

Tough Spartans hold off Penn State, 78-73, in Big Ten test

By Ernie Boone

EAST LANSING - "Tough times never last - tough people do."

And in college basketball, they don't come any tougher than Michigan State University's Travis Walton! The 6-2 190-pound Lima, Ohio senior is the backbone of the Big Ten leading Spartans and a primary reason coach Tom Izzo's crew is ranked 7 and 10 in the national polls and rated by many a good bet

The Lady Spartans slap around the Wildcats, 64 - 52

EAST LANSING, Mich. - Junior Allyssa DeHaan scored a game-high 19 points and collected eight rebounds as the Michigan State women's basketball team defeated Northwestern, 64-52, Thursday night at the Breslin Center, its 13th consecutive home victory over the Wildcats. With the win, Michigan State improves to 10-6 on the season and 3-2 in the Big Ten, while Northwestern falls to 5-11, 1-4.

The Spartans never trailed and led by as many as 22 points in the second half. Using its size advantage down low, MSU outrebounded Northwestern, 39-29, and scored 14 more points in the paint (30-16). DeHaan, who made her first six shots of the game, tied her season high with eight field goals, and also notched four blocked shots.

Redshirt junior Aisha Jefferson reached double-figures for the 10th time this season with 10 points and went 6-for-8 from the free-throw line. MSU is now 6-0 this season when DeHaan and Jefferson both score in double-figures.

to reach the Final Four in Detroit come spring.

He's seldom been tougher than he was Wednesday, January 14 shadowing Penn State's Tyler Battle and leading the Spartans to a 78-73 victory over the Nittany Lions in a Big Ten road contest.

The victory moved MSU to 4-0 in the conference, a full game ahead of Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota.

Walton held Battle, the Big Ten's leading scorer, to 8 points in the first half as MSU grabbed a 13 point, 42-29 lead at intermission, stretched it to as many as 19 in the second half and hit crucial free throws down the stretch to hold off a determined Penn State crew.

Raymar Morgan led MSU with 17 points with help from Kalin Lucas, 15, Goron Sutton 13, and Durrell Summers, 10. Battle finished with 20 points. Janelle Cornley led all scorers with 26 points.

Called by Izzo the Spartans' most effective player leader since Mateen Cleaves led MSU to its second NCAA championship in 2000, Walton is the heart and soul of the team - the glue and guts.

One of only three three-time team captains during Izzo's 14 years at the MSU helm (Cleaves and Antonio Smith are the others), Walton is called a "true point guard in the mold of Eric Snow.

Defense, distribution and inspiration are his forte. Despite having been displaced as the starting point guard last season, Walton led the team in assists in 16 of its 36 games. Twice he turned in 11 assist 0 turnover performances.

He's been named to the Big Ten All-Defensive Team twice and is well on his way to a third such designation. He



Travis Walton

held Texas standout, A.J. Abrams to 8 points in MSU's 67-63 victory in Houston earlier this year and every game gets the assignment of shadowing the opponent's top perimeter player.

"Travis is as tough as they come defensively," Izzo says. "He can defend four positions. There aren't many better on-the-ball defenders." At 6-2 190-pounds, he's often asked to check taller, bigger opponents. He makes up for his lack of size with quickness, dogged determination and strength. In the weight room he's the strongest member of the team. He bench presses 300 pounds and leg presses 700 pounds.

The consummate team player, it was Walton who went to Izzo early last season and suggested that freshman Kalin Lucas, a quicker, more talented offensive player, was ready to replace him in the starting line-up and would improve the team's ability to run the floor and pick up the pace.

"That's what I love about Travis," Izzo said at the time. "He understands what it takes to win, and he's willing to do what it takes."

In this, his final season at MSU, Walton is totally focused on leading the

Spartans to a Big 10 championship and a spot in the NCAA Final Four at Ford Field come March.

"I just want to win a championship and get to the Final Four," said Walton at the start of the season. "If we get that championship, all of my personal goals will be taken care of."

"My grandmother wants a ring."

His parents, Nate and Likita Walton, live in Lima, Ohio, but Walton's grandmother, Charlene Adams, raised and nurtured him from age 11 through high school. She is his No.1 fan, frequently attending games at Breslin.

He would like nothing better than to present her with a Big Ten championship or Final Four ring.

Of course, there is another quite important personal reason Walton is focused on getting MSU back to the Final Four.

He doesn't want to be the first Izzo coached Spartan to complete his eligibility without making a trip to the college basketball Mecca.

"Coach can brag and talk about it (all of his players making a Final Four appearance) to recruits. I don't want him to have to say, 'except for Travis Walton'.

"That helps to motivate me and everybody here."

"I dream about it, think about it, talk about it," Walton said. "Out of the heart, the mouth should speak it."

While he seldom gets personal when talking about basketball goals, he's quite open when it comes to his goals in life. Tops on his list is continuing to become a better person.

He credits Tom Izzo and the MSU coaching staff with having helped him considerably in that area.

He said that they've been

tough at times, but it's tough love, and it helped him become a man.

"If I had it to do all over again I wouldn't do anything different," Walton said.

He also credits his local pastor, Jessie Brown, of the Rivers of Life Church.

"I've been going to church, reading the Bible and talking the pastor a lot," said Walton. "It has opened up new pages and new thoughts everywhere."

Church attendance has helped a number of MSU players get closer.

"All of our players go," said Walton. "I was the first one that started going. Kalin goes now, Quise (Marquise Gray),

Coach G (Mike Garland) and his wife attend, Raymar (Morgan)."

It started with conversations in the barber shop Walton's sophomore year. He was impressed with what Brown had to say and when he discovered that Brown was a minister Walton paid a visit to the church.

"I called my grandmother and she said I might have found something good."

It's his final season, and Walton is determined to, "Try to cherish every moment. No matter what it is, cherish every moment through the ups and the downs with the understanding that there is a purpose for everything."

MSU men's basketball to retire jersey No. 42

The Michigan State men's basketball program will retire the jersey (No. 42) of former All-American Morris Peterson this Saturday, Jan. 17 as the Spartans host Illinois in the Breslin Center at 4 p.m. Peterson, who helped lead Michigan State to the 2000 National Championship, earned All-America and Big Ten Player of the Year honors as a senior in 1999-2000. The jersey retirement ceremony will be held prior to tip-off.

Morris Peterson was not a highly visible recruit nationally, but he and Antonio Smith took a chance on me, and we'll always have a special bond because of that," said Michigan State head coach Tom Izzo.

"If you look at where he was when he came to Michigan State, to where he was when he graduated, to where he is today, he is one of the all-time

success stories. He excelled athletically, academically and socially. Everyone knows about all of his on-the-court accomplishments, but to him and his family, his graduation day was just as important, with family coming in from far away to be a part of that special day.

"The unselfishness he showed as a junior willing to come off the bench for the betterment of the team is an example that I still use today," Izzo continued. "He deserved to start, but instead, he became the first sixth man to earn First-Team All-Big Ten honors. His unselfishness is one of those things that is a cement block as you try to build a program that stands up over time. Equally impressive, he's stayed in touch ever since he graduated and has ensured that the program that he helped build has continued to flourish."

THE CONTOURS

The Contours are the multi-Platinum Motown recording artists best known for their blockbuster hit 'Do You Love Me'. Their show is jam-packed with dazzling high-energy choreography, impeccable harmonies and those timeless Motown grooves of the 60s and 70s that everyone knows and loves.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 23 @ 7:30PM \$22

Charlotte Performing Arts Center

517-541-5690
www.CPACpresents.com

Sponsored by Auto-Owners Insurance, Russell & Schrader Insurance Agency, Ackley-Peters-Haubert Insurance Services, and WILX-TV10

CELEBRATE HOPE.

OPRAH WINFREY PRESENTS

The Color Purple

The Musical about Love.

"A ROOF-RAISING STORY OF TRIUMPH."

PHOTO: PAUL KOLNIK

4 Easy ways to order tickets! **TICKETS FROM \$30**

CALL 1-800-WHARTON (1-800-942-7866)	IN PERSON WHARTON CENTER BOX OFFICE Michigan State University
ONLINE whartoncenter.com	GROUPS (517) 353-1982 ext. 120 (15 or more)

FEBRUARY 4 - 8 • WHARTON CENTER

MSU FEDERAL CREDIT UNION BROADWAY AT WHARTON CENTER

ARIEL

East Lansing engagement welcomed by Bank of America, Delta Dental Plan of Michigan and MSU Department of Radiology.

American Airlines