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# The Service Line

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Volleyball News from the MSU SideOut Club

Vol. VI No. 4

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## Tournament-Bound for the 7<sup>th</sup> Time!

For the seventh consecutive year, the Michigan State volleyball team has earned a berth in the NCAA tournament. Over this period (1994-2000) only two other Big Ten teams—Penn State and Ohio State—have matched this feat.

The Spartans will play in the Mideast region, in rounds to be played at UCLA on December 2 and 3. The first match pits MSU against the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee at 8:00 pm EST on Saturday, followed by UCLA versus Morgan State. The two winners will play on Sunday at 6:00 pm EST to decide who will advance to the regional playoff. The regional will be held at the home of the top remaining seed, which will probably be either Wisconsin (seeded first in the region) or Pacific (seeded second). See the full brackets on page 4.

Wisconsin-Milwaukee finished the regular season at 23-4, and is making their third consecutive NCAA tournament appearance. They lost in the first round to Illinois in 1999 and to Texas in 1998.

UWM played strongly in their conference this year, but were a long-shot to even make it into the NCAA tournament. They tied with Loyola-Chicago for first in the Midwestern Collegiate Conference for the regular season with a 12-2 record. Loyola went on to win the conference tournament, earning the

conference's automatic bid to the NCAA tournament. The Midwestern Collegiate Conference is not normally strong enough to earn two tournament berths, but UWM was ranked higher in the Midwest region than Loyola, which is probably what got them into the tournament.

The highest ranked opponent they defeated this year was Cincinnati, who came in at number 46 in Miguel Ballicora's computer rankings. UWM was ranked number 60 and MSU finished the season at number 25.

Nevertheless, the Panthers' accomplishments in their conference are impressive. Laura Dallenbach, a 5'7" outside hitter, was named the MCC player of the year, 5'11" setter Lindsay Spoden was named freshman of the year, and coach Kathy Litzau was named coach of the year. Middle blocker Chrissy Schurla was chosen for the MCC first team, and two other Panthers made the MCC newcomer's team.

UCLA is a much more formidable team, as the Spartans discovered in a 1-3 loss to the Bruins on September 8. Their season record is 22-7, but that is somewhat misleading. They played perhaps the most demanding pre-conference schedule of any team in the country, including four matches against top-ten teams and three others against top-25 teams. They finished third in the PAC-10 (arguably the strongest overall conference this year) at 14-4, never losing two matches to any opponent.

However, they lost two out of their last three conference matches, and then finished the season against relatively weak opponents in a tournament at Baylor.

Two UCLA starters—junior outside hitter Kristee Porter and senior middle blocker Elisabeth Bachman—were named to the all-PAC-10 team, both for the third time, and four other starters won honorable-mention status.

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UCLA came in sixth in the country in the computer rankings, at about the same strength as Minnesota and Penn State, so they will be very tough to beat.



Photo: Chris Wolf

## 2000 Spartan Wrap-Up

The Spartan volleyball team finished the season pretty much the same way they started it, with some really solid play interspersed with a few unfortunate stumbles.

For example, just prior to the final weekend of the season, MSU was fifth in the country in blocks per game, ahead of such top-ten ranked teams as Hawai'i, Colorado State, Florida, Arizona and Penn

State. They were also first in the Big Ten in solo blocks, with 1.0 per game.

Team hitting percentage is up from .250 last year to .270 this year, as are digs per game from 13.7 to 15.4. In the late-season 1-3 loss to highly-ranked Minnesota, the Spartans outblocked and outdug the Gophers, while giving up only a small advantage in hitting percentage.

On the other hand, the losses at Illinois and Michigan, to teams we should have beaten, were a coach's (and a fan's) nightmare. On both occasions, MSU outscored their opponents in total points for the match and had a much higher hitting percentage (.324 to .191 at Illinois, .313 to .209 at Michigan). They also outblocked Michigan 21-4 and outdug them 94-78. They lost both matches, of course, because they could not score points at crucial times. Illinois finished tenth in the conference, and MSU was the highest ranked team they defeated all year.

As for individuals, Sarah Gustin, Erin Hartley and Lisa Ashton came on strong at the end of the year. Sarah moved back to the middle after Maren Witzel aggravated her old foot injury during the Michigan match. She immediately had an outstanding night against Ohio State, leading the team in kills (20) and hitting (.600). She looks completely at home in that position, playing like she owns the middle of the net.

Chuck Erbe sees Erin Hartley as having really established herself on the court during the last half of the season. "Erin has gained the consistency she needs and is now a dominating force at the net, both hitting and blocking", he said.

Lisa Ashton led the team in digs against Ohio State—an amazing accomplishment considering that she only played half of the rotations. Even though Erin plays incredible defense, Lisa might have been ahead of her in digs per game if she were playing full-time. Fans have been able to watch Lisa improve week-to-week, and enjoy seeing some fabulous saves in the back row from both of these players.

### **\*\*Volleyball Trivia Question\*\***

Who was the only Spartan player to play in all 109 games this year? See the answer on page 5.

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### ***The Service Line***

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## Big Ten Goes Down to the Wire

The Big Ten race was a nail-biter this year, with two teams tied for the lead coming into the last night of the season. Wisconsin defeated MSU and Minnesota lost to Ohio State 16-18 in the fifth game at Columbus, giving Wisconsin the championship. They last won the championship outright in 1990, having tied with Penn State in 1997.

The final Big Ten standings are shown below. Other than Wisconsin, the big winner for the year may have been Iowa, who moved from tenth place in 1999 to sixth place this year. Penn State had an incredible run after losing their first three conference matches for the first time ever. From that point on they had the best record in the conference, going 16-1 for the rest of the season. Illinois may have had the most disappointing season, falling from fourth last year to tenth.

2000 Finish	School	Big 10	Overall	Preseason Poll	1999 Finish
1	Wisconsin	18-2	28-3	3	3
2	Minnesota	17-3	28-3	2	2
3	Penn State	16-4	27-5	1	1
4	Ohio State	14-6	24-6	6	5
5	<b>MSU</b>	10-10	17-12	4	5
6	Iowa	9-11	13-15	10	10
7	Michigan	8-12	18-13	5	8
8	Indiana	7-13	16-14	8	5
9	Purdue	5-15	13-19	9	8
10	Illinois	4-16	13-18	7	4
11	Northwestern	2-18	5-25	11	11

## Gustin First Team All-Conference

Sarah Gustin had to work to earn the respect of the Big Ten coaches this year—they left her off the pre-season all-conference team, but thought much more highly of her by the end of the season. As a result, Sarah was the only Spartan chosen for the All-Big-Ten first team. Teammates Jess Sanborn, Christie Landry, and Erin Hartley won honorable mention.

The voting produced a tie for Player of the Year,

shared between Nicole Branagh of Minnesota and Sherisa Livingston of Wisconsin. Wisconsin also had the Freshman of the Year in Claudia Rodriguez and Coach of the Year Pete Waite.

## 2000 All-Big-Ten Volleyball Team

Nicole Branagh, OH, Minnesota\*  
 Stephanie Hagen, MB, Minnesota\*  
 Sherisa Livingston, MB, Wisconsin\*  
 Jenny Maastricht, OH, Wisconsin\*  
 Betsy Spicer, MB, Illinois\*  
 Lindsey Berg, S, Minnesota  
 Fabiana de Abreu, S/H, Iowa  
**Sarah Gustin, OH, Michigan State**  
 Lizzy Fitzgerald, S, Wisconsin  
 Mishka Levy, MH, Penn State  
 Katie Schumacher, OH, Penn State  
 Katie Virtue, S, Ohio State  
 Amanda Welter, OPP, Indiana

\*unanimous selection

Honorable Mention: Sue Calligaris, OH, Ohio State;  
**Erin Hartley, OH, Michigan State; Christie Landry, S, Michigan State;** Claudia Rodriguez, RS, Wisconsin; Amanda Rome, OH, Penn State;  
**Jessica Sanborn, MH, Michigan State;** Suzie Stiling, MB, Ohio State.

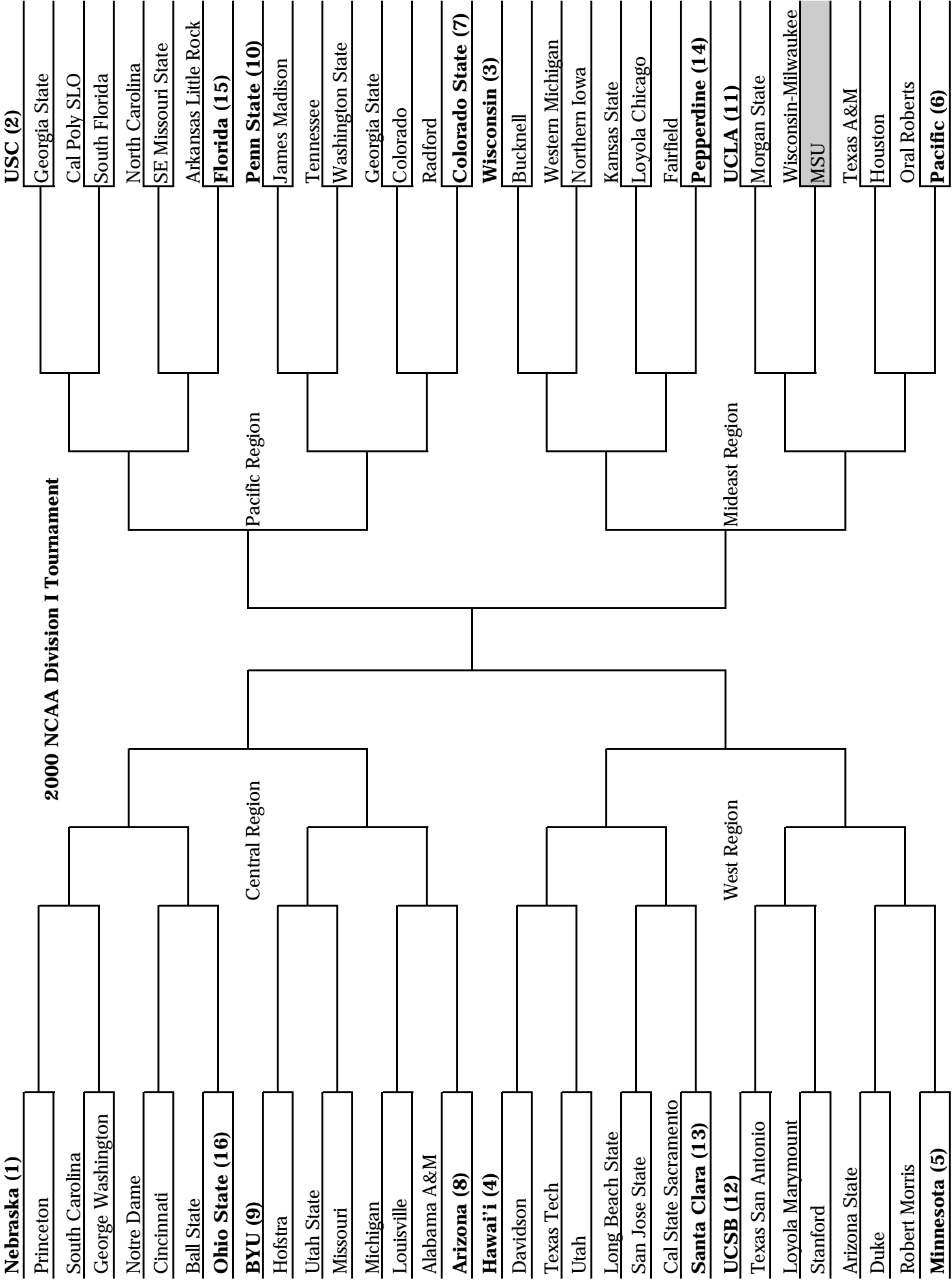
## All Freshman Team

Melissa Brewer, MB, Indiana  
 Jessica Hayden, S, Penn State  
 Erika Lange, MB, Northwestern  
 Joanna Lowry, OH, Purdue  
 Claudia Rodriguez, RS, Wisconsin  
 Cara Smith, MH, Penn State

## NCAA Tournament Brackets

Six Big Ten teams were invited to the 2000 NCAA tournament, with Wisconsin named the number three seed in the nation. Minnesota is number 5, Penn State is number 10 and Ohio State is number 16, so four Big Ten teams are hosting the first round. MSU and Michigan complete the Big Ten contingent.

The Big 12 and the Pac-10 will also send six teams, but they have only three and one top-16 seeds respectively.



## Banquet Celebrates the Season

The Spartan Volleyball Banquet, held on Thanksgiving weekend, had a different feel this year. Usually the banquet has been held in January, with the season long over and a national champion crowned. This year the atmosphere was one of anticipation, wondering where MSU would be placed in the tournament and how well they would do. (Chuck said the players wanted to go some place warm; first choice—Hawai'i!)

SideOut Club Treasurer Jim Ellis was one of the presenters this year, handing Coach Chuck Erbe a check for \$4,000 to help pay for the digital video editing system.

Lisa Ashton was selected for the Andrea DeLuca Spirit Award. Her verbal slip in thanking the coaches for "all they do to us" brought gales of laughter from the audience, as she stood genuinely puzzled about what she had said.

The recipient of the SideOut Club Service Award was Dean McCracken. Dean was chosen for his leadership as president during a crucial year for the Club, as well as his hard work during the rest of his tenure on the Board. Dean continues his support as a member of the official statistics crew.

Vicki Basil and Jess Sanborn were presented with the Captain's Award. Sarah Gustin won the top GPA award for the third year in a row. Jess also won the Hitting Efficiency Award for her .420 hitting percentage.

Finally, in an honor bestowed by the players, Christie Landry was named the L&L Most Valuable Player for 2000. It's an amazing accomplishment for her to win this award playing a position she never played before coming to MSU.

## Gustin Wins All-District Award

Sarah Gustin won academic honors earlier in the month when she was named to the NCAA Academic second team for District IV (Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama). She has twice won All-Big-Ten Academic honors, but this was her first All-District award. Sarah

maintains a 3.74 GPA as a communication major. Sue Calligaris and Katie Virtue of Ohio State join Sarah on the second team, with OSU's Dana Stearns a member of the third team.

## Thanks to Our Volunteers

We would like to extend our thanks to the Club members listed below, who contributed their time to SideOut Club activities this season. (Please excuse any omissions or misspellings. Not included 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.)

Amy Eagle	Bob Lovell	Georgia Johnson
Joy Jacobs	Eileen Ellis	Marlene Wesselman
Andy Kurtz	Kate Weldon	Roy Wesselman
Jim Pifer	Ann Purvis	Nancy Hammond
Betsy Pifer	Chris Wolf	Cathy Caswell
Shirley Garrity	Carl Carlson	

## 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	Al Jacobs
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
Lowell McCann	Laura Peters
Al and Kay Schmid	Nancy Hammond

### 2000-01 Supporting Members

Kate Weldon	Jeff and Sharron McDonald
Tom and Anne Clifford	John and Frances Quinn
Sarah and Stu Patterson	Jenny and John Bond
John and Sandra Dagenais	Jim and Eileen Ellis
Nord Nordlinger and Cindy Ziesmer	

### \*\*Answer to Trivia Question\*\*

Erin Hartley was the only player to play in every MSU game this year.

## 2000 Schedule and Results

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

9/1	W	RUTGERS	15-11, 15-7, 15-11	10/13	L	@Wisconsin	9-15, 15-12, 13-15, 6-15
9/2	W	NORTHEASTERN	15-2, 15-3, 15-7	10/14	W	@Northwestern	7-15, 15-10, 15-10, 15-8
9/2	W	EASTERN WASHINGTON	15-5, 15-5, 15-10	10/20	L	MINNESOTA	15-6, 8-15, 11-15, 4-15
9/8	L	UCLA	15-13, 12-15, 11-15, 7-15	10/21	L	IOWA	15-1, 15-12, 10-15, 13-15, 11-15
9/9	L	Nebraska	3-15, 3-15, 4-15	10/27	W	@Indiana	15-5, 15-9, 15-12
9/10	W	Notre Dame	12-15, 15-7, 15-12, 12-15, 15-10	10/28	L	@Penn State	7-15, 5-15, 7-15
9/15	W	Hofstra	15-11, 13-15, 15-5, 15-11	11/3	L	ILLINOIS	6-15 15-4 12-15 15-1 12-15
9/16	W	Georgetown	15-10, 15-1, 15-11	11/4	W	PURDUE	15-6 10-15 15-5 15-6
9/16	W	San Diego	15-10, 15-8, 15-10	11/8	L	@Michigan	13-15, 15-9, 13-15, 15-7, 10-15
9/20	W	MICHIGAN	11-15, 15-11, 15-13, 6-15, 15-5	11/11	W	OHIO STATE	9-15, 15-6, 15-4, 15-12
9/22	L	@Ohio State	15-11, 5-15, 7-15, 11-15	11/17	W	@Iowa	15-10, 18-16, 15-3
9/29	W	@Purdue	15-5, 15-6, 15-8	11/18	L	@Minnesota	13-15, 15-10, 14-16, 8-15
9/30	W	@Illinois	15-2, 4-15, 15-13, 6-15, 15-12	11/24	W	NORTHWESTERN	15-3, 15-11, 15-1
10/6	L	PENN STATE	15-11, 6-15, 10-15, 7-15	11/25	L	WISCONSIN	5-15, 11-15, 12-15
10/7	W	INDIANA	15-3, 15-4, 15-2				
				12/2		Wisconsin-Milwaukee	8:00 pm EST
				12/3		UCLA/Morgan State winner	6:00 pm EST
				12/9-10		NCAA Regionals	
				12/14-16		NCAA Championships in Richmond, Virginia	



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