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# THE SERVICE LINE

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Volleyball News from the MSU SideOut Club  
Vol. II No. 1  
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## MSU Opens with Tough Schedule

When Chuck Erbe told us eighteen months ago that he had a big schedule lined up for 1996, little did we realize just how big it was. In the first nine days of the 1996 season, the Spartans will find themselves matched up against each of the other three teams from last year's final four.

They will open the season August 30 with the Goff/MSU Volleyball Classic, hosting national runner-up Texas, final-four participant Stanford, and the University of Houston. The following weekend, they will travel to Lincoln for an unusual dual matchup against national champion Nebraska. The two teams will play each other twice, on Friday and Saturday nights. (Sandwiched in between, on Saturday afternoon, MSU will also play Nebraska in football.)

National attention will be focused on the Goff/MSU Volleyball Classic, as it looks to be the premier pre-conference tournament of the year. Its only close competitor is the State-Farm/NACWAA Volleyball Classic hosted this year by Illinois State. That tournament, initiated last year by the National

*(continued on page 2)*

### Spartans Top Volleyball Magazine Preseason Poll

The 1996 preseason poll from Volleyball Magazine ranks MSU as tops in the nation for the first time ever. The USA Today/AVCA Coaches Poll puts MSU in the third spot.

This is how the top teams shape up in the two polls

	Volleyball Magazine	USA Today/AVCA
1	Michigan State	Hawai'i
2	Hawai'i	Stanford
3	Stanford	Michigan State
4	Nebraska	Texas
5	Texas	Nebraska
6	Notre Dame	UCLA
7	Washington State	Penn State
8	UCLA	Washington State
9	Penn State	Notre Dame
10	San Diego State	San Diego State

Of the top five teams, all but Hawai'i lost a setter to graduation. Nebraska and Texas, last year's NCAA champion and runner-up, each lost a second starter, which may explain why these two dropped several notches in both polls. In contrast, MSU moved up, perhaps because Chuck Erbe is known for his skill at training setters, and because Julie Pavlus has proven herself by winning a national championship with her juniors club team.

Last year the Spartans were eleventh and twenty-first in the preseason polls and moved up to number 5 and number 4 by the end of the season. Sometimes high preseason rankings are seen as a jinx, but Stanford and Nebraska were one-two in both 1995 preseason polls, and wound up having outstanding seasons.

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**Tough Schedule** (continued from page 1)

Association of Collegiate Women Athletic Administrators, takes place August 23 and 24, a week before the official kickoff of the college volleyball season. It will feature appearances by Nebraska, Hawai'i (the AVCA's preseason number one), and 1995's sixth-ranked Florida.

**Goff Tournament Preview**

At the opening of the season, coaches will normally be experimenting with lineups but each team has certain key players to watch for.

**Friday - University of Texas**

This will be the first meeting between 1995's premier freshman outside hitters, Demetria Sance of Texas and our own Jenna Wrobel. Although Sance beat out Wrobel for national freshman-of-the-year honors, the result might have been different if Jenna had not missed six weeks of play due to an ankle injury. The two have actually played together twice, at the 1995 Junior Olympics, where their team won the gold medal, and at a high-school all-star match. Jenna isn't worried: "Demetria's a really good player, but we have really good players who will match up against her."

The big change for Texas this year may be their switch from the Southwest Conference to the newly formed Big 12 Conference, where they will join

volleyball powerhouse Nebraska for some high level competition. On the court, the Longhorns have to contend with the loss of two star players, setter Carrie Busch and outside hitter Angie Breitenfield.

This may result in junior Tammy Juergens taking over at setter, with the outside hitter position still in question. With returnees Lakisha Bledsoe, Sonya Barnes, and Katie Austin all at 6'1" or taller, the Longhorns will be putting up the same kind of huge blocks that they became known for last year.

**Saturday - University of Houston**

Saturday night brings the University of Houston, who finished fifth out of six teams in the Southwest Conference last year, yet whose overall record of 17-14 attests to the strength of the conference. They advanced into the NCAA playoffs, losing in the first round to BYU, who then traveled to East Lansing to meet the Spartans. Two of their juniors—Nashika Stokes and Marie-Claude Tourillon—were named to the all-conference team, and Stokes joined Sami Sawyer on the conference all-tournament team.

Saturday also features Stanford versus Texas. Stanford will be looking for revenge against the Longhorns, who were responsible for two of the Cardinal's three losses last season, including the upset in the NCAA semifinal that ended their drive for a second consecutive NCAA title.

**Sunday - Stanford University**

Stanford's Don Shaw could be looking for sympathy this year as he loses four key players, including two-time NCAA Player of the Year Cary Wendell, from last year's team. However, he probably won't get much, given Stanford's past history as a powerhouse plus the quality of the players who are returning.

1995 All-American Lisa Sharpley has the potential to be the best setter in the country. The junior co-captain will run a very different offense this year, as the loss of Wendell has Stanford abandoning their two-setter offense for a more customary 5-1. On the right side opposite Sharpley we can expect to see the Cardinal's top new recruit, 1995 High School Player of the Year Kerri Walsh.

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**The Service Line**


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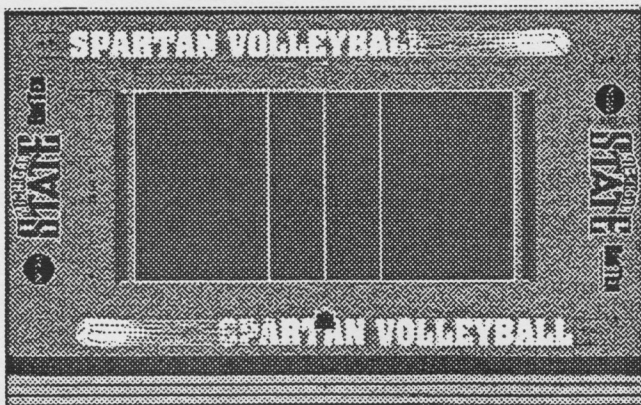
Barbara Ifejika and Eileen Murfee, both three-year letter-winners, continue to hold down the middle-blocker positions, just as they did for most of last year. On the left side will be 1995 second-team All American Kristin Folkl. Folkl actually spent more time with the U.S. national team than she did at Stanford during 1995-96, hoping to earn a spot on the Olympic team. She just missed this honor, being named the first alternate, and will now be returning to Stanford full-time.

Stanford's other outside-hitter position could be up for grabs. During drills before last year's NCAA semi-final, starter Debbie Lambert tore her anterior cruciate ligament. She had surgery during the off season, but will now be competing with freshmen Sarah Clark and Jaimi Gregory for the position.

## More Improvements to Jenison Field House

Crews were busy in Jenison last week with stencils and black paint, trying to make sure fans can find their reserved seats this fall. The seat numbers were slowly appearing on the aluminum bleachers on the west side of the arena, now positively identified as the section for season-ticket holders.

As reported in *The Service Line* in April, volleyball will expand into the north end of Jenison for 1996, with the court turned ninety degrees and seating increased to nearly 7,000.



The playing floor will have a fresh look, thanks to a new design sporting additional logos. The design elements, shown above, consist of a vinyl applique

material that adheres to the Sport Court.

Most prominent are the dynamic white "SPARTAN VOLLEYBALL" logos that include a comet-like streaking volleyball. Both of these are readable from the west side of the court, because, as Chuck says, "That's the TV side". Behind each end line is centered a green Michigan State logo, flanked by smaller Big Ten and NCAA insignias.

### New Banners

Chuck Erbe wanted something else to dress up the field house, and the SideOut Club was happy to oblige. Delta Sports is making up ten green and white banners that will mark the accomplishments of MSU women's volleyball, both past and future. The five-by-eight-foot banners will be hung from a railing above the seating on the north wall.

The first set of five, to be unveiled at the Goff tournament, will include NCAA achievements, such as appearances in the NCAA tournament (1994, 1995), appearances in the final four (1995), and national championships (1996?).

The second set will be raised for the Big Ten opener against Michigan on October 4, and will, appropriately, celebrate Big Ten accomplishments. Both sets of banners will include some devoted to individual honors, such as All-America awards.

### New Volleyballs

Home matches will be played with a different ball this year, after Chuck Erbe signed an agreement with Baden Sports to use their LEXUM 15-0 volleyball exclusively. According to Chuck, "This is an excellent ball, a little bit softer than what we were using".

The new balls are really sharp looking, thanks to a green imprint of the same Michigan State logo appearing on the new floor. The team received 110 of them, and the players have been seen carefully counting them at the end of practice to make sure they're all accounted for.

### And More...

The new court layout required additional speakers, for a further enhancement of the sound system that was new last year. The east and west side walls will

sport brand-new, volleyball-only scoreboards.

## Alumni Return August 24

Yes, in spite of its omission from some of the official printed schedules, the latest word is that the team will play a match against the MSU alumni at 7:00 pm on Saturday August 24. As of press time, the NCAA had not given official approval (needed because the match would precede the earliest allowable opening date), but this was expected at any time. Be sure to watch the daily papers, or call for confirmation.

The MSU SideOut Club will sponsor post-game festivities at Jenison for the two teams and SideOut Club members. There will be free refreshments and a chance to meet and talk with the players. Check at the SideOut Club merchandise table for details.

Alumni who may play include Courtney DeBolt, Connie Thomas, Jill Krumm, Mary Jo Hardy, Corinne McNamara, Andrea DeLuca, and others.

## Team Notes

■ Seniors Val Sterk and Dana Cooke (below) have been named co-captains of the 1996 Spartans.



■ Most of the players spent a relaxed summer in East Lansing, playing and working out together. According to Dana Cooke, "This is our chance to play together and have fun without the coaches."

■ In addition to the arena changes, you'll see a subtle change in the players' uniforms this year, as

the fronts of their jerseys drop the *MSU* lettering in favor of *Michigan State*.

■ Chuck Erbe says the team will be quicker and more powerful this year, and that the back row will become a more important part of the attack. The team is also working on jump serves, with Jenna Wrobel delivering perhaps the most deadly ones right now. Chuck says "We are treating the jump serve as yet another attack weapon, a way to disrupt opponents and to make sure they don't get a moment's rest on the court."

■ If Val Sterk gets her jump serve working well, it could become a fan favorite. The serve she has been practicing is a slide jump serve, starting with a sideways approach from outside the left sideline, continuing into a one-foot takeoff. "It developed because I just feel really comfortable with that approach in the front court, and, besides, I've never seen anyone else serve that way", Val laughs.

## A Leader In Attendance Too

MSU was eleventh in the nation in average attendance per volleyball match in 1995, a year which saw a record 1.85 million fans attending women's Division I matches. The Spartans attracted an average of 1,590 to the 20 matches played in East Lansing, showing the largest increase in the nation in ranking, up from 626 in 1994.

The University of Hawai'i led the nation by posting a new record average attendance of 6,042. Hawai'i's incredible performance pushed the Big West Conference to the top of the overall attendance list for the first time, unseating the Big Ten, which had led the nation for the last five years. The Big West drew 216,635, compared with 185,954 for the Big Ten and 141,413 for the third-place PAC-10. The Big Ten still placed six schools in the top twenty, more than any other conference. Of those, only Illinois and Wisconsin placed higher than MSU.

Nebraska set a new NCAA single-match attendance record of 11,529 for their October 21 meeting with the University of Colorado. The best-attended Big Ten match of the season took place at Jenison Field



House when 4,476 watched Ohio State battle MSU for the conference title. That ranked as number eighteen out of all regular season matches held throughout the nation in 1995. However, it's even more impressive when you consider that fourteen of the seventeen matches that drew more fans were held at Hawai'i. Other than Hawai'i and the record-setting match at Nebraska, only one match at UCLA and one at Florida drew more.

Total attendance for all NCAA levels (Divisions I, II, III, NAIA, and NJCAA) exceeded 3.9 million.

	School	Matches	Total	Avg.
1	Hawai'i	24	145,006	6,042
2	Nebraska	17	66,583	3,917
3	Florida	21	53,986	2,571
4	Illinois	14	32,856	2,347
5	Texas	13	26,704	2,054
6	Illinois State	13	26,253	2,019
7	Wisconsin	14	26,811	1,915
8	Wash. State	16	29,027	1,814
9	Stanford	17	29,765	1,751
10	Pacific	16	26,171	1,636
11	Michigan State	20	31,799	1,590

## 1996 Rules Changes

Servers will no longer be constrained to a "service area" as a result of the most visible change in women's college volleyball rules for 1996. Players will be allowed to execute the serve from any point along the end line, which should benefit fans by adding more variety to the game.

Other rule changes are more subtle:

- The ball pressure will be restricted to a narrower range, at or below the previous minimum pressure. The old range was 4.5 to 6.0 lb./sq.-in., with the new range at 4.3 to 4.6. There has also been discussion at the international level of lowering pressures to make it easier to pass the ball with control, especially against the overpowering jump serves seen in the men's game.

- The rule against touching the opponents' playing area has been relaxed to allow the same leeway for hand contact that has always been allowed for foot contact. This means that as long as some part of the hand is on or directly above the center line, contact with the other team's court is allowed.

- One of the new rules fixes a loophole. In the past, if the ball was hit into the net, pushing it into an opposing player, the net contact by the player was never a fault. This meant that a quick-thinking player with outstretched hands could legally angle or even move her hands slightly to redirect the ball so that the opposing team could not play it out of the net. The rules have been modified to make any intentional play of the ball in this situation illegal.

- The new rules specifically allow the use of computers on the bench, although this was never prohibited in the past. They now prohibit the use of electronic devices, such as radio headsets and computers, to transmit information from elsewhere in the facility to the bench. This may have been in reaction to the computer system developed by Aldis Berzins of the U.S. National Team to track the performance of a team or the tendencies of an opponent. The system allows someone with a computer in the stands to record the results of each play and send them through a wireless network to a computer on the bench where the coaches can use the performance summaries instantaneously during a match. For the national team, the system was beneficial because the international rules put limits on how many staff members can sit on the bench. This system essentially gives the team another staff member. The University of Wisconsin used this system at Jenison in the 1994 season.

- And, if you watch carefully, you'll see the line judges going to a different spot during time outs. In the past the line judges were required to stand at the center of the end line during time outs. The new rules call for them to move to the referee's side line at the attack line.

## The Referee's Stand

The huge success of volleyball in East Lansing has brought a lot of new fans to the game, many of

whom are not well acquainted with the rules. *The Referee's Stand* will be a regular feature, with each column trying to explain one aspect of the rules of volleyball. This introductory installment will cover the game officials and their duties.

The official on the stand above the court at one end of the net is called the *first referee*. The official on the playing floor at the opposite end of the net is the *second referee* (or sometimes, *umpire*).

Rules violations committed during play are known as *faults*, and one of the duties of the referees is to stop play with a whistle if they see a fault committed. Certain faults may be whistled *only* by the *first referee*. These include: a) faults by the server, b) faults in playing the ball (e.g. a lift, or a back-row attacker), and c) faults above or in the upper part of the net. In addition, only the first referee may issue penalties for misconduct.

The second referee watches for and whistles: a) players touching the net, b) players crossing the center line into the opponent's court, and c) balls hitting the antenna or crossing the net outside it. He also authorizes time-outs and substitutions.

If the second referee sees a fault that is out of her jurisdiction, she may use signals to indicate this to the first referee, but may not whistle. You will see this most commonly when the first referee's view of a lift or double hit is blocked by another player.

The *scorekeeper* records information about the play of the match as it progresses. The scorekeeper also reports three types of faults—a) when a coach tries to take too many timeouts, b) when an illegal substitution is attempted, and c) when the wrong player serves the ball.

Two *line judges* at opposite corners of the court signal to the first referee in four situations—a) foot faults by the server, b) whether a ball is in or out when it lands near their sidelines, c) balls crossing the net outside the antenna, and d) a player touching a ball on its way out of bounds.

When a play ends, for whatever reason, the first referee always does three things—a) blows her whistle, b) makes a hand signal indicating why it

ended, and c) makes a second signal to indicate whether the result is a point or a sideout.

Knowledgeable fans always watch for the referee's signal immediately after a whistle. Sometimes in televised games the announcers report the calls wrong, because they go by what they think they saw, rather than what the referee actually signals. In later columns on specific rules, we will include graphics of the corresponding hand signals.

The first referee has complete authority over the teams and the other officials, and has the power to decide any matter involving the game, including those not provided for in the rules.

Fans often complain about the referee "overruling" a line judge, especially when it goes against their team. One referee explained this situation as follows: "Line judges are a very important part of the officiating team. However, I do not 'overrule' line judges, because they do not make rulings. They signal to the referee their view of what happens on certain plays. I use that information in addition to what I see in order to make a ruling, which is ultimately my responsibility."

That responsibility is a difficult one. When a referee makes a call you don't like, remember that it's much easier to make the calls when you're sitting in the crowd than it is up on the referee's stand.

## The Chuck Erbe Show

MSU volleyball will have its own weekly television show starting September 8. *The Chuck Erbe Show*, with co-host Ken Landau, will be seen on WLAJ, channel 53, from 12:30 to 1:00 pm for sixteen consecutive Sundays this fall. The SideOut Club has signed on as a \$1,500 sponsor for the show.

The Goff Coach's Corner will feature Chuck's analysis of the week's matches. Courtney DeBolt will talk to one player or coach each week, featuring the non-volleyball part of their lives, on Courtside with Courtney. There will also be a segment highlighting other Olympic sports teams from MSU.

This will be an opportunity for fans to get the inside scoop on MSU volleyball, so be sure not to miss it!



## SideOut Club Report

### When Do I Renew My Membership (or, what's that insert in my newsletter)?

It's the start of a new season, so it may be time to renew your SideOut Club membership.

We send out the first newsletter of the year to all members from the previous year. If this issue contains a separate insert for membership renewal, it means your membership has expired. The SideOut Club membership year runs from July 1 to June 30, but for those who join during the "off-season" (between January 1 and June 30) we extend the membership to the following year.

You'll see from the form that we have added a few new types of memberships. Notable are the Supporting memberships for individuals and families, made possible by our recognition as a 501(c)3 charitable organization. These memberships allow you to give a little extra monetary support to the team, and, at the same time, earn a tax deduction.

### What Do I Get?

The Club has made some changes to the benefits offered to members this year. The following is what members can expect to receive in 1996:

- Charter-member pin (while remaining supplies last)
- SideOut Club newsletter
- MSU volleyball media guide
- 10% discount on most SideOut Club merchandise
- Priority in assignment of season tickets
- Invitations to meet and interact with coaches and players at Club functions.

Young Spartan members receive:

- Free general admission to regular-season home matches

- Autographed team poster.

### Volunteers Needed

We've told you this several times before, and a few members have responded to help out with our fund-raising activities. However, this year the need appears critical. Attendance at Jenison is expected to soar, often reaching the full expanded capacity of nearly 7,000. We'll be offering a greater range of merchandise for sale, and operating 50/50 raffles at every home match. *We simply cannot do this without additional help.* If you can spare some time to work at one or more home matches, please call Dave Pike at (517) 626-9914.

### Let's Win the "Battle for Boosters"!

The MSU Athletic Department has announced a contest to increase membership in booster groups. The group showing the largest proportional increase in membership for the 1996 school year will earn \$5,000 in apparel for their sport.

The size of the SideOut Club more than doubled in 1995-96 to nearly 90 memberships, which, including families, represents nearly 200 members.

We'd like to see current members doing everything they can to increase that growth rate even further. With the expected popularity of the team this year, there's no reason we couldn't reach 500 memberships for 1996-97.

### 50/50 Raffles

After an experimental run at four matches last year, the 50/50 raffle will become a full-time fixture this season.

The raffles will start at the opening of the regular season with the Goff Tournament. For that weekend, there will be one raffle each night, with the drawing held during MSU's match, always the second of the night. Tickets will be available at two tables in the arena, and from vendors roaming the stands. Remember that half of the proceeds goes to the MSU volleyball program, and the other half goes to one lucky winner, who could be you!

## 1996 Schedule

(All home matches will be played in Jenison Field House)

8/24	ALUMNI	7:00 pm	10/18	@Iowa	
8/30-9/1	GOFF/MSU VOLLEYBALL CLASSIC		10/19	@Illinois	
8/30	Houston vs. Stanford	5:00 pm	10/25	MINNESOTA	7:00 pm
	MSU vs. Texas	7:00 pm	10/26	WISCONSIN	7:00 pm
8/31	Stanford vs. Texas	5:00 pm	10/30	NORTHWESTERN	7:00 pm
	MSU vs. Houston	7:00 pm	11/2	@Michigan	
9/1	Houston vs. Texas	5:00 pm	11/8	@Ohio State	
	MSU vs. Stanford	7:00 pm	11/9	@Penn State	
9/6-7	@Nebraska		11/15	ILLINOIS	7:00 pm
9/13-14	@Cleveland State Invitational (Niagara, Loyola, Cleveland State)		11/16	IOWA	7:00 pm
9/20	KENTUCKY	7:00 pm	11/22	@Wisconsin	
9/27	@Indiana		11/23	@Minnesota	
9/28	@Purdue		11/29	PURDUE	7:00 pm
10/2	@Northwestern		11/30	INDIANA	7:00 pm
10/4	MICHIGAN	7:00 pm	12/4	NCAA 1st round	
10/11	PENN STATE	7:00 pm	12/7	NCAA 2nd round	
10/12	OHIO STATE (Homecoming)	7:00 pm	12/13-14	NCAA Regionals	
			12/19	NCAA Semifinals	
				Cleveland State University	
			12/19	NCAA Championship	
				Cleveland State University	



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