



Eastern Michigan men's basketball eager to compete in College Basketball Invitational

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Western Michigan's Connor Tava (2) and AJ Avery (34) try to stop the drive of Eastern Michigan's Raven Lee earlier this season. (File | MLive.com)

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YPSILANTI -- **Oregon State, University of California, University of Massachusetts** and **Michigan** are among the schools to turn down College Basketball Invite bids.

While those programs didn't see the value of playing in a second-tier postseason tournament, the Eastern Michigan men's basketball team only sees the upside of playing in March.

"March is the most important month in college basketball," EMU coach Rob Murphy said. "For us, in building a program, it is important to play in the postseason. We are trying to establish ourselves throughout the country. We aren't one of the 68 teams to make the NCAA tournament, but you have to look past that. A championship will help us move this program forward."

The College Basketball Invitational (CBI) is a 16-team postseason tournament with games hosted at on-campus sites. The tournament is single-elimination until a best-of-three championship series.

Eastern Michigan visits Louisiana Monroe at 7 p.m. Wednesday night. Teams joining the Eagles in the eighth CBI include Colorado; the only power conference school to accept a bid, Stoney Brook, Vermont and Mercer.

After going 1-1 in the CollegeInsider.com Tournament (CIT) last year, EMU views an invitation to the CBI as a step up.

"We thought this tournament would be a little closer to the NIT," Murphy said. "There would be some higher level opponents, top mid-majors, that we could try to step up to play."

Western Michigan is playing in this year's CIT with fellow Mid-American Conference schools Bowling Green and Kent State.

Test Run

The NCAA is using the CBI and NIT to evaluate potential rule changes, so the tournaments will feature a 30-second shot clock. The current shot clock for NCAA men's basketball is 35 seconds.

"It means more offensive possessions for teams," Murphy said. "The first five to six seconds of the shot clock there is usually a lot of false motion. The change will mean teams will have to cross half court, and go right into their offense."

Murphy hasn't had to spend much time discussing the change with his team since he's had them practicing using a 30-second shot clock for the past two seasons.

"It wasn't done with the idea in mind that it was something that would be implemented, but we just wanted faster practices," Murphy said. "We wanted to score more, and keep up the pace of play, so I think we will be fine with it."

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