



# The Service Line

Volleyball News from the MSU SideOut Club  
Vol. X No. 5  
November 2004

## Plan to Attend the 2004 Banquet

By Jenny Bond

This weekend will be our last opportunity to watch the 2004 Spartans play at Jenison and our final chance to watch our three graduating seniors in action – Michaela Kopka, Kim Schram and Diana Steplyk. On the court, the Spartans will do battle with two of the top contenders for the Big Ten title – Penn State on Friday at 7 p.m. and Ohio State on Saturday at 7 p.m. Off the court, there are also some exciting activities planned.

The final coach’s lunch of the season will take place on Saturday, November 27. As with previous lunches, it will take place at Damon’s at 1601 W. Lake Lansing Road (by the 127 exit), beginning promptly at 11:30 a.m. and running until about 1 p.m.

The climax of the weekend will be the annual banquet at Hawk Hollow Golf Course on Sunday, November 28. The reception will begin at noon, with lunch being served at 12:45. Tickets are \$30 for adults and \$15 for children. All SideOut Club members should have already received a mailing about the banquet and tickets will also be available at the SideOut Club table this weekend.

If you haven’t attended a banquet in the past, please strongly consider doing so this year. Chuck Erbe has frequently said that the annual event is one of his proudest moments as a coach, because it gives his seniors a chance to reflect on how far they have come in their four years as Spartan volleyball players. It is also a very special and emotional event for the players; at last year’s

banquet, Stephanie Knopp revealed that she had been thinking about her speech since her freshman year!

The banquet is also a touching moment for fans, because it allows us a glimpse at another side of the young women whose volleyball skills have entertained and amazed us. Please turn out this weekend to honor Michaela, Kim and Diana and all of their teammates for their accomplishments on the court and in the classroom, and to hear these three outstanding senior student-athletes reflect upon what their years as Spartan volleyball players have meant to them.

## Volleyball Tailgaters are Tough!

By Cathy Caswell

The Fifth Annual Volleyball Tailgate on October 23 got off to a wet start, but the dedicated fans arrived and persevered. By putting up a couple of camping-style screen tents, and cleverly arranging trucks, ladders, tarps and tie-downs, the food and drink remained secure and dry. This year’s partyers were fashionably attired in ponchos, rain jackets and wet shoes, but that didn’t stop the attendees from good talk and good eats. A special thanks to those devoted guys who managed to get the grills going despite the drizzle.

Volleyball tailgating started from a great idea by John Ulrich and Dave Birney, who put together the first one five years ago. Together they arranged for tables for food, grills for cooking, contributed food and drink, picked a time and place, and generally got the whole plan moving. Since tailgating is a well-known activity (you set the time and place and everyone shows up with food), it was an immediate success. A big thanks to all you loyal fans who have come out to share the fun through the years.

I’ll never forget the expressions on the faces of a couple of our players at the first tailgate as they were coming across the Jenison south lawn and saw their fans. With big grins, they said, “You’re having a tailgate for Volleyball? That’s so cool!”

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## Meet the Freshmen: Alex Ratcliff

This is the final in our series of profiles of this year's three new additions to the MSU Volleyball team. Alexandria Ratcliff was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, and is the daughter of Lisa Huson. Alex lived in Hawaii for three years, and then began a steady eastward trek. She resided for seven years in two different towns in Kansas, followed by three years in Charleston, Illinois. These moves meant that she had to keep making new friends, and she found that playing sports at local park districts was an excellent way to do so. Volleyball and basketball became her favorites.

When Alex was in eighth grade, she and her mother moved to Champaign, Illinois, where Alex attended Champaign Central High School. At that point, she decided that volleyball was her favorite sport and she gave up basketball in order to be able to play club volleyball. She played for various volleyball clubs, including the Primetime Volleyball Club, the Champaign Juniors and the Illini Elite Volleyball Club, as well as being a three-year letter winner and a co-captain of her high school squad.

When it came time for college, Alex continued her eastward course by selecting Michigan State. She reports that she was especially impressed by the "natural beauty and flow" of a campus that was designed as a natural arboretum, featuring a living laboratory of more than 7,000 different species of trees, shrubs and vines.

Alex is redshirting this season, and head coach Chuck Erbe is pleased by the progress she has made. He reports that she has worked hard to improve her backcourt skills and to make full use of her "excellent athletic skills and explosive jumping ability." This latter talent has turned many heads in practice, and the accompanying photograph shows the difficulties that her vertical extension causes attackers.

While casual observers might assume that leaping is simply an innate skill, that isn't entirely the case. Just as the natural beauty of the campus that appealed to her so much has been enhanced by skillful design and cultivation, Alex has worked hard to cultivate her natural athleticism. During

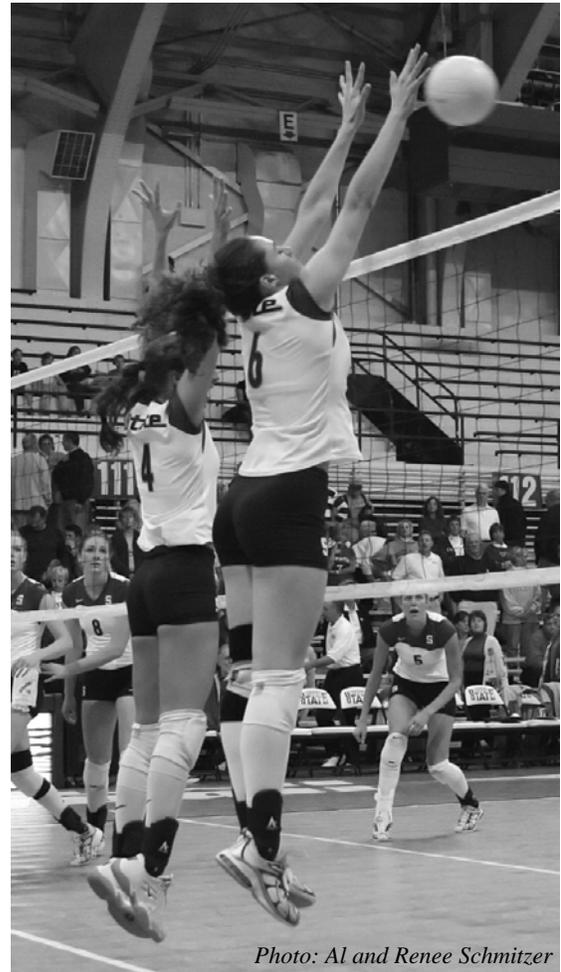


Photo: Al and Renee Schmitzer

high school, she worked with a personal trainer and a training tool called a VertiMax, which she compares to "standing on a box and doing bungee jumps." The result was improved jumping technique and a strengthening of the critical lower-body muscles.

Spartan fans will have to wait until next season to see the benefits of all that hard work in intervarsity competition, but in the meantime Alex is taking full advantage of her redshirt season. Her favorite class has been a course entitled "Power, Authority and Exchange," which she enjoys because its multidisciplinary approach enables it to explore many different academic fields and yet always return to these three recurring themes. She has also made a smooth transition to the college experience, and says that bonding with her teammates has been especially rewarding.

Those teammates are looking forward to next season when Alex Ratcliff will have the opportunity to pose the same problems for opponents that she now does in practice. Alex, however, is a patient young woman. When I asked her to sum up what she has learned during her first year at Michigan State, she replied thoughtfully, "You can always get better; there's always room for improvement." That mature outlook will hold her in good stead in the years to come.

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### The Service Line

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## Spartan Profile: Michaela Kopka

A Big Ten volleyball match is a pressure-packed environment, with two or more hours of action suddenly being reduced to joy or sorrow. It's hard for anyone in such a situation to maintain an even keel, especially a student-athlete who may at the same time be dealing with exams, injuries, and all the growth that the college years bring. For Michaela Kopka, however, it's not really all that hard to keep volleyball in perspective.

Michaela was born in Prague to a family of accomplishment in both athletics and academics. Her father, Jiri, worked as a ski instructor and was a pioneer in introducing and popularizing the sport of wind surfing. Her maternal grandmother played for the Czech national teams in both basketball and volleyball, but encouraged Michaela's mother, Dana, to concentrate on academics, and Dana became a doctor.

Czechoslovakia was still under communist rule and when Michaela was five, her parents made the decision to defect from their homeland. Having received permission to leave the country on a skiing vacation, they packed minimally to avoid suspicion of their actual intentions. Then they stowed Michaela and her sister Petra under the car seat with instructions to remain very silent.

The two young girls duly stayed quiet as their parents passed through the checkpoint to freedom in Austria. Michaela now had to adapt to life without her friends and grandparents in a new country with a different culture and language. At the time, however, none of these dislocations troubled her as much as learning that, in the hurry, her favorite stuffed animal had been left behind in Prague!

The Kopkas settled in the small village of Fladnitz, Austria, and spent the next two years there. Michaela has dim but fond memories of attending school and learning German, running around among the cows with her playmates, and being fascinated by the sight of people wearing lederhosen.

When Michaela was seven, she was uprooted again as the family moved to Newfoundland, the northernmost of Canada's Maritime Provinces. The Kopkas were amazed and dismayed when it snowed there that June, and soon relocated to Toronto. By now, Michaela and her sister were accustomed to upheaval but even so this latest move brought new challenges. Michaela picked up English quickly but found to her surprise that the new words replaced the German ones in her mind and she can no longer recall any German. She discovered that her clothes and hairstyle also attracted attention. Even her name proved

difficult to her new friends, and she soon became known as Michelle and now is comfortable with either name.

The Kopkas spent their first few years in Toronto in an inner-city neighborhood as Michaela's father learned English and her mother redid parts of her education and licensing in order to practice medicine in Canada. With many of her school-mates being immigrants from India, Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, Michaela's experience was further broadened. She had never even seen a Black face during her years in Europe, but soon had friends who represented a wide mosaic of backgrounds and cultures.

Her parents worked hard to adjust to their new surroundings and the family eventually settled in suburban Scarborough. At Cedarbrae Collegiate, Michaela became a standout as both a student and an athlete, and lettered – characteristically – in a wide variety of sports that included volleyball, cross country, tennis, swimming and even rugby.

Having to adapt so frequently during her formative years, Michaela is now unfazed by change and likes nothing better than a new challenge. As a senior in high school, she arranged to graduate in December so that she and a friend could spend several months backpacking through Europe. When the friend backed out, Michaela decided there was no way she could pass up such an opportunity and backpacked by herself through France, Italy, Switzerland, Austria and the Czech Republic.



*Photo: Al and Renee Schmitzer*

She arrived in East Lansing in time for summer camps and now it was her new teammates' turn to adjust. Diana Steplyk recalls being amazed to learn that one of her fellow freshmen had just returned from backpacking across Europe. And the better she got to know Michaela, the more she felt "very conservative and sheltered" by comparison.

But Diana says that the experience proved very rewarding, because Michaela "has opened my eyes to new cultures, personalities, and ways of thinking." The two are now fast friends and Diana reports, "It's been an honor playing with Michelle, but she has had a greater impact on me and taught me more off the court than on the court. Together we have survived some rough volleyball times, but in the end, I have gained a new perspective on a lot of issues, and a new friend. She will be successful in whatever she chooses to do because she is self-motivated and driven, and won't let anything stand in her way."

—continued on page 4

## Michaela Kopka *(continued from page 3)*

Diana adds that she especially admires the fact that Michaela is very adventurous and yet at the same time is extremely focused on her studies. A physics and human biology major, Michaela maintains a 3.98 GPA. She continues to receive awards for academic excellence, including two straight selections as an Academic All-Big Ten performer, first-team CoSIDA Academic All-District honors in 2003 and 2004, and capturing the program's coveted Top Grade Point Average for the past two seasons.

One of the keys to that success is that Michaela applies her spirit of adventure to her studies as well. She enjoys watching the Discovery Channel because it makes her think about new applications for the material she studies in her classes. She intends to attend medical school and specialize in neurology, with a focus on the brain. At this point, a career as a medical researcher appeals to her more than clinical practice.

If she continues on that path Michaela will, in a sense, be going into the family business, since her mother is a psychiatrist and her sister is a graduate student in psychology at the University of New Brunswick. Each, however, is studying the workings of the human brain from a different vantage point. Michaela indicates that she is particularly intrigued by the power of the brain to affect behavior and emotions. Ideally, she would like to conduct research that would lead to a better understanding of schizophrenia and other mental disorders.

Michaela reports that being a Spartan volleyball player has been a valuable experience for her by making her more well-rounded, more disciplined, more punctual and more responsible. She feels that she has benefited most from learning how to work as part of a team. She observes that the adapting of one's personality that is necessary to fit into a team is ultimately more of an addition than a subtraction because it

enables a player to feed off of her teammates' strength and enthusiasm. She feels blessed to have been part of a group of young women who are now "friends first and teammates second."

Another fond memory will be of rooming with teammate Kim Schram for the past three years. Michaela notes that she and Kim are similar in many ways, and yet have such different perspectives that they regularly engage in memorable conversations. She finds it particularly admirable that with all the time constraints of volleyball and academics, Kim always squeezes in time for creative outlets like painting. She also said that she is very grateful to the SideOut Club for their support over the past four years.

As she approaches the end of her four years on the MSU Volleyball team, Michaela is already looking forward to the next set of adventures. She plans to complete her studies at MSU next December and wants to then take a year off from school before entering medical school. Not surprisingly, she already has a wide range of activities that she plans to fit in that year, including spending the spring in Colorado as a ski instructor, a summer of adventure racing, white water rafting and wakeboarding, and the following winter snowboarding and skiing in the Alps. She also intends to travel through Europe and Australia. It is hard to imagine how anyone is going to squeeze all those activities into one year, but nobody who knows Michaela doubts that she will manage to do so.

Sixteen years ago, her parents fled their then-communist homeland so that their daughters would have the opportunity to grow up in a free country. Nobody takes fuller advantage of that freedom than Michaela Kopka.



*Photo: Al and Renee Schmitzer*

## Annual Report—fy2004

<b>INCOME</b>	
Bus Trip	1,048.00
Donation	1,535.60
Interest Income	15.93
Luncheons	817.00
Membership Income	
Fam Membership	1,539.30
Ind Membership	875.00
Lifetime Mem	250.00
Stu Membership	10.00
Supporting Mem	900.00
YS Mem	0.00
Total Membership Income	3,574.30
Picnic Donation	61.00
Raffle Income	4,762.00
Sales at matches	8,975.89
Banquet sales	160.00
Internet sales	105.77
Tournament Sales	323.74
Wristband Revenue	25.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>21,404.23</b>

<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Uncategorized	0.00
Bank Charge	2.00
Bus trip expense	1,017.33
clearing	0.00
Coaches Lunch	830.00
Gifts	60.55
Gifts to MSU VB	8,000.00
Member benefits - misc.	59.30
Courtside Seats	87.00
Merchandise	5,452.40
Newsletter	443.16
Non-profit org. fee	20.00
Office Supplies	7.36
Online Data Exp	240.00
Picnic	358.92
Postage	102.20
Printing	153.57
Raffle	2,681.80
Ralph Young	125.00
Service award expense	48.00
Spartan Banquet	300.00
State tax	598.49
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>20,587.08</b>

<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>817.15</b>
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## Alumni News and Notes

This month we continue our update on the current activities and whereabouts of former MSU Volleyball players. Thanks to **Kyla Smith** for again providing much of the information:

**Amy Sibbernson**, after playing in a Final Four, getting married and having a baby, has returned to volleyball and is a senior at the University of Nebraska-Omaha

**Jenny Rood** is finishing her degree at Michigan State and has recently become engaged

**Stephanie Knopp** is student-teaching in Lake Orion, Michigan

**Jenna Wrobel** is married and is an assistant volleyball coach at Golden West College in California

**Angela Morley** got married in January and now she and her husband are looking to buy a house. She is also about to start her internship for her Dietetics degree.

### Changes on the Board

Two SideOut Club officers, vice president Julie Carmichael and secretary Ron Springer, have decided to step down because of pressing family commitments. Julie will remain on the Board and Ron intends to continue to be involved in SOC activities. The Board is grateful to both for their service as officers and pleased that Julie and Ron will remain a big part of the club.

To replace them, Kathy Lovell has agreed to serve as vice president and Shirley Garrity as club secretary. At the club's annual meeting on October 23, Stu Patterson was elected to succeed Ron on the Board. The Board is delighted to be able to enlist such dedicated and capable individuals!

### Last Coach's Luncheon

Saturday, November 27  
11:30am to about 1:00pm  
Damon's at 1601 W. Lake Lansing Road  
(near the 127 exit)

### President's Message

*By SOC President Jenny Bond*

Can you believe that the season is almost over? It was a treat to see the team beat Michigan and Illinois in the same week. Many of you expressed your pleasure at having the MSU band, a student section, Sparty and the cheerleaders for the Michigan match.

Plan to attend the year-end banquet. The seniors deserve our support. Contact me if you have not received your invitation: jbond@msu.edu or 517-676-2676.

I hope to see you for Senior Night and Parent's night.

*Go State!*

*Jenny Bond*

## The Early Days of the SideOut Club

by Chris Wolf

My involvement with the SideOut Club started in the spring of 1993, when I answered a phone call in my office and found myself talking to Chuck Erbe, who had been hired as MSU's volleyball coach just months earlier. He explained that he was trying to make contacts in the local volleyball community, with the ultimate goal of starting a booster group for the program. I told him I was thrilled to see signs that the Athletic Department was trying to build a first-class volleyball program, and that I'd be happy to help him meet people. However, I warned him I was not a booster-group type of person. I told him in no uncertain terms that I really was not interested in becoming a Board member or in organizing or running a club.

Skipping ahead to the summer, Chuck, Ivan Bartha and I arranged a get-together at Ivan's house for fifteen or twenty volleyball enthusiasts who were interested in hearing more about his plans for the program. My main memory of that night is Chuck giving one of his now-familiar inspirational talks about the future of MSU volleyball. He wound up by telling us that his three-year goal was to win a Big Ten title. Of course, those of us who had been following MSU volleyball thought he was out of his mind.

At the beginning of the 1993 season, Chuck called me again and said he'd had some T-shirts made up, and needed some people to sell them at matches. That fall, Cathy Caswell and I, with occasional help from a few others, essentially were the SideOut Club (although we had no name at the time).

We set up a table at matches to sell the T-shirts, and also had a sign-up sheet to collect names of people who would be interested in forming a club.

Skipping ahead again, the organizational meeting of the SideOut Club was held on March 30, 1994. The attendees were Dianna Kaplinski, Mick Kelly, Tim Chamness, Dee Telman, Cathy Caswell, Bob Alim-Young, and Mace Ezell, with Ken Hoffman, Chuck Erbe and Laura Bush (later Farina) representing the Athletic Department. I don't know what got into me, but I found myself volunteering not only for the Board of Directors, but also to become an officer. The main discussion item at that first meeting was Chuck's desire to hold a team awards banquet.

Cathy and I printed flyers and mailed them out to the thirty or so fans who had signed up at the table during the season. The banquet was held on April 24, 1994, in a conference room at the Breslin Center. The total attendance was around sixty or seventy people, mostly made up of Board members and the players' relatives. It was modest and low-key, without any of the trappings we have today, but it was a nice, successful event.

The next year, Chuck delivered on his promise of a Big Ten title and added a trip to the Final Four for good measure. As a result, the SideOut Club has grown dramatically in the past ten years and now has more members and sponsors more events than any of us anticipated. However, it remains at heart a grass-roots effort by people who want to support MSU Volleyball in any way they can.

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## Harder Than It Looks: Volleyball Swerve

by Kathy Lovell

All spinning balls follow curving paths, but a volleyball appears to be the most unpredictable of all, and can swerve by as much as a meter if it's moving at an intermediate speed. According to data presented at a recent Conference on Engineering of Sport, reported in *Science* 306:42; 2004, the volleyball regularly enters a curious state in which one half experiences much greater aerodynamic drag than the other does.

"When a ball moves through the air, a long tangle of swirling air trails behind it. Flapping like a flag in the wind, this 'turbulence wake' pulls straight back on the ball and slows it down – the phenomenon known as drag. At low speeds the wake is large, and the drag is high, but if a ball moves faster than a certain speed, the wake suddenly shrinks and the drag plummets. The speed range in which the drag changes rapidly is known as the drag crisis, and balls moving in it can behave unpredictably."

Thomas Cairns (a mathematician at the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma who coached the women's volleyball team there for 17 years) and his students videotaped volleyballs launched from a serving machine and analyzed their trajectories. The path of some serves made sense only if the top of the ball was

moving fast enough relative to the air to avoid the drag crisis, while the bottom half was moving so slowly it dipped into it. Unusual serve paths included a serve with topspin that floated farther than a matching spinless serve, and serves that swerved first one way and then the other.

The unpredictability occurs more often in women's volleyball than in the men's game, where the ball is hit harder. Women tend to hit the ball at about 15 meters per second, where the strange aerodynamic effect comes in. When you watch the Spartans play, think about the difficulty of getting a good bump when the ball path is unpredictable, and appreciate how often they get it just right.

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## Update on Megan Wallin

Megan Wallin had surgery on October 14 to repair the torn anterior cruciate ligament in her right knee. The doctors discovered that there was also damage to her meniscus, but the surgery was successful in repairing both injuries. She is now on the road to recovery and the hope is that she will be able to participate in the spring tournaments.

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## Shirley Garrity—Consummate Volunteer

By Jenny Bond

Everyone who has ever been to a MSU Volleyball match has seen Shirley Garrity! She meets you at the door selling 50/50 tickets. Before and during the matches she can be seen working with the Court Crew. Whatever the job, we know that Shirley will be there, whether it means assisting with the Meet the Team picnic, obtaining the banquet favor, or serving as a line judge or scorekeeper at a Spring tournament. She is especially dear to my heart because she sponsored seven Court Crew members for the 2003 Banquet. She is currently serving on the SideOut Club Board and was recently elected club secretary. Anyone who has ever been secretary of any group knows the commitment that that job takes.

Shirley grew up in Sandusky, Michigan, the oldest of six kids, and she attended MSU on a 4-H scholarship. She majored in Recreation and Elementary Education and met her husband, who was also majoring in education. While teaching middle school in Perry and Westwood-Heights-Flint, Shirley completed a master's degree at Saginaw Valley State University. She retired in 1990 and remains an active volunteer in 4-H, community projects and the Methodist Church.

As students Shirley and her husband regularly attended MSU athletic events, an activity they continued to share until his death in 1999. Shirley recalls: "The very first volleyball

game that we saw, many years ago, was against Penn State. It was a packed house. We weren't expected to win but we did and we were hooked. We didn't miss many games after that. My Court Crew involvement began with my granddaughter, Katie, four years ago. She wanted to be part of the group so after the first year I volunteered to help. They are an important part of the match and need to work efficiently. My husband and I joined the SideOut Club to support our Spartans. After his death, I became more active."

In addition to faithfully completing any job the SideOut Club has ever asked her to take on, Shirley finds time to garden, read, bake (she always brings cookies on SOC bus trips) and watch all sports. She is also a regular at the women's basketball games but MSU Volleyball is fortunate that she has chosen to devote her considerable energy, time and enthusiasm to it. She enjoys backpacking and camping with her two sons and six grandchildren and traveling both in the United States and abroad. She has visited many countries in Europe, as well as Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan and Taiwan.

The next time Shirley Garrity asks you to buy a 50/50 ticket, after your purchase be sure to thank her for her many contributions to the program. Watch for her on the sidelines instructing the Court Crew. How fortunate we are to have her on our side! She is a consummate volunteer.



**Court Crew:** From left to right: Lauren Kustasz, Megan Rahall, Kristina Sievers, Cimone Diggs, Hannah Arbogast, Teresa Micheaux (parent assistant), Marie Micheaux, Katie Garrity, Amanda Chaffee, Erika Nehil-Puleo, and Jackie Micheaux. Shirley Garrity (SideOut Club Board) is at the back right side. Denise Potter, a second parent assistant, was not available for the picture.

## FALL SCHEDULE

Day	Date	Opponent	TV	Time	Result
Fri	09/24/2004	@Minnesota		8:00 PM	L 0-3
Sat	09/25/2004	@Iowa		8:00 PM	L 1-3
Fri	<b>10/01/2004</b>	<b>INDIANA</b>		7:00 PM	W 3-0
Sat	<b>10/02/2004</b>	<b>PURDUE</b>		7:00 PM	L 2-3
Wed	10/06/2004	@Michigan		7:00 PM	L 1-3
Sat	10/09/2004	@Illinois	FOX	8:00 PM	L 0-3
Fri	10/15/2004	@Ohio State		7:00 PM	L 0-3
Sat	10/16/2004	@Penn State	ESPN2	7:00 PM	L 1-3
Fri	<b>10/22/2004</b>	<b>WISCONSIN</b>		7:00 PM	L 0-3
Sat	<b>10/23/2004</b>	<b>NORTHWESTERN</b>		7:00 PM	W 3-1
Wed	<b>10/27/2004</b>	<b>MICHIGAN</b>		7:00 PM	W 3-2
Fri	<b>10/29/2004</b>	<b>ILLINOIS</b>		7:00 PM	W 3-1
Fri	11/05/2004	@Purdue		7:00 PM	L 1-3
Sat	11/06/2004	@Indiana		7:00 PM	W 3-1
Fri	<b>11/12/2004</b>	<b>IOWA</b>		7:00 PM	W 3-0
Sat	<b>11/13/2004</b>	<b>MINNESOTA</b>		8:00 PM	L 0-3
Fri	11/19/2004	@Northwestern		8:00 PM	W 3-0
Sat	11/20/2004	@Wisconsin	FOX	8:00 PM	
Fri	<b>11/26/2004</b>	<b>PENN STATE</b>		7:00 PM	
Sat	<b>11/27/2004</b>	<b>OHIO STATE</b>		7:00 PM	

## Tournament results

Date	Opponent	Result
09/03	Ohio University	W 3-0
09/04	St. John's	W 3-0
09/04	Florida A&M	W 3-0
09/10	Arkansas	W 3-1
09/10	Wichita State	W 3-2
09/11	Washington	L 0-3
09/17	Notre Dame	L 1-3
09/18	South Carolina	L 2-3

### NCAA Tournament

Dec. 2-5—NCAA First Round

Dec. 9-12—NCAA Second Round

Dec. 16-18—NCAA Third Round

*NOTE: In the schedule at left, home games are in bold capital letters. All home games are at Jenison Fieldhouse.*



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