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# The Service Line

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Volleyball News from the MSU SideOut

Club

Vol. VII No. 4

December 2001

## Spartans Peaking at the Right Time

What a way to close out the Big Ten season!

It's too bad for the Spartan volleyball team that the conference season isn't divided into halves, because their 9-1 record since October 24 would have tied them with first-place Wisconsin for the second-half championship. The team's improvement from the first half was nothing short of phenomenal. The conference probably doesn't keep track of such things, but it's unlikely that any previous team has gone 4-6 in the first half and 9-1 in the second half.

In the process, the team recorded five upsets, starting with the victory over Michigan in East Lansing, and continuing with a triumph at Minnesota the following week. At the time, these two teams were ahead of MSU both in the Big Ten standings and in the national polls.

Of course, the greatest accomplishment came in the three consecutive matches from November 16 to November 23, when MSU upset three of the top four teams in the conference—Ohio State, Penn State, and Illinois. These three were all nationally ranked, and Illinois was on a hot streak of their own, having won 11 out of their last 13 matches.

The road trip to Ohio State and Penn State has always been considered one of the toughest in the nation. Only three times has any team come back with double victories. MSU was the first to do it, in 1995, and then Illinois accomplished the same feat later the same year. In 2001, the Spartans have done it again!

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### Angela Wins National Honors

One of the highlights of the final two weeks was the selection of Angela Morley as Division I Player of the Week. She had shown signs of greatness in the past, even earning the Big Ten Player of the Week award as a freshman. She had also been one of the conference blocking leaders all this season, but her hitting early in the season was not having much impact. This all changed against Penn State and Ohio State, when she had 31 kills and only two hitting errors in 52 swings.

Chuck Erbe's comment on her award was that "You never know when a player is going to have a breakout performance. A player like Angela has the ability and we provide her everything we can to develop her skills. When everything works the way it's supposed to, the coaches just sit back and enjoy it. Angela is a wonderful young woman, and she told everyone that she



*Nikki Colson watches from a comfortable seat as Angela Morley cuts the ball past an Ohio State blocker. Photo: Al Schmitzer*

considers it a team accomplishment, not an individual one.”

### ★★Spartan Volleyball Trivia Question★★

MSU players have been honored as Division I Player of the Week four times in the past, with three of these awards resulting from an Ohio State/Penn State weekend sweep.

Which Spartan players won the four previous awards? See the answer on page 6.

### Lots of Contributions All Over the Court

Often you would expect a significant turnaround to be a result of some major lineup changes, but that wasn't the case for MSU this year. We told you in the last issue that we could expect to see major improvements in these players from one week to the next, and that's exactly what happened.

Nikki Colson is not only a great setter, but almost immediately stepped up to be the on-court leader the team needed. Chuck just can't say enough about her: "At this stage in her career she is the best setter I have ever coached. Nikki is the complete package."

In the back row, she reacts quickly to opponents' hits, rewarding fans with some amazing digs. Although she's our shortest front-row player, Nikki makes up for it with fabulous blocking form and mechanics.

Of course, everyone recognizes that this was Erin Hartley's year. She led the team in hitting percentage and kills per game, and was second in blocks per game and digs per game. Her swing hitting added excitement to the Spartan's game, since you never knew where

along the net Erin would be attacking next. It was also great to see her rid herself of some of the frustration that was so evident in previous seasons.

We already mentioned Angela and some of her great matches, but let's also note that she finished as the Big Ten blocking leader, averaging 1.68 blocks per game in conference matches.

Jenny Rood probably didn't have as good stats as she would have wanted for the season, showing how hard the transition to the middle position is. One of her best performances actually came in the loss to Ohio State, where she had a double double in kills and digs. She remains a fan favorite and is probably the most animated Spartan on the court.

The left side saw solid performances with two contrasting styles. Kyla Smith matured as a player, with a huge improvement in hitting percentage. She was the team leader in digs per game. Kyla had her match of the season at Iowa where she had a career high of 20 kills, coming rather amazingly in a three-game match and accompanied by a .586 hitting performance.

Kim Schram came in as a freshman with a huge jump and hitting style reminiscent of Jenna Wrobel. She didn't play the back row, but made her mark by edging out Kyla (just barely) for second place in kills per game.

Finally getting to the defensive specialists, we did see some changes as the season went on. In particular, Emmy Miller and Diana Stepyk played bigger roles, stabilizing the Spartan's passing and contributing some exciting digs. Diana led the Spartans with a personal-best 14 digs in the win over Illinois, and even got a kill from the front row after MSU ran out of substitutions. Emily Engel seemed occasionally disappointed with her jump serve, but still had one of the best aces-to-errors ratios on the team, and finished second in the Big Ten in aces per game.

### The X Factor

We can't overlook another important factor. As the team slogan for 1999 told us, "It's all about chemistry." Based on everything we hear from players, parents and coaches, this may be the most unified Spartan team ever. The players have great attitudes about each other and about the game. This has to be a major contributor to the dramatic turnaround, and it makes them a great group to watch. We all wish the team another great three weeks of play this year!

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## The Season Continues in Madison!

As was announced on Monday, MSU will be traveling to Madison, Wisconsin for the first and second rounds of the NCAA tournament. They will meet Notre Dame on Friday at 5 pm, followed by a 7 pm matchup between host Wisconsin and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The two winners will meet Saturday at 7 pm for the second-round match.

The team will be staying at the Best Western Inn-Towner (800 528-1234 or 608 233-8778) where some rooms are being held for MSU fans at \$79 per night.

Notre Dame is ranked number 25 in the country in the final coaches' poll of the season, while MSU is ranked number 20. The Irish won the Big East Conference for the sixth time in seven years, boasting a 12-0 conference record. They played a very tough non-conference schedule, including Nebraska, Florida, Pepperdine, UCLA and Northern Iowa, but they never defeated a nationally-ranked opponent. The only common opponent between MSU and Notre Dame in 2001 was Idaho. The Spartans defeated the Vandals 3-0, but the following weekend Notre Dame needed four games to beat them.

Notre Dame senior middle blocker Malinda Goralski was named Big East Player of the Year, and senior opposite Kristy Kreher, from Birmingham, Michigan, was named to the all-conference first team. Sophomore setter Kristen Kinder was named Big East Setter of the Year. Her twin sister Jessica also plays for the Irish.

Notre Dame head coach Debbie Brown won honors as Big East Coach of the Year for 2001. Brown played for Chuck Erbe at USC, and was a member of the undefeated national championship team of 1977, often referred to as the best college team of all time.

## President's Corner

*by SideOut Club President Jenny Bond*

Wow! What a time to be a Spartan Volleyball booster! The bus trip to Ohio State was great. If you listened carefully to the ESPN broadcast, you could hear the MSU fans. The team knew we were there. They thanked us enthusiastically after the match. What a classy group of young women.

Just finished the banquet a few hours ago. The SOC

was in charge of arrangements, a significant undertaking. The team and fans appreciated our efforts tremendously. It was good to see such a large and enthusiastic crowd. I was pleased that SOC could present a \$7,000 check to Chuck for the program. That is 175% of the 2000 contribution and represents much hard work. Thanks to all of you who have made this possible by paying your dues, buying SOC merchandise and 50/50 tickets and your donations. The dedicated SOC Board has been phenomenal—Julie Carmichael, Ron Springer, Jim Ellis, Kay Schmid, Kathy Lovell, Jim Constant, Dennis Eagle, Bob Potter, Dave Pike and Dave Martz.

As you may know if you were at the match, Chuck had career win number 500 on November 23, 2001. SOC presented him with a limited edition (1 in 500) model for his train layout. He has been most appreciative of the group's support.

At the recent mandatory compliance meeting for all booster groups on campus, this newsletter was cited as the model for quality and coverage. We congratulate Chris Wolf on his continued efforts to keep all of us informed. I have requested that he start signing his lead articles so you can recognize his efforts.

The bus trip to Ohio State was a revenue neutral one financially as a result of a contribution of almost \$200 by an anonymous donor. Thank you, Anonymous!

The coach's luncheons have been successful and have attracted new participants this year. Diana Steplyk's parents attended the last one. Her father commented that he had no idea the SOC did so many things until this event.

The SOC Board has identified a number of concerns which will be addressed in the future. These include: lack of coverage of MSU volleyball by the Lansing State Journal, need for more sponsors to support the program, and evaluation of the club's activities. We welcome your suggestions on these issues and other items you think should be addressed. Just contact me—email is easiest but phone and US mail work too.

Lisa Ashton, Erin Hartley and Maren Witzel in their farewell speeches today demonstrated what MSU volleyball is all about—maximizing physical and mental volleyball skills, coping with adversity, maturing and developing and caring for each other and the world around them. They will continue to make valuable contributions after graduation which will be tempered by their experience with the MSU volleyball

program—coaches, team and fans. You have been a part of that. Give yourself a pat on the back!

A number of our volleyball alums will be playing in the new professional league which includes Grand Rapids and starts in early February. Once we have detailed information, SOC will consider the feasibility of scheduling a bus trip to GR for a match when Courtney DeBolt, Val Sterk, Jenna Wrobel and Jenny Whitehead will be playing. You may not have to wait until the MSU spring tournaments to get your volleyball "fix." The SOC email list will be used as the major communication link for this. If you have email and have not received messages from me within the last two weeks, we do not have your correct address. Please, email me at [jbond@msu.edu](mailto:jbond@msu.edu) to get on the list.

Thank you for your support this season.

## Big Ten Final Results

The top of the Big Ten went pretty much as expected this year, with the main surprise being that Penn State lost six matches and thus finished lower than many had predicted. In spite of this, they were the only team to defeat conference leader Wisconsin.

The biggest improvement belonged to Illinois, who finished at 13-7 after last year's dismal 4-16 record. Their fourth place finish brought them back to where they finished 1999, after a surprising fall to tenth in 2000. On the other side of the ledger, Minnesota plummeted from second in 2000 to sixth this year, while Iowa dropped from sixth to tenth.

2001 Finish	School	Big 10	Overall	Preseason Poll	2000 Finish
1	Wisconsin	19-1	25-3	2	1
2	Ohio State	17-3	25-3	3	4
3	Penn State	14-6	21-7	1	3
4	<b>MSU</b>	13-7	20-7	5	5
-	Illinois	13-7	20-8	7	10
6	Minnesota	10-10	18-12	4	2
7	Michigan	9-11	13-14	6	7
8	Northwestern	6-14	10-17	11	11
9	Indiana	5-15	8-20	8	8
10	Iowa	3-17	6-23	10	6
11	Purdue	1-19	4-25	9	9

## 2001 Volleyball Banquet

Chuck Erbe was unusually quiet for the 2001 Volleyball Banquet, but it wasn't really for lack of anything to say. He had unfortunately lost his voice earlier in the week, and so turned all the vocal duties over to his assistants. (Now you why Todd and Daune did all of the coaching for the Indiana match, while Chuck merely observed.)

There was a large crowd to hear the team's thoughts and learn who were this year's award recipients. Special guests Val Sterk and Courtney DeBolt were appropriate choices to present the Andrea Deluca Spirit Award, since both of them played with Andrea. The award went to Nikki Colson, to whom Courtney put a challenge, telling the audience "I'm going to put a little pressure on her now. I want to see her become the next setter to take the Spartans to the Final Four and then win the championship!"

The Captain's Award winner was presented by Todd Dagenais to Lisa Ashton. Todd credited Lisa for "making everyone around her better, and thus being personally responsible for a lot of our recent success."

The SideOut Club Service Award was given posthumously to Norma Guyer, a huge supporter of Spartan volleyball. In accepting it, her husband Gordon Guyer (a former president of MSU) said he most wanted to express Norma's feeling that "These young ladies are the class of the University."

Then, for the first time ever, three awards went to a single player. Erin Hartley was named as the choice for Top GPA, Best Hitting Efficiency, and Most Valuable Player. Erin was quick to give Nikki Colson's setting credit for her improved hitting. She also spoke about difficulties she had in her first two years, and thanked her teammates for bringing back her love of the game.

Erin's hitting award is notable because she is MSU's first outside hitter to win this one. All the prior winners have been middle hitters, who traditionally have higher hitting percentages. Erin's 2001 mark of .335 is really quite remarkable when you know that she ended her freshman year hitting only .146!

Finally, for the second year in a row Lisa Ashton got the biggest laugh from the crowd. It was the kind of remark that you just had to be there for, so we'll tell you only that it had to do with headbands and hair ribbons.

## 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
Sarah and Stu Patterson	

### 2001-02 Supporting Members

Kate Weldon	Nona and James Anderson
Greg and Beth Langston	Fran and Jerry Rood
Bob and Carolyn Boger	Jenny and John Bond
Rick Richardson	Jim and Eileen Ellis

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 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. Especially notable is Jim Ellis, who coordinates the volunteers and fills in repeatedly wherever help is needed. We should also single out our number one volunteer, Shirley Garrity, who worked at nearly every match.

Amy Eagle	Chris Wolf	Chuck Riley
Joy Jacobs	Eileen Ellis	Marlene Wesselman
Paul Miller	Deb Miller	Shirley Garrity
Jim Pifer	Ann Purvis	Cathy Caswell
Betsy Pifer	Diana Priebe	

## Erin Hartley on All Big Ten Team

The Big Ten coaches finally saw Erin Hartley live up to her potential this year, and rewarded her by selecting her as the only Spartan on the 2001 All Big Ten Team. In both 1999 and 2000, Erin was a pre-season all-conference selection, but failed to make the season-ending team. This year her performance on the court was so dominant that she was a unanimous choice.

In addition, Nikki Colson and Angela Morley were honorable mention selections, and Kim Schram was chosen for the all-freshman team.

The first team was heavily weighted with seniors this year, with exactly one freshman, one sophomore and one junior included. Lizzy Fitzgerald could be seen as a slight (but deserved) surprise as player of the year, since she has often been eclipsed by her more spectacular teammate Sherisa Livingston. The conference also created a new award this year, for best defensive player; it's good to see them explicitly acknowledging all aspects of the game.

### 2001 All-Big-Ten Volleyball Team

Lisa Argabright, Illinois So MB/OH  
 Lindsey Berg, Minnesota\* Sr S  
 Anne Botica, Ohio State Sr OH  
 Lizzy Fitzgerald, Wisconsin\* Sr S  
 Shadia Haddad, Illinois Sr OH  
 Stephanie Hagen, Minnesota Sr MB  
**Erin Hartley, Michigan State\* Sr OH**  
 Stacey Gordon, Ohio State Fr OH  
 Sherisa Livingston, Wisconsin\* Sr MB  
 Sara Meyermann, Iowa\* Sr OH  
 Katie Schumacher, Penn State\* Sr OH  
 Katie Virtue, Ohio State Jr S

\*unanimous selection

Honorable Mention: **Nikki Colson, Michigan State**; Erika Lange, Northwestern; Mishka Levy, Penn State; Erin Moore, Michigan; **Angela Morley, Michigan State**; Suzie Stiling, Ohio State; Erin Byrd, Wisconsin

### All Freshman Team

Christina Archibald, Indiana OH  
 Jennifer Gandolph, Michigan\* OH  
 Stacey Gordon, Ohio State\* OH  
 Jill Odenthal, Wisconsin OH/S  
 Drew Robertson, Northwestern S  
**Kim Schram, Michigan State OH**

**Player of the Year:** Lizzy Fitzgerald, Wisconsin

**Defensive Player of the Year:** Shadia Haddad, Illinois

**Freshman of the Year:** Stacey Gordon, Ohio State \*

**Coach of the Year:** Coaches' selection—Don Hardin, Illinois; Media selection—Pete Waite, Wisconsin.

## NCAA Tournament Changes

The NCAA made some significant changes in their bracketing procedures this season "in order to minimize air travel, and mitigate risk, inconvenience and travel delays to the greatest extent possible."

There were two very visible consequences of this. For the first time, many of the top sixteen seeds are not hosting the opening round matches. Six of these are West Coast teams who are each bracketed with teams from the eastern half of the country. Instead of making three teams fly across the country, the matches will be held at one of the lower-ranked schools so that only one team has to travel such a large distance. A typical example of this is number seven seed Pepperdine who will travel to North Carolina, for a field that also includes South Carolina and Georgia Southern.

Second, many regular-season conference foes now have the potential to play each other in the second round. Previously, the selection committee had a policy that conference foes could not meet before the round of 16. It was that change that allowed the Spartans to wind up at Madison this weekend.

The full tournament bracket is shown on page 7.

## A Great Friday in Columbus!

The SideOut Club couldn't have picked a better time and destination for a road trip, as they went to Ohio State on November 16. This is Julie Carmichael's report on a fantastic trip:

We had perfect weather as we set off at 12:15PM from the Park and Ride lot at exit 110 in Okemos. Everyone settled in to the comfortable seats and read, slept or visited. We arrived punctually at 5PM at St. John Arena. The group of 25 boosters headed off to the nearby restaurants for a relaxing dinner. The match was fantastic for the MSU fans present. The team played consistently and with full effort to win. The boosters could not believe their luck to see a nationally televised match live that was so exciting. Everyone present could see that the MSU team was dominating the net and digging up impossible balls. I believe we were louder than the 3,000 or so OSU fans.

After the victory we collected to congratulate the team and wish them well at Penn State the next night. Apparently everyone listened because the team was very successful at Happy Valley. What an amazing weekend for MSU fans! If you have any doubt that the bus trips are worthwhile, just ask anyone who went to Columbus on Nov. 16th. Hope you can join us next year at an away match. The team really appreciates the effort.

### ★★Answer to Trivia Question★★

Dana Cooke was our first Division I Player of the Week in 1995, after double victories on the road trip to PSU and OSU. Only four weeks later Val Sterk won when we defeated PSU and OSU in East Lansing. We defeated the same two opponents on their next visit to East Lansing in 1996, and Jenna Wrobel won the national honor. Jenna repeated the feat in 1998 with an upset of Wisconsin.



The Spartan volleyball rock band, with their souvenir red foam guitars, pose with SideOut Club members in Columbus.

**\*Long Beach St.(1)**

San Diego State

UCSB

San Diego

DePaul

Minnesota

Northern Illinois

**\*Northern Iowa (16)**

**Hawai'i (9)**

\*Washington State

Eastern Washington

Oregon State

\*Penn State

Fairfield

Pennsylvania

**UCLA (8)**

**Arizona (5)**

Eastern Illinois

Missouri

\*Illinois

\*Louisville

Georgia Tech

Alabama A&M

**Pacific (12)**

**\*Ohio State (13)**

Robert Morris

Cincinnati

Xavier

\*Duke

William and Mary

Liberty

**USC (4)**

**\*Stanford (3)**

Nevada

San Jose State

Santa Clara

Utah State

Brigham Young

Texas Tech

**\*Utah (14)**

**\*Texas A&M (11)**

Texas-Arlington

Northeastern

Texas

Notre Dame

Michigan State

Wisconsin-Milwaukee

**\*Wisconsin (6)**

**Pepperdine (7)**

Georgia Southern

\*North Carolina

South Carolina

Florida International

Central Florida

Florida A&M

**\*Florida (10)**

**\*Colorado St. (15)**

Baylor

Colorado

American

\*Kansas State

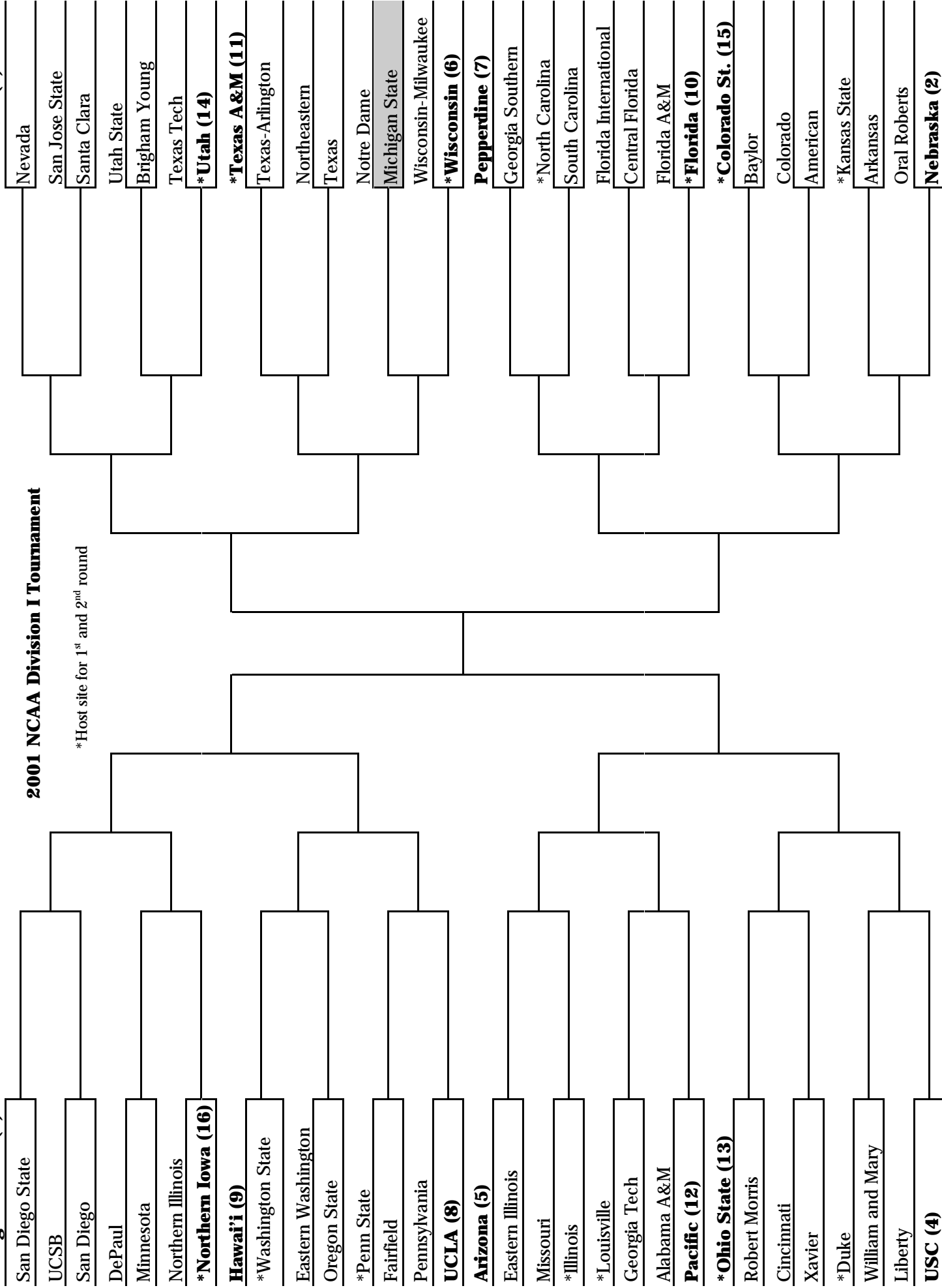
Arkansas

Oral Roberts

**Nebraska (2)**

**2001 NCAA Division I Tournament**

\*Host site for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> round



## 2001 Schedule and Results

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

8/31	W	Auburn	30-19, 21-30, 30-25, 30-22	10/12	W	Indiana	30-16, 26-30, 30-28, 30-20
	W	Dayton	33-31, 27-30, 30-25, 30-23	10/13	L	Illinois	27-30, 26-30, 22-30
9/1	W	Denver	30-23, 28-30, 30-19, 30-19	10/19	L	PENN STATE	23-30, 24-30, 25-30
	W	Western Michigan	29-31, 30-28, 30-19, 30-20	10/20	L	OHIO STATE	24-30, 30-24, 18-30, 26-30
9/7	W	Winthrop	30-23, 27-30, 30-21, 30-22	10/24	W	MICHIGAN	30-18, 30-15, 19-30, 30-22
	W	Idaho	30-17, 30-28, 30-14	10/26	W	PURDUE	30-22, 30-19, 32-30
9/8	W	Bowling Green	30-25, 30-26, 30-24	10/29	—	@Florida	cancelled
9/14	—	Wake Forest	cancelled	11/2	W	Iowa	30-22, 30-16, 30-22
	—	South Carolina	cancelled	11/3	W	Minnesota	30-24, 30-23, 30-21
9/15	—	Jacksonville State	cancelled	11/9	W	NORTHWESTERN	30-26, 30-21, 26-30, 30-20
9/21	L	Wisconsin	24-30, 18-30, 30-25, 20-30	11/10	L	WISCONSIN	30-25, 30-25, 30-20
9/22	L	Northwestern	24-30, 30-32, 20-30	11/16	W	Ohio State	30-25, 24-30, 30-23, 30-24
9/28	W	MINNESOTA	30-17, 30-25, 30-27	11/17	W	Penn State	30-21, 32-30, 28-30, 30-28
9/29	W	IOWA	30-18, 30-16, 26-30, 30-28	11/23	W	ILLINOIS	30-24, 34-32, 30-27
10/3	L	Michigan	30-19, 30-28, 26-30, 23-30, 9-15	11/24	W	INDIANA	30-22, 23-30, 30-25, 30-24
10/6	W	Purdue	29-31, 30-25, 31-29, 30-25	11/30		Notre Dame	5:00 pm CST
				12/1		Wisconsin or Wisconsin/Milwaukee	7:00 pm CST
				12/6-9		NCAA Regional	
				12/13-15		NCAA Championships in San Diego, CA	

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