

BIG IMPACT



NICK DENTAMARO/THE STATE NEWS

Senior goaltender Jeff Lerg prepares for his last collegiate home game Saturday night at Munn Ice Arena against No. 2 Notre Dame.

"Everyone underestimates how big he plays. His competitiveness, quickness and his confidence level are outstanding. At every level he's had to prove he can do the job. I can't tell you the secret, but he's been a tremendous goalie throughout his career."

Red Berenson, Michigan head coach

"With the season they are having as a team, not every kid would react the way he's reacting. It goes back to his character and his humility and how he's trying to work with his teammates. He's not pointing fingers or passing blame, but instead making the very best out of the circumstances."

Tom Anastos, CCHA Commissioner

"He gives me nightmares. He has better lateral movement than anyone I've ever seen. I don't know of anyone better, and I've coached Curtis Joseph and Mike Richter."

Mike Kemp, Nebraska-Omaha head coach

"Jeff Lerg is one of the top goaltenders in this conference and in the nation. He is capable of shutting you down on any given night."

Enrico Blasi, Miami (Ohio) head coach

See stateneews.com for...

- A timeline of Lerg's career accomplishments
- A photo gallery of Lerg playing hockey
- A podcast highlighting Lerg's time at MSU
- A Q&A with CCHA Commissioner Tom Anastos and former Omaha Lancers head coach Mike Hastings
- A video from Tuesday's press conference

"I wouldn't be surprised to see them in the second round or back in Detroit for the CCHA semifinals. Nothing would surprise me with Lerg in goal. He always keeps his team in position to win games."

Jeff Jackson, Notre Dame head coach

"Any team — no matter what point of the season — needs to have good goaltending to be successful. MSU's been blessed for four years to have Jeff on the team and they've been successful because of it."

Walt Kyle, Northern Michigan head coach

"He's really one of the bright spots in college hockey. Jeff's been a guy that — even when wearing the opposite jersey — you are really glad he's in the CCHA. He's an outstanding representative of the league and super competitor."

Scott Paluch, Bowling Green head coach

"I have a great deal of respect for Jeff, not only of how he competes and how hard he plays, but how he conducts himself away from the arena — both in the classroom and in the community. He just battles so hard every day."

Bob Daniels, Ferris State head coach

"Jeff is, without a doubt, the MVP of the league. If any coach could take one guy on any team right now, they would take Jeff first. He single-handedly wins games by himself. He's a difference maker in every game."

Jim Roque, Lake Superior head coach

"He's athletic and he's into every game. He swallows up the shots when he sees them and the guys play well in front of him. He's really a big compliment to the team."

John Markell, Ohio State head coach

"You never see him get rattled. He's very composed as a young man and understands every day is a work day. To have that quality of person and be able to showcase him from the CCHA standpoint is a tremendous feather in our cap."

Dallas Ferguson, Alaska head coach

"Everybody has a lot of great athletes over the time and kids who you remember. But for me, there is none better than him. He's by far the best student-athlete I've had in 36 years of coaching."

Rick Comley, MSU head coach

Stay tuned...

For results from the weekend hockey series with Notre Dame and updates on Saturday's Senior Night, visit stateneews.com.

Despite his small stature, Jeff Lerg defies the odds and leaves a lasting legacy at MSU

By Alex DiFilippo
THE STATE NEWS

There wasn't a moment to waste with thinking. No, this play was going to have to be all instinct. It was going to require a calculated maneuver practiced over and over — much of the time without success. To have any chance, the timing was going to have to be perfect, requiring a quick, yet smooth slide from right-to-left. In the blink of an eye, someone would be the hero on the biggest stage in college hockey. Would it be the 5-foot-6 David or the 6-foot-7 Goliath? Thud. The sound of rubber smashing against leather rang out in the packed arena, as fans of both teams held their breath.

With his small stature and head just clearing the crossbar, MSU goaltender Jeff Lerg sprang to his feet — revealing the puck locked away in his glove — showing that David really can win in real life. Lerg's post-to-post, sprawling save on Boston College's giant, Brian Boyle, during a 2-on-1 in the third period of the 2007 NCAA National Championship game gave the Spartans exactly what they needed — the momentum.

See LERG on page 2B



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY NICK DENTAMARO/THE STATE NEWS

"Staying focused on the game and the puck is the main attribute to my game," senior captain and goaltender Jeff Lerg said. "I don't want to get too out of control because that's when holes open up and opportunities arise for the other team."