

Spartan basketball seniors post successful season, graduate

EAST LANSING – Idong Ibok and Drew Neitzel earned their undergraduate degrees during Michigan State University's 2008 Spring Commencement this month, while Drew Naymick inched closer to earning his doctorate.

Having helped MSU post one of its most successful basketball seasons in history,

Spartan football opener set

EAST LANSING, Mich. – Michigan State's 2008 football season opener, Aug. 30 at California, will be televised on a regional basis by ABC, with kickoff set for 8 p.m. EDT/5 p.m. PDT. The Spartans will be playing their first game in Berkeley since 1957.

It marks the fourth-ever meeting between the Spartans and Golden Bears. Michigan State leads the all-time series 2-1; however, California won the most recent meeting, 46-22 in Spartan Stadium in 2002, as Kyle Boller threw for 232 yards and accounted for four scores. The Spartans have posted a 30-19-1 record (.610) against current members of the Pacific-10 Conference (3-0 vs. Arizona, 1-1 vs. Arizona State, 2-1 vs. California, 2-2 vs. Oregon, 6-2-1 vs. Oregon State, 3-2 vs. Stanford, 3-3 vs. UCLA, 4-4 vs. USC, 1-2 vs. Washington and 5-2 vs. Washington State).

The Spartans enter the 2008 season with a streak of 63 consecutive live TV appearances (games televised regionally or nationally) since November 2002.

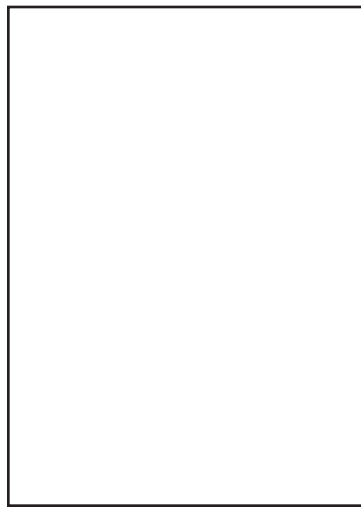
the trio completes the year and their careers as one of the most academically honored as well.

Neitzel, he received his degree in interdisciplinary humanities, earned second-team Academic All-American honors as well as his third straight Academic All-Big Ten selection this year.

Ibok, who also earned three Academic All-Big Ten selections, received a degree in telecommunication.

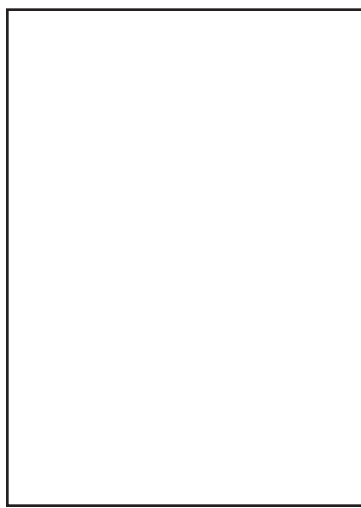
Naymick earned Academic All-Big Ten honors in 2005 and in 2006, received MSU's Scholar-Athlete Award those years, and received his degree in finance in May of 2007.

In 2005, he shared the Scholar-Athlete Award with Chris Hill.



Idong Ibok

"Graduation means a lot to me," Ibok said, "and it means a lot to my family and my mom especially. It's always been a dream of hers for me to



Drew Neitzel

get an education and graduate. Coming here to Michigan State, I've had the opportunity to do that. It's exciting to finally get that

degree."

Ibok is from Nigeria and is the only member of his family here in the United States.

"It's well documented what these guys accomplish as athletes," said MSU head coach Tom Izzo, "but not enough times is there enough credit given to these guys that get the job done in the classroom, too.

"We've had a tremendous graduation rate over the years."

Since 2000, 29 MSU basketball players have earned their undergraduate degrees.

On the court this year's Spartans finished 27-9, advancing to the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Tournament.

It was the 11th straight NCAA Tournament, the fifth

longest active streak in the nation and second longest in Big Ten history.

The seven Sweet 16 stops in the last 11 years is the second best in the country. Only Duke, with 9, has more.

UCLA also has seven. MSU was undefeated, 17-0, in Breslin, the only Big Ten team to accomplish the feat this season.

Basketball isn't the only high profile sport boasting graduates this month. Ten members of the football team participated in commencement ceremonies.

Adding the seven gridders that graduated prior to the start of the 2007 season, Head coach Mark Dantonio graduated 17 in his first season.

"On campus for a reason, not a season!"

MSU Black athletes progress academically, graduate on time

By Ernie Boone

"On campus for a season, not a reason."

That was once an apt description of a large number, if not the majority of Black athletes on scholarship at Michigan State University, especially football and basketball players.

They were there to audition for the professional leagues and generally completed their athletic eligibility well before completing their undergraduate degrees.

Those who earned degrees more often than not returned to campus to earn them

during or after their professional athletic careers or when their dreams of professional stardom were sufficiently dashed.

When red-shirting became the rule rather than the exception and five years to complete four became the norm, more Blacks began completing degrees along with their eligibility.

Few, however, completed their undergraduate work in four years and used their final year of athletic eligibility to earn credits toward an advanced degree.

Not anymore! Of the 10 players who

received their degrees this month, three, Mike Bell, urban and regional planning, Carl Grimes, advertising, and Justin Kershaw,

interdisciplinary studies, are Black, on scholarship, and have a year of athletic eligibility remaining.

Their academic dedication has enabled them enter their final season with the opportunity to make significant progress toward the advanced degree that is sorely needed for outstanding success in their chosen non-athletic professions.

And they are doing so at university expense.

How things have changed. If Black athletes follow their lead, that description will have to change.

Maybe soon we will be saying, "On campus for a reason, not a season!"

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