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Setting the Scene Game Preview

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SETTING THE SCENE

Game Preview

Site: Hanner Fieldhouse (3,897)

Tipoff: 7 p.m.

Listen: GS Sports Network (pregame show starts a half hour before tipoff)

Watch: ESPN+

Series: GS leads 7-3, W1

Last meeting: 1/26/19, W 74-58

Promotions: Star Wars Night, Hanner for the Holidays - \$5 General Admission Tickets, \$3 Group rate tickets (15+ people), \$1 kids ages 4-12.

Probable Starters:

#2 - Elijah McCadden

#3 - Ike Smith

#10 - Calvin Wishart

#13 - Quan Jackson

#23 - Simeon Carter

- The Eagles open Sun Belt Conference play at home Dec. 19, at 7 p.m. when Texas State visits Statesboro.
- GS opens conference play at home for just the second season in Southern's six in the Sun Belt.
- It's the earliest GS has opened Sun Belt Conference play and the earliest the Eagles have started their conference schedule since playing host to Elon Nov. 28, 2012, when the Eagles were members of the Southern Conference.
- Georgia Southern is 3-3 in conference openers under head coach Mark Byington and 2-3 in the Sun Belt. GS won its lone Sun Belt Conference opener at home, an 88-65 decision over Georgia State on New Year's Eve in 2016.
- The Eagles are 64-22 in Hanner Fieldhouse under Mark Byington and 35-12 in Sun Belt contests.
- GS plays three games in five days to finish their stretch before Christmas break as the Eagles play host to UTA Saturday and travel to Georgia Monday. GS also plays three games in five days coming out of the holiday with Sun Belt games at Coastal Carolina (Jan. 2), Appalachian State (Jan. 4) and Little Rock (Jan. 6).
- The Eagles are 3-2 in their last five and coming off an 81-51 loss at Bradley Sunday.
- Georgia Southern was picked third in the Sun Belt in the conference's Preseason Men's Basketball Coaches Poll. Quan Jackson was named first-team All-Sun Belt, Ike Smith was named second-team all-league and Isaiah Crawley was named third team all-conference.

- The Sun Belt poll followed a trend of preseason praise for the Eagles. Athlon, Lindy's, Street & Smith's and The Blue Ribbon College Basketball Yearbook all have the Eagles picked in the top-3 of the conference.
- The Eagles posted 20 wins in consecutive seasons for the first time in 30 years. The last time GS won 20 games two years in a row was in 1987-88 (24-7) and 1988-89 (22-6). GS has three 20-win seasons in the last five years.
- Senior Ike Smith received a medical hardship waiver to regain a year of eligibility. Smith scored five points against Reinhardt Nov. 8 to pass 1,500 for his career and had four rebounds vs. Radford Nov. 15 to become the fifth Eagle with 1,500 career points and 500 rebounds, joining Jeff Sanders (1,861 pts, 893 reb), Kevin Anderson (1,843 pts, 986 reb), Matt Simpkins (1,684 pts, 642 reb) and Louis Graham (1,581 pts, 908 reb).
- Smith has been named to the Lou Henson Award Preseason Watch List. The award is given annually to the nation's top Division I Mid-Major player.
- The Eagles rank seventh in the country in steals (10.5/gm), ninth in turnovers forced (19.4/gm) and second in turnover margin (+7.4). GS is also 25th in scoring at 80.9 points a game.
- Texas State was picked fourth in the Sun Belt Preseason Poll and garnered a first-place vote.
- Nijal Pearson was a first-team All-Sun Belt selection, and he and Ike Smith both rank in the top-25 on the NCAA's Division I active career scoring leaders list. Pearson is the reigning Sun Belt Conference Player of the Week.
- The Bobcats are 3-2 in their last five and coming off a 117-65 home victory over Bethany (Kansas) Sunday evening.
- Texas State is 1-3 in road games this season.
- The Bobcats give up 61.7 points per game (No. 2 in the Sun Belt) and hold opponents to a league-low 37.0 field goal percentage, which ranks 17th in the nation.