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# The SERVICE LINE

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Volleyball News from the MSU SideOut Club

Vol. II No. 2  
October 1996

## A New Spartan Line-Up for 1996

Observant fans will notice some significant changes in the MSU volleyball line-up this year. Some were expected, but others are modifications that Chuck Erbe initiated recently, based on the team's pre-conference play. Although further changes are possible, Chuck expects this to be the basic line-up for the rest of the season.

❖ The most subtle change is also the most interesting. Starting at the Cleveland State tournament, MSU's two outside hitters, Veronica Morales and Jenna Wrobel, have traded their usual L1 and L2 positions. They are still both designated as left-side hitters, but they have rotated 180 degrees in the lineup, so they are in different spots relative to the setter. (See the sidebar at the right for an explanation of the positions on the court.)

According to Chuck, "This will allow Veronica to concentrate exclusively on hitting from the left, which is her strength. It returns Jenna to the position that she played on her high school and club teams." The results have been positive, as shown by the opening Big Ten weekend. At Purdue, Jenna had 34 kills, the second-highest total ever for an MSU player. Against Indiana, Veronica

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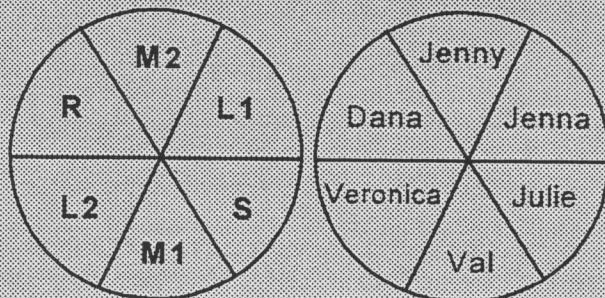
### What's an L1?

In the terminology of MSU's system, the six positions on the court are referred to as S (setter), L1 and L2 (left-side players), M1 and M2 (middle blockers), and R (right side). These are usually diagrammed as a six-slice "pie" (bottom left).

L1 and M1 play next to the setter, L2 is opposite L1, and M2 is opposite M1. With these restrictions, the coach must decide whether the setter is followed in service order by M1 or L1. MSU uses the latter arrangement, resulting in a service order of S, L1, M2, R, L2, M1. You'll notice that some of our opponents have M1 follow the setter.

This choice is a complex one, based primarily on serve reception formations and the type of offense the team uses. Important factors include who the passers are, what types of sets the hitters will be hitting, and where they can best approach from. The L1-following line-up is best suited to a multiple-tempo attack like MSU's, where all the hitters can attack both quick and slow sets.

Shown below right is the current team rotation. There are three new players (Julie at S and Jenny/Tammy at M2) in the lineup this year, and three others have moved to different spots. Only Val is playing in the same location as last year.



**New Line-Up** (continued from page 1)

had a phenomenal .680 hitting percentage, with 17 kills and no errors.

❖ The most obvious change, and the one that everyone knew would happen, is that Julie Pavlus is now the setter. According to Chuck, she will be responsible for a quicker offense this year, the quickest in the Big Ten. Julie already proved her quickness, anticipation, and ball control as a back-court specialist last year. In the early part of this season, the team play has occasionally been ragged, but it is already improving as she works her way into the setter's role and the team adjusts to her personality and setting style.

❖ Another major change is Dana Cooke's switch from middle blocker to right-side hitter. Dana has already established herself as the team's most versatile player. "There was one tournament this past spring where during the course of the day I played every position on the court except setter", she says. Now we'll even see her setting occasionally, since the right-side hitter is the fall-back setter during transition plays when Julie is forced to dig the first hit.

❖ She may be setting even more if Chuck continues with a strategy he tried during the Kentucky match. On several occasions when MSU was serving with Julie in the front row, he brought

in Corie Richard to replace Julie. This gives the team a much bigger block, so their opponents can't try to attack over a shorter setter. With this lineup, Dana becomes the setter from the back row. The strategy behind this is that when your team is serving, blocking is more important than setting. If the front row does their job blocking, the rally will end quickly, and it won't really matter that the primary setter is on the bench. When receiving serve, setting is critical, so Julie will always be brought back in when the opponents regain the serve.

❖ Replacing Dana at middle blocker is 6' 4" red-shirt freshman Jenny Whitehead, known as Whitey to her teammates. Chuck had not expected her to see a lot of play until next year, but after giving her some trial play during the Goff tournament, he decided to put her into the starting lineup. She hit .333 against Houston and .545 against Stanford, while getting several key blocks. Whitey is the biggest player ever to wear an MSU uniform, and her early start bodes well for the years ahead. Freshman Tammy Vonderheide has been sharing that spot in the rotation with Whitey, as a back-row specialist.

❖ In spite of some early difficulties with jump serves, the team has persisted, and now seems to be producing results. The number of aces per game is up to around 1.8 from last year's 1.5, but service errors have soared from 2.5 per game to 4.7. (Chuck wants to see no more than two errors per ace.) Dana Cooke is the team leader in aces, but Julie Pavlus has the best aces-to-errors ratio.

In the opening of the season Chuck incorporated a large number of back-row attacks into the offense, but this proved to be a low percentage option. Although the back row is still used occasionally, its importance has been de-emphasized.

## Big Ten Preview

The Big Ten coaches have nearly unanimously picked Michigan State to win the conference championship for the second year in a row. The preseason coaches' poll put Penn State in second place, followed by Wisconsin and Ohio State.

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Penn State had arguably the best opening week of the Big Ten, during which there were two matches involving the top four teams. Penn State defeated Wisconsin, while Wisconsin topped Ohio State. Ohio State also lost to unranked Minnesota, while MSU beat both of their foes. This left MSU, PSU, and Illinois undefeated in conference play.

### **Penn State**

The Nittany Lions have been the highest ranked Big Ten team nationally this year, reaching number two in the AVCA poll in late September. Victories over then-No. 6 Washington State and then-No. 8 Notre Dame were the highlight of their 11-0 pre-conference play. They are number four in the country in both team hitting percentage and blocks per game.

A lot of their firepower comes from the middle, where junior Terry Zemaitis was Big Ten Player of the Year for 1995. This year she is staking an early claim to that title by being the only player to rank among the Big Ten's top five in three categories: hitting efficiency, kills and blocks. Opposite her, freshman Lauren Cacciamani is among the top three in both hitting efficiency and blocks per game.

The big new contributor for PSU is freshman setter Bonnie Bremner, the sister of Julie Bremner who was the starting setter for UCLA's 1991 championship team. Bonnie is from Jenna Wrobel's home town of Naperville, Illinois, and was Jenna's setter on a Sports Performance club team two years ago.

### **Wisconsin**

The Badgers had a very strong pre-conference season, going 10-0 while defeating then-No. 13 USC, then-No. 22 Colorado, and then-No. 20 Texas A&M. This is quite a turnaround for a team that finished in seventh place last year, and lost out on an NCAA tournament invitation.

The last time the Badgers won the Big Ten crown was 1990. Spartan fans may remember this, since Wisconsin finished the season in East Lansing where their fans streamed onto the court at the end of the match to unfurl a twenty-foot long championship banner.

Although Wisconsin lost no starters to graduation, some of the improvement for 1996 is certainly due to freshmen Kate Fitzgerald and Kelly Kennedy. Kennedy, a 6'4" middle blocker, ranks fifth in the Big Ten in blocks per game, and leads Wisconsin in hitting efficiency. Fitzgerald is second on the team in kills per game and first in digs.

Their bonafide star is senior setter Laura Abbinante, who has been named to the All-Big-Ten team two years running. She is expected to set a new Big Ten career record for assists this year. She is also the best-blocking Big Ten setter, averaging nearly one block per game.

### **Ohio State**

Ohio State has been ranked highly in the polls this year, coming off a second-place Big Ten finish in 1995. However, they played the easiest pre-conference schedule of any of this year's contenders, so their 11-0 opening record is less impressive than it might sound.

Ohio State's attack this season has a European flair to it. Outside hitters Vanessa Wouters (Belgium) and Andrea Pankova (Czech Republic) have combined for 315 of OSU's 674 kills this season, representing 47 percent of the Buckeyes' offense.

## **Jam Jenison II**

The Spartans' Big Ten home opener against Michigan on Friday, October 4 will be this year's **Jam Jenison** night. SideOut Club members should make it a point not to miss this match, and should tell all their friends to be there as well.

Highlights of the night will be the unveiling of the new awards banners purchased by the SideOut Club, and presentation of 1995 NCAA tournament rings to last year's players.

Last year's **Jam Jenison** was a huge success, producing a new MSU attendance record of 3,177, even though it was held on a Wednesday night.

## **Big Ten on Live TV**

This season, eight Big Ten volleyball matches will be televised beginning October 2, when the

Spartans travel to Northwestern. That match will appear on Sports Channel, which is not available in mid-Michigan. The following three matches will be shown on ESPN2:

Fri., Oct. 18	Indiana at Minnesota	8:30 pm
Sat., Nov. 9	Michigan State at Penn State	5 pm
Sat., Nov. 16	Ohio State at Michigan	5 pm

The match format will be the one described in the April newsletter as the 3+2. The first three games of a match are played under a clock, while the fourth and fifth games, if needed, use rally scoring to 15 points.

## Reminder: Chuck Erbe Show

No one with an interest in MSU volleyball should miss *The Chuck Erbe Show* on WLAJ, channel 53. It provides insight into the workings of the team, and information that you simply can't get anywhere else (except maybe this newsletter). The broadcast time was changed after our last issue was published; you can see it at 12:00 pm on Sundays.

## The Referee's Stand

### Court Positions and "Overlap"

Everyone knows that volleyball players rotate on the court at every service change, and that the team is divided into a front row of three players and a back row of three players. This issue's column will cover the rest of the rules regarding where players may be on the court, and when.

Every time a team earns a side out, the players on that team must rotate, even for the side out that precedes their first serve of the game. Unfortunately, until this season U.S. high school rules have been different, calling for no rotation following the first side out of the game. This difference often caused confusion among fans seeing higher level volleyball for the first time. For 1996-97, the U.S. high school rules have finally come into line with the standard rules on this point.

At the instant the server contacts the ball, the players on both teams must be positioned properly on the court or the referee will whistle a fault.

There are several requirements for proper position. One set of requirements covers where the players must be in relation to the court, and another set covers where they must be in relation to their teammates.

The server, of course, must be outside the court. On a volleyball court, the boundary lines are considered part of the court, so if the server steps on or over the line before contacting the ball, it is a fault. Once the server has contacted the ball, she may enter the court. This is why a player who is jump serving must leave the floor behind the end line, but is allowed to land in the court after serving. An additional restriction on the server is that she must serve from within the ten-meter length of the endline, i.e. she cannot be outside the right or left sideline. The referee's signal for a line violation by the server is to point at the line with an open hand.

All other players are required to be inside the court at the moment the ball is served. A player's foot can be on a sideline or on the endline, but may not be even partially outside it.

Probably the most confusing positional rule concerns where players must be relative to their teammates. Violations of this rule are commonly called "out of rotation" or "overlap". Especially on serve reception you will see teams taking up such strange formations that it's hard to believe they are in legal positions. Most college teams have only three of their players receive serves, and they stretch the positioning rules to the max in order to get the three receivers in position to be able to cover the whole court.

There are two basic rules about relative positioning. For both rules, player positions are determined by the positions of their feet on the floor. First, each front-row player must have at least a part of a foot closer to the net than both feet of the corresponding back-row player. Figure 1 shows an example of illegal front/back overlap.

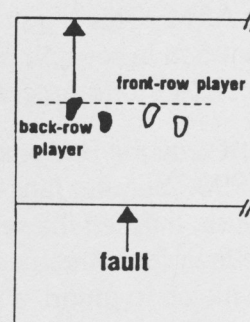


Figure 1

Second, each right (or left) side player must have at least part of a foot closer to the right (or left) sideline than both feet of the center player in the same row. The server is exempt from this rule. Figure 2 shows both correct and incorrect right/left positioning.

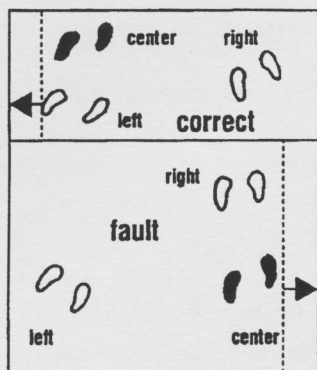


Figure 2

Notice that the rules apply only to players that are immediately adjacent to each other, not to players that are on a diagonal to each other. This is what gives teams the flexibility to get into the strange service reception formations mentioned above. It means that for purposes of overlap, the players on the right and left sides only have to worry about two other players—the one next to them and the one in front or in back. The two players in the center have to avoid overlap with three others—the two on either side of them, plus the one in front or back of them.

The need to have serve receivers in the best locations often forces the setter to start far from where she needs to be to set the ball. If she is in the back row, she will try to anticipate the moment of serve and get the quickest possible start moving up to the net. Most referees are pretty lenient on calling illegal overlap on a setter who starts in a legal position but moves past the front-row player slightly too soon.

The referee's signal for a player out of position is to make a horizontal circular motion with the hand or finger, as shown in Figure 3.

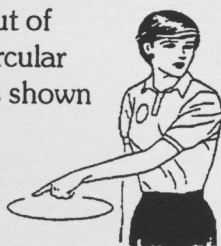


Figure 3

Once the ball has been served, the players may go anywhere on the court. There are some additional restrictions on blocking and attacking by back-row players, but those will be covered in another column.

## SideOut Club Report

### Win a Trip with the Team!

You could be the lucky person who will travel with the Spartan volleyball team to Ohio State and Penn State for a weekend that should offer two of the most exciting matches of the season.

All members of the SideOut Club are automatically eligible for this prize, which will be given away at the Wisconsin match on Saturday, October 26. The winner and one guest will fly from Lansing with the team to the matches on November 8 and 9, with all expenses paid.

### Media Guides Available for Members

SideOut Club members can now pick up their free copy of the 1996 MSU Volleyball media guide at the Club merchandise table at any home match. At 88 pages, this year's guide is the largest ever. It will tell you everything you want to know about the players, the coaches, the Spartans' past seasons, statistical records, and more. Postage costs make it uneconomical for us to mail these out, so please remember to pick yours up.

### Announcement Board, Merchandise

The SideOut Club merchandise table now features an announcement board that will be used to post the latest information about Club activities. Stop by to find out what's happening with your Club!

Merchandising is one of the most dynamic activities of the SideOut Club. This season you've already seen several new types of MSU volleyball apparel for sale at the SideOut Club table. The merchandise group has many more ideas, so you can expect to see additional items for sale every weekend this year.

### Don't Forget "Battle for Boosters"!

Help the SideOut Club prove the importance of volleyball at MSU, and win \$5,000 for the program. If you have friends with an interest in volleyball, encourage them to join the Club this fall.

## 1996 Schedule and Results

(All home matches are played in Jenison Field House)

8/30	L	Texas	15-10, 14-16, 8-15, 15-10, 15-17
8/31	W	Houston	10-15, 15-8, 15-13, 15-4
9/1	L	Stanford	14-16, 8-15, 4-15
9/6	L	Nebraska	7-15, 11-15, 15-13, 15-11, 13-15
9/7	L	Nebraska	11-15, 8-15, 7-15
9/13	W	Niagara	15-2, 15-1, 15-6
9/13	W	West Virginia	15-0, 15-10, 15-8
9/14	W	Loyola	15-13, 15-8, 16-14
9/14	W	Cleveland State	15-1, 15-3, 15-4
9/20	W	KENTUCKY	15-2, 15-7, 15-8
9/27	W	Indiana	13-15, 15-7, 15-1, 15-8
9/28	W	Purdue	15-6, 15-2, 14-16, 15-6

10/2	@Northwestern	
10/4	MICHIGAN	7:00 pm
10/11	PENN STATE	7:00 pm
10/12	OHIO STATE (Homecoming )	7:00 pm
10/18	@Iowa	
10/19	@Illinois	

10/25	MINNESOTA	7:00 pm
10/26	WISCONSIN	7:00 pm
10/30	NORTHWESTERN	7:00 pm
11/2	@Michigan	
11/8	@Ohio State	
11/9	@Penn State	
11/15	ILLINOIS	7:00 pm
11/16	IOWA	7:00 pm
11/22	@Wisconsin	
11/23	@Minnesota	
11/29	PURDUE	7:00 pm
11/30	INDIANA	7:00 pm

12/4	NCAA 1st round
12/7	NCAA 2nd round
12/13-14	NCAA Regionals
12/19	NCAA Semifinals
	Cleveland State University
12/21	NCAA Championship
	Cleveland State University



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