

MSU advance to quarter finals**Lady Spartans notch 45-40 OT WNIT victory over Michigan**

It looked more like Keystone Kops than championship basketball, but Kalisha Keane nailed a three-point shot with 1:37 left to tie the score at 37-37 and set the stage for Michigan State's 45-40 overtime victory over Michigan in the quarterfinals of the WNIT at the Breslin Center Sunday, March 30.

The victory moves the Spartans in the tournament semifinals where they face North Carolina State in a 7p.m. contest at Breslin, Wednesday, April 2.

"It wasn't the prettiest game," said MSU head coach Suzy Merchant. "Both teams came to play defense. We were getting shots, but we just couldn't make them."

"We were laughing about the shot after the game," Keane said about her game saver. "Alisa (Wulf) tripped over Allyssa (DeHaan) threw the ball to me. I put up a shot and it went in. It wasn't the prettiest play, but it went down and we'll take it."

Keane's heroics capped a second half comeback made possible by stifling defense and clutch shooting.

Hampered by three fouls throughout the second half, Keane led the way for the

**Kalisha Keane (32)**

Spartans on both ends of the court.

Held scoreless in the first half, the gutsy freshman forward hit 15 points after the intermission and frustrated the Wolverines on defense, getting into passing lanes to disrupt while managing to avoid picking up more fouls. The Spartans trailed by nine, 37-28 with just 6:26 left in regulation before applying complete lock down defense to turn the tide.

MSU went on a 9-0 run to force the overtime, then maintained the shutout until just: 35 was left on the clock. Michigan closed with three

free throws, not enough to catch up.

MSU also failed to register a field goal in the extra period, but hit 8 freebies to notch the victory.

"No that (MSU's second half defense) was the key to the game," said Michigan coach, Kevin Borseth. "Sometimes we couldn't even get a shot off. We seemed to pass the ball around near the half court most of the time. I don't remember us getting a very good shot."

Michigan was held to 21percent shooting from the field, but MSU shot little better, hitting just 29 percent. DeHaan provided 13 points to help turn back Michigan. Britany Thomas grabbed 10 rebounds and Keane grabbed 8 to help MSU claim a 44-40 edge in that department.

"This is a real valuable lesson for our team," said Merchant. "It's survive and advance here, just like the NCAA tournament."

The victory, MSU's third in the post season, raised the Spartans' record to 22-13. Michigan finished at 19-14.

MSU earned its spot in the quarterfinals with a second round victory over Bowling Green, 74-66, and a 58-54

third round win over Kansas. DeHaan led MSU scorers with 16 points against Kansas, and Keane paced

scorers with 20 points against Bowling Green. All three contests were played at Breslin.

The 22 victories marks the first time a first year MSU coach, male or female, recorded 20 wins.

Ernie Sez

By Ernie Boone

HOUSTON, TX – There are no, "My bads," at NCAA Tourney time!

Nobody knows that better than Michigan State head coach, Tom Izzo.

Try as he may, the four-time National Coach of the Year was unable to adequately communicate that to a largely inexperienced group of Spartans this season. Now they know!

Lose track of your man on defense – whoops! Chris Douglas-Roberts back door lay up; don't get a body on a rebounder – whoops! Joey Dorsey put-back dunk; relax and don't chest-up on the sub for a star player – whoops! a pair of Willie Kemp three-pointers!

In short – lose focus, don't follow the game plan, fail to bring you're "A" game at NCAA Tournament time...it's over. One and done!

And if you're not careful, you just might get thoroughly embarrassed in the process.

Michigan State learned those lessons the hard way here Friday, March 28, in the NCAA South Regional semifinals.

They got the education at the hands of a talented group of Memphis Tigers who hit the Reliant Stadium floor confident and loaded for bear.

The Tigers, led by Conference USA Freshman of the Year, Derrick Rose (27 points) and Player of the Year, Chris Douglas-Roberts (25 points), were flawless in the first half, burying the Spartans 50-20 by halftime, then coasting to a 92-74 victory.

To their credit, the Spartans

did an about face after the intermission. They regained their composure and battled back to close to within 14 points, 76-62, with 4:13 remaining, but Memphis steadied itself and hit 12 of 15 free throws down the stretch to seal the victory. Recognizing that they were facing a less intense, less energetic Memphis team, MSU was almost as solid in the second half as it was inept in the first.

The Spartans outscored Memphis, 54-42, held a 22-17 rebounding edge, turned the ball over just three times, to six for the Tigers and shot 55.6 percent from the field. Memphis shot 62 percent (20-32) in the first half and 40 percent in the second.

The first half hole they had dug was just much too deep. Among the bright Spartan spots was the play of Goron Sutton. The 6-10 red-shirt junior from Everett High School led MSU with 23 points, 11 in the first half as he tried to keep the Spartans afloat. He fell just short of a double double with 9 rebounds.

Freshman guard, Chris Allen, came off the bench to score a career-high 20 points. Kalin Lucas was the only other Spartan in double figures with 11.

No one could find an explanation for the early MSU collapse.

After the game Izzo said that he did sensed a sort of "deer in the headlights," feeling during the disastrous first half, but he could not attribute it to stage fright, fear or lack of preparation.

Seldom at a loss for words, he joked about a first half sitting on a stool cursing the Reliant Stadium architects

for not having designed the stadium with a hole into which he could have crawled.

It looked to me like disbelief. It was as if the players themselves couldn't believe what was happening to them, and they were helpless when it came to doing anything about it.

They played like they were stuck in the middle of a bad dream and were not able to wake up.

"We didn't do anything we said we were going to do," said Lucas, over and over again. "We said we were going to shrink the gaps to keep them from driving to the basket, we didn't.

"We said we were going to have six eyes on them (Chris Douglas-Roberts and Derrick Rose), we didn't. We were going to block out and keep them off the boards, we didn't. "Everything we said we were going to do, we didn't do." Izzo said it even better.

"We didn't execute," he said. "We didn't execute on offense, and we didn't execute on defense...I've never seen us do the things we did, which means some of it had to be Memphis."

The game marked the end of the careers of seniors Drew Naymick and Drew Neitzel. Both had disappointing nights. Neitzel, who finished his career ranked 14 among MSU scorers with 1,534 points, didn't score until there was just 1:47 left in the game. He hit two three-point shots late to finish with 6 points, and 7 assists.

Naymick, the MSU career record holder in blocked shots, finished with four points, one rebound and one blocked shot.

Returning Spartans determined to change

There was, a strange feeling in the Spartan locker room following the NCAA Regional Semifinals loss to Memphis.

The players were clearly disappointed and feeling bad, but there was also a strong sense of a need for change and a determination to make that change happen.

"It sucks!" said senior Drew Naymick as he slumped on a stool in the Spartan Locker room following MSU's 92-74 loss to Memphis in the semifinals of the NCAA South

Regional. "It was awful."

The underclassmen seemed to hurt more for the seniors, Drew Neitzel and Drew Naymick, than for themselves. They hated to send the Drews out on so disappointing a team performance.

"That's the worst part," one said. "We let the Drews down. Those guys have worked so hard and done so much, then to go out with us playing like this.

We've got next year. For them, it's all over."

If there was one consolation, it was the way the Spartans played the second half.

"We battled back," Naymick said. "We didn't lay down. We fought like I learned to fight in the five years I've been here."

"It's heartbreaking," said freshman point guard, Kalin Lucas, but we've got to get ready for next year."

That's what seemed so strange about the players' mood.

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