

# THE BEST OF THE DECADE

Championships and All-Americans. Memorable moments and jaw-dropping plays. The 2000-09 decade has given MSU sports fans memories they will never forget. The next eight pages are filled with the best of the best in the last decade of MSU athletics.

— Compiled by the State News Sports Desk, State News file photos featured



The MSU men's basketball team, led by the "Flintstones," won the 1999-2000 national championship by beating Florida 89-76 at the RCA Dome in Indianapolis, Ind.

## BEST TEAM

- 1999-2000 men's basketball — Ten years later, no team has matched the Flintstones' leadership, talent and entertainment value.
  - 2004-05 women's basketball — The best team in program history not only ran through the Big Ten and beat 13 nationally-ranked opponents, but was the No. 1 overall seed in the NCAA Tournament, making it to the national championship game.
  - 2006-07 hockey — The underdogs came out of nowhere to win MSU's third national championship and its first in 21 years, upsetting anyone that came in its path.
  - 1999 football — The school's best team since the 1960s. Boasting 15 future pros, MSU went 10-2, beat Notre Dame, Michigan, Ohio State and Penn State before beating Florida in the Citrus Bowl on a last-second field goal.
  - 2008 men's soccer — The perfect mix of offense and defense came together to form one of the best teams in MSU soccer history. And it came at the perfect time — head coach Joe Baum's last season at the reins of the program.
- Honorable mention: 2000-01 men's basketball, 2000-01 women's golf, 2001 women's cross country, 2002 field hockey, 2006-07 men's golf, 2008-09 men's basketball

🎧 To hear the sports desk talk about its all-decade picks, visit [stateneews.com/multimedia](http://stateneews.com/multimedia).



Joe Baum spent 32 years as the MSU men's soccer team's head coach. On Nov. 2, 2008, he coached his last home game at DeMartin Stadium at Old College Field in front of numerous soccer alumni.

## BEST MOMENT

1. Mateen Cleaves coming out of the tunnel in the 2000 National Championship — A sprained ankle couldn't keep MSU's leader down, as he came back to lead the Spartans to the title.
2. Joe Baum's last home game as men's soccer head coach, 2008 — Spartans win first-ever Big Ten regular season crown in front of standing-room only crowd of MSU soccer alumni.
3. 2009 Final Four — The open practice. The Somersett Mall. Durrell Summers' dunk. The entire experience is one MSU, Detroit and the state of Michigan never will forget.
4. Women's basketball vs. Duke and Coach P. 2009 — A hot crowd rallied behind the Spartans and led them to the biggest upset in program history against No. 1-seed Duke and the coach who abruptly left two years prior.
5. Amp Campbell scoring touchdown on fumble return against Oregon one year after injuring neck, 1999 — Campbell was almost paralyzed in 1998 while trying to tackle an Oregon player. He returned a fumble 85 yards for a touchdown in the fourth quarter of the 1999 game to give the Spartans a victory.

Then-junior defenseman Daniel Vukovic, left, celebrates the Spartans' NCAA National Championship with then-sophomore forward Justin Abdelkader.



Fans from across the state of Michigan traveled to Detroit for the 2009 to cheer on the MSU men's basketball team. The Spartans beat Connecticut in the national semifinal before losing to North Carolina.

## BEST GAME

1. Hockey vs. Boston College, 2007 — It's tough to top winning the national title on a goal with 18.9 seconds to play against the best team in the country. Jeff Lerg reached legendary status at MSU with his performance in this game.
  2. Men's basketball vs. Kentucky, 2005 — A wild back-and-forth affair with a trip to the Final Four on the line. Kentucky sent the game to overtime on a disputed 3-pointer, but MSU weathered the storm and put the Wildcats away in double overtime.
  3. 2000 Citrus Bowl — A crazy season that included a highly publicized coaching change ended with a game-winning 39-yard field goal with no time on the clock.
  4. Football vs. Northwestern, 2006 — A season that went downhill quickly saw a breath of life when the Spartans overcame a 35-point second half deficit to complete the greatest comeback in college football history.
  5. Men's basketball vs. Wisconsin, 2007 — Drew Neitzel put the Spartans on his shoulders for a signature win that will go down as one of the best ever at Breslin Center. Oh, what a Neit.
- Honorable mention: Men's basketball vs. Iowa State, 2000; Hockey vs. Michigan (Cold War), 2001; Football vs. Michigan, 2004; Men's basketball vs. Gonzaga, 2005; Football vs. Notre Dame, 2005