

The State News

After a win on Saturday, MSU's football team is ranked in the NCAA top 25. But another team has been in the top 10 all season.

Can you name that team?



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POLICE INVESTIGATE DEATH OF MSU STUDENT

By Abby Lubbers
THE STATE NEWS

One week after a fatal house fire in Wright Township, investigators still have questions about the death of an MSU sophomore and three others.

Katherine A. Brown was found dead with her boyfriend Jeremy Zimmer, his mother Sharmaine and his brother Tyler in the Zimmer's house Sept. 29, according to The Grand Rapids Press.

But what was originally

viewed as a tragic house fire became a homicide case once autopsy reports came back.



Brown

Officers had received hundreds of tips through silent observer programs by Friday

Investigators began searching for more clues Wednesday once they discovered the four victims were dead before the fire began.

morning, said Russ Barkow, a father figure to Katherine since her dad's death about two years ago.

Stories circulated during the weekend that some of the victims had been shot, but police cannot confirm any information.

"I don't know if it's really healthy to spin a bunch of tales," said Ben Barkow, an agribusiness management senior who was a friend of Brown. "Nobody can confirm it right now."

Brown, an 18-year old agribusiness management sopho-

more, had traveled to her home in Conklin and attended Coopersville High School's homecoming Sept. 26. She graduated from Coopersville in 2007.

On Sept. 27, she attended a wedding in Ohio with her mom, brother and Russ Barkow. She was planning on eating dinner at the Zimmer house Sept. 28, before getting a ride back to MSU, Russ Barkow said.

The fire happened just before 1 a.m. Sept. 29, according to The Grand Rapids Press.

Brown's roommate, hospital-

ity business sophomore Claire Stevenson, said she first heard about the fire when Brown's mom called around 4 a.m. Sept. 29, looking for her daughter.

Stevenson had gotten a text message from Brown saying she was staying at Zimmer's house.

"I guess I was the only one who knew she was staying at her boyfriend's house that night," she said.

Investigators originally did not find Brown's body, Stevenson said. It was about six hours

later that it was discovered.

"She had decided to stay over and leave the next morning, and the rest is history. She was there," Russ Barkow said.

Brown's friends remember her as a funny, laid-back girl who was fulfilling her dream of attending MSU.

"(She) was somebody who was just effervescent," Ben Barkow said.

"She just shone from within a lot of times, and she had a personality that would make you smile."

The Nickless family, including mother Arlene Nickless and sons Aaron, 11; Noah, 9; and Andrew, 7; along with Ty Pennington, host of ABC's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition," wave to the crowd after the unveiling of their new home Friday afternoon in Holt. The children also were given tuition waivers from MSU.



NEW HOME BRINGS FRESH START

"To know my boys are going to be taken care of ... something their dad wanted so much to do ... something I worried about every day, 'How was I going to make things happen for them?'"

Arlene Nickless, homeowner

By Kyle Feldscher
THE STATE NEWS

Holt — Arlene Nickless watched her late husband's dreams come true last week: Her family now has a stable home and their three sons have bright futures ahead of them. After entering their new home, built by ABC's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition," for the first time Friday, the Nickless family received more good news on Saturday. MSU Provost Kim Wilcox presented them with two-year scholarships to complement the two-year scholarships they had already received from Lansing Community College. "It really was my husband's dream (to see the boys become Spartans)," said Nickless, whose husband, Tim, died in January after a seven-year battle with hepatitis C.

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PHOTOS BY SAM RUIZ/THE STATE NEWS

The Nickless family — mother Arlene Nickless and her sons Aaron, 11; Noah, 9; and Andrew, 7 — received a new home Friday afternoon in Holt from ABC's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition."

MSU football

CASH KRUTH

MSU defeats Iowa in what may have been ugly game



The struggles of last year's MSU football team are well documented. The Spartans went 7-6, with

all six losses coming by seven points or less.

That trend continued in the 2008 season opener against California, where the Spartans once again found themselves staring at another loss by seven points, with a 38-31 outcome.

In 2007, MSU head coach Mark Dantonio repeatedly said the main thing to take away from those losses was that the Spartans were in the position to get the win. After the Cal game, Dantonio said the same thing; getting in the position to get the win was the first step, and when the team finds itself there, it was up to someone to make a play.

Saturday's 16-13 win over Iowa could have been a similar scenario. True, MSU was up the entire game, but in a physical, low-scoring game such as Saturday's, anything can happen.

With 7:40 remaining in the game, the Hawkeyes took over at their own 45-yard line. Iowa quarterback Ricky Stanzi hit wide receiver Derrell Johnson-Koulianos for a 9-yard gain. On the next three plays, Shonn Greene, who pounded the MSU defense all day for 157 yards, picked up 15 yards to put Iowa at MSU's 30-yard line.

The Hawkeyes picked up nine more yards, then called a timeout with 2:16 remaining as they faced a fourth-and-inches situation.

It could've gotten ugly

In my mind, and I'm sure in many of yours, there was no decision to be made. Kick the 38-yard field goal, tie the game and, more than likely, head to overtime.

See FOOTBALL on page 2A

OUTBREAK

Health department reaffirms its E. coli suspicions

By Justin Harris
THE STATE NEWS

While the Michigan Department of Community Health targeted iceberg lettuce from Aunt Mid's Produce Co. as the cause of last month's statewide E. coli outbreak, the company has yet to confirm any responsibility.

Dominic Riggio, the president of Aunt Mid's, said the Detroit-based food distributor has fully cooperated with the health department and Michigan Department of Agriculture's investigation.

"We have opened our facility

E. coli cases

A total of 34 cases of E. coli strain O157:H7 have been confirmed in Michigan by the Michigan Department of Community Health.

The ages of those infected range from 11 to 81 with the last symptom onset reported Sept. 19.

SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH

and all of our products to all of the state departments to cooperate with this investigation," Riggio said. "All environmental tests and all product sampling has come back negative for E. coli."

As of Thursday, the health department had confirmed

34 cases of E. coli in the state, including nine at MSU.

Riggio said the health and agriculture departments have tested food samples from the company as well as from outbreak locations such as the Lenawee County Jail, where five of the cases were reported, and all tests have

been negative. He said the state departments also have conducted tests of the company's facilities, which came back negative.

In addition, Riggio said Aunt Mid's has utilized third-party inspections of its food and facilities, which have shown no link between the company and the outbreak.

James McCurtis, a spokesperson for the health department, said tests are only one part of an investigation to determine where the lettuce originated. He said Aunt Mid's is still suspected because its lettuce is the only kind delivered to the Lenawee

County Jail and the two restaurants in Illinois where the virus was also found.

Because the shelf life of lettuce is short, McCurtis said Aunt Mid's could conduct negative tests now but still be responsible for distributing the affected lettuce last month.

"It doesn't take away from the fact that in early September, people were sick and they were all linked to lettuce from Aunt Mid's," McCurtis said.

Riggio said Aunt Mid's doesn't directly sell to the Lenawee

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ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

An MSU student has caught the attention of the government for his work on wind turbines, page 3A.



Weather

Showers

High 63° | Low 42°

Three-day forecast, page 2A