

Spartan D: bigger, stronger, faster and athletic

By Ernie Boone

Michigan State's Spartans are bigger, stronger, faster and more athletic on defense this season, and head coach John L. Smith is hoping that will translate into more momentum changing turnovers and fewer game breaking errors as MSU prepares to take on Idaho Saturday, September 2 in its season opener at Spartan Stadium.

That's especially true for the defensive secondary where giving up big plays has often spelled Spartan doom.

The Spartan secondary underwent almost complete change this season with new faces at three of the four positions.

The result is a bigger, faster, more athletic crew, but one with limited experience. That inexperience makes focus on individual assignments all the more necessary.

"We've got to be more assignment oriented," Smith told the media at his first regular

weekly conference.

He wants the Spartans to eliminate costly defensive and special team mistakes and force teams to earn every yard and point they make.

Such an orientation means defenders stay with their individually assigned duties for



Spartans must remain injury free

each full play rather than cheat to help others.

That increased speed and athleticism also encourages the coaching staff to be more aggressive, fly around and get after opposing offenses.

Sophomore Otis Wiley, free safety and junior college transfer,

Nehemiah Warrick, strong safety, are bigger, faster, stronger newcomers to the backfield, while seniors Demond Williams and Greg Cooper are holdover starters from last year.

Cooper, however, is making the switch from free safety, which leaves Williams as the only one with experience at his position.

Just as important as eliminating backfield breakdowns is generating a pass rush. Sacks and hurries were rare last season, and Smith hopes to see more pressure applied on opposing quarterbacks.

That pressure could come from junior college transfer, Ervin Baldwin, a 6-3 252-pound junior defensive end.

Baldwin was named Defensive Player of the Year in California's Central Valley Conference last season. He recorded 27 tackles for losses, 14 sacks.

Another newcomer, 6-4 297-

pound Ogemdi Nwagbuo, is expected to help along the defensive line.

Nwagbuo edged David Stanton in the battle for a starting tackle job. He had 10 sacks last season for Southwestern College in Chula Vista California.

More pressure might also come from the linebacker positions.

Line backer play should be a Spartan strong point with David Herron, Kaleb Thornhill and Sir Daraan Adams all returning.

Herron is on the pre-season watch in the race for the Bronco Nagurski Trophy, Thornhill appears healthy for the first time, and Adams led last year's unit in tackles for losses and interceptions.

All three are playmakers and should help the defense show marked improvement.

Special teams and kicking should improve also. Punter Brandon Fields seems to be

regaining the foot that propelled him to All-American status as a sophomore, and freshman Brett Swenson has won the battle for place kicking duties. Walk-on Todd Boleski will handle the kick-off duties.

Inability to convert field goals was costly last season. Smith is confident that MSU will improve in that department as well.

Smith got his head coaching start at Idaho and ranks as the school's winningest coach with a 53-21 record (.716) in six seasons.

Facing Idaho takes on added importance to Smith. He will be facing his former boss and offensive mentor in Dennis Erickson.

Smith spent seven years as the assistant head coach and defensive coordinator under Erickson at Idaho, Wyoming and Washington State.

MSU will be heavily favored, but Smith says the Spartans don't take them lightly.

Ernie Sev

By Ernie Boone

Let's just call it a feeling.

You know, the feeling you sometimes get when you're around a group of athletes that could be about to do something special.

Well, that's the feeling I get when I watch or talk to members of this year's Michigan State University football team.

There's an enthusiasm and determination that's been missing these past few seasons. And I've got a feeling it means that Big 10 observers are in for a surprise.

The schedule sets the stage perfectly. The Spartans will wait a long time for a better opportunity.

They start with three "should win" games, at home against Idaho and Eastern Michigan, then on the road for Pittsburgh. If they play with heart, they should welcome Notre Dame to East Lansing needing a win to repeat last year's 4-0 start.

The Irish could be ripe for the picking after tussles with Georgia Tech, Penn State and Michigan. Notre Dame could be banged up, stressed out or

super high and on a roll.

In any event, an MSU upset victory would not be out of the question in Spartan Stadium.

A loss to the Irish would not ruin the season, however, with Illinois waiting in the wings for a recovery win.

Then it would be on the road to Ann Arbor for what should be a no-win situation.

With minimal luck the Spartans should be 4-2 when they welcome Ohio State. For my money that will be the key contest. If Smith's kids can steal one from the Buckeyes, it could propel them into a special season.

Such a win could set the stage for a five game run that would see MSU traveling to Penn State with a shot at a share of the conference crown and certainly a New Year's bowl.

Having both Notre Dame and Ohio State, two highly regarded teams that MSU could have beaten the past two seasons, coming to East Lansing, buoys Spartan hopes.

It'll be no easy task. MSU must stay healthy and play up to its potential. Northwestern, Purdue, and Minnesota are all capable of beating the Spartans

and did so last year.

But the Spartans are competitive with them and all but Northwestern have to come to East Lansing.

Should MSU fail to pull a major upset, the trip to Northwestern will likely determine their fate. Without and upset of Notre Dame or Ohio State, MSU should be 4-3 going into Evanston.

A win at Northwestern would make them 5-3 with home games against Purdue and Minnesota. Should they take care of home they'd be 7-3 headed for Penn State.

Even a loss at Penn State would send them to a bowl and assure Smith's continued East Lansing residence.

A loss at Northwestern, however, would likely signal disaster. Assuming losses to the big three, MSU would be 4-4 and very vulnerable. There would likely be another late season Spartan collapse.

But my money's on Smith and the Spartans. I like what I see in the eyes of those kids who play defense, David Herron, Kaleb Thornhill, Clifton Ryan, and Otis Wiley

Just call it a feeling.

Rev. Nathan A. Dixon Trinity African Methodist Episcopal Church

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Celebration Announcements

By Mr. Party, The Ambassador of Celebration



Birthdays in August

- Mr. San Diego Graves's birthday was August 1, 2006. He turned 12 years old.
- Jocelyn Starr celebrated her birthday August 3, 2006
- Reverend David Foreman celebrated his birthday August 3, 2006.
- Ms. Lexie Leek's birthday was August 8, 2006. She turned 5 years old.
- Mr. Leonord Leek's birthday was August 9, 2006. He turned 48 years old.
- Ms. Laticia Beuker celebrated her birthday August 9, 2006
- Ms. Alice Brown celebrated her birthday August 10, 2006
- Ms. Sharon Courtland celebrated her birthday August 10, 2006.
- Mr. Mikail Mc Connell celebrated his birthday August 11, 2006.
- Ms. Cynthia Williams celebrated her birthday August 11, 2006.
- Ms. Doris Graves's birthday was August 12, 2006. She celebrated with family and friends at Trippers. She turned 36 years old.
- Ms. Alma Civils and her daughter Portia Civils, celebrated their birthdays on Sunday, August 13, 2006, with a BBQ, with family and friends. They both turned 85 and 60, respectively.
- Mr. Mike Ranke's birthday was August 13, 2006. He celebrated at home with friends.
- Ms. Darellyn Suttuth's birthday was August 14, 2006. She celebrated with friends in Detroit.
- Ms. Sarah Hinton's birthday was August 16, 2006. She celebrated on that day at Rum Runners with her friend Crystal Flood.
- Ms. Idyana Brown birthday was August 20, 2006. She turned 2 years old.
- Mr. Julian Darden birthday was August 21, 2006. He turned 36 years old.
- Ms. Rachel Davis birthday was August 21, 2006. She turned 22 years old.
- Mr. Ollie Wilkie celebrated his birthday August 21, 2006.
- Ms. Darcy Mc Connell celebrated her birthday August 22, 2006.
- Ms. Thersea Greenwood celebrated her birthday August 23, 2006.
- Mr. John Morris celebrated his birthday August 23, 2006.
- Mr. Kris Brown's birthday was August 26, 2006. He turned 15 years old.
- Mr. Marc Tyler celebrated his birthday August 27, 2006.
- Ms. Jessica Cowles-Huge's birthday was August 27, 2006. She had a birthday show at the Temple Club.
- Ms. Lauren Starr celebrated her birthday August 28, 2006.
- Ms. Robin Hollingsworth celebrated her birthday August 30, 2006
- Ms. France Richardson celebrated her birthday August 31, 2006.
- Ms. Linda Mangum Kelley celebrated her birthday August 31, 2006.
- Mr. Don Armstrong celebrated his birthday August 31, 2006.

Retirements

- Mr. Al Cooper of Holt, Michigan, retired from General Motors August 1, 2006, after 60 years of dedicated service.
- Mr. Alvin Jones is celebrating his retirement of 41 years of dedicated service for General Motors and his birthday on August 26, 2006, at Gregory's Ice and Smoke.

Anniversaries

- Mr. & Mrs. Michael and Flora Boles celebrated their wedding anniversary on August 3, 2006. They now have been married for 32 years.
- Mr. & Mrs. Ollie and Kim Wilkie celebrated their wedding anniversary on August 21, 2006. They now have been married for 12 years.

Celebration Announcements - Congratulations:

- Ms. Cheyenne Brown sends congratulations to her son Kris, for hitting his second grand slam of the season against the Cougars, on August 8, 2006, for his team the Northside Sluggers. The Northside Sluggers won the game.

The Woodward Dream Cruise



David Lenear with his restored 1961 Lincoln Mark V convertible photo by Marcus Kelley

By Marcus Kelley

Detroit - It's the third weekend in August and like the harvest moon, the steady roar of engines is heard down Woodward Ave. Many stories are told of the past days of cruising Woodward. The true days of cruising have all but disappeared killed by police radar, high cost of cars, the cost of gasoline, and the lack of places for teenagers to cruise too. But what remains for all ages is the love of cars. The idea is that coming of age for a young person means more than a late curfew. It means the right to drive the family car. Kids enjoy for the first time, the freedom of transportation, the ability to go and come without your parents in tow. Whether it clunks or it roars, the love of car is deep in the American psyche.

Harry M. Roberts has been enjoying the Woodward Dream Cruise since it began. Along with him he bought his 1979 Pontiac Trans Am. The only work he's done on the car since buying it has been a new paint job. Giving the car a new look in Black.

"I come to the same spot every year to watch." He mentioned in passing. As he watches the cars go by he leans sits on the hood of Trans Am talking aloud about maybe some modifications in the next year. Around him were seated families that had come out to see the hot rods, muscle car and exotic cars, cruise Woodward. David Lenear has his pride and joy sitting farther down Woodward with a restored 1961 Lincoln Mark V convertible. David lives outside of Flint and is retired from a career with

General Motors.

"The cars original color was blue." David commented, "I redid it with in the current cream and red colors.

When asked how much work it took to get the car to its current condition He slowly shook his head.

"Me and my Buddies put a lot of work in this car." He said, "I wanted to show that Black folks could do this kind of work too." He goes on to mention that everybody in the family gets to drive the car. He sees the car as something that they all can take pride in.

We stand and watch as other cars pass. I begin to notice that almost all the cars have more than one person in the car. In many of the larger cars whole families are inside. We wave as a car full of Black folks goes by.