
THE SERVICE LINE

Volleyball News from the MSU SideOut Club
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Big Ten Season Opens for 1999

Landry Out with Knee Injury

Every year MSU fans look forward with anxious anticipation to the start of the Big Ten season for their favorite sport. Volleyball fans are no different than any others, enjoying the pre-conference tournaments, but knowing that the "real" season doesn't begin until the referee whistles the start of the inaugural Big Ten match of the fall.

For 1999, the Spartan spikers opened at home, and gave the crowd more than their fair share of thrills, drama and heartbreak.

When you launch the season against the top team in the conference, the feeling is an indescribable combination of dread and exhilaration. MSU, as serious underdogs to national-#2 Penn State, had nothing whatsoever to lose this year.

The thrills came immediately in game one, where we saw the best Spartan volleyball performance since 1996, even better than last year's match victory over Wisconsin. The green and white squad did nearly everything right, looking like a final-four team. As Jessica Sanborn expressed it after the match, "I just want to say one thing:

We're good. And we're really good."

The drama followed, as the match turned into a pitched battle for supremacy. The Spartans lost two games, but came back to win the fourth. As you know, Penn State came out on top in the fifth, but no one from MSU's volleyball program was acting as though they had lost. "The team finally showed everyone what they're capable of", said Chuck Erbe, "Now we know that we are that close to being a Top 10 team." By Saturday, he was even speculating about going into State College for the rematch on November 13 with a single conference loss, and then beating Penn State on their home court.

Unfortunately, Saturday brought the heartbreak—Christie Landry's season-ending injury. With MSU tied 1-1 in games with Ohio State, but leading 7-5 in game 3, Christie served the ball and moved up in the court. As she stopped at her defensive position, she fell to the floor and didn't get up. Play continued for a few seconds before the second referee stopped the action. Trainer Tory Lindley examined Christie on the court, and then helped her up and back to the training room.

Vicki Basil replaced Christie, and her nervousness was visible from courtside. Amazingly, Ohio State couldn't take advantage of the situation, and MSU scored three quick points to go up 10-5. Buckeye coach Jim Stone cradled his head in his hands, unable to believe the succession of errors his team was making.

A few minutes later, Tory returned from the training room, and knelt next to Chuck's chair to deliver a short message. His demeanor and Chuck's reaction told the whole story without words—we wouldn't be seeing Christie play again any time soon.

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On the court, however, the Spartans held their lead to the end of game three, and won game four by 15-5, the largest margin of the match.

After the match it was announced that Christie had torn the anterior cruciate ligament in her right knee, and would be out for the remainder of the season. She is expected to have surgery October 18, after all swelling is gone and she has full range of motion.

This leaves the team with no one with any setting experience to act as backup for Vicki Basil. We're very lucky to have an assistant coach who is a former setter, as Laura Abbinante will be the second setter for practice sessions.

So the season is officially under way. Now we just sit back and hope that the team works through what could be a major setback.

Changes on the Court

Every year we have some changes in the lineup to explain to you, but this year tops them all.

Even though the Spartans returned four starting players, the lineup looks radically different. Only Christie Landry started the year in the same spot as she was last year, and with her loss to injury not one spot in the rotation is the same.

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Why such a radical change? Look at the circumstances as a coach might:

- ◆ You have unexpectedly lost your right-side hitter, Jenny Whitehead, and don't have anyone with college experience at that position.
- ◆ You have four tall players with considerable skill or potential, but they have all been playing or training as middle blockers (Jessica Sanborn, Sarah Gustin, Maren Witzel, and Angela Morley).
- ◆ You have a left side hitter (Erin Hartley) with the most raw athletic ability on the team, but who has not really established herself in that position.

One way to solve this dilemma is as follows:

- ◆ Move Erin to the spot opposite the setter. Her athleticism will help her adapt to the new position, and it might even be better suited to her approach and swing. As the opposite, she would be the primary back-row attacker, a role for which she seems a good candidate.
- ◆ Move the more versatile of the current middle players, Sarah Gustin and Maren Witzel, from the middle to the left side. Maren has played on the outside in the past, and while Sarah has not, she shows some potential. In addition, Sarah is one of the best passers on the team, a skill that is wasted if she stays in the middle.
- ◆ Start Angela Morley at the M2 middle position, and move Jessica Sanborn from M2 to M1, next to the setter. Angela is our tallest player, with a long reach and could become an outstanding middle blocker. Jessica, with more experience and a faster arm swing, can provide the greater sideout punch when the setter is in the front row.

Put Vicki Basil in as setter, and you have what is likely to be the lineup for the rest of the season.

This is not the lineup we saw in spring training, but an idea that came to Chuck later. Fortunately, he was able to take advantage of his players' off-season activities to find out whether it would work.

Sarah and Erin were offered spots on U.S. national

training teams, so Chuck offered some advice to their summer coaches. He suggested that Erin would make a great right-side hitter, and she performed so well in that position that she won the starting job for the Junior National team. Similarly, Sarah did a successful stint on the left side on the A-2 National Training team. By the time the NCAA training season began, Chuck had a pretty good idea that the lineup would be a winner.

How well does it work? At the end of September, some of the hitting statistics were very promising.

Jessica Sanborn led the Big Ten in hitting percentage at .417, with Angela Morley and Sarah Gustin in the top 15. Erin Hartley was hitting .284, well above last year's .146. As a team, MSU's hitting was second only to Penn State. The Spartans also allowed their opponents fewer blocks than did any other Big Ten team.

Angela Morley was second in the conference with 1.38 blocks per game, and was the only freshman in the top ten in blocking. The team performance earned them a fourth in this category. Other numbers were more middle-of-the-pack, but the improvements seem to validate the new lineup.

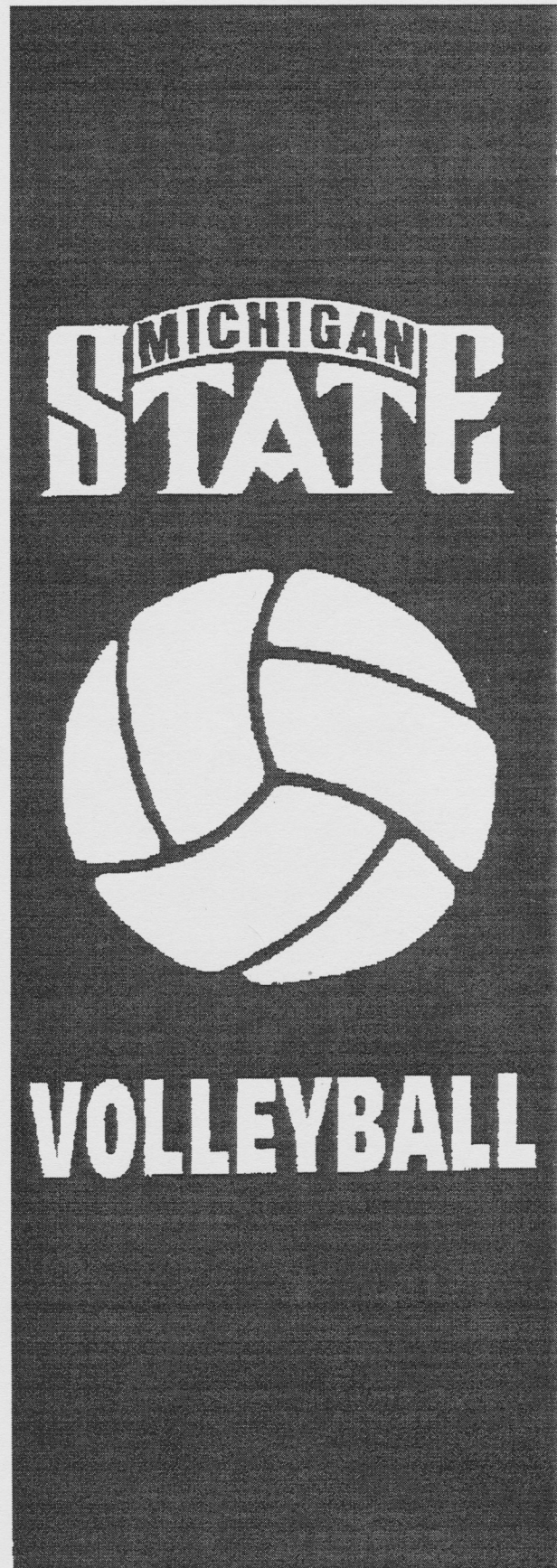
Just for Fun, It's Jam Jenison

October 13th against Michigan is the biggest volleyball day of the year, and the SideOut Club wants you there! Jam Jenison is the match where MSU volleyball tries to demonstrate the maximum fan support for the team.

U of M has an up and coming program this year, and nothing would establish them better than a win in East Lansing. Come out and support your team against the intruders from the southeast, and bring as many friends as you can find!

Banners Are Ready to Go!

As announced in the last issue, the SideOut Club has purchased fifteen Michigan State Volleyball banners (design shown at right) to be hung from the street-light poles along Kalamazoo Street in the



vicinity of Jenison Field House. We expect these to be flying by the time of the Iowa match, but this depends on the schedule of the MSU work crews.

If you attended the first coach's luncheon you've already seen one of the banners, which are 31 inches wide and 94 inches tall, in green with white lettering. Everyone who has seen them loves them—they will be a great way to promote our team and sport.

To cover the costs, we hope to find generous supporters who want to adopt a banner. A tax-deductible contribution of \$100 to the MSU SideOut Club covers one banner. Mail your check to MSU SideOut Club, PO Box 80491, Lansing, MI 48908. For more information, phone Jenny Bond at 676-2676. Names of contributors will not be imprinted on the banners, but will be announced in the newsletter, unless asked to remain anonymous.

Big Ten Outlook

Penn State and Wisconsin, the Big Ten's big guns for the last couple of years, appear to be a bit quieter this year, but some of the expected also-rans are making quite a bit of noise of their own.

The **Michigan** Wolverines are easily the top surprise of 1999. Picked by the coaches to repeat their 1998 finish in tenth place, they started the season with the biggest win in the history of their program, defeating then-#7 Brigham Young 3-0. The following week they came down to earth with a 0-3 loss to then-#11 Pepperdine, but turned around the next night to defeat then-#16 Arkansas 3-1.

U of M entered the conference season at 7-1, and ranked at their highest ever #20 in the nation. They immediately proceeded to upset #18 Ohio State, winning 20-18 in the fifth game.

Under first-year coach Mark Rosen, the Wolverines have dropped the two-setter offense they used for most of last season, now relying on the hands of sophomore Shannon Melka. Alija Pittenger has switched from setter to outside hitter.

However, the team's greatest strengths appear to be in middles Joanna Fielder and Annie Maxwell and outside hitter Nicole Kacor. Fielder and Kacor have each made the all-tournament team for all three of U-M's 1999 tournaments, with Fielder being honored as MVP twice. Fielder also has a Big-Ten Player of the Week honor to her credit already.

In terms of experience, the Wolverines are very similar to the Spartans, playing primarily sophomores and juniors.

Minnesota is another team that has surprised a few this year, with a close loss to UCLA and an upset of Wisconsin. They have high hopes to better their recent Big Ten finishes this year.

The Gophers rely heavily on junior outside hitter Nicole Branagh, who leads the Big Ten in kills and racks up as many kills as the next two Gophers combined. However, they are actually a well-balanced team, being the only squad to place among the top four in the conference in the categories of hitting percentage, kills, service aces and blocks.

Penn State, of course, is the favorite to win the conference. They return senior All-Americans Bonnie Bremner and Lauren Cacciamani, plus Portage Michigan's Carrie Schonveld, also a senior.

Bremner is a great setter, and also a threat as an attacker at the net, with a hitting percentage typically in the top five in the conference. Cacciamani earned co-MVP honors at last year's NCAA Championship. Together, the three seniors have led the Nittany Lions to a stellar 108-7 record over the last three years, but the NCAA championship itself has eluded them.

This year, it appears that their best chance may have passed them by. They are still a strong team, but the three new starters have very little match experience, which shows on the court. A Big Ten championship is likely, but the national title is probably out of reach.

Wisconsin was picked number two by the Big Ten coaches, in spite of a couple of big transitions this year—adapting to a new coach and a new setter. The setting spot still appears to be undecided, with both sophomore Lizzy Fitzgerald and freshman Morgan Shields getting playing time.

They got off to a rocky start, when they were missing two regular starters, losing a match to UW-Milwaukee. They also lost to Nebraska, Florida, and unranked Minnesota, without a single victory over a top-25 team.

Kelly Kennedy and Sherisa Livingston comprise one of the best pairs of middles in the country, and should guarantee strong blocking for the Badgers. They may not factor into the offense, however, if the new setters can't get the ball to them.

Tom Anterior Cruciate Ligaments in Volleyball—An Epidemic?

Over the last ten to fifteen years, there has been growing concern among coaches, sports medicine specialists and others over the proliferation of torn anterior cruciate ligaments (ACL) among female athletes. The sports that have been hardest hit include volleyball, basketball and soccer. Sometimes it seems that it is hard to find a college volleyball team without at least one player who has suffered this injury.

Michigan State has had four players on the roster in the last five years undergo an ACL reconstruction. In 1994, Julie Pavlus tore an ACL playing in an early season tournament at Ann Arbor. Courtney Debolt replaced her as setter and then later in the season incurred the same injury herself. (In 1998, while in tryouts for the national team, Courtney tore the ACL in her other knee.) In addition, Jennifer Stroffe tore an ACL and sat out a season while playing at UC Santa Barbara.

It's not hard to find examples (such as Lisa Avery of Nebraska and Claire Roach of Florida) of players who have had multiple ruptures, either in both knees or by re-injuring the same knee. Other schools besides MSU have suffered multiple

occurrences within short periods. Three Florida players had a combined five ACL injuries within three years. Nebraska at one time had three players on their roster with repaired ACLs. Washington even lost two players to torn ACLs in a single match in 1993, ending the careers of Dawn Austin and Jennifer Streatfield. Perhaps the best-known volleyball player with a torn ACL is Kristin Folkl of Stanford, who incurred her injury on the basketball court, after she had completed her collegiate volleyball career.

Just last week, Wisconsin lost two players due to torn ACLs. Junior Keylee Wright retired from the team, at least partially as a result of her ligament tear from last season. Freshman Claudia Rodriguez is out for the season after the discovery of a previously undiagnosed torn ACL, incurred during her pre-college play at home in Mexico.

The knee is a complicated joint that endures a lot of stress in athletic activity. The femur (thigh bone) and tibia (shin bone) are connected to each other at the knee with four main ligaments. Two of these are on the sides of the knee and are known as the collateral ligaments. The other two run through the center of the joint from front to back and back to front, in sort of a cross formation, and are thus known as the cruciate ligaments. The anterior cruciate ligament is the smallest of all four and the most susceptible to injury.

An ACL tear in volleyball is almost always a non-contact injury. One study that looked at 26 ACL injuries among NCAA volleyball players found that 23 of them were suffered by hitters, with only 3 affecting setters. It commonly happens when a hitter lands after executing an attack, often on only one foot, and often while the body is turning or the leg is straight or hyper-extended.

However, MSU's setter injuries did not follow this pattern at all. Julie, Courtney and Christie were all running to play a ball or to get into position when they were injured. In these cases it is probably a sudden stop combined with disadvantageous body and limb positions that puts the excessive stress on the knee.

Excellent repair techniques have been developed for this injury, and the success rate is quite high. (I tore my left ACL playing volleyball in 1986, and had it repaired using techniques less advanced than those available today. My knee is still quite stable, with the only after-effects being reduced range of motion and the need to ice it to prevent soreness or swelling after heavy use.)

A 1995 report on NCAA injury data showed that female basketball players sustain ACL injuries at a rate four times as high as their male counterparts. *Sports Illustrated* for February 13, 1995 ran an article about the spate of injuries to women basketball players. In December 1995, *Volleyball* magazine covered the problem in women volleyball players in the story "On a Tear".

So, why are female athletes affected disproportionately by this particular injury? No one knows for sure, but there are a lot of theories being advanced by researchers.

First of all, it should be said that most experts are being very cautious about drawing conclusions, with none of them suggesting that women should stop competing in high-impact sports. Numbers from NCAA competition show that volleyball is still one of the safest sports when all injuries are considered, ranking 13th in injury rate among 16 sports studied. The most common volleyball injury is still the sprained ankle, which is usually one of the more minor sports injuries.

Some of the important factors in women's ACL tears may include:

- ◆ The ACL passes through a notch in the knee, which tends to be shaped differently in men and women. Men often have a wider, U-shaped notch, while women have a narrower, V-shaped notch that may be more likely to sever the ligament.
- ◆ Women's ligaments tend to be smaller. A typical diameter for a man's ACL is 18 mm, while a woman's is more likely around 14 mm. Christie's post-injury examination showed that hers is approximately 12 mm.

- ◆ There is evidence that the female hormones estrogen and relaxin have an effect on ligaments that may increase the likelihood of injury.
- ◆ Differences between the male and female pelvis alter the angles between many bones and ligaments in the lower body, possibly causing stresses to be applied differently.
- ◆ Male athletes tend to have greater development of thigh muscles, which may contribute to knee stability. They also usually have a different balance between quad and hamstring muscles, with the hamstring being stronger.
- ◆ The use of ankle braces, worn more often by women, may transmit greater stresses to the knee.

At this point, all of these are only theories as to possible causes, and there is contradictory evidence for each of them. We can only be grateful that the injury can be repaired, and hope that further research will provide us with preventive measures.

Spartan Volleyball on the Air

The airwaves (and cables) will be full of broadcasts of Spartan volleyball this season.

Perhaps most interesting is that every MSU match, apparently including road trips, will be covered live by **WVFN 730 AM radio** ("The Fan"). Jason Colthorp provides the play-by-play while ex-Spartan Veronica Morales dishes up the commentary. While radio coverage may seem an anachronism in our visually-oriented world, it is lively, and you just can't beat being able to follow what your team is doing away from home.

National television coverage will be provided for the Minnesota match on October 9. **ESPN2** will tape this match and show it at a very unfortunate time, on Wednesday, October 13 at 1:00 pm.

All other home matches will be televised **live on AT&T Cable Services** in Lansing, East Lansing and Meridian Township, and will also be replayed at selected times.

The local announcing team is anchored by Ben Stark, along with Jamie Ianni and Corie Richard. MSU graduate Ben Stark is the Local Origination Supervisor for AT&T Cable Services, and previously worked as manager of HOM-TV of Meridian Township. Jamie Ianni is the head volleyball coach at Okemos High School, and was named 1999 Coach of the Year for the Lansing area by the State Journal. Corie Richard, of course, is a former Spartan volleyball player.

The channel and schedule information for East Lansing/Meridian was not available at press time, so residents of those areas will have to call the former TCI to find out.

For Lansing residents served by the former MediaOne system, all broadcasts will be on channel 17, and the replay schedule for the October matches is as follows:

Match (broadcast live)	Replay Dates
Iowa, October 8	10/9, 5:00 pm 10/10, 3:00 pm 10/13, 3:00 pm
Michigan, October 13	10/15, 3:00 pm 10/16, 7:00 pm 10/20, 7:00 pm
Northwestern, October 15	10/17, 7:00 pm 10/21, 7:00 pm 10/23, 4:00 pm

Two Bus Trips to Choose From

The bus trip to Wisconsin didn't work out, because too many people had prior plans for MSU Homecoming or other activities, but plans are still on for trips to Indiana on October 23rd and Ohio State on November 12th. There has also been interest in adding the Penn State match to the itinerary for the weekend of the 12th. Contact Julie Carmichael at (517) 676-5211 for more information, or inquire at the SideOut Club merchandise table at any home match.

Coach's Luncheons at Buddies

Make your volleyball game-day experience complete this year by coming to the SideOut Club Coach's Luncheons.

Luncheons will be held on the three remaining Big Ten home Saturdays, plus the Wednesday that we host Michigan. The dates are October 9 and 13, and November 6 and 20.

The gatherings will take place at Buddies Pub & Grill in East Lansing at 11:30 am. This is located in the Carriage Hills Shopping Center, at the corner of Hagadorn and Lake Lansing Roads. The cost will be \$7 to cover food and drink.

Michigan State Falls to 16th in Attendance for 1998 Season

MSU volleyball attendance fell for the second year in a row in 1998, down from the all-time season high of 1996. The average of 1,294 fans per match, a loss of over 200 compared with 1997, still earned us 14th place in home attendance among Division I schools. It was good for 6th place in the Big Ten.

The Big Ten kept the number one spot among conferences, with a total attendance over 230,000.

	Team	Dates	Total	Avg.
1	Hawaii	21	144,476	6,880
2	Nebraska	18	69,594	3,866
3	Penn State	21	59,791	2,847
4	Illinois State	13	34,842	2,680
5	Wisconsin	17	44,745	2,632
6	Long Beach St.	19	45,769	2,409
7	Florida	19	40,294	2,121
8	Texas	16	31,149	1,947
9	Pacific	17	32,225	1,896
10	Illinois	15	27,419	1,828
16	Michigan State	17	21,998	1,294

1999 Schedule and Results

(All home matches are played in Jenison Field House)

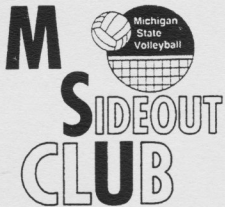
9/3	W	Cleveland State	15-6, 15-11, 15-3
9/3	L	Texas A&M	15-12, 5-15, 15-9, 3-15, 10-15
9/4	W	Eastern Kentucky	15-4, 15-1, 15-11
9/4	L	Clemson	3-15, 11-15, 7-15
9/10	W	New Hampshire	15-6, 15-8, 15-10
9/10	W	Southern Mississippi	15-3, 15-5, 15-8
9/11	W	Seton Hall	15-1, 12-15, 15-5, 15-3
9/11	W	Massachusetts	15-5, 15-12, 15-11
9/17	W	Depaul	15-8, 15-5, 15-13
9/17	W	Niagara	15-4, 15-0, 15-1
9/18	W	Loyola	8-15, 15-13, 15-4, 15-6
9/18	W	Western Michigan	15-13, 15-9, 15-4
9/24	L	PENN STATE	15-10, 3-15, 5-15, 15-11, 8-15
9/25	W	OHIO STATE	15-13, 15-9, 15-4
10/1	L	Purdue	11-15, 10-15, 13-15
10/2	L	Wisconsin	5-15, 13-15, 4-15
10/8		IOWA	7:00 pm
10/9		MINNESOTA	7:00 pm

10/13	MICHIGAN	7:00 pm
10/15	NORTHWESTERN	7:00 pm
10/22	@Illinois	7:00 pm
10/23	@Indiana	7:00 pm
10/29	@Minnesota	7:00 pm
10/30	@Iowa	7:00 pm
11/5	WISCONSIN	7:00 pm
11/6	PURDUE	7:00 pm
11/12	@Ohio State	7:00 pm
11/13	@Penn State	7:30 pm
11/19	INDIANA	7:00 pm
11/20	ILLINOIS	7:00 pm
11/24	@Michigan	7:00 pm
11/27	@Northwestern	7:00 pm

12/2-5 NCAA - 1st and 2nd Round

12/9-12 NCAA Regionals

12/16-18 NCAA Final Four in Honolulu, Hawai'i



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