
The Service Line

Volleyball News from the MSU SideOut Club
Vol. IX No. 3
November 2003

SideOut Club Activities and News

Bus Trip to Ohio State

The bus trip to Ohio State on November 14 is a definite go! There are still a few seats available. Join us for a good time and hopefully a Spartan victory. The bus will leave about noon and return after the match. Get all the specifics and sign up at the SideOut Club table at the entrance to Jenison or contact Julie Carmichael at 676-5211. Cost is less than \$40.

Coach's Luncheons

Join Coach Erbe and SideOut Club members at Coach's luncheons on:

Friday, October 31, and Saturday, Nov. 22

Luncheon's are at Damon's East Lansing, 1601 W. Lake Lansing Road near US-127, starting at 11:30 am. The cost is \$10 which includes a meal, non-alcoholic drink, tax and gratuity. If for some reason you are unable to eat, there will still be a place for you.

Purchase a Wristband for the Night of Giving

Do you have your wristband? Or would you consider buying a band for the shoppers in your family? Or perhaps you would be willing to sell a few bands at your workplace or to friends. The SideOut Club is selling wristbands that allow wearers to shop at Meridian Mall during their "Night of Giving". The \$5 cost of the wristband goes entirely to the SideOut Club.

The "Night of Giving" is a special evening of private shopping on Sunday, November 16, 2003 from

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6:00-9:00 PM for supporters of local charities and non-profit organizations. Get the specifics on this special event at the SideOut Club membership table or from one of the persons selling these. Consider buying a wristband to support the MSU Volleyball Program.

Volleyball Banquet

This year's volleyball banquet will be held in January because the team will be on the road the last weekend of the season. An announcement of the details will be sent out soon. We hope you will plan to attend to acknowledge the efforts of the team—especially our seniors, Nikki Colson, Jenny Rood, Emmy Miller and Stephanie Knopp. They are most deserving of a special event, which will be made more special by your attendance.

Volunteers Needed

If you signed up on your SOC membership application to assist with SOC activities or if you want to help, please check at the merchandise table or with Jim Ellis at a match. Volunteers are always welcome.

Photo CDs Available

We've told you before about Al and Renee Schmitzer's web site (<http://my.voyager.net/~flare>) where they post an ever-changing set of photos of MSU volleyball matches and SideOut Club activities.

The Schmitzers have now assembled a simple-to-use photo CD containing more than 3700 pictures from the 2002 season, many of which were never on their website. It is available for \$10 from the SideOut Club merchandise table and all proceeds will go directly to the club. There are also a few copies of the 2001 CD (distributed as a banquet favor that year) available for \$5 from Jenny Bond. All proceeds go to the Club. We commend Al and Renee on their continuing service to MSU volleyball fans!

Need a Tape of a Favorite Match?

Ever wished you could obtain a tape of a favorite MSU home match from this or a previous season? If Comcast aired the match, a copy of the tape may be obtained for \$20 from Kevin Arnett of Comcast at (517)333-4364. The SideOut Club does not receive anything from the sale of these tapes. Thanks to Julie Carmichael for providing this information.

Team Notes

❖ **Nikki Colson** joined an elite group of Spartans when she was named AVCA/Sports Imports National Player of the Week on September 22. She is currently ranked third in the Big Ten in assists per game and two weeks ago passed Courtney Debolt to claim second place on MSU's career assists list. Nikki is well on track to set the all-time Spartan career record for assists, surpassing that of Judy Doles ('85-'88).

❖ **Jenny Rood** is really making her mark offensively for her senior year. She is currently hitting at a .373 clip in Big Ten matches, which puts her in second place in the conference. This is an improvement of more than 100 points over her hitting percentage last year. **Megan Wallin** is fourth in the conference at .333, up 80 points over last year.

❖ **Emmy Miller** had a career-best 23 digs in the match against Iowa. **Kim Schram** is fourth in the Big Ten with 4.73 kills per game, up one kill per game over 2002. **Brooke Langston** had a career-best hitting percentage of .643 against Illinois.

❖ **Michelle Kopka** is out for an unknown period of time with a stress fracture in her back.

❖ This is the fifth consecutive year that the Spartan volleyball team has had a disappointing **first half** of the Big Ten season. The Big Ten coaches ranked the team number three in the conference prior to the season, and the Spartans had even higher expectations for themselves—to compete for the Big Ten title. At the

midpoint, they find themselves in sixth place, effectively out of the race for the conference championship. Now they must refocus on earning a good berth in the NCAA tournament.

❖ **Statistically speaking**, MSU is solidly in the middle of the conference. In every category the team ranks between 4th and 9th, with their highest ranking in kills per game and their lowest in service aces.

❖ The **remaining schedule** also does not favor the Spartans. There are five teams in the upper half of the conference, whom the Spartans would like to overtake. MSU has already played the easier home match against all of these but Minnesota, and will now have to face the rest of them on the road. In fact, six of the ten matches left on the schedule will be on the road.

Spartan Profile: Mickey Davis

by Peter Morris

Mickey Davis made her first start as an MSU Spartan on October 3 against Wisconsin. Three seasons earlier, Mickey had been a Fab 50 selection of Volleyball Magazine, the highest honor for prep players. There's such a disconnection between those two statements that it's hard to escape the feeling that something must be wrong. In fact, Mickey Davis' story is about everything that's right about college athletics. Because all Mickey has ever asked for is a chance.

Doug Davis gained valuable insight into his daughter's makeup when he coached her sixth-grade basketball team. One day he was lecturing the players on Xs and Os when Mickey's hand shot up. When recognized, she said, "Dad, this is boring. Can't we just play?" Even then, Mickey Davis just wanted a chance to play.

Given that opportunity, Mickey blossomed into an all-around athlete who starred in soccer and basketball. However, her parents got a glimpse of the future during a basketball game in seventh grade. As Mickey went to the free throw line, instead of preparing with a few dribbles or a shooting motion, she mimicked the act of setting a volleyball.

Having thus chosen her sport of preference, Mickey became a standout outside hitter in spite of her average height. Her club coach, Kathy Kleinhuisen, attributes Mickey's success to her outstanding work ethic: "In 16 years of coaching multiple sports I have never and will probably never coach another player like her." She

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Published five times per year, in March, August, October, November and December

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continues to tell her players inspirational stories about Mickey Davis to illustrate what can be accomplished through determination and belief in one's own abilities.

Among other accolades, Mickey twice earned recognition as a USA Volleyball All-American and was twice selected to the Kentucky All-State Team. She led her club team to three national finishes and her high school squad to two state championship games. Her Fab 50 selection was the crowning glory on an outstanding prep career.

But while her fellow Fab 50 players were the objects of intense recruiting wars from the Big Ten and top 20-type programs, the Davis phone was not ringing for Mickey's talents as an outside hitter at that level. Many coaches at top college programs took one look at Mickey's listed height of 5'9", and praised her determination for having succeeded against taller players for so long. Then they crossed Mickey's name off the list as an outside hitter for a top-level program. There was a lot of recruiting interest from mid-Division I schools as an outside hitter, and Mickey considered them seriously, but none seemed right for her.

The MSU coaches recognized that the odds were against Mickey Davis, but they were impressed by her competitiveness. The more they saw of the determined but undersized outside hitter, the more intrigued they became. MSU needed a setter, but Nikki Colson had three years of eligibility remaining and was ready to assume the starting setter role. But there was no other setter on the roster, and many candidates were unwilling to consider a school where the opportunity for playing time looked so bleak. As the MSU coaches gained more appreciation for Mickey Davis' leadership skills and fearlessness, they realized that Mickey was the perfect fit.

And so Michigan State offered her a scholarship and the opportunity to learn a new position. In an era of entitlement and instant gratification, another player might have at least grumbled about having to switch positions. Mickey Davis, however, was grateful for the challenge and the opportunity to learn from a great coaching staff. The day after she committed to MSU, another major program called. The coach said that she had plenty of players with height and athletic skills, but they were losing matches because they lacked Mickey's leadership and mental toughness. But she had figured that out too late.

Mickey redshirted her first year at MSU, as she adapted



*Mickey Davis puts up a high set—for Sara in the back row or Kim in the front?
Photo: Al Schmitzer*

to a new position and a new system. She made steady progress as a setter and emerged as a leader of the seven-player freshman class, both on and off the court. Moreover, it became clear that setting was a perfect fit for her temperament. More than any of her athletic accomplishments, Doug and Susie Davis are proud of the fact that their daughter has always preferred giving to receiving. That natural generosity, coupled with her leadership skills, makes Mickey a born setter.

The contributions of the second setter get little recognition from outsiders, but those within the program know that the role is crucial. Without a capable second setter, practices become less competitive and the development of young hitters is thwarted. Just as importantly, the starters don't get meaningful repetitions on defense unless the second setter performs well. Associate Head Coach Todd Dagenais says that Mickey is "one of the best, if not the best, we have ever had in this role."

Her second year at MSU saw Mickey continue to work hard to master the setter position. She also earned All-Big Ten Academic honors and participated in many community activities. Before every match, she prepared herself physically and mentally so that she would be ready to enter the match if the chance arose. But backing up the durable and consistent Nikki Colson is a bit like being a Maytag repairman, and Mickey saw action in only three matches. Although she had been the lone Fab 50 selection of a seven-player recruiting

class, Mickey was now the only one not to have started a match.

This season, as a redshirt sophomore, Mickey earned praise from the coaching staff for her dramatic improvement. In preseason, she gave Nikki Colson a spirited competition for the lead setter position, but was narrowly beaten out. Unfazed, Mickey continued to work tirelessly in practice and offer leadership and encouragement. The coaches are particularly impressed that her teammates respect her so much that she can say the tough things that sometimes need to be said. She has also continued her development as an all-around player by fine-tuning a nasty jump serve and working hard on her defense.

By the time the Big Ten campaign started, those aspects of her game had earned the outside-hitter-turned-setter playing time as a back-row specialist. The chance was all she needed, and she seized it. On the afternoon of the Wisconsin match, Mickey learned that she would finally get to start that evening and called her parents with the good news.

For over two years, Doug and Susie Davis had been making the long drive up from Kentucky for Mickey's matches, knowing that she was unlikely to see any action. Because the Davises had already driven up for the Wednesday match against Michigan, they had initially planned to skip the Friday match. However, unbeknownst to Mickey, they had already changed their mind and decided to attend after all.

So the Davises were already en route to East Lansing when Mickey called. Wanting to surprise his daughter, Doug Davis told her that he was in his office. (This was not a lie, he explains, because his car is his office.) He asked Mickey if she wanted them to drive up. Typically, Mickey tried to hide her disappointment and said that it wasn't necessary.

That evening went like a movie script. Mickey saw her parents and her older sister Christie walk into Jenison before the match and turned red. Then she went out and played solidly as Michigan State beat Wisconsin for the first time in four years.

If this were a movie, Mickey would be rewarded for her perseverance with a starting role next season. But Mickey Davis has never asked for guarantees. Indeed, Mickey has done the one thing that will make the challenge even greater. She helped MSU to recruit one of the country's top prep setters, who has given a verbal



Mickey passes a short serve.

Photo: Al Schmitzer

commitment to become a Spartan next year.

Todd Dagenais observes that "there are not many players who would put the team first in this situation." But he explains that that is exactly what he has come to expect from Mickey Davis, because she possesses "what we hope every athlete has - confidence in her own abilities to compete with anyone for a starting position. Moreover, we know Mickey will be the first to stand up and help this young setter adjust to setting in the collegiate environment." The girl who just wanted a chance to play has become a young woman who just wants the chance to compete and to make her team better.

As a result of this selfless decision, there is no way to predict what role she will play in her remaining two-plus years of eligibility. But one thing is certain. Whenever she is given a chance, Mickey Davis will do everything she can to contribute. The motto of her high school was "Women Who Make A Difference." Mickey Davis has already lived up to that credo.

President's Corner

by SideOut Club President Jenny Bond

Greetings to all SideOut Club members! I started composing this as I listened to the Minnesota match on the computer. We are fortunate to have this option and to have John Kreger provide the play by play, even on nights when we lose. He works very hard at this effort, dragging much equipment all over the country as the team travels. I have also observed him at practices where he is working to learn even more about the team

and volleyball. He is just one of an excellent MSU volleyball support staff.

SOC tailgate: The weather cooperated, the company was great and the food and drink were abundant to make the 4th annual volleyball tailgate very successful. This special event was started by Cathy Caswell and John Ulrich and has grown yearly. It was a great time for fans to interact with a number of the parents. Many parents commented on how much they appreciate all that the SOC does for the team. Many thanks to all who participated—especially Cathy and the brewers.

On the road again: John and I made the trip to Purdue and Indiana to support the team. Tried our best to encourage the team but were overwhelmed by the Purdue student section, band and cheerleaders. The MSU parents and fans were assigned seating next to them and as far away from the team as we could be in the gym. It was especially interesting to see how much volleyball is being promoted at Purdue. For example, Friday is Student Night with special promotions and giveaways. These included a celebrity look-alike and "evil twin" night with prizes for the best look-alikes; free t-shirts to the first students in attendance, plus a hot dog eating contest; Guys Night with all the guys getting in for \$1 plus students playing Boilermaker Fear Factor with a home entertainment system as the prize; and free entrance and free food for the Indiana match. On Saturday night Purdue features a Family Night. For example, on one night \$20 purchased 4 tickets, 4 hot dogs and 4 drinks plus there was a Family Double Dare with prizes. Ultimate Heroes Night was a celebration of America with free tickets to all service personnel (armed forces, fire, police,



The tailgate party drew a big crowd.

Photo: Al Schmitzer

paramedic, etc.). I am not sure that we want to have exactly these same events at MSU but I am sure that the SOC will continue to advocate for greater promotion of the volleyball program.

Indiana had an eight piece "pep" band and several special enticements. For example, they have a special Hoosier Birthday Bash package which includes match tickets, food, cake, party hats and favors and a gift pack which includes an autographed women's volleyball poster and pom-poms. The Dedicated Fan Card allows fans who attend at least four matches to enter a drawing for a prize at the end of the season.

The facilities at Purdue and Indiana have been recently upgraded. However, I still vote for the Jenison venue.

We continue to collect the programs from the various away matches to compare to what we have at MSU. The SOC has as one of its continuing agenda items the



There was fun for all ages...



...and plenty of food to go around.

Photos: Al Schmitzer

discussion of the home match programs format. A number of fans continue to complain verbally about the current programs or actively by not purchasing them.

When we attended the Michigan-Wisconsin match in Ann Arbor, I observed that efforts are being made to form a booster club to be called the Blue Aces. At the present time, there does not appear to be a booster club at Indiana or Michigan. In contrast, the current Illinois booster club president looked up the SideOut Club Board to share what they were doing and learn from what we are doing. I believe Illinois is the only other Big Ten school that has VB banners similar to ours and they were the first. All in all, you can be proud of what SOC members are doing to contribute to our program compared to other booster clubs.

For those who are interested in talking (or listening) to other Big Ten fans, Dave Martz and others suggested that I mention the *bigtenvb* discussion group on Yahoo:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/bigtenvb>
I have never participated in this and the SOC cannot vouch for the accuracy of the "chatting", but some of you may enjoy it.

Featured Members: We salute two recently retired teachers who are SOC members. Jan Holcomb, a long time supporter in Courtside Seats at almost every match, retired after more than 40 years in the public school system. Althea Phillips who retired after more than 30 years in the classroom has recently become a Lifetime Member of the SideOut Club. She will be missing a few matches this season as she is one of the Brewster Sisters in the Lansing Civic Players' production of "Arsenic and Old Lace" which opened on October 16. Another faithful member of the SOC who wishes to remain anonymous recently contributed her entire 50/50 winnings to the club. I know that she has done this at least one other time also. That is real support of the SOC and the MSU VB program.

Pam Sievers, a new member of the SOC, shared information on the Girls on the Go program. This program is being offered by the Girl Scouts of Michigan Capital Council and MSU Women's Athletics. For more information on this program or if you are interested in sponsoring a girl, contact Pam at (517)699-9400, ext 20 or at psievers@gsmcc.net.

Kudos: I have been especially pleased with the coverage the volleyball program has received in the campus paper, The State News, this year. J. Ryan Mulcrone has written many interesting articles and has

featured a number of our players. If you are not on campus, copies of the paper are routinely available just outside the main entrance to the Michigan Athletic Club or inside Goodrich's ShopRite, both in East Lansing or you can read it online at <http://statenews.com>

Participation at the Coach's Luncheons has increased this season and we have had some interesting discussions with Chuck. Chuck is especially pleased that more women are participating in these. Come and join us for the next one on the 31st. Contrary to the rumors, Chuck welcomes parents and the SOC will be especially pleased with their participation.

The Big Ten season is half finished. As Todd Dagenais stated on the broadcast of the match at Minnesota, we start a new "season" with the opportunity to increase our efforts to make this a special season for the team and fans. As SOC members, we want this to be a very special season for our young women and all who are associated with MSU Volleyball. You can help make this a reality by supporting SOC activities, purchasing SOC merchandise and bringing new fans to the matches. Just do it!

Do not hesitate to contact me or one of the Board Members with suggestions or comments. We need your support and feedback also.

The Referee's Stand

Continuing last issue's theme of where players may play on the court, this column will focus on attacking and blocking by back-row players.

One of the unique features of volleyball is that although players rotate around the court to play all positions, players who are in the back row are temporarily restricted as to the role they can play in attacking and blocking. On one play you may see Megan Wallin kill a slide behind the setter for a side out, but as soon as she rotates into the back row she is no longer allowed to make that same play.

Each team's court is divided front to back by the *attack line*, which runs across the court three meters from the net. Since the full area is nine meters square, the front court makes up one third of the court. The attack line is considered part of the front court.

The attack line is ignored for most play during a game. Players who are in the back row are free to move up in front of the attack line whenever they want, and front

row players may go behind it.

However, when a back-row player hits the ball over the net to the other team's court, the attack line comes into play. In order for this play to be legal, one of two conditions must be met: either 1) some portion of the ball must be below the level of the top of the net, or 2) the back-row player must have last made contact with the floor behind the attack line. The intent is that each team be restricted to only three spikers close to the net.

The referee's signal for an illegal back-row attack is to swing the forearm downward in a motion similar to a spike.

Two aspects of this rule are often misunderstood. First, it makes no difference whether a player jumps or not; what is important is the position of the ball relative to the height of the net. A very tall player, who can reach a ball entirely above the net, could make an illegal back-row attack while standing on the floor, while a very short player might be able to make a legal attack while jumping, because the ball could be below the top of the net. In other words, the ref simply ignores whether the player is jumping or not.

Second, the way the player hits the ball does not matter. Any ball that is sent towards the opponent's court is an attack hit, whether it was spiked, dinked, set with two hands, popped off a fist, etc. If such a hit is made from entirely above the net by a back-row player on or in front of the attack line, it is an illegal attack.

There is also a rule prohibiting back-row players from blocking. The intent of the rule is similar to that for attackers—to restrict each team to three blockers.

Another column will explain exactly what constitutes a block; for now all you need to know is that back-row players may not do it. The ref's signal for an illegal back-row block is to raise the hands as if blocking.

You will typically see violations of these rules in three situations.

- ❖ Many teams use their back-row players as attackers. If the ball is set too far forward in the court, or the hitter misjudges her approach, she may step on or over the attack line while jumping to hit the ball. If she also hits the ball while it is entirely above the net, the attack is illegal.



- ❖ During rotations where the setter is in the back row, she may violate the back-row rules while trying to set bad passes. For example, if the pass crosses the net while the setter is trying to reach it, the opposing hitter may spike the ball back into the setter's hands above the net. This is considered an illegal back-row block by the setter.

- ❖ Another outcome of a pass too close to the top of the net may be that the back-row setter jumps and reaches the ball above the net to set it, but cannot control it well enough and accidentally sets it over the net. This is an illegal back-row attack.

To complete this topic, you need to know one more fine point. If a back-row setter sets the first or second hit from above the net and sends it towards the net where an opponent blocks it, the setter's hit may or may not constitute an illegal attack. If the referee believes that one of the setter's teammates would have been able to make a play on the ball if it had not been blocked, then there is no violation by the setter. If no teammate had a chance of playing the ball, the setter's play is deemed an illegal attack. The idea is that a blocker legally interceding into what would have been a legal offensive play should not convert that play into an illegal one.

First Recruits Reported for 2004

According to richkern.com, three high-school players have verbally committed to attend MSU next year.

- ❖ Maggie Griffin, a six-footer from Aurora, Illinois, is perhaps the best high-school setter in the country. Her Sports Performance 18-under club team won the gold in the Open Division at the USA Volleyball National Championships and she was named MVP.

- ❖ Alex Ratcliff is an outside hitter from Champaign Central High School in Champaign, IL. She plays for the Illini Elite Volleyball Club. An opposing high school coach described the 6-foot Ratcliff as "pretty much unstoppable" as a hitter.

- ❖ Meghan Schoen is a 6-1 all-state middle blocker from Englewood, CO, where she plays for Cherry Creek High School and the Front Range volleyball Club. According to an article in the Denver Post, she has a grade-point average of 4.1, her favorite subject is English, and she hopes for a career in law, possibly dealing with sports contracts.

2003 Schedule and Results

(All home matches are played in Jenison Field House. All times listed are Eastern.)

8/29	W	Villanova	30-14, 30-27, 30-25	10/17	L	ILLINOIS	24-30, 25-30, 25-30
8/30	W	Tennessee	28-30, 26-30, 31-29, 30-28, 17-15	10/18	W	NORTHWESTERN	30-24, 32-30, 30-19
8/30	W	Maryland	30-21, 30-27, 30-15	10/24	W	@Iowa	30-14, 30-21, 27-30, 30-21
9/5	W	South Carolina	30-19, 24-30, 30-17, 30-28	10/25	L	@Minnesota	30-27, 15-30, 15-30, 25-30
9/6	W	North Carolina	30-17, 30-28, 30-21	10/31		INDIANA	7:00 pm
9/12	L	Georgia Tech	20-30, 16-30, 25-30	11/1		PURDUE	8:00 pm
9/13	L	Nebraska	20-30, 20-30, 24-30	11/5		@Michigan	7:00 pm
9/14	W	Santa Clara	30-26, 26-30, 26-30, 30-21, 15-11	11/8		@Wisconsin	8:00 pm
9/20	W	San Diego	28-30, 30-21, 30-28, 30-28	11/14		@Ohio State	7:00 pm
9/20	W	American	30-19, 30-22, 34-36, 30-26	11/15		@Penn State	7:00 pm
9/26	L	PENN STATE	20-30, 30-28, 28-30, 30-26, 14-16	11/21		MINNESOTA	8:00 pm
9/27	W	OHIO STATE	30-25, 30-24, 31-33, 30-22	11/22		IOWA	8:00 pm
10/1	L	MICHIGAN	20-30, 23-30, 27-30	11/28		@Northwestern	8:00 pm
10/3	W	WISCONSIN	30-16, 24-30, 30-28, 30-22	11/29		@Illinois	8:00 pm
10/10	L	@Purdue	31-33, 29-31, 22-30	12/5-12/8		NCAA 1 st & 2 nd round	
10/11	W	@Indiana	26-30, 30-25, 30-26, 30-25	12/12-13		NCAA Regionals	
				12/18-20		NCAA Championships in Dallas, TX	



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