

The Service Line

Volleyball News from the MSU SideOut Club
Vol. VI No. 5
March 2001

Two Home Spring Tournaments on Tap

In a turn-around from last year's "spring drought", Spartan volleyball will host not one but two home tournaments for 2001. The competitions, to be held on consecutive Saturdays April 7th and 14th, will feature four Big Ten teams as well as a couple of non-conference opponents who were NCAA tournament selections last season.

Play will start both days at 9:00 am, with a lunch break at noon. Afternoon play will run until about 5.

For the April 7th tournament, our guests will be Georgia Tech, Indiana and Michigan. Because there are only four teams, the matches will all consist of three games, with the first two rally-scored to 30 and the third rally-scored to 15. The schedule is as follows:

	Court 1	Court 2
9 am	MSU/Ga. Tech	Indiana/Michigan
10:30 am	MSU/Michigan	Ga. Tech/Indiana
12 noon	lunch break	
1:30 pm	MSU/Indiana	Michigan/Ga. Tech
3 pm	Playoff match	Playoff match

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On April 14th, we will be hosting Bowling Green, Cincinnati, Iowa, Northwood, and Northwestern. Matches will be two games out of three, rally scoring to 30/15.

The schedule for the morning is as follows:

	Court 1	Court 2
9 am	MSU/Bowling Green	Cincinnati/Northw'd
10 am	Northwest'n/Bowling Gr	Iowa/Northwood
11 am	MSU/Northwestern	Cincinnati/Iowa

After a lunch break at about noon, power pools will be formed, with the top three teams from morning play on Court 1 and the others on Court 2, according to the following schedule:

	Court 1	Court 2
1:30 pm	1 vs. 3	4 vs. 6
2:30 pm	2 vs. 3	5 vs. 6
3:30 pm	1 vs. 2	4 vs. 5

The Spartans will also play in two away tournaments this spring. The first will be at Michigan preceding the home stand, on March 17. The spring season will end with a tournament at Illinois on April 21.

Annual Membership Meeting to be Held April 14

All SideOut Club members are invited to attend the annual membership meeting, to be held at Jenison Field House in conjunction with the April 14th tournament. The meeting is scheduled to follow the end of morning play, at approximately noon. Someone at the SideOut Club table will be able to tell you where the meeting is being held.

The agenda will include:

- Introduction of current Board members
- Officers' reports (short and specific)
- Financial report for the 2000-2001 year
- Additional reports related to club activities
- Old business—including follow up of parking discussion
- New business—including 2001 season club events and dates (if available), strategies to increase membership and income, others?
- Election of new Board members
- Open forum for members comments, questions, feedback, suggestions.

Contact Jenny Bond if you want an item added to the agenda (jbond@msu.edu or 517 676-2676).

Lots of Volunteers Needed for April 7 and 14

The coaching staff is counting heavily on volunteers to help run MSU's two spring tournaments. People are needed for a number of tasks, including line crews, ball crews, scoring crews, and general court management. It would be great to have people who will work all day (a lunch break is provided), but, if you can't, a commitment of 3.5 hours for either the morning or the afternoon would also be helpful. This is a rare opportunity to watch college volleyball action from only a few feet away. Bring some non-Club members to volunteer with you, so they can see what a great sport this is! To sign up, contact Jim Ellis at jimandeileenellis@prodigy.net or 323-3566.

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Four Recruits Announced; Another Expected in April

MSU has announced four new players who will be joining the volleyball team in the fall.

Two of them—6-0 **Kim Schram** and 5-11 **Diana Steplyk**—are outside hitters. Kim is a three-sport MVP in volleyball, basketball and track from London, Ontario, and is a member of the Canadian Junior National Team. She is a dual citizen of Canada and the United States, and the third generation in her family to attend Michigan State.

Diana, like many previous Spartans, comes from the Chicago area (Libertyville), and plays for the Sports Performance club team. She won all-state honors in volleyball in both 1999 and 2000, and was also a standout in basketball.

Megan Wallin is the 6-2 middle hitter we told you all about in November. Since then, her Cardinal Moody High School team finished second in the Florida state championships.

Mickey Davis is a 5-10 setter from Notre Dame Academy in Villa Hills, Ky. She was named to Volleyball's Fab 50 list of top recruits this year.

More Expected

All of these recruits were announced in November due to a change in the NCAA signing period for volleyball. Prior to this year, there was only one signing period for volleyball, starting in early February. Under the new rules there is an early signing period (from November 8 to November 15 last year) followed by a late signing period from April 1 to August 1. MSU is expected to gain at least one more recruit during the late signing period this year.

Switch to Rally Scoring, Change in Service Rules Announced

The National Association for Girls and Women in Sport (NAGWS), the official rules maker for NCAA and NAIA women's volleyball, approved several proposed rules changes at its Feb. 9-11 meetings in Reston, Va.

The most controversial is a switch to rally scoring. The first four games of a match will be played to 30 points, with the deciding game still played to 15. Games must be won by 2 points. We'll have more about this in the next issue.

Two of the changes will affect the serve. Serves that hit the net on the way over will remain in play, just as occurs in any other play during a rally.

(Unfortunately, this is confusingly being referred to as a "let" serve. In tennis, from which the term was apparently adopted, a let specifically refers to an event which causes the referee to stop play and initiate a replay, not one that allows play to continue.)

Servers will now be allowed only one attempt at service, but will be given eight seconds after the whistle to do this. The previous rule allowed only five seconds, but permitted a second attempt if the server allowed the first toss to fall to the floor. The intent of the previous rule was to allow for an occasional bad toss, just as is done in tennis. Unfortunately, the majority of re-serves in volleyball have been an abuse of the rule, where the player either does not prepare to serve promptly or hasn't gotten a service instruction from her coach yet and just makes a token toss to earn the re-serve.

The change will give the server an extra three seconds to get ready, but won't incur the delays caused when the referee has to whistle a second serve. It will, however, penalize the server who makes an errant toss, because she will have no choice but to attempt to serve it anyway.

NAGWS also approved an experimental rule allowing ball "pursuit". This allows a player to cross the centerline outside the antenna to retrieve a ball. The player must return the ball back into her own court outside the antenna so that a teammate can then hit it over the net. As an experimental rule, it will be used only if both coaches agree to it prior to a match. This rarely happens; last year's experimental rule was the "let" serve, which we never saw used during the season.

The rule changes must be approved by the NCAA Championship Cabinet at their meeting June 25-27, but this approval is pretty much assured.

2001 Season Matches to Remain in Jenison

As we told you last fall, areas of Jenison Field House are scheduled for major renovations, starting as soon as spring semester ends and continuing for over a year. However, it now appears that the volleyball program will be able to play their matches in Jenison in spite of the construction.

It's not clear yet how this will be worked out. Although there may be some inconveniences and compromises, Chuck Erbe feels that the difficulties of arranging practice space elsewhere and playing in the too-large Breslin Center would be worse.

Something New Underfoot

Regardless of where the team plays, the court will have a new look this year, and it's not just for aesthetic reasons. Sport Court will be replacing the court tiles with new ones, due to unexpected wear.

You may have noticed last season that the floor had taken on an uneven appearance, as each of the individual tiles became visibly cupped. This is not supposed to happen, and represented a failure of the backing structure of the tiles, allowing each of them to sag in the center. Since the floor was still under warranty, the company agreed to replace it at no cost. The new tiles have a different backing grid design for longer life.

The deterioration also meant that the floor has not been providing the cushioning it was designed to. Chuck speculated that this might have contributed to what he felt was an unusual number of foot and leg problems experienced by the team recently. The situation is analogous to wearing a pair of athletic shoes that have been overused to the point where the midsoles get compressed and hard.

Even if you weren't aware of the cupped tiles, you'll probably notice the new floor. Chuck decided to take this opportunity to change the color scheme of the court. The new layout will be basically the opposite of the current one, to feature a green playing area surrounded by a gray/silver border.

Team Notes

Unfortunately, much of the news about Spartan players has not been the best recently.

Lucy Lee was seriously injured in a ski accident, and has left school to recuperate. She was hit in the head by a ski lift, resulting in major head trauma.

Amy Sibbersen is not with the team for the spring, and her status for the fall is uncertain. She left MSU early this semester, returning to Nebraska for health reasons.

Naomi Taylor had surgery on her shoulder to remove an internal growth that been causing her pain. She has been rehabbing, but will not play during the spring.

In addition to the annual L&L Classic, MSU will host a **second fall tournament** this season. Coca-Cola has stepped forward as a sponsor for the event, to be held Friday and Saturday, September 7-8. The scheduling that weekend proved difficult, due to an evening football game on Saturday. As a result, the first two matches will be played Friday afternoon, followed by two evening matches. The tournament will conclude with just two matches on Saturday afternoon.

Nike, the current athletic-gear supplier for major MSU sports such as football and basketball, has signed on as the supplier for volleyball as well.

Big Ten Reconsiders Schedules

After several years of talk, 2002 may be the year we see a change in volleyball schedules in the Big Ten.

The current scheduling method is an ingenious one, because it allows everyone to play twice a week even though the conference has eleven teams. However, it also has a few weaknesses, explained below.

The current system designates a different team each year as the "solo" team, and then divides the other ten into five pairs of traveling partners. Each weekend, two of the pairs play against two other pairs. For example, MSU and U-M are traditionally a traveling pair, as are Minnesota and Iowa. On a Friday when MSU travels to Minnesota, U-M will

travel to Iowa. The following night, the teams exchange opponents, with MSU traveling to Iowa and U-M traveling to Minnesota. Since there are four pairs involved in this part of the schedule each week, this accounts for eight matches.

To complete the round-robin pattern of eleven matches per week, there must be three more matches involving the solo team and the other pair of partners. This starts with a midweek match between the two partners. Then on the weekend, the solo team plays against one of these partners on Friday, and against the other partner on Saturday.

This results in everyone playing twice per week. However, the solo team suffers a disadvantage over the course of the season. They play Friday/Saturday matches every single week, whereas the paired teams have two weeks out of ten that they play a Wednesday/Friday or Wednesday/Saturday schedule. Consecutive Friday/Saturday matches are considered more demanding, because of the lack of time to recuperate and prepare between matches. Furthermore, the solo team always plays against an opponent who is rested and prepared, having not played in at least two days. In contrast, the paired teams play eight of their Saturday matches against a team that just played the previous night.

An analysis of the won-loss records of the solo teams for the last ten years shows that they won only 46% of their matches, as compared with the 50% that would be expected. Furthermore, if you look at the won-loss record of each solo team the year before they played solo, they won 62% of their matches. Similarly, the year after they played solo they won 58% of the time. (Thanks to Mark Eastom, a Minnesota fan, for compiling the numbers.) With such a small sample the numbers are hardly conclusive, but they tend to show a disadvantage for the solo team.

2001 is the eleventh year since Penn State became the eleventh member of the Big Ten, so it completes the scheduling cycle with every school having been the solo team once. That makes 2002 the right time to consider different scheduling.

The format most discussed is Wednesday/Saturday, with one home match and one away match each week. The Big 12 volleyball conference has played

this schedule for two seasons now, and, according to Chuck, it has been a big success.

As we told you in the March 1999 issue, the main advantages of Wednesday/Saturday scheduling are players who are better rested and prepared for Saturday matches, no conflicts with Friday-night high school football, and a consistent schedule of one home match per week for fans. Critics cite increased travel costs, and more time away from school for the players.

Daune Koester Replaces Laura Abbinante as Second Assistant

MSU volleyball has said goodbye to another assistant coach, and is welcoming in her replacement.

Laura Abbinante ended a two-year stint as second assistant in December when she got married, went on a honeymoon, and then left for California. Laura's husband is Greg Wakeham, whom she met while they were both playing professional volleyball overseas. Greg is a graduate of University of the Pacific, where he was named a volleyball All-American as well as a GTE academic All-American.

Greg got an offer to join his father's sales company, PIM Sales in Santa Ana, California. Laura says they had a very short time to make the decision, finish their job duties here, pack everything up, and get to California before February 1. They are excited about the new house they purchased in Lake Forest, and Laura is looking into jobs. She reports "I joined the Women's Opportunity Center at UC-Irvine and think that I am going to get into the therapeutic setting, although I have not quite narrowed it down." Greg's company deals with hardware, serving clients such as Home Depot. As a long-time midwesterner, Laura has been enjoying the opportunity to travel with Greg through California, Nevada and Arizona.

On February 5, MSU announced the hiring of Daune Koester as the new second assistant coach. She comes here after two years as the assistant coach at Georgetown University in Washington D.C. where she played a significant role in recruiting.

Daune is unique among recent MSU assistants in that she is the first that Chuck did not know personally

before hiring. He noticed her at the tournament in San Diego last fall, and commented to Todd on her skills. Chuck was specifically looking for someone with previous coaching experience, so he was pleased to see her application when the position opened up.

Daune is a Michigan native, having played volleyball at Redford Thurston High School. She was recruited to go to University of Maryland, where she was team captain for two years and holds the record for most kills in a match.

She found herself facing the Spartans once during her college years, which resulted in an interesting story. In 1995, Maryland played at the MSU Invitational Tournament, drawing Daune's friends and family up from the Detroit area for a rare chance to see her play close to home as a collegian. Daune got out on the floor to warm up and promptly sprained her ankle! Fortunately it wasn't serious, so she was able to play anyway.

After college she played professionally for the Franches-Montagnes Volleyball Program in Switzerland and served as the head coach of their junior team.

Accepting a position in the Big Ten, has given Daune a new goal—to win a championship in a third college conference. She won two Atlantic Coast Conference championships as a player at Maryland, as well as a Big East title while coaching at Georgetown.

President's Corner

by SideOut Club President Jenny Bond

Greetings to all SideOut Club members! I suppose that each of you is missing seeing the MSU volleyball team compete as much as my husband and I are. At least I have three of the current players—Lisa Ashton, Christie Landry and Angela Morley—in the introductory nutrition class I am teaching (with 77 other MSU athletes) in the 875 students I have this semester. Jenny Rood has a class in my building so I have seen her also. This experience reinforces for me the fact that our players are Student-Athletes.

As announced elsewhere in this newsletter, you will have the opportunity to see the team on April 7 and

14 in spring tournaments in Jenison. Please plan to attend and participate in the SideOut Club annual meeting on the 14th. It is an opportunity for you to add your voice on club activities and make suggestions which will help support the volleyball program and increase the fan base. We will only be able to increase our support if we have participation from more of our members-even for a few hours during the year.

If you are interested in running for a position on the Board of Directors, you should contact Ron Springer, Chair of the nominating committee at rspring@ci.east-lansing.mi.us. If you prefer, contact me at 676-2676 and I will forward your name to the committee. Any Board member will be happy to discuss what being on the Board involves. We have streamlined the meetings and have several committees/task forces working on specific activities. Each member is busy so we are working to maximize our efforts and our commitment to the program and the club.



Team members at the banquet hold the check presented by the SideOut Club
Photo: Jack Carmichael

We are proud of what the club has accomplished during this year, including the following:

- sponsorship of a reception after the Green and White game in August
- presentation of a \$4,000 check (shown above) to Coach Erbe for the program at the annual banquet
- maintenance of a SideOut Club web site

- hosting the Meet-the-Team event in August
- 50-50 raffle
- sales table at all games
- court-side seats drawing
- this excellent newsletter edited by Chris Wolf
- volleyball banners on light poles around Jenison
- Young Spartan drawing at home matches
- coach's luncheon before all home games
- other monetary support of the team via the Ralph Young fund
- support of the annual awards banquet, and others.

We have been active! We need your input! Phone or email me with suggestions. Come to the annual meeting. Our team as a nonrevenue generating sport needs us more now than ever. The freshman, especially, will definitely need our support.

Let's get ready to rumble on April 7 and 14!

A Special Opportunity— Mostly Enjoyed

Candid Observations by Jenny Bond

John and I were surprised and pleased to be invited to travel with the team to the Michigan game on Wednesday November 8 last year. There are a limited number of opportunities to do this because of the size of the bus and probably NCAA rules as well. I think that we were included because of our activities and financial contributions supporting the team over several years (actually ever since Courtney DeBolt invited me as her guest to the Favorite Faculty Night when she was a senior).

We met the team at Jenison to board the bus at 11 AM. Team members hurried from class to get on board. Some even studied on the short ride to Ann Arbor. Once at the Michigan facility, team members went through a "walk through" with the second team taking the roles of the Michigan team. It was obvious that some of the team had studied the various situations more than others. We were also made aware again of how critical the assistant coaches are in preparation for games.

Todd had dissected video tapes of Michigan games and knew what to anticipate from each person in each rotation. I cannot imagine the time that takes,

but fortunately he is aided by the video equipment that the SideOut Club is helping to purchase. (This stuff is expensive and Chuck still owes many \$\$\$ for it, plus I am sure parts already require upgrading and maintenance. He will be happy to accept any contributions to help with this system.)

The team's pregame meal was at the Macaroni Grill. I do not know how the team could pack the pasta away before a match; I think that I would be too excited.

However, each person knows that it may be a long time before the next meal comes and that they must eat to have the energy needed to compete. The meal was great and it was good to interact with team and support staff in an informal setting. The Michigan team was finishing its meal in the same area, but for obvious reasons there was little interaction with them.

Back to the gym for the extensive taping of ankles, etc. and preparation for the game. Michigan was in the gym and practiced with confidence. Michigan State went through their practice and warm-up preparations. We were surprised with how much time it takes any team to get ready for a match on the day it is played. We were a bit weary before the game started and the team must have been also. In the end we lost the match. I choose not to go into any of the details related to that.

Needless to say, the team and especially Coach Erbe were upset. I do not know what he said in the locker room, but I know it had to be emotional. I met him in the gym after the team interaction and his question of me related to where his wife Becky was and if she was ok. This reinforced what I already knew—how lonely it is to be a coach at times and how important Mrs. Erbe is to the coach and the MSU volleyball program.

Some of the team members had definitely been crying by the time they returned to the bus for the trip home. The loss was devastating because at the time it threatened an NCAA bid. Except for team members getting subs, chips and beverages (which had previously been ordered and were delivered to the bus), there was little conversation. John and I wanted to say something to the team and coaches, but what could be said?

Our trip ended at Jenison about 11 PM. Our student athletes gathered their gear from the bus driver and left for home. A number had classes the next morning and I am sure that it was a short night for them.

I shall not forget Vicki Basil once again demonstrating that she is a "class act." She has been asked to play a number of roles for the team, and not all of them have been on the court in competition situations. She was the only team member who came back and thanked the bus driver for a safe trip and for helping with the luggage. I know that she will succeed long after she leaves the MSU volleyball program. And after all, isn't that the ultimate purpose of collegiate athletics—to provide our students with unique opportunities to contribute to their success in life.

Thanks, Chuck Erbe for a special trip. You made a good investment as John and I definitely will keep the team and program on our list of things we support—with our time and our dollars.

Live National Broadcasts May Be Closer Than You Think

There's a chance that women's college volleyball will be making a few live appearances on national television this fall. The American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) NCAA Division I coaches have formed a National TV Committee to explore this possibility. Chuck Erbe is the Big Ten representative on the committee.

The committee, chaired by Mary Wise of the University of Florida, is looking for a corporate sponsor to support the broadcast of four live matches. They would most likely be scheduled on Wednesday nights.

Broadcasters insist that matches must fit within a two-hour time slot, so the committee is looking at an experimental format to guarantee this will happen. The last time this was tried was when the Big Ten used a timed format for some televised live matches in 1995 and 1996.

Tentative 2001 Schedule

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

8/25	GREEN & WHITE	6:30 pm	10/19	PENN STATE	7:00 pm
8/31-9/1	L&L/MSU VOLLEYBALL CLASSIC		10/20	OHIO STATE	7:00 pm
	Auburn, Dayton, Denver, Western Michigan		10/24	MICHIGAN	7:00 pm
9/7-8	COCA-COLA/MSU VB INVITATIONAL		10/26	PURDUE	7:00 pm
	Bowling Green, Idaho, Winthrop		11/2	@Iowa	
9/14-15	@South Carolina Tournament		11/3	@Minnesota	
	Jacksonville State, Wake Forest, South Carolina		11/9	NORTHWESTERN	7:00 pm
9/21	@Wisconsin		11/10	WISCONSIN	8:00 pm
9/22	@Northwestern		11/16	@Ohio State	
9/28	MINNESOTA	7:00 pm	11/17	@Penn State	
9/29	IOWA	7:00 pm	11/23	ILLINOIS	7:00 pm
10/3	@Michigan		11/24	INDIANA	8:00 pm
10/6	@Purdue		11/30-12/1	NCAA 1 st & 2 nd round	
10/12	@Indiana		12/6-9	NCAA Regional	
10/13	@Illinois		12/13-15	NCAA Championships in San Diego, CA	



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