

# MSU in position to take control of conference title chase

By Ernie Boone

It's championship week! Their fate rests in their own hands as coach Tom Izzo's Spartans prepare to host Big Ten co-leader, Ohio State, and then travel to Purdue for a rematch with the Boilermakers.

The Spartans paved the way for the showdowns with a business like 72-58 victory over Indiana at Bloomington, Indiana, Tuesday, February 16.

MSU, 11-3, in the conference, 20-6 overall, took a temporary game lead in the conference regular season title chase. Ohio State, 10-3, hosts Purdue, 9-3, Wednesday, February 17 in what could be an elimination match. The loser will fall a full game back and perhaps out of the race.

Draymond Green led the way for the Spartans pacing four double figure scorers with 14 points Kalin Lucas added 13 and four assists, and

Raymar Morgan and Chris Allen added 10 points each.

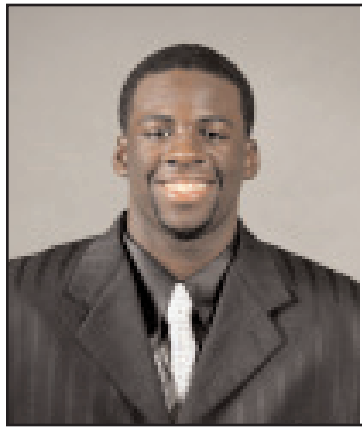
But it was Green and Lucas who did the major damage. Green went 5 for 5 from the field and four of six from the line to snap a two-game scoring slump which saw him hit just one of 20 shots.

Lucas hit key shots to thwart all Indiana attempts at coming back after the Spartans made a late first half surge to go to the locker room up 40-30 at halftime.

The Spartan freshman centers stood tall in the contest, combining for eight points and seven rebounds in 21 minutes.

If Ohio State beats Purdue, the Buckeyes will come to East Lansing Sunday tied with the Spartans and in the best position to take control of the title chase with a victory.

Ohio State would have perhaps the most favorable schedule with only Illinois among the leaders left to play. If Purdue beats the Buckeyes,



**Draymond Green**

the Boilermakers will still have to face Illinois and MSU as well as Minnesota, Indiana and Penn State.

Should MSU handle Ohio State, the Spartans must face Purdue, Penn State and Michigan, with Purdue on the road.

The Spartans warmed up for the Ohio State showdown by disposing of Indiana. It was last game in an eight game stretch which saw MSU play six games on the road.



**Kalin Lucas**

Three of those games were against conference contenders, and the Spartans lost all three.

Captain Kalin Lucas went down with a sprained ankle midway through the second half in a game at Wisconsin and the Badgers thumped MSU, 67-49.

Lucas sat out the next game at Champagne and MSU fell, 78-73. Purdue then came into Breslin and with Lucas at less than full strength, knocked off the

Spartans, 76-64.

It looked like the wheels were starting to fall off the Spartan machine. Izzo benched high flying guard, Durrell Summers during the second half of the Purdue loss, citing lack of effort.

Back-up point guard, Korie Lucious, cut classes during the recent snow storm, and Izzo left him home during the visit to Penn State.

Lucas returned to near full strength and led the Spartan attack with 24 points and five assists.

Summers responded with a solid effort on both ends of the court. He scored nine points and grabbed four rebounds, but more importantly he played touch defense, especially during a key second half stretch when MSU took control of the contest and snapped the losing streak with a 65-54 victory.

With MSU locked in a tight

contest and Taylor Battle shooting the lights out, Summers teamed with walk-on Mike Keebler to lock down the Penn State all-star and stage a 13-0 rally that erased a 46-44 Penn State lead and gave MSU the separation it needed to put the game out of reach.

Summers scored the first seven points during the run and wrapped Battle up defensively on a pair of possessions.

"It was maybe the best six or seven minutes of defense that we have played all year," said Izzo.

They'll need that defensive intensity for all 40 minutes Sunday if they expect to protect home turf and topple Ohio State. The Buckeyes, led by All-America candidate, Evan Turner and a host of top flight talent, are ranked fourth in the country and playing their best ball of the season.

## Lady Spartans fight for Big 10 top finish

By Ernie Boone

Like their male counterparts, Michigan State's women's basketball team has used suffocating defense, dominant rebounding and off the bench scoring to fight its way into the thick of a Big Ten conference race.

While Ohio State's Buckeyes have wrapped up the conference championship, the battle for second place, a top five seed in the Big Ten Tournament and a spot in the NCAA is wide open.

And with victories in six of their last seven games, Coach Suzy Merchant's Spartans have battled their way back into the fray. The Spartans prepare to host last place Illinois Thursday, February 18 in a 7 p.m. contest at the Breslin Center, then travel to Ohio State for a match against the Buckeyes Sunday, February 21.

MSU posted a 50-45 victory over arch-rival Michigan in Ann Arbor and a 68-55 win over Northwestern at Breslin to bring their conference record to 8-6 and join Wisconsin, one half game of second place behind 9-6 Purdue.

The battle for second place is also joined by Iowa, 7-7, Penn State, 7-8, and Michigan and Indiana at 6-8. With four games left, all of those teams have a mathematical shot at the runner up spot. Just as important are the top five seeds in the post season conference tournament.

The top five seeds each get a first round bye in the tournament. That means they must play just three games to win the tournament rather than four.

Just as important, it means that they face the weaker teams, thus potentially enhancing their chances for additional victories that could bolster their chances to be selected for the big NCAA dance.

In addition, senior center, Allyssa DeHaan, is chasing a big time individual mark of her own. The 6-9 All-Big Ten standout tied the NCAA Division 1 career blocks record against Michigan.

That distinction was short lived as Louella Tomlinson of St. Mary's broke that record and moved the mark to 486. Dehaan can surpass that with three or more blocks against Illinois.

The two are likely to stage a see-saw battle with the mark the remainder of the regular season. Dehaan is likely have the last opportunity as she should see post season action while Tomlinson will finish at the end of the regular season.

Opponents have managed to shoot less than 34% from the field, and just 22.2% from three-point range the last five games.

The Spartans lead the Big Ten in field goal pct. defense, 34.9, blocks, 6.72, and offensive rebounds, 14.6, and rank second in rebound margin, +5.9.

They also rank second in scoring margin, +7.4. MSU also leads the conference in bench scoring, averaging 28.9 points off the bench.



Taking one for the team, Detroit Piston Jason Maxiell takes a charge by Sacramento's Tyreke Evans on Feb 10 at the Palace. However, Maxiell's effort was not enough as the Pistons bowed to the Kings 103-97. Photo by Alan Wade(MPA)

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