

the game

Hockey vs. No. 16 Ohio State

Faceoff at 7:05 p.m. Friday

Follow the game
TV Big Ten Network
Radio WJIM (1240 AM)

Last matchup

The Buckeyes swept the Spartans in a two-game series in Columbus earlier this season — winning 3-0 and 3-1.

Extra point

The Spartans are coming off their first three-point weekend since Nov. 1.

Keep an eye on...

MSU goaltender Jeff Lerg. Last weekend the senior net-minder stopped 76 shots and allowed only three goals.

REPORT CARD BREAKDOWN

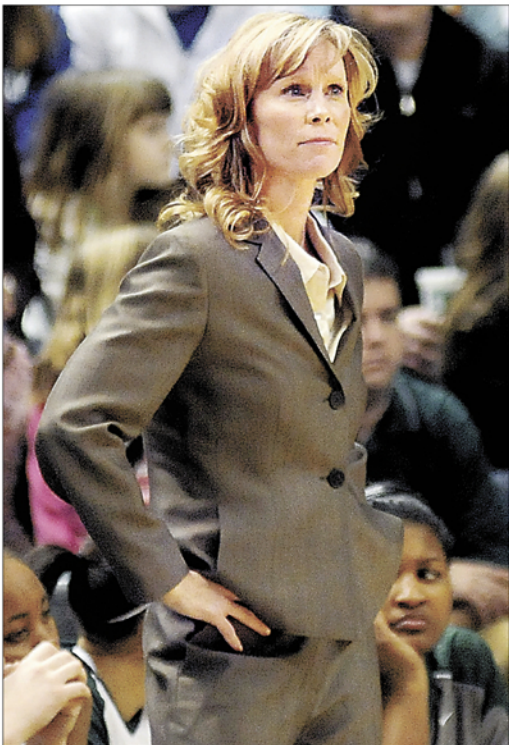
About halfway through the season, the men's and women's basketball teams are looking good

A-

Standing near the top of the Big Ten, the women's basketball team is looking good for the NCAA Tournament. The focus the rest of the season will be how the bench will rise to support the loss of sophomore point guard Brittney Thomas. With three of the final four games at home, the Spartans should be a frontrunner for the regular season Big Ten Championship. There's room for improvement, but not much.

A-

Despite several setbacks, the men's basketball team has established itself as the clear frontrunner in the Big Ten. Since being routed by North Carolina, MSU has elevated its play to new heights, losing just two games and boasting a perfect road record in conference play. If the Spartans get by Purdue in West Lafayette, Ind. on Tuesday, they can start fitting their fingers for Big Ten Championship rings.



JEANA-DEE ALLEN/THE STATE NEWS

MSU head coach Suzy Merchant stands along the court sidelines Dec. 29, 2008 at Breslin Center during the game against Indiana.



JASON CHIOU/THE STATE NEWS

MSU head coach Tom Izzo peers back at his bench after the Spartans took the lead in the second half on Jan. 25 at Value City Arena in Columbus, Ohio.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Picked to finish third in the Big Ten, the MSU women's basketball team is off to a 17-7 start and are 10-3 in the conference. Winners of seven of the last eight games, MSU is in shouting distance of the Big Ten Championship. Here's how they grade out so far.

BACKCOURT



Thomas

B-

The backcourt has been hit-or-miss this season. The group has been great at finding the post players down low, helping the team average the third most assists in the conference. The group has been solid on defense as

See BACKCOURT on page 2B

FRONTCOURT



DeHaan

A-

The frontcourt has been the trademark of this team, behind junior superstars Alyssa DeHaan and Aisha Jefferson. The group is probably the strongest in the Big Ten and only has gotten better with the addition

See FRONTCOURT on page 2B

MEN'S BASKETBALL

With the best Big Ten start in school history, an undefeated road record and the moxie to rise above an array of injuries and illnesses, the MSU men's basketball team looks to be in prime position to win its first Big Ten Championship since 2001. Even with all of their success thus far, the No. 9 Spartans (20-4 overall, 10-2 Big Ten) have had their share of breakdowns. Here's how they stack up with six games remaining:

BACKCOURT



Lucas

A-

After an underwhelming opening month, Kalin Lucas has emerged into a Big Ten Player of the Year candidate. The sophomore point guard averages 17.3 points and 3.5 assists in conference play, and has added an impressive jump

See BACKCOURT on page 2B

FRONTCOURT



Sutton

B+

Given everything this unit has had to deal with, the results have been awfully impressive. All three starters — senior center Goran Sutton, junior forward Raymar Morgan and freshman forward Delvon Roe — suffered health issues

See FRONTCOURT on page 2B

— Joseph Terry,
The State News

— Cash Kruth, The State News

For a men's basketball podcast about the Michigan game and the week off, visit statenews.com/multimedia.