
The Service Line

Volleyball News from the MSU SideOut Club
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Dagenais Named Associate Coach

MSU volleyball fans were delighted to hear that Todd Dagenais was promoted to associate head coach in February. Todd's hard work and especially his on-court enthusiasm have made him a fan favorite since he arrived in 1997.

His first stint as a Spartan consisted of one year as volunteer assistant coach, before going to Northern Michigan as an assistant coach for the 1998 season. He returned to MSU in 1999 following the departure of Laura Farina. While at MSU, he has also spent considerable time in the off season working with the U.S. national program in various capacities.

Todd is extremely busy this time of year as the Spartans' recruiting coordinator, while in practice he works primarily with the team's hitters.

Two other Big Ten programs currently have associate coaches. In 2001, Leisa Rosen was promoted to associate head coach at Michigan after two years as assistant to her husband Mark Rosen. In 2002, his third year at Minnesota, Brian Heffernan was promoted to associate head coach.

Team Notes

Chuck Erbe reports that **Sara Villwock** is completely recovered from her foot problems, and was granted red-shirt status for 2002, so has two more years of eligibility.

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Todd Dagenais on the court

Photo: Al Schmitzer

Brooke Langston had relatively minor surgery to remove a bone chip, and is recovering well.

Our 2002 Spartans set a Big Ten volleyball record by placing **eleven student-athletes** on the Academic All-Big-Ten Team. In addition, a team GPA above 3.3 made the Spartans one of 47 Division I volleyball teams to receive the Academic Excellence Award from the American Volleyball Coaches Association. MSU, Stanford and Nebraska were the only teams in the NCAA Sweet 16 to receive the coaches association's highest academic honor.

Capping off the academic awards, freshman **Kristy Snell** was named MSU's Freshman Student-Athlete of the Year for her 4.0 GPA fall semester as well as her community service. Kristy is a member of the Honors College, majoring in biochemistry in preparation for a career in medicine. Last year Diana Steplyk won this same award.

Schedule Notes

For the third time in four years, there will be no tournaments in Jenison this spring. Chuck says that the benefits of being at home are usually not worth the hassles of being the host. Traveling gives the team a better chance to play against a variety of competitive teams.

The closest to home the Spartans will play is Kalamazoo, when they travel to Western Michigan on March 22. March 29 will see the team repeat their 2002 trip to Arizona, and April 5 will take them to Chicago. Two weeks later, they will finish the spring season with a competition at Illinois.

The fall schedule (see page 6) also brings us no home tournaments this year, due primarily to the difficulty of scheduling volleyball against the home football game on Labor Day weekend. There will be one home pre-conference match, against Ball State, the week before the Big Ten opener.

Match starting times for the fall vary widely, with four scheduled for 7 pm, four at 7:30 and three at 8. Fans will have to remember to check the schedule carefully to make sure they get to Jenison on time!

Coaching Changes

Purdue has hired Dave Shondell to be the fourth head coach in the history of their volleyball program.

Shondell is an Indiana native and the longtime coach of the Asics Munciana Volleyball Club and Muncie Central High School. He led the Muncie Central team to four state titles, including the 2002 championship. His club teams have had similar success, with Munciana honored for the best overall performance by a club for 12 consecutive years.

Shondell is the son of Don Shondell, the legendary men's coach at Ball State University. Dave played volleyball for his father on a team that included Pete Waite, the current women's coach at Wisconsin. He has two brothers who coach high school volleyball, and hopes to bring one of them on board as an assistant. He has already hired Kathy Jewell as an assistant coach. Jewell was an assistant at Central Michigan for the last three years, and played at Northern Michigan.

Jeff Hulsmeyer, who had coached the Boilermakers for four seasons, was let go in December. Purdue will honor the remaining two years on his contract.

In other news, former U-of-M volleyball coach Greg Giovanazzi was named head coach at the University of Maryland Baltimore County. In 2002, he was a volunteer assistant coach for the Retrievers, who play in the Northeast Conference of Division I.

President's Corner

by SideOut Club President Jenny Bond

Have you been bored or depressed? It is not the weather! The solution is not medication, physical therapy or an herbal remedy. You are just suffering from Spartan volleyball withdrawal. An MRI or CAT scan will not diagnose this condition. The problem: We have not seen our Spartan volleyball team play for more than three months. Fortunately things are looking up for all of us with spring tournaments scheduled. The team is practicing at 6 AM daily during the week and at 9AM on Saturday. Can you imagine facing the Erbe drills at 6 AM, the ones we have heard the seniors "fondly" discuss at the year end banquet. Then demanding practices are followed by classes—they are student athletes.

Are they ever STUDENT ATHLETES!!! Eleven of our Spartans were named to the Academic All Big Ten Team for Fall 2002. To be eligible for this

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selection, student athletes must be letter winners in at least their second academic year at their institution and carry a career grade-point average (GPA) of 3.0/4.0 scale or better. Marley Bellwood, Mickey Davis, Emily Engel, Stephanie Knopp, Michelle Kopka, Brooke Langston, Angela Morley, Jenny Rood, Kim Schram, Diana Steplyk and Megan Wallin made the team—and made us very proud. This means that all seven of the freshmen who entered MSU in 2001 received this award! Our freshman class of 2002, Kristy Snell, Caroline Belich and Courtney Williams, met the GPA criteria for this award, but of course were not in their second academic year. We congratulate the coaches on their excellent recruiting efforts. We congratulate the team on a job well done—on and off the court. Awesome is the best term I can think of to describe the team as they juggle the demands of their sport, academics and personal life.

Michelle Kopka received special recognition as she was one of only 7 Big Ten Athletes to have a 4.0 GPA Fall Semester. One other volleyball player, Kathleen Bazzetta a sophomore in Finance at Illinois was in this distinguished group. Michelle is a premedical major.

The team was recognized at the Minnesota-MSU men's basketball game for their academic and athletic efforts. Of course, we SideOut Club members have known for some time how talented and hardworking and special these young women are. Makes it really easy for us to support them in all the ways we do.

It has been good to see many of the loyal SOC members at the women's basketball games this season. One of the nice things about being active in the club is getting to know some interesting people. Thought you might like to know what three of our members have been doing. I did not get their permission to do this and may embarrass them, but ... Dennis Eagle, who is always behind the SOC merchandise table with Jim Constandt, is an accomplished baritone who had a special concert in January in Lansing and also sings in The Chorale Union. His day job is with the State of Michigan. Peter Morris, another active SOC member, has just published his second book, *Baseball Fever: Early Baseball in Michigan*. It is already available on amazon.com and is to hit the local bookstores soon.

He is lined up to do a number of book signings for Borders' stores all over the state. Finally, John Bond, was quoted in the Wall Street Journal in a front page article on February 21. I never thought that I would be married to anyone who received that kind of press. If you know of others who have done interesting things, let me know.

Congratulations are in order for Todd Dagenais on two counts. He has been named as Associate Head Coach, a well deserved promotion. He became officially engaged to Katie Mitzner, who is a news reporter for WJRT TV in Flint. A June 2004 wedding is planned. Like the team, he has been busy on and off the court.

As always, remember that the SOC Board is looking for your suggestions for future activities, etc. Please email me at jbond@msu.edu or phone at 517-676-2676 with them. Also, please keep us updated with your correct email address Email me at jbond@msu.edu with any changes.

Thanks again for your past support of MSU volleyball via your support of the SOC. Again this year we have a very special team who are ready to go after their "Sweet 16" finish last year—losing to the eventual National Champions. We have hardworking and competent coaches. We also have a budget shortfall at MSU. That means that the SOC support will be even more important this year as Chuck continues to get the team the things they need to make this a very competitive program—and one with tradition and class. You do not want to miss out on the opportunity to support—with your financial resources, time and caring—this very special group of young women in a very special university.

So, get your volleyball shirts back out—hope to see you at one of the Spring tournaments! Go State!

Four New Faces for Fall

MSU volleyball has announced two recruits for fall 2003, and two more are expected, according to richkern.com. First announced, in the early signing period, were middle blockers Andrea Hansen and Jessica Hohl.

Hansen is 6-2, from Andover, Minnesota, and led her high school team to the state semifinals this year.

She was an honorable mention all-state selection and was named to the all-state academic team.

Hohl was named #73 among the top 100 players of the class of 2003 by the Student Sports magazine (www.studentsports.com). She is a six-footer from Waterville, Ohio, who played for the Toledo Volleyball Club. Her high school play made her a first-team all-state selection.

Also expected to join the Spartans is Katie Johnson, a 6-3 middle blocker from Brooklyn, Michigan. She played volleyball for the Kalamazoo Elite club team, and also lettered in basketball, track and cross country. Coming in as a defensive specialist is Miken Trogdon, from Wheaton, Illinois. Her St. Francis team (the Spartans!) won the Illinois state championship in 2002

NCAA Selects Regional Sites

The NCAA volleyball committee has announced that beginning in 2003 the committee will choose the sites for the four championship tournament regional competitions prior to the start of the season. Previously, only the site for the national semi-finals and final has been predetermined.

For 2003, the four sites chosen are the University of Florida, the University of Hawai'i, Long Beach State University, and the University of Nebraska.

According to Lisa Love, committee chair and senior associate athletics director at the University of Southern California, the primary benefits include "growing the sport" and "giving regional hosts more time to prepare for the competitions".

"The committee believes that moving to pre-determined regional sites (as opposed to the old three-day-notice format) will facilitate that goal by putting these four highly competitive tournaments in front of larger audiences," said committee chair Love. "Florida, Hawaii, Long Beach State and Nebraska have a history of successful hosting and boast great potential in raising the attendance standards."

In theory this move will allow the four institutions to sell advance tickets throughout the season, and give fans additional time to plan travel to a chosen site. However, the fans who are most likely to travel to a

regional are the ones from top-25 programs, and they certainly aren't going to make plans for a specific regional until they know where their own team will play. For example, last year there was absolutely no way MSU fans could have known during the season that the Spartans would be placed in the West region. Even when that was announced at the start of the tournament, it's unlikely that any would have committed to a trip to Santa Barbara until after MSU had earned the regional berth by winning the first two rounds.

Love said that in all likelihood, the host teams would play in their own region. This will tend to shift the balance of power towards those lucky enough to be chosen as the regional sites, and diminish the benefit of earning a high seed. For example, Nebraska is likely to benefit from this in 2003. They are not expected to be a top-4 seed, so one or more higher-seeded teams will have to come to Lincoln to play the Huskers as a home team for the regional.

Nebraska coach John Cook was clearly pleased that the Huskers will host. "We'll take our chances to stay at home whenever we can," Cook said. "For next year's team that won't be as experienced, it should be a great advantage."

Of course, there's always the possibility that one of these four teams could fail to qualify for the regional, leaving a site with no home team to draw the crowds. This could cause attendance to plummet. It may be that the committee doesn't mind taking that risk. The long-term goal could be to switch volleyball to completely neutral sites, and this year's change could start to give us some idea of how well that might work.

Minor Rules Changes for 2003

The NCAA Women's Volleyball Rules Committee chose to do only a little fine-tuning to the rules for 2003, adopting only two changes to play that might be noticeable to fans.

The pursuit rule was revised to prohibit a player from traveling under the net in order to pursue a ball. This change was based on concerns for player safety.

In contrast, players will be allowed more leeway to cross the center line while not involved in play of the

ball. Now any part of the body will be allowed to contact the opponent's court as long as there is no interference with opponents and some part of the player remains on or over her own court.

The committee also asked coaches to experiment during spring competition with allowing the libero to serve in one designated rotation. This rule would not be used during the regular season until at least 2004.

The 2003 rules will also address expected crowd conduct in more detail than in the past. This is in line with the NCAA's renewed concern about fan behavior, as shown by their sponsorship of an all-sport "sportsmanship summit" in February. This meeting, held in Dallas, was attended by over 100 leaders in higher education, intercollegiate athletics, city government, news media, and law enforcement.

While incidents of violence, property destruction, harassment and other unsportsmanlike behavior have been most prominent in football and basketball, there are indications that the same mentality is spreading to other sports.

The rules for volleyball will emphasize that the referee can penalize the home team or default the match if the event administration does not act to correct problems caused by fans. Some of the examples of prohibited behaviors include use of vulgarities, racial or gender-related statements, and physical intimidation.

We all would like to hope that changes like this are unnecessary. Perhaps the simple fact that they are being discussed and publicized will help to avert the need for them. Remember that well-behaved fans can exert peer pressure on others, making it too uncomfortable for them to misbehave.

MSU Attendance Is Up..Or Is It?

MSU volleyball posted an increase of 67% in official attendance for 2002, jumping from 25th in the nation for 2001 to number 12. The average attendance at Jenison was 1,802, the second largest in Spartan history. This was good for fourth place in the Big Ten, behind Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Penn State.

However, if you didn't think you saw any more people in the stands, you may be right. Apparently

MSU changed the way they count attendance this year. In previous years, the official attendance was based on a turnstile count, whereas this year it was based on tickets sold.

If you recall, up until this year faculty, staff and students were admitted free. Since they did not buy tickets, the only way to count everyone was to use the turnstile numbers. Starting in 2002, everyone had to have a ticket to get in, so volleyball attendance could be calculated using the ticket-count method used in other sports.

Why does this make so much difference? To keep admission affordable for faculty, staff and students who attend regularly, MSU offered them a \$10 season pass that covered all home volleyball matches as well as all home women's basketball games. For the purpose of calculating attendance, they treated passes as season tickets, i.e. they counted them as tickets sold for every match, regardless of whether the person came to the match. This produced large discrepancies between the official attendance numbers and the number of people actually sitting in the stands. For example, at the Iowa match, the turnstile count was about 1,300 people, but the official attendance was reported at 2,100.

	Team	Dates	Total	Avg.
1	Hawai'i	20	146,001	7,300
2	Nebraska	14	61,808	4,415
3	Wisconsin	15	54,644	3,643
4	Florida	14	35,281	2,520
5	Minnesota	18	43,310	2,406
6	Penn State	16	36,274	2,267
7	Arizona	13	26,142	2,178
8	Illinois State	15	31,036	2,069
9	Stanford	14	28,500	2,036
10	Long Beach St.	17	33,363	1,936
12	Michigan State	14	25,229	1,802
21	Illinois	12	15,017	1,251

Probably not coincidentally, women's basketball, which made the same ticketing changes as volleyball, reported "an astounding 85% attendance increase" this season. This earned MSU the first-ever Big Ten SuperFan trophy, a promotion designed to boost attendance at women's basketball.

Tentative 2003 Schedule

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

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



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