

THE SERVICE LINE

MSU VOLLEYBALL @MICHSTVB



Volume XXI, Issue 11

August 16th, 2016

Articles courtesy of Peter Morris.

Upcoming Date Reminders!

August 20th, 2016

SOC Picnic—Meet the Team at Jenison after our Green & White Scrimmage

August 29th, 2016—6:00pm

Home Opener Kick-Off Dinner

FIELDHOUSE

213 Ann St
East Lansing, MI 48823

Coaches Talks at Hall of Fame Café

Luncheons are open to all, so bring a friend! Join the MSU Volleyball family and hear from Coach George and other guest speakers. Admission is free and a full lunch menu will be available for your purchase.

Luncheons – Doors open at 11:30 a.m. and Coach George speaks at noon.

September 20, Tuesday
October 13, Thursday
November 1, Tuesday

And Away We Go— 2016 Here We Come!

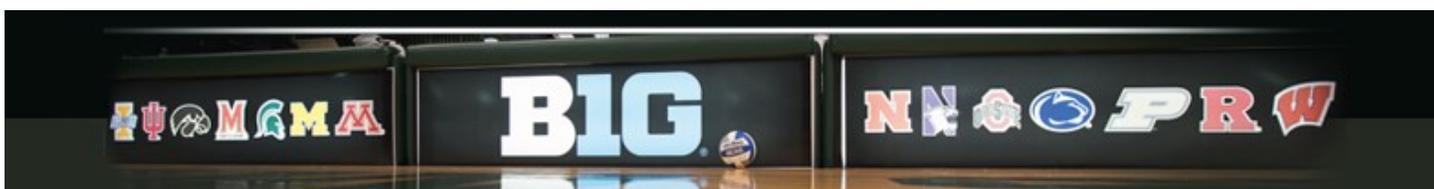
The 2016 campaign has begun! And in such a beautiful place—Lake Charlevoix! We had a wonderful time bonding as a team last week and we got to do some pretty cool stuff—ride jet skis, go tubing and visit The Young Americans Dinner Theater to name a few. Oh and we learned that we aren't good singers, but that Kristen Kelsay knows how to dance. You'll have to ask us about it at Green and White. Now as we transition into double days we've been able to be even more productive due to extra wood being added to our court so that we can run two courts side by side on our competition court. It's something that we've always wanted and will definitely add to the efficiency of our practices.





MITCHELL'S RUN THRU ROCKFORD

Every year, the Peterson family sponsors a 5K Walk/Run in their hometown of Rockford (just outside Grand Rapids) to raise funds for researching Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, the deadly disease that afflicts Halle Peterson's brother Mitchell. "Mitchell's Run Thru Rockford" will take place on Saturday, August 20, 2016, and sees the racers make their way through Rockford's picturesque downtown, which is blocked off to make room for the race. Serious runners will have plenty of top-flight competition -- three-time Olympian (and Rockford native) Dathan Ritzenheim won last year's race -- but most participants just look at it as a fun summertime event to share with their entire family. One of the highlights of the day, for example, is a Kids for Kids Run in which youngsters run alongside their favorite superheroes! For entries and more information, check out: <http://mitchellsrun.org/>.



The Big Ten Conference - An NCAA Heavyweight

In previous parts of this series, we have looked at coaching, attendance, and performance in the NCAA Tournament. Since much of the season is devoted to in-conference play, the results of the NCAA Tournament are the best way to determine the relative strength of the many Division I conferences. Accordingly, this final segment will take a closer look at the results of the past four NCAA Tournaments.

By any standard, the BIG has been the dominant conference over those four seasons. In addition to having the winning entrant in three of those four tournaments, the Big Ten has sent two teams to the Final Four in each of those four seasons. More impressively, it has not just been a case of a top-heavy conference, since five different Big Ten teams have reached the Final Four in those four campaigns. An even more striking statistic is the number of Big Ten teams to reach the Sweet Sixteen: six in 2015; five in 2014; a record seven in 2013; and five in 2012. It is no exaggeration to say that finishing in the middle of the Big Ten conference makes you one of the best volleyball teams in the nation!

Even those measuring sticks, however, tend to understate the conference's strength. Because of a deliberate emphasis on what is known as "regionalization" in creating the brackets for the NCAA Tournament, Big Ten schools tend to be clumped together, limiting the number that can advance. So in 2015, while Big Ten schools posted a collective 21-8 record in the tournament, that included a match between Minnesota and Illinois in which only one Big Ten school could advance. So in fact, the conference's record that year was 20-7 in matches against other conferences. That trend was even more pronounced in the three preceding seasons. An 18-5 record in 2014 included two matches between Big Ten foes, meaning that the conference went 16-3 versus other conferences. In 2013, Michigan State was eliminated by Penn State in the Sweet 16, Illinois lost to Purdue in that same round, Purdue was ousted by Wisconsin in the round of eight, and Penn State topped Wisconsin in the championship match. Thus, the overall 23-7 record was actually 19-3 in matches against other conferences. It was a similar story in 2012, as three of the Big Ten's entrants were eliminated by conference rivals, meaning that a 16-6 overall record actually corresponded to a 13-3 mark versus other conferences.

That is an important to remember when conference play starts and the competition becomes so stiff that a single injury or even a few misplays can spiral into a losing streak that can push a team out of contention for a tournament berth. Teams have to be very mentally tough to survive playing under those circumstances, but the ones that do so are likely to make long runs in the NCAA Tournament. Michigan State has endured some of those rough patches, to be sure, but what is more striking is how consistently the Spartans have turned things around. Penn State and Nebraska are the only Big Ten teams that can match Michigan State's streak of competing in each of the last five NCAA Tournaments.

Michigan State has also won at least one match in each of the past five NCAA Tournaments, but that is no big surprise for a team coming out of the nation's toughest volleyball conference. The conference's battle-tested teams are 28-1 in first-round matches since 2012!