

# the game

## MSU vs. Northwestern

Kickoff at 3:45 p.m. Saturday

### Follow the game

TV ESPN2  
Radio WJR (760-AM)

### Forecast

Mostly sunny  
High 75° | Low 59°  
Precipitation 10 percent

### Extra point

The last time MSU played at Northwestern, it staged the greatest comeback in Division-1 football history

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# WIDE RECEIVER 'U'

From the college ranks to the pros, MSU's wide receivers shine wherever they go

"...if you look at all the colleges, I think that we are the most dominant college in the world at that position. Not only at the college level, but also in the NFL."

**Derrick Mason, former MSU wide receiver**

By **Cash Kruth**  
THE STATE NEWS

In college football, players come and go. They leave their mark on the field and in the record book, and some, if they're lucky, go on to make their marks in the NFL. In many cases, programs struggle to find new players who can fill the shoes of their departed stars. But in the case of the wide receiver position at MSU, that has very rarely been a problem.

Prior to the 2008 NFL Draft, Rick Goselin, an NFL columnist for the Dallas Morning News, dubbed MSU "Wide Receiver U."

In looking back at the history of MSU's wide receivers, there's sufficient background validating that claim. Since 1965, there have been

five former MSU wide receivers taken in the first round of the draft, as well as 23 overall. Since 1980, 15 Spartans wide outs have been drafted, with four going in the first round.

Although MSU players have been successful in getting drafted, becoming a solid contributor in the NFL is a whole different challenge.

According to former Spartan and current Baltimore Ravens wide receiver Derrick Mason, the ability to stay in the league multiple years and become a contributor is what sets MSU players apart in the professional ranks.

"I think it's true, because if you look at the receivers over a

20-year span, we've had some very, very successful receivers, not only in college, but who also go onto the NFL and play and be successful," Mason said of the Wide Receiver U tag.

"It's a fair assessment because if you look at all the colleges, I think that we are the most dominant college in the world at that position. Not only at the college level, but also in the NFL."

### Setting the standard

When reminiscing about some of the first great wide receivers to wear green and white, former MSU player

See RECEIVERS on page 2B

### By the numbers

**2** Draft position of former MSU wide receiver Charles Rogers, the earliest any NFL receiver has been taken.

**4** MSU receivers drafted in the first round of the NFL Draft since 1980.

**9** Total Pro Bowl appearances by former MSU wide receivers Andre Rison (5), Derrick Mason (2) and Muhsin Muhammad (2).

**15** MSU receivers drafted since 1980.

SOURCE: THE STATE NEWS

## REPORT CARD

# Ringer, linebacking corps set mid-season grading curve

With a 5-1 record, the Spartans have reached the midpoint of the regular season in good shape for a Big Ten championship run. From stellar running-back play to a surprisingly stout defense, the team has earned high marks through six games. Here's a position-by-position breakdown of the MSU football team halfway through the season.

— Jacob Carpenter and Cash Kruth, *The State News*

### Want more reports

For more mid-season grades, see page 2B.

### QUARTERBACK



Mid-season grade:

# B-

In the beginning of the Iowa game, Hoyer showed promise by stepping up and making quality throws. However, he made too many mistakes for a second-year senior starter.

By the numbers (four touchdowns, three picks, 47 percent completion percentage), Brian Hoyer could probably be graded much lower. He has missed some throws receivers, but there have also been too many drops by his young wide receivers.

### RUNNING BACKS



Mid-season grade:

# A+

Through six games, Ringer is on the brink of 1,000 yards for the second straight. Backups Andre Anderson and Ashton Leggett have been solid the few times they've been called upon.

What can be said about Javon Ringer other than the fact that through six games, he's carried the Spartans on his back, held up physically despite carrying the ball an average of 35 times per game and gained national recognition as a potential Heisman Trophy finalist.

### WIDE RECEIVERS/TIGHT ENDS



Mid-season grade:

# B

could block, but he has surpassed expectations as a ball catcher. Backup Garrett Celek has been solid, too. This group is sometimes seen as inconsistent, but that's just because its ceiling is so high.

Plain and simple, these guys drop too many balls, which is the only thing keeping them from receiving a higher grade. Sophomore Mark Dell and redshirt freshman B.J. Cunningham each have big-play potential, while junior Blair White has become a reliable No. 3 guy. We knew junior tight end Charlie Gantt

### OFFENSIVE LINE



Mid-season grade:

# B+

struggled against California and Iowa — two teams who are notorious for their physical toughness — which were the only times Ringer failed to rush for 100 yards.

A big question mark heading into the season, these guys deserve a hand. Not only have they paved the way for more than 1,200 rushing yards and 14 rushing touchdowns, but they also have protected Hoyer, allowing just two sacks through six games. They