assists, two rebounds and a steal in a 2-0 week for the Eagles. The 5-foot-11, freshman guard shot 60 percent from the field and 54 percent from 3-point range. He scored 20-plus points in each game, giving him eight contests with 20 or more this season. He was also named Sun Belt Player of the Week by College Sports Madness.
- Brown was also named Sun Belt Player of the Week by College Sports Madness Dec. 28.

### **Next Up**

- Georgia Southern plays at South Alabama Saturday, Feb. 13.
- Tipoff is set for 5:05 p.m. ET, and the game will be broadcast live on ESPN3.
- Following the game against the Jaguars, the Eagles play four in a row at home Feb. 18-25.

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

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