
The Service Line

Volleyball News from the MSU SideOut Club
Vol. IX No. 4
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Spartans Chosen to Host First Round

For the fourth time in team history, and the first since 1998, Michigan State volleyball will play host for their opening match of the NCAA tournament this Friday. That was the surprising news delivered to the team and fans assembled at Champps restaurant on Sunday night to watch the tournament-announcement show.

The Spartans will play Dayton at 8 pm Friday in Jenison Field House, following a 5 pm match between Nebraska and Valparaiso. The two winners will advance to the second round match at 8 pm Saturday in Jenison.

Tickets went on sale Tuesday at noon. An all-session pass for both Friday and Saturday will cost \$10 for adults and \$6 for youth, seniors and MSU students. A single-session ticket for either day will cost \$7 for adults and \$5 for youth, seniors and MSU students. All tickets are general admission.

The Spartans fully expected to be in the tournament, but being allowed to host was quite a shock. Of the top sixteen seeds, fourteen are hosting, with only #9 Nebraska and #14 Colorado State being required to travel to another site. Colorado State could not host because their arena was in use for basketball games on the required dates. However, Nebraska was able to, and reportedly very disappointed not to, host.

One guess is that this is a result of two circumstances: 1) Nebraska having been named one of the four pre-determined sites for regional matches, as we explained

in the newsletter last March, and 2) the Huskers not doing well enough this year to earn a top-4 seed.

To understand this, consider what happens if all the early matches go according to seed. For the regional at Lincoln, #9-seed Nebraska will then play host to two teams seeded higher than they are—#1 USC, and #8 UCLA. This gives the Huskers an advantage they would not have had as such a low seed in previous years, when the regionals were almost always hosted by the highest remaining seed.

So it's possible that the selection committee used this favored position as justification to deny Nebraska the additional privilege of hosting the first and second rounds. Two of the other pre-determined regional hosts—Hawai'i and Florida—earned top-4 seeds and will host the first rounds. The fourth pre-determined regional site is at Long Beach State, who did not earn a top-16 seed so will not host the first round.

Another possibility is that MSU's site selection was determined by travel distances, with too few tournament schools within a short distance of Nebraska. However, there are more teams traveling farther distances this year than we've seen since 2000, so it's hard to believe this is the only reason.

In any event, our team will enjoy the good fortune of being able to sleep in their own beds this week and to follow their usual routines. And of course, MSU fans will enjoy the privilege of seeing their favorite team continue their season, without the need to travel anywhere. As for the coaches, well, they get to sleep in their own beds and hold practices in a familiar facility, but they also have to deal with the extra distractions caused by the duties of being a host.

First- and Second-Round Opponents

Dayton is making their first-ever NCAA tournament appearance under first-year head coach Tim Horsmon. The Flyers were 12-2 in Atlantic-10 conference play and won the season-ending tournament over top seed Temple.

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The Flyers had the two top middle blockers in the conference in senior Shannon Gardner and freshman Faye Barhorst. Gardner was named to the all-conference team, while Barhorst was chosen rookie of the year. In addition, senior outside hitter Erin Treadway was named Atlantic-10 Player of the Year, after leading the league in total kills and kills per game, while finishing second on her team in digs per game. Treadway played for Ohio State her freshman year in 2000 and saw action against MSU.

Dayton lost to Minnesota 3-0 in Minneapolis early in the season, and also lost to San Diego 3-1 in San Diego the week after MSU defeated them 3-1.

Although their national ranking slipped somewhat this year, **Nebraska** had a very good season. They suffered only four losses, three of which were to highly ranked teams (Kansas State and Georgia Tech) and three of which were five-game matches. Nevertheless, three of those losses were Big 12 conference matches, which was enough to deny them the conference championship for the first time in seven years. The Huskers disposed of MSU pretty easily in Lincoln on September 13 and also defeated Illinois 3-0 earlier in the season.

Nebraska placed two players, both sophomores, on the All-Big 12 team this year. Middle blocker Melissa Elmer was the top blocker in the conference as well as the most efficient hitter, with 1.64 blocks per game and a hitting percentage of .379. Jennifer Saleaumua is a versatile outside hitter who led the Huskers in kills per game (3.24) and digs per game (3.86). She set a single-

season dig record of 398 for the Huskers in 2003. Nikki Colson went to high school with Nebraska's other outside hitter, senior co-captain Anna Schrad.

Team Notes

The injury-plagued Spartan volleyball team struggled through the end of the conference season, losing four out of the last five matches, three of those by 0-3 margins. Their regular-season record of 19-11 and conference record of 11-9 were identical to 2002, but this year that was good for only sixth place, the team's lowest finish since 1994.

Jenny Rood's Big-Ten hitting percentage of .326 placed her third among all conference hitters. In addition, **Megan Wallin's** ninth place showing made MSU's middles the second-best hitting duo in the conference, behind Penn State's Cara Smith and Cassie Salyer. If Jenny can maintain or improve her overall 2003 regular-season hitting percentage of .343 through tournament play, it will be good enough to rank her fourth among MSU's season record-holders.

Nikki Colson's regular-season total of 1513 assists guarantees her at least third place in MSU's single-season rankings, and by the time MSU gets to the second round of the tournament she should break the all-time single-season record which she set last year. As mentioned in the last issue, Nikki is now the Spartans' career leader in total assists.

Kim Schram had 4.95 kills per game in the conference this year, ranking her number three among Big Ten hitters. She has a total of 530 kills so far this year, chalking up the fifth best season for a Spartan, and she can expect to move up to number four before the tournament is over. Her overall 4.77 kills per game this year also ranks her fourth on the list of season-record holders. She is currently sixth in kills for her career, with one year to go.

Unfortunately, Jenny, Nikki and Sara Villwock have all been playing with foot, shin or knee injuries for several weeks now. In addition, **Brooke Langston** fractured a finger on her right hand two weeks ago, and is questionable for the remainder of the season.

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Schram, Colson and Rood Earn All-Conference Honors

For the third consecutive year, MSU volleyball placed one player on the All-Big Ten Team for 2003. Kim Schram earned the honor this year as MSU's big gun on the left side. Interestingly, only one other left side player, Ohio State's Stacey Gordon, was named to the team this year. Kim was named to the All-Freshman team in 2001 along with Gordon.

Nikki Colson and Jenny Rood finished their careers by becoming honorable mention selections of the coaches. This was Nikki's second honorable mention and Jenny's first conference award of any type.

2003 All-Big-Ten Volleyball Team

Erin Virtue, ILLINOIS, JR, S
 Lisa Argabright, ILLINOIS, SR, MB
 Erin Moore, MICHIGAN*, SR, MB
Kim Schram, MICHIGAN STATE, JR, OH
 Cassie Busse, MINNESOTA*, SR, OPP
 Paula Gentil, MINNESOTA, SO, LIB
 Erika Lange, NORTHWESTERN, SR, MB
 Stacey Gordon, OHIO STATE*, JR, OH
 Cara Smith, PENN STATE*, SR, MH
 Erin Iceman, PENN STATE, SR, OPP
 Sam Tortorello, PENN STATE, SO, S
 Jill Odenthal, WISCONSIN, JR, RS
 *unanimous selection

Honorable Mention: INDIANA: Melissa Brewer;
 MICHIGAN STATE: **Nikki Colson, Jenny Rood**;
 MINNESOTA: Lindsey Taatjes; PURDUE: Kim
 McConaha, Renata Dargan; WISCONSIN: Morgan
 Shields

All Freshman Team

Megan Bowman, MICHIGAN, MB
 Meredith Nelson, MINNESOTA, MB
 Briana McCarthy, OHIO STATE, S
 Cassy Salyer, PENN STATE, MH
 Melanie Ukovich, PURDUE, OPP
 Amy Bladow, WISCONSIN, MB

Player of the Year: Cassie Busse, MINNESOTA

Defensive Player of the Year: Paula Gentil,
 MINNESOTA

Freshman Player of the Year: Cassy Salyer, PENN STATE

Coach of the Year (Coaches): Don Hardin, Illinois
(Media): Don Hardin, ILLINOIS and Russ Rose,
 PENN STATE

Penn State Back On Top

Penn State logged a perfect 10-0 record for the second-half conference season to climb back from second place to win the 2003 Big Ten race. This ended a three-year title drought for the Nittany Lions, the longest time they have gone without a championship since they joined the conference in 1991.

Illinois had a banner year, with their best conference finish and best won-lost record since their Big Ten championship in 1992. This continued their peculiar five-year pattern of following a very bad year with a very good year. And speaking of bad years, Ohio State's fall from fourth place in 2002 to ninth place this year was quite a shock.

2003 Finish	School	Big 10	Overall	Preseason Poll	2002 Finish
1	Penn State	17-3	28-4	2	2
2	Illinois	15-5	24-6	9	9
-	Minnesota	15-5	22-10	1	1
4	Wisconsin	13-7	21-10	4	2
5	Michigan	12-8	20-11	7	6
6	MSU	11-9	19-11	3	5
7	Northwestern	9-11	18-14	8	6
8	Purdue	7-13	14-17	11	10
9	Ohio State	5-15	11-17	6	4
10	Indiana	5-15	12-19	5	6
11	Iowa	1-19	6-24	10	10

President's Corner

by SideOut Club President Jenny Bond

Great news! Michigan State will play in the first round of the NCAA tournament at home. This is your opportunity to support the team in a very big way. We just returned from Champ's in Lansing where the team first received this news. They were ecstatic. It is your opportunity to support them again at home. Line up your friends to attend as well. We need a huge crowd

to cheer for the team.

John and I just returned this afternoon from Illinois and Northwestern to see the team in their Big Ten final matches for the year. Although they lost both matches, we were not disappointed in our trip. First, about the team—I thought I was seeing the "almost walking wounded" playing at times.

However, not one of the players will admit that they are hurting! These are tough young women. If you have had a chance to attend the coach's luncheons recently, you probably know that Nikki Colson and Jenny Rood have been having severe problems with their legs. They are playing over the pain but neither currently has the mobility we have seen in past seasons. Someone told me last night at the match that they might have one good leg of four between them. We hope that more healing will come very soon as they obviously want to perform well in the NCAA as it will be their final appearances in a MSU uniform. We missed Brooke Langston who is still out with a broken finger—she hopes to play in the NCAA. The team did not lose to Illinois because they gave up! I was proud of their comeback in the second and third games. They came so close to making it a close match. It was good to see Sara Villwock's injuries improving and her improved play. Emmy, Marley, Mickey and Stephanie definitely showed up. Marley took a ball directly in her face but picked herself up and kept going. Megan had a hard hit in practice on her nose which was broken last spring but worked to hit .458 with 13 kills. Kim Schram and Michelle Kopka played well overall but met a potent defensive team. It did not help that it was senior night at Illinois with much hoop-la.

I was really pleased to see so many parents and fans at the matches at both sites. Al and Renee Schmitzer should have some great pictures to post from them on their web site. Be on the lookout for the picture of Miken Trogdon and Brooke Langston—with green "hair." Richard Alban made both matches as did the Paul Millers and Peter Morris. The team is so appreciative of the fan support at home and away. Every player I saw Saturday night after the match thanked us for attending.

The facilities at Northwestern and Illinois are very nice. If I were one to be envious, I would definitely be envious of the scoreboards at both places and the sound system and theater style seats at Northwestern. Jenison has far to go in these areas to catch up with most of the sites we have visited this year. However, I

still like the ambience at Jenison. There was no evidence of a booster club obvious at Northwestern. The between-games activities and promotions at both schools were lively and involved many people. For example, at Northwestern between games 2 and 3 more than 100 people of all ages lined up to serve a volleyball across the net to hit one of at least 20 prizes (shirts, pendants, etc.) on the floor. It was fun to see everyone participating and the activity was one which will bring people back. Apparently this is done at every match as the fans knew exactly what to do and when to do it. At Illinois the band was present and an accomplished majorette entertained at most of the breaks. Fans lined up around the court at the break between matches 2 and 3 and participated in an Illinois tradition where the mascot dressed as an Indian comes out and "dances" to what I think was probably their fight song. (He was an accomplished dancer/gymnast). He ended leading the fans in singing the Alma Mater. It was really impressive. And by the way, *at both sites the fans were able to park near the arenas—at no cost.*

In the Illinois facility, there were large banners of the three seniors on the wall. The president of the booster club told me that every year the club has these banners made and that they stay up all season. At the end of the season they are apparently given to the individuals in appreciation of their efforts to the team. The SideOut Club Board will check to see if a similar thing might be done for our seniors in the future—if we can afford it. We will update you as we progress with this matter.

Ohio State Bus Trip: A good time was had by all who participated in the SOC sponsored bus trip to Ohio State in mid-November—once the bus finally arrived to pick us up. The team cooperated by trouncing Ohio State. We were pleased to welcome fans who have made the trip several times and new fans as well. Special thanks to Julie and Jack Carmichael for making the arrangements for this trip.

Most Important Item: The year end banquet will be held on Saturday, January 17, 2004 starting at 11:30 AM at the Hawk Hollow Banquet Facility. Get this date on your calendar now. All members will receive a specific invitation with details later. Our seniors—Nikki Colson, Jenny Rood, Emmy Miller and Stephanie Knopp have given their all on the court and to this program. They will graduate on time and all have represented us well. This is a special time to honor them. It is also an excellent time to support the rest of

the team, especially those who have worked all year in practice but who have not had real playing time. If you have tickets for the men's basketball game with Michigan on that day, you will be finished in time for the game. Plan now to join this special celebration of a very special group of young women and the people who have contributed to the program this year.

When I thought of the things for which I was thankful this year, I include the MSU volleyball program and its supporters. That includes you! Remember that we are always open to your suggestions and ideas for activities, etc. The Board has begun discussion of several suggestions made by SOC members recently to improve our support of the team and the fans.

I definitely hope to see you at the NCAA matches on Friday and Saturday. I also hope to see you at the banquet on January 17. We are planning a number of surprises for you and the team. Do not miss out on them.

Go Green!

Thanks to Special Members

The SideOut Club would like to acknowledge the members who through their membership give extra monetary support for MSU women's volleyball.

Lifetime Members

Becky and Chuck Erbe	Lowell McCann
Denise and Jeff Jones Sr.	Mick Kelly
Bob and Kathy Lovell	David Kirkby
Jim and Betsy Pifer	Tom Minnema
Lyle and Jeanne Montgomery	Mike Ward
Sarah and Stu Patterson	Laura Peters
Al and Kay Schmid	Nancy Hammond
Peter Morris	Althea Phillips

2003-04 Supporting Members

Carl Carlson	Nona and James Anderson
Jim Ellis	Fran and Jerry Rood
Susan Epple	Jenny and John Bond
Jerry Hansen	Rick Richardson
Ed Trogdon	

We would also like to thank the Club members listed below, who contributed their time to SideOut Club activities this season. Please excuse any omissions.

Cathy Caswell	Eileen Ellis	Fran Rood
Joyce Henry	Chris Wolf	Laura Willard
Kay Schmid		

Not included above are the names of Board members, all of whom worked for the Club at matches in addition to the many hours they put in as Board members. Those who organize the most visible of the Club's efforts include:

Jim Constandt and Dennis Eagle	<i>merchandise</i>
Susan Epple	<i>50/50 raffle</i>
Jim Ellis	<i>volunteer co-ordinator</i>
Julie Carmichael	<i>membership promotion, bus trips</i>
Jenny Bond	<i>banquet organizer</i>

Special mention should be made of Jim Ellis, who for at least six years now has been the Club's do-it-all guy at matches. Officially he is the volunteer coordinator and the treasurer, but he also winds up doing any other job that needs to be done. The SideOut Club activities at matches simply could not function without Jim's work.

However, Jim's job has gotten harder each year, as we see fewer Club members volunteering to help out. In 1997, we had 39 different non-Board members do some kind of work for at least one match. For 2003 there were only seven. The workload is being borne by too few people, and it cannot continue this way. It really is fun to help the Club at matches, and you do get to watch most of the on-court action as well. We hope every member will find the time to volunteer to help next year.

Dynamic Combination(s)

by Peter Morris

Over the years, Michigan State has had more than its share of lethal combinations: DeBolt to Morales; Basil to Wrobel; Colson to Rood; Pavlus to Sterk; DeBolt to Cooke; Landry to Gustin; Colson to Hartley, and so many others. However, this season, Nikki Colson to Kim Schram became the duo that had successfully paired up on kills more times than any other in school history.

Entering this season, only two hitters, Val Sterk and Veronica Morales, had managed over 1,000 kills while playing with the same principal setter - Courtney DeBolt in both cases. Not even Jenna Wrobel made the list, although that wasn't her fault; she played with a different principal setter in each of her four years! This

season, two more combinations have surpassed that milestone: Colson to Rood and Colson to Schram.

Michigan State does not officially track the number of kills by one player that were set up by assists from another, and some come off scramble plays or overpasses. As a result, exact totals cannot be calculated. However, Kim Schram now has amassed over 1,300 career kills, all of them since Colson became the setter. (Jenny Rood is ahead of Kim Schram in career kills, but she played one year with Christie Landry setting.) It is therefore safe to assume that, at some point this season, Colson to Schram became the number one combination.

Nikki Colson and Kim Schram have their own unique personalities, but their success together reflects the great respect they share for one another. Rob Schram, Kim's father, puts it best when he says that Kim respects Nikki for being "more than just the setter but also captain and team leader. Nikki will leave MSU this year as the well-deserved career assists leader and Kim is just proud to be a part of it."

Rob's comment underlines a particularly pleasing aspect of volleyball statistics. While statistics in other sports can encourage one-on-one play, almost all volleyball statistics credit combined accomplishment. Nikki Colson's career assist mark is a tremendous individual achievement. At the same time, it also reflects teamwork, because every single assist relied upon her successfully teaming up with two other players - a finisher like Schram, Rood, Sara Villwock, Megan Wallin, Diana Steplyk, Brooke Langston, Michelle Kopka, Erin Hartley, Angela Morley or Kyla Smith - and a digmeister like Emmy Miller, Stephanie Knopp, Marley Bellwood, Mickey Davis or Emily Engel.

Each of these people, and many others, can feel justly proud at having been a part of the record. The feeling of accomplishment is thus distributed just as smoothly as Nikki distributes sets.

Sister Acts

by Peter Morris

Diana Steplyk's younger sister Hayley will play volleyball at Dartmouth next year. Hayley deserves a great deal of credit for bouncing back from a serious knee injury to return to her old form on the volleyball court. Her admission to an Ivy League school shows that she is also following in her sister's footsteps by excelling in the classroom.

Proud parents Tony and Judy Steplyk will continue to have their loyalties divided between daughters separated by several hundred miles. One consolation will be the reduced risk of colors running in the laundry; Dartmouth's athletic nickname is the Big Green. Another nice touch is that Hayley broke two school records at Libertyville High School, but they were different ones from the three held by Diana!

This means that no fewer than seven of the eighteen players on this year's MSU squad have a sister who has played college volleyball at the varsity level - Diana, Marley and Tracy Bellwood, Jenny Rood, Kim Schram, Mickey Davis and Stephanie Knopp. In addition, Andrea Hansen's sister played on the champion intramural squad at the University of Puget Sound this year.

While a number of conclusions could be drawn from this extraordinary number of sister acts, perhaps the most important one is this: the older sisters must have conveyed the message to their younger siblings that the benefits they received from playing collegiate volleyball far outweigh the tough losses, jam-packed schedules, banged up fingers and other bumps and bruises that the sport can bring.

NCAA Tournament Brackets

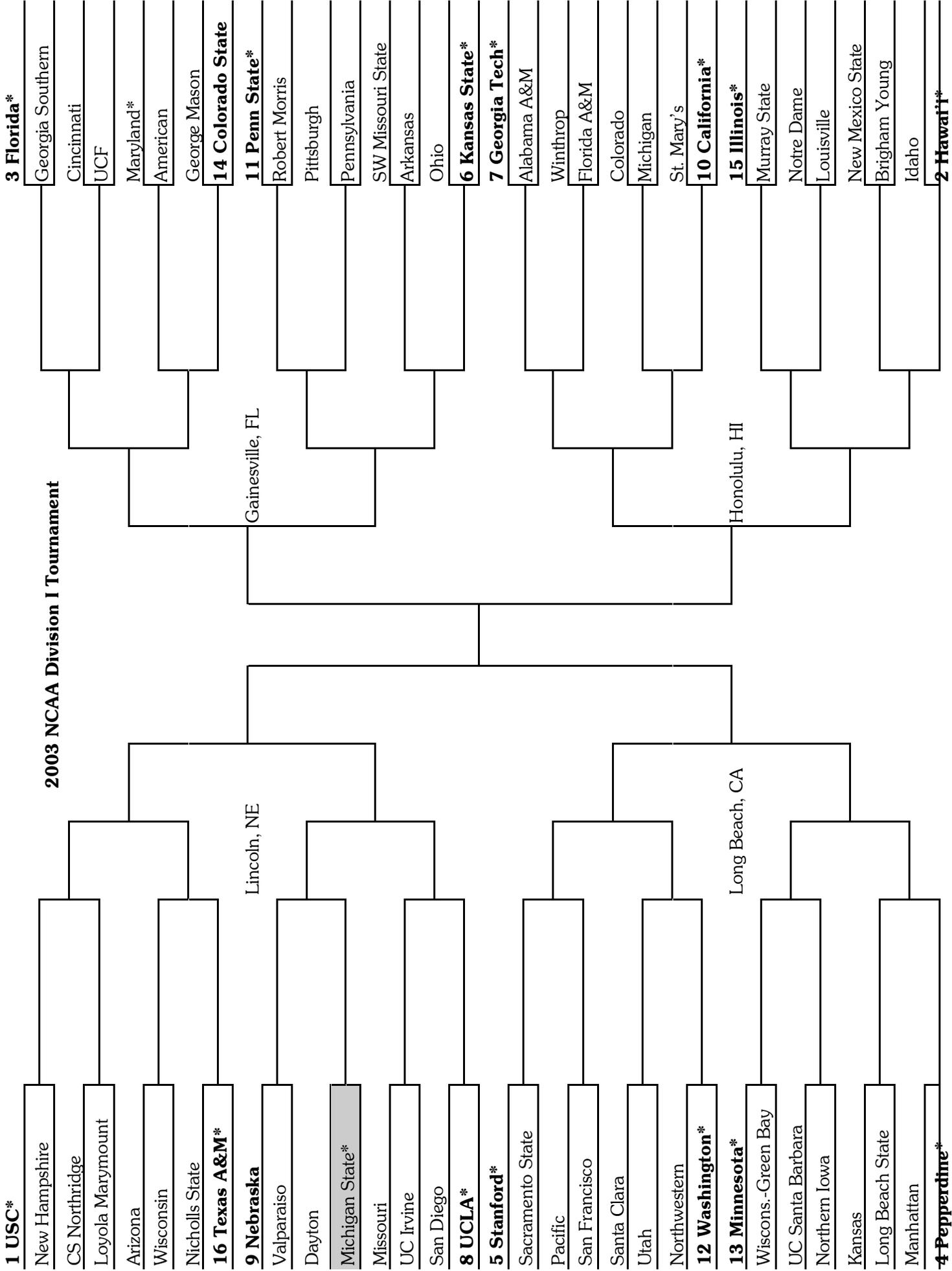
Southern Cal certainly earned the NCAA's number-one seed this year, with a 29-0 season in which they lost only six individual games. In a very unusual situation, USC has already faced and defeated each of the other three top seeds this season by scores of 3-0.

The Big Ten placed seven teams in the tournament, more than any other conference. Three of them were seeded among the top 16, with Penn State the highest at number 11, Minnesota at number 13 and Illinois at number 15. All of them will host and have fairly easy first-round matches, but face potentially troublesome second-round opponents.

Michigan and Wisconsin both travel west and have to face first-round opponents that are similar in strength to the second-round opponents expected by the top three, followed by very strong second-round teams.

Northwestern was the lowest ranked Big Ten team to get into the tournament, and must play a very difficult first round match against number 12 seed Washington.

The full bracket is shown on the next page.



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	W	INDIANA	30-24, 30-23, 30-23
9/12	L	Georgia Tech	20-30, 16-30, 25-30	11/1	W	PURDUE	23-30, 30-16, 32-30, 30-23
9/13	L	Nebraska	20-30, 20-30, 24-30	11/5	W	Michigan	29-31, 30-17, 30-25, 28-30, 15-8
9/14	W	Santa Clara	30-26, 26-30, 26-30, 30-21, 15-11	11/8	W	Wisconsin	30-26, 21-30, 22-30, 30-25, 15-8
9/20	W	San Diego	28-30, 30-21, 30-28, 30-28	11/14	W	Ohio State	30-22, 23-30, 30-26, 32-30
9/20	W	American	30-19, 30-22, 34-36, 30-26	11/15	L	Penn State	28-30, 30-24, 21-30, 30-28, 8-15
9/26	L	PENN STATE	20-30, 30-28, 28-30, 30-26, 14-16	11/21	L	MINNESOTA	20-30, 26-30, 23-30
9/27	W	OHIO STATE	30-25, 30-24, 31-33, 30-22	11/22	W	IOWA	30-21, 30-23, 30-23
10/1	L	MICHIGAN	20-30, 23-30, 27-30	11/28	L	Northwestern	28-30, 29-31, 28-30
10/3	W	WISCONSIN	30-16, 24-30, 30-28, 30-22	11/29	L	Illinois	18-30, 29-31, 27-30
10/10	L	Purdue	31-33, 29-31, 22-30	12/5		Dayton	8:00 pm
10/11	W	Indiana	26-30, 30-25, 30-26, 30-25	12/8		Nebraska or Valparaiso	8:00 pm
				12/12-13		NCAA Regionals	
				12/18-20		NCAA Championships in Dallas, TX	



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