

the game

No. 7 MSU at Ohio State

Tipoff at 3:45 p.m. Sunday

Follow the game
TV CBS
Radio WJR (760-AM)**Last matchup**
On Jan. 6, MSU defeated Ohio State 67-58 at Breslin Center.**Extra point**
MSU will hope to rebound from its loss Wednesday to Northwestern. It was MSU's first loss in 11 games.**Keep an eye on ...**
Ohio State guard William Buford. The freshman is the Big Ten's reigning player of the week.**Basketball IQ**

"He does all the things well (and) his decision making has really improved a lot, so I think he's got all the intangibles."

Goran Suton, senior center

Vision

"If you run, he's gonna get you the ball. He's the quickest guy I've ever played with."

Marquise Gray, senior forward

Vocal leadership

"He's a great leader, he's a great point guard. If he keeps doing this, there's no telling where he'll be."

Raymar Morgan, junior forward

Shooting

"He's a much more confident shooter, which means now he's more dangerous, because if you play him for the shot, he'll take you to the hole."

Tom Izzo, head coach

Handles

Has an uncanny ability to weave through traffic and get to the hoop; rarely turns the ball over.

Speed

"God did bless me with being quick and me just being able to be fast on the court (and) be fast with the ball."

Kalin Lucas

To learn the meaning behind Lucas' tattoos, visit stateneews.com.

PICTURE-PERFECT PLAYER

With a new mentality and improved jumpshot, Lucas is doing big things for MSU

By Alex Altman
THE STATE NEWS

About 45 minutes after another grueling practice, sophomore Kalin Lucas stands with one of his assistant coaches near the far end of the court. Almost all of his teammates have vanished into the locker room, but Lucas stays on the balls of his feet. He wipes a few beads of sweat off his silky forehead as he listens to instructions from his coach.

Moments later, Lucas nods his head and saunters back to his spot at the top of the key. In one fluid motion, he plants his feet into the hardwood, bends his knees, pops into the air and flicks his wrist.

The ball soars through the air, begins its descent just in time and slowly caresses the strings as it swims through the net.

Swoosh.

Lucas, MSU's soft-spoken starting point guard, has been hearing that sound a lot lately.

That's because after every practice, he doesn't leave the gym until he's successfully run through the following gauntlet: 100 made 3-pointers, 60 made pull-up jumpers, 35-40 made free throws.

"My play wasn't good at the beginning of the season, and I was in a shooting slump," said Lucas, a slippery 6-foot guard with blazing speed and deceptive strength.

"When some guys get into a shooting slump, they might drag or might hang their head, but I just kept working and getting in the gym more because I had to get out of that shooting slump."

The work has been paying off for Lucas. The sophomore is shooting 41.2

percent from 3-point range, a 4.8 percent improvement from last season.

Although he's cooled off since the first three games of conference play, when he went a combined 6-of-50 from long range, he's taken what many considered his biggest flaw and transformed it into one of his greatest strengths.

"He's really worked hard at it," MSU head coach Tom Izzo said. "He's a much more confident shooter, which means now he's more dangerous, because if you play him for the shot, he'll take you to the hole."

Lucas' penchant for getting to the rim as a freshman is what thrust him into the national limelight and made him one of the most highly extolled players in the Big Ten during the offseason. He parlayed an impressive freshman season into preseason second-team All-Big Ten honors from Athlon and Lindy's College Basketball preview magazines and preseason second-team All-American honors from Sporting News.

Despite the accolades, the Sterling Heights native still felt he had criv-

See **GUARD** on page 4B

PHOTO BY JASON CHIOU/THE STATE NEWS