

Injuries threaten Spartan improvement

By Ernie Boone

When life gives you lemons, don't whine, make lemonade!

That's just what Tom Izzo plans to do this Christmas season.

Injuries have provided Spartan basketball little more than sour news lately, threatening to call a halt to an impressive home win streak and ruin plans for badly needed improvement

through extra holiday practice.

But, with the help of a pair of little used perimeter players, Izzo hopes to turn those injury lemons into basketball lemonade.

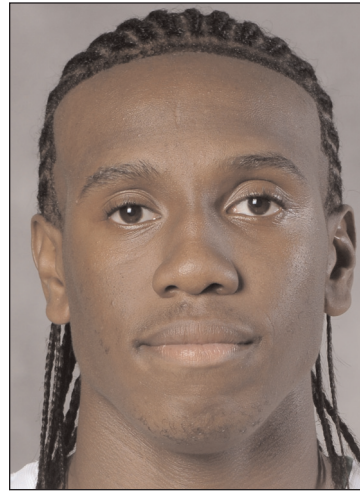
Stress fractures have sidelined two of the Spartan's top wingmen, prize freshman Raymar Morgan and sophomore harp shooter Maurice Joseph.

That leaves Izzo with just true freshman Isaiah Dahlman

and walk-ons DeMarcus Ducre and football receiver Deon Curry at the three-guard position as MSU gears up for its last four Big Ten warm-up games.

MSU hosts Chicago State Saturday, December 16, Belmont, December 19, University of Wisconsin at Green Bay, and Loyola (MD.), December 30.

For Dahlman, who might have red-shirted had things been different, it's an



Raymar Morgan

opportunity to gain valuable experience and grab a solid spot in the playing rotation, and it looks like he's going to make the best of it.

That is if he can stand up under the pressure of playing perhaps 30 minutes during the four-game holiday stretch.

He's shown promise in the Spartan's last two contests. He had 9 points, 6 rebounds and 4 assists in an 80-43 victory over IPFW and followed with 9 points and 3 assists when pressed into 30 minutes of play against Brigham Young at the Palace.

Ducre, a red-shirt junior who earned a scholarship after a year on the scouting team, hasn't played more than seven minutes in any of his six appearances this season.

He'll get chances during the December stretch, and he'll have to take good care of the ball and limit mistakes to increase the length of his stretches.

If he can do that, it will give the other guards much needed rest and add considerably to team depth as the Big Ten season opens and Morgan and Joseph return to

the line-up.

In addition to providing an opportunity for some players to gain experience and add team depth, the injuries are forcing Izzo to explore using what he calls a "three bigs" line-up, with a power forward on the wing or at a high post on offense, and more zone on defense to reduce their vulnerability to dribble penetration

While the injuries may result in a reduction of running and jumping activities, Izzo plans to hold two-a-days and seek to make the team's usual holiday progress.

He pointed out that MSU usually makes considerable progress during the Christmas holiday sessions as they get in the practice repetitions needed to improve timing, put in plays

and defensive sets, and work on individual problems.

With the injuries and having played 11 games in a month, the Spartans need rest perhaps more than the usual repetitions.

Given that, Izzo plans to place more emphasis on the mental aspect of the game and things that are less physical such as free throw shooting.

He'll add more film sessions and focus on such things as recognizing defenses, when and when not to run, cutting down turnovers.

If the idea works, it could result in a team that makes better decisions and plays more correctly.

The real pay off could be a team that competes effectively in a tough Big Ten campaign and qualifies for a 10th straight NCAA Tournament appearance.

Walk on awarded scholarship, expected to boost MSU's defense

By Ernie Boone

The call came one summer day when he was vacationing on Mackinaw Island. It was MSU with news that he had been awarded a basketball scholarship.

There could have been no more exciting news for DeMarcus Ducre than the award.

He'd worked more than two years to hear those words.

After leading his Saginaw High School team to a Saginaw Valley Conference championship and class A district championship his senior year, Ducre enrolled at MSU.

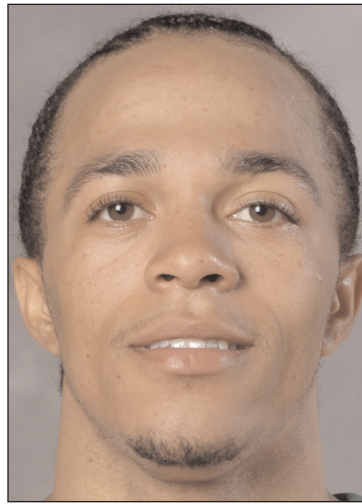
An exceptional student, he was a member of the National Honor Society and was named an All-American student athlete.

He'd hoped to study engineering and play basketball at MSU, but things didn't quite work out.

While he did well in the classroom, his grades weren't quite high enough to get into the highly selective MSU School of Engineering, so he switched to math and kept moving towards a degree.

His basketball dreams

didn't materialize either. He failed to make the team as walk on the first time around.



DeMarcus Ducre

But when he tried again in 2005, he made the squad, was a mainstay on the scout team, and appeared in six games.

He scored five points and grabbed six rebounds.

Being awarded a scholarship meant that more was expected of him this season, and he's determined to live up to those expectations.

"I know I'll have to play good defense and take care of the ball," Ducre said at the start of the season.

That's just what Izzo and the Spartan coaching staff need from the 5-10 175-

pound senior.

"He can help us," said MSU assistant, Mark Montgomery. "He's smart and quick, and he can play some defense.

"What's important is that he play within himself and doesn't hurt us."

He'll be called on to do just that beginning Saturday, December 16 when MSU takes on Chicago State at Breslin Center and the rest of the month while MSU waits for guards Raymar Morgan and Maurice Joseph to recover from stress fractures and return to the line-up.

Freshman Isaiah Dahlman has moved into the starting line-up, but Ducre will be asked to fill in and give Dahlman and point guard Travis Walton rest.

He won't be asked to score much. The Spartans just need for him to play some good minutes so the other guards can rest.

If he can get the team into its offense and not turn the ball over he will have done his job on offense, but he'll need to play lock-down defense during his time on the floor.

If he can do that for 12-15 minutes a game while MSU is short handed, he will realize his dreams and pay for that scholarship.

The 9th ranked LSU Lady Tigers take on the 18th ranked Lady Spartans at the Breslin Center

Mid-Michigan basketball fans are in for a treat Sunday, December 17. The ninth ranked LSU Tigers invade Breslin Center to take on Michigan State's 18th ranked Spartans.

MSU coach Joanne P. McCallie is seeking career victory 300, and her Spartans are on a five-game win streak.

LSU is fresh off an impressive 75-51 victory over Big Ten favorite and fifth ranked Ohio State.

It's the Spartans' biggest challenge of the young season and could provide the best basketball fans will see all year.

The Tigers are led by Sylvia Fowles and Quianna Chaney. The pair scored 18 and 17 points against Ohio State.

The Tigers, 10-1, are a sharp shooting bunch. They hit 50% from the field against the Buckeyes. On the season they've shot .461 to average 72 points while limiting

opponents to 42.9 points. They apply tremendous pressure on defense, forcing an average of 21.1 turnovers. Chaney and Erica White are the mainstays, combining for 50 of the team's 134 steals.

Last season the Tigers handed MSU a 72-52 thrashing in Baton Rouge, and the Spartans would like nothing better than to return the favor at Breslin.

It's a major challenge and sets the table for a December schedule that includes a pre Christmas trip to California to face UC Santa Barbara and Cal St. Northridge before post Christmas Big Ten visits from Indiana and Wisconsin.

Senior guard Victoria Lucas-Perry, 7-1, leads the Spartans, 14.1, freshman center, Allyssa De Haan, 13.5, Aisha Jefferson, 12.6 and Rene Haynes, 11.4.

DeHaan leads a quartet of fine rebounders at 7.8 per game, followed by Jefferson,

6.8, Lucas-Perry, 6, and Katrina Grantham, 5.0.

To win Sunday and in the Big Ten, MSU will need to reduce its turnovers. The Spartans average 17.1 miscues per game, and if they can't take care of the ball, those miscues will turn into LSU points and spell doom.

Indiana 8-2 and Wisconsin, 10-1, mark the beginning of what will be an extremely challenging Big Ten campaign.

At 8-2, Indiana ranks fifth in the Big Ten in scoring offense at 70.8 points, fifth in field goal percentage at .451, and fifth in field goal percentage defense at .355.

At 10-1, Wisconsin ranks first in scoring defense at 50.7; scoring margin, plus 22.3; and rebounding defense, 29.4; and they're second in scoring, 73 points, and fourth in field goal percentage, .461.



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Celebration Announcements

By Mr. Party, The Ambassador of Celebration

Birthdays in November and December

Mr. Juan Gonzales celebrated his 24th birthday on November 13th, 2006 with a big party in his basement.

Ms. Resa Civils celebrated her 53rd birthday on November 29th, 2006 doing what she likes to do best, dancing the hustle at Gregory's Nightclub

Ms. Sylvia Calvo celebrated her 24th birthday on November 29, 2006 with Prissa and Heather and the Dollar Nightclub in Lansing, MI.

Ms. Nattalie Seymore celebrated her 21st birthday on November 29, 2006 parting with Shanon, Fawn, Naomi, Adam, Raynell and other girls at the Dollar Nightclub in Lansing, MI.

Ms. Brandy Johnson celebrated her 25th birthday on November 30, 2006 with friends at the 621 Club

Ms. Jet Wilson celebrated her 25th birthday on December 2nd, 2006 with friends at the Silver Dollar Nightclub in Lansing, MI.

Ms. Courtney Shaffer celebrated her birthday on December 3rd, 2006 with family and friends at Rum Runners Nightclub in Lansing, MI.

Ms. Wendy Hawkins celebrated her 21st birthday on December 5, 2006 with boy friend Marvin and friends at The Riv Nightclub in Lansing, MI.

Ms. Kindra Jackson celebrated her 35th birthday on December 6th, 2006 with Ursula Guy, Lawonna B., Janice S., Gen W., Tammy C., Naden, and Tracy A. Thank you all, for helping celebrate my birthday at Gregory's Nightclub in Lansing, MI.

Mr. Alex Almazan celebrated his 11th birthday on December 7, 2006 with a dinner with family, and a party on December 9th with friends a the Midway Hotel in Lansing, Michigan

Mr. Anthony Curry celebrated his 33rd birthday on December 7th, 2006 with his fiancé Lenna Allen stating "Go Tony it's your birthday!"

Mr. Robert Heintz celebrated his birthday on December 8th, 2006 at Auggies Pub & Grill

Mr. Mo Cuts celebrated his birthday on December 9th, 2006.

Mrs. Amber Cuellar celebrated her birthday on December 9th, 2006 with her husband Carios and the Cuellar boys at Lucky's Bar in Lansing, MI.

Ms. Khadija and Georjettia Williams celebrated their birthday on December 10th, 2006 with friends Nia Dunn, Brandi Jones and Marquetta Jones at the Dollar Nightclub in Lansing, MI.

Ms. Cynthia Richardson celebrated her birthday on December 13th, 2006 with family and karaoke friends at a surprise party on December 11th at Gregory's Nightclub in Lansing, MI.

Ms. Jenny Kim celebrated her 21st birthday on December 14th, 2006 with a celebration on December 16th at the 621 Club in Lansing, MI.

Ms. Diane Buckley celebrates her birthday on December 16th, 2006.

Ms. Sonia Brown celebrates her birthday on December 16th, 2006.

Ms. Victoria Jefferson celebrates her birthday on December 19th, 2006. She will turn 4 years old and will receive a laptop computer from her Dad!

Mr. Ronald Leek celebrates his birthday on December 24th, 2006.

Mr. Zack Phillips celebrates his birthday on December 22nd, 2006 with and Black and White party at Gregory's Nightclub in Lansing, MI.

Mr. Marcus Jefferson, Jr. celebrates his 18th birthday on December 31st, 2006 with a gift from Dad of a Mercedes four sedan from Dad!

Anniversaries

Mr. & Mrs. John and Mary Stephenson celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary on November 9th, 2006 at the Colonial Bar in Lansing, MI. They stated: "We love Mr. Party!"

Mr. & Mrs. Carios and Amber Cuellar celebrated their 17th wedding anniversary on November 9th, 2006 at Lucky's Bar in Lansing, MI.

Congratulations

Ms. Lindsay Maltby advances to the second round in the American Idol contest at the Chicago Soldier Field session.

Please send us the information about you, your family or friends **celebrating** the Events of Life, by email: mrpartycserv@aol.com, or call our office at 1-517-482-9782.

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