
THE SERVICE LINE

Volleyball News from the MSU SideOut Club

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It's a Whole New Ball Game ...

But Is It Volleyball?

The Big Ten plans to use a series of live televised matches this fall to test a radical new format for the game of volleyball. The television contract has not been signed at publication date, but chances are good that a Big Ten "Match of the Week" will be televised live on a combination of cable networks that may include ESPN, ESPN2, Sports Channel, Liberty Sports or others. The conference has allocated \$100,000 to kick off the project, which is expected to include eight to twelve broadcasts during the season. One or two of these are likely to originate from Jenison Field House.

What fans see at these matches will be a big change from what they're used to.

The live matches will consist of three games (or sets), each played with a ten-minute time clock that will run only when the ball is in play. The winner of the match will be the team that scores the most total points for all three matches.

Proponents hope that the time clock and the pre-determined number of games will result in a match

that will consistently fit within the 90-minute time slot allotted for the broadcasts. It has also been suggested that the new format, with its obvious similarities to basketball and hockey, may be more comfortable for viewers who are new to the game of volleyball. The scoreboard will be modified so that it can display the running-total score for the match, as well as the more usual current-game score.

The new scoring includes a method to calculate a traditional match score for each contest. There will be five "set points" awarded to the two teams. One set point will be awarded to the winner of each of the three games, and the remaining two set points will go to the team with the most total points. The possible match scores will thus be 5-0, 4-1, or 3-2, with the team scoring the most total points for all games always scoring the most set points also.

Based on other indoor matches that have been played under a time clock (notably those at the USAV nationals), it appears that a ten-minute clock will frequently produce winning scores in the range of 20 to 25 points. Each game must still be won by two points.

The new format was reportedly opposed by six of the eleven Big Ten volleyball coaches, but when the athletic directors voted, it was passed by a 5-4 margin, with two abstentions. The NCAA has also approved the experimental scoring.

If the television deal should fall through, all matches will be played with the traditional scoring system. Nevertheless, the plan is a significant indication of the changes that may lie ahead in our game, as it tries to compete with mainstream spectator sports.

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On the Road...To Japan

The MSU volleyball team will travel to Kobe, Japan for two weeks in August to train with the top women's club team in Japan. The Spartans will depart East Lansing on Saturday, August 12, and return to campus on Saturday, August 26. NCAA rules allow a team to make one trip outside of the United States every four years.

Terry Braverman, Director of the Ralph Young Fund, and Coach Chuck Erbe raised \$25,000 to make the trip possible.

"This opportunity will be great technical preparation for our team", Erbe said. "It's a tremendous competitive opportunity. We'll learn from their discipline and intensity. This will be better than any preparation we could receive in the U.S.

"I am very pleased and overwhelmed by the support of the MSU family, alumni, and the community as a whole to help us raise a significant amount of money in a short time", Erbe added. It's gratifying to know our program has this kind of support. Without their support, this opportunity would have passed us by."

The Spartans will train with Daiei Women's Club, the top-ranked women's team in Japan. Daiei is coached by Dr. Arie Selinger, who guided the United States women's team to a silver medal in the 1984

Olympics. Selinger also coached the U.S. National Team that would have competed in the 1980 Olympics. He was assisted in '79 by Erbe. Selinger, who will retire in May of 1996, is the first foreign coach to win the Japan women's league.

In addition to training with Daiei, the Spartans will have scrimmages against university teams and second division clubs.

"I'd like to express our appreciation to the community, fans, alumni and donors of the volleyball program for their incredible support to make this trip a reality," said Associate Athletic Director Kathy Lindahl. "This trip will set the tone for what we guarantee will be the most exciting volleyball season ever at MSU. Coach Erbe has taken this program to a national level and this international opportunity for the student-athletes will be one they remember forever."

Kobe, Japan was in the news earlier this year when it was hit by a 7.2 magnitude earthquake. Selinger's apartment had most of its furnishings demolished, and the team's facilities were damaged slightly. Some U.S. volleyball players, including Paula Weishoff and Bob Samuelson, who were living in the area and playing in Japanese professional leagues, experienced the earthquake first-hand.

Team Notes

Preseason Rankings

The buzz around the national volleyball community is that the Spartans are *the* up-and-coming team of 1995. The preseason polls are not available at publication time, but MSU is expected to garner one of the top rankings in the Big Ten, as well as a top twenty or better ranking nationally.

Practice Begins

Returning players from last season reported to campus on July 31 and began practice on August 1. The incoming freshmen will head to campus on Friday, August 11. The team leaves for Japan the following day, so the freshmen will experience their first college practice session in the Land of the Rising Sun.

The Service Line

MSU SideOut Club

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Spring (and Summer) Training

Julie Pavlus and Courtney DeBolt spent their spring and summer undergoing rehabilitation therapy following knee injuries and subsequent surgical repair last winter. At the start of practice August 1, Julie was reported to be nearly at full strength. Courtney was not yet at that level, but still had a full month before the beginning of competition.

Alumni Match Canceled

Unfortunately, the team's trip to Japan made it necessary to cancel the alumni match this year. The match was scheduled for August 26, but the team won't arrive back in Lansing until 11:20pm that night. Instead of rescheduling the match, the coaching staff decided it was more important for the team to get a couple of days of rest, and then resume normal practice before the start of the regular season on Labor Day weekend. The alumni match will be back on the schedule next year.

Team Changes

The Spartans lose only one senior from last year's team, captain Amy Schloss. In addition, sophomore Sarah Smith decided not to return to the team this fall, leaving her scholarship available for another player. Coach Erbe awarded it to Sarah Blakely, who had originally joined the team as a walk-on.

Top Recruiting Class

For 1995, MSU has signed three AAU and USAV All-Americans, Robin Ill, Jenny Whitehead and Jenna Wrobel. Noted volleyball recruiting expert Bill Feldman of Chicago has rated MSU's recruiting class as one of the top three in the nation along with UCLA and Nebraska.

The most celebrated of the three recruits is six-foot outside hitter **Jenna Wrobel**, considered by some to be the top prospect in the country. A native of Naperville, Illinois, Wrobel played club ball for Sports Performance in Chicago and was a member of the Junior National Team in 1993 and 1994. Last summer she led Sports Performance to the 1994 AAU National Championship and was named the

tournament MVP. In addition she earned first-team AAU and USAV All-America honors.

"Jenna Wrobel is the premier recruit in the nation," Erbe said. "She is a world-class athlete who with a 32-inch vertical jump can dominate a match from the outside hitting position. It goes without saying that Jenna as a freshman will be an impact player in the Big Ten and nationally. Jenna along with sophomore outside hitter Veronica Morales will give MSU the two best left-side attackers in the Big Ten and one of the best tandems in the nation."

At Naperville Central High, Wrobel broke the state high school record with 1,243 kills during her career. She was a two-time first-team all-state selection and was named to the Mizuno High School All-Star team in 1994 and played in the Mizuno High School All-America match in Los Angeles. As a junior and senior, she was named to the *Chicago Tribune* All-State and All-Area squads. Wrobel was a two-time all-state honoree by the *Chicago Sun Times* and was named MVP of the *Naperville Sun* All-Area team in 1994.

Robin Ill, a 5-11 outside hitter from Millington, Michigan, earned AAU All-America honors in 1994 after leading her Genesee Area Volleyball Club to a top eight finish at the AAU National Tournament last season. While at Millington High, Ill has earned all-league, all-area and all-state honors for three straight seasons. As a junior in 1994, she led the Cardinals to a record of 42-3-2. Ill averaged 4.2 kills per game and totaled 164 blocks and 387 digs.

"Robin Ill is an outstanding all-around athlete and one of the most intense competitors I have ever seen," Erbe said. "I expect her to compete immediately for playing time. Robin is a dynamic attacker, who also possesses excellent passing and defensive skills."

In addition to her volleyball honors, Ill earned all-league, all-area and honorable mention all-state honors in basketball. Off the court, Ill was a member of the National Honor Society, the French Club and the Principal's Advisory Committee. Ill comes from an athletic family. Her sister Karen plays volleyball for Oakland University, while her twin sister Renee was

an honorable mention all-state basketball player for Millington High this past season.

Jenny Whitehead, a 6-3 middle blocker from Jenison, Michigan, earned first-team AAU All-America honors and second-team USAV All-America honors in 1994 as a member of the Michigan Volleyball Club. As a junior at Jenison High, Whitehead was an all-conference, all-area and third-team all-state honoree after totaling 289 kills, 163 blocks and 215 digs.

Whitehead also competed in basketball and track, earning all-conference, all-area and all-state honors on the court.

"Jenny Whitehead, at 6-3, is one of the top middle prospects in the nation," says Erbe. "Physically, she is a dominant player at the net and is athletic enough to play the back court. Jenny has the potential to make a significant contribution as a freshman."

"Robin, Jenny and Jenna, together with our returning players, put MSU volleyball into a position to compete for the Big Ten championship and national honors next season and for many years thereafter. It will be exciting for old and new fans of Michigan State volleyball to watch future All-American and Olympians wear the Green and White," Erbe added.

Two Walk-ons Chosen

In addition to the three new scholarship players, MSU has two talented walk-on freshmen for 1995.

Heather Mitchell is a 6-1 outside hitter from Lake Odessa, Michigan, who attended Lakewood High School. She was near the top of MSU's recruiting list, but when the three available scholarships went to other players, Heather decided to attend MSU anyway.

Kelly Penny is a 5-8 backrow specialist and potential setter from Mundelein, Illinois.

With ten returning players plus five new freshmen, there will be intense competition for the six starting positions and the twelve road spots.

Spartans Well-Represented at Olympic Festival

Three MSU volleyball players competed in the 1995 U.S. Olympic Festival in Boulder, Colorado, from July 21 through 30. Regional tryouts were used to select a total of forty-eight players for the four Festival teams.

MSU was one of only five schools in the nation sending more than two volleyball players to the Festival. Florida, Stanford, and Nebraska each sent four players, while MSU and Pacific sent three apiece.

Current Spartans appearing in Colorado included middle hitter Val Sterk for Team North and outside hitter Corie Richard for Team East. Joining Val on Team North was incoming freshman outside hitter Jenna Wrobel.

Despite their talents, the MSU players were overshadowed by bigger name players from other schools. As a result, none of the Spartans were starters, and only Wrobel had much playing time. The Festival coaches have only a short time to work with their teams, so they tend to favor the players they know from their own conference or from national publicity. Nevertheless, in her first match, Wrobel led all players with seven blocks.

Sterk and Wrobel's North team won the gold medal 3-2 over the South team, while Richard's East team won the bronze.

Seven other MSU student-athletes also competed, in wrestling, ice hockey, and field hockey. MSU Sports Information Director Ken Hoffman served as an Olympic Festival Press Officer.

1994 Awards

Regional Recognition for Spartans

The 1994 season produced a number of post-season awards for MSU players.

- ◆ Val Sterk was named an All-Big-Ten First Team selection for her outstanding season at the middle blocker position.

- ◆ Outside hitter Veronica Morales won a spot on the Honorable Mention All-Big-Ten team. Her play also earned her a place on the All-Mideast Region Second Team.
- ◆ Five Spartans—Dana Cooke, Stephanie Friedlund, Amy Schloss, Sarah Smith, and Val Sterk—were honored as All-Big-Ten Academic team selections. Val Sterk was also chosen for the District IV Academic All-American team.

Team Awards

The following awards, determined by MSU's coaching staff, were presented at the Spartan Volleyball Banquet on April 9:

- Most Valuable Player Veronica Morales
- Andrea DeLuca Spirit Award Sarah Blakely
- Hitting Efficiency Val Sterk
- Captain's Award Amy Schloss

Eat Your Heart Out, Goodyear

Fans have seen many kinds of inflated objects—from basketballs to volleyballs—flying through the air in Jenison over the years, but so far none of them have been self-propelled. That will change this fall when MSU Athletics unveils a new diversion for fans: a motorized helium-filled blimp.

You may have seen one of these mini-airships plying the "skies" at Chicago Bulls games, Illinois home basketball games, or other sporting events. Now MSU is the proud owner of a green and white version of this technological marvel.

Assistant Coach Laura Bush was the driving force behind the acquisition of the blimp. "Just the sight of it will generate some extra excitement in Jenison," she said. "It can be draped with banners to promote events or sponsors, and it even has a few capabilities we're going to surprise you with."

The \$3,000 blimp, produced by Peck-Polymers of Santee, CA, had its maiden flight on Friday, August 4.

It was removed from its shipping boxes and the parts laid out on the green and gray Sport Court flooring. Most of the assembly time was devoted to the miniature gondola, with its dual propellers controlling up/down and forward/reverse motion.

The crew ran a hose from the tank of helium to the inflation valve of the gas bag. The thirteen-foot long white vinyl envelope began to take shape as it filled with helium. Someone hurried to attach a tether to the tail, unsure of whether it was going to get away and float to the ceiling. By the time the bag had filled with 160 cubic feet of helium, it was about five feet in diameter, sporting Spartan helmet logos on its flanks and a block S on the nose.

The tether was removed, and after a few false starts, the blimp rose from the floor and moved forward under its own power. It veered in the wrong direction and bounced softly off the balcony, as a lone runner on the Jenison track watched in amusement..

Andy Hartsuff of the Capital Area Radio Drone Squadron (CARDS) will be the official operator of the Spartan blimp. "I've flown radio-controlled planes, and even helicopters," Andy said, "but this is a new experience."

As Andy quickly learned the controls, the dirigible began to move with more of a purpose. Two players shooting hoops stopped to watch as it floated overhead, silently at first, then with motors whirring to increase speed or to change direction. Pivoting the propellers downward and giving them some power, Andy brought the blimp closer and closer to the ground until the gondola touched down smoothly, its wheels rolling across the volleyball court.

"Volleyball will act as a pilot program for a lot of our new ideas this year," said Melissa MacCaul, Director of Promotions. "Eventually the blimp will likely be used at women's and men's basketball games, but volleyball fans will be the first to see it."

MacCaul didn't say at which match the blimp would make its public debut, but everyone present agreed that fans will be delighted with the new addition.

1995 Schedule

9/2-3	GOFF MSU VB CLASSIC (Illinois State, Baylor, SDSU, Bowling Green)	10/25	MICHIGAN
9/8-9	@UCSB Invitational (including Florida, Long Beach State, others)	10/27	IOWA
9/15-16	MSU TOURNAMENT (Cleveland State, Maryland, South Carolina)	10/28	LOUISVILLE
9/20	CENTRAL MICHIGAN	11/3	INDIANA
9/22	NORTHWESTERN	11/4	ILLINOIS
9/23	PURDUE	11/10	@Minnesota
9/27	@Michigan	11/11	@Wisconsin
9/30	@Iowa	11/17	PENN STATE
10/6	@Illinois	11/18	OHIO STATE
10/7	@Indiana	11/24	@Purdue
10/13	WISCONSIN	11/25	@Northwestern
10/14	MINNESOTA		
10/20	@Ohio State	11/29	NCAA 1st round
10/21	@Penn State	12/2	NCAA 2nd round
		12/8-9	NCAA Regionals
		12/14-16	NCAA Championships University of Massachusetts

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