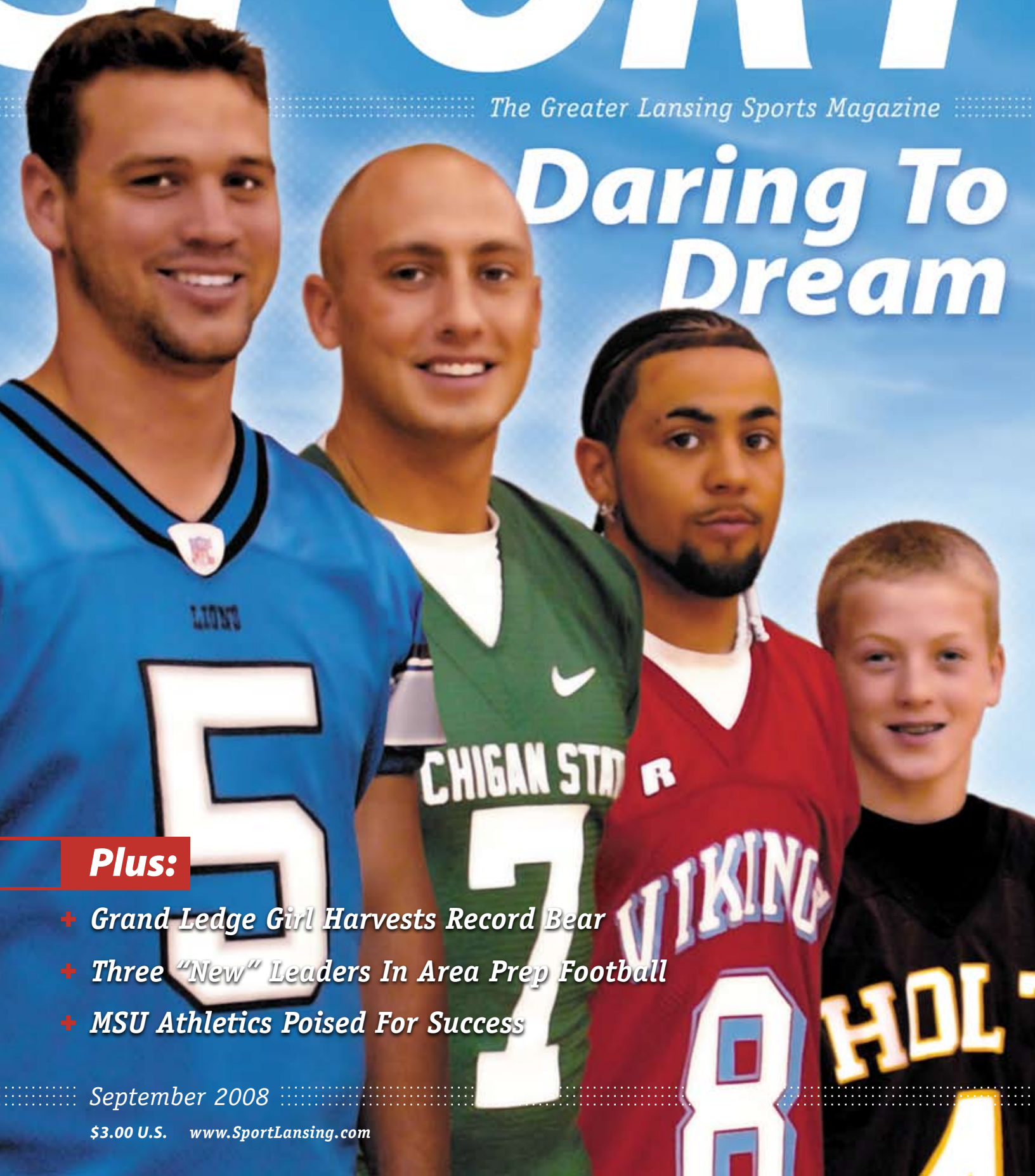


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Doug has been a sports writer and radio broadcaster in various capacities. Beginning in 1996, Doug worked for WBBL-AM and WLAV-FM in Grand Rapids. From 2003 to 2005, Doug was a columnist and reporter covering the Detroit Lions and Michigan State Spartans for Scout.com. In the fall of 2005, Doug moved over to Rivals.com, joining the staff of Spartan Magazine and SpartanMag.com. Doug returned to radio in late 2006, serving as a producer and sports reporter for WILS-AM until May, 2008.



Dr. John H. Braccio

Dr. John H. Braccio has been a well-known psychologist in Greater Lansing for many years. He is the director of Regional Psychological Services, where his children, John and Sara, work with him. He has an active private practice, which includes athletes, and performs in-services and develops self-help programs. Dr. Braccio does weekly segments on psychology on "Ebling and You" Tuesdays at 5:35 p.m. and "The Jack and Tom Show" Saturdays at 10:05 a.m. on 1320 WILS. His website is www.drjohnb.com



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Judi Brown Clarke is the director of multicultural affairs in the College of Communication Arts & Sciences at MSU. The former East Lansing High and MSU standout was the first Big Ten Female Athlete of the Year. She is a five-time national champion, a silver medalist in the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles and a 1987 Sports Illustrated Athlete of the Year.



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Steve Grinczel is an award-winning sports reporter for Booth Newspapers of Michigan and mlive.com. He has covered Michigan State University football and basketball since 1986. Grinczel began his soccer officiating career in 1975 and has more than 1,300 NCAA, high school and USSF games under his belt.

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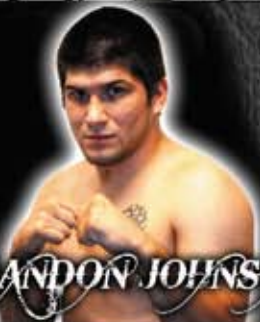


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The Birth Of A Notion

BY JACK EBLING

Congratulations, Mid-Michigan!

You've just given birth to a baby—a publication with great promise. You've inspired the creation of a magazine that will make us smile and think and cry. And you've proven again that this community is all about people.

Our people...Sports people...In Greater Lansing they're one and the same.

When we think of the things that have made this a great place to live, we don't get too far into that paragraph before we get to sports and its heroes—not just National Champions and USA Olympians, but Champion Contributors and Special Olympians.

SPORT, Greater Lansing's Sports Magazine, will profile those heroes each month and go behind the scenes with athletes, coaches, administrators and supporters.

It will introduce us to future standouts and reintroduce some former stars.

From sandlot fields to Spartan Stadium, **SPORT** will go where the stories are. That means it will have to be everywhere. That's only fitting for a region with one heartbeat, the pounding pulse of competition. If you don't believe that, you've never seen

a CAAC showdown or a celebration in Breslin Center. And you've never won a bet with a strike at Pro Bowl or made a birdie for a skin at Eagle Eye or Akers.

In 30 years of covering sports in Mid-Michigan, I've been blessed to do all those things and to realize how lucky we are. If I start to forget, I only need to think about two encounters:

On a trip to Seoul, Korea, with my son, Zach, I couldn't conduct a geography lesson: "Our home?...Ummm...Lansing, Michigan...The Great Lakes!...Oldsmobile?...Hmmm...Magic Johnson." With those two words, Jed Clampett hit a gusher: "MAGIC JOHNSON!...MAGIC FROM LANSING!...LANSING AND MAGIC!"

At its best, Greater Lansing can be all that and more. But only because of its people. People like Vance DeCamp, who've coached us all in the game of life. Inspiring students and athletes for 34 years is reason enough for anyone's salute. Overcoming a near-death experience and the loss of his eyesight, discourtesy of a drunk driver, then running multiple marathons and close to 1,000 miles a year with his tethered guide, Don Call, shows the power of the human spirit.


If we do everything in our power at **SPORT** to tell those stories and spread the

word, the Mid-Michigan sports scene will be a better place. With staff writers like Doug Warren, Chuck Klonke and Andy Brent and photographers like Jim Fordyce, Ceil Heller, Mike Holder and Rob Sumbler, we're ready and willing to tackle that challenge.

It all started with Don Loding at a luncheon meeting with John Young from the Greater Lansing Sports Authority. Add in Chris Holman and the staff of the Greater Lansing Business Monthly and the seeds were sewn. It was John's thoughts, Don's vision and Chris's encouragement that has this MacBook humming today.

And me? Our masthead says I'm the editor. I'll also be found in this space each month and as the writer for a favorite story or two. But somehow I feel like an obstetrician. This baby is healthy and ready to holler. So let us know how you'd like **SPORT** to grow. That's why we have phone numbers and e-mail addresses.

In the community where "One Shining Moment" was written (Thanks, David Barrett!) and where its hero's number hangs from the rafters (one of Mateen's last gifts to Mama Cleaves), this is our moment to shine a light on Mid-Michigan.

Together, let's make that light a galaxy, as Greater Lansing deserves. 

Jack Ebling

SPORT EDITOR

Jack has covered sports and much more as a writer and broadcaster in Mid-Michigan since 1978. A three-time Michigan Sportswriter of the Year, he was a 2006 inductee into the Greater Lansing Area Sports Hall of Fame. He has written five books—four on Michigan State and one on the Detroit Tigers—and has contributed more than 125 pieces for national publications. The former English teacher and coach spent nearly a quarter-century as a beat writer and columnist for the Lansing State Journal and won 21 major writing awards. He became a sports radio host in 2002 and branched into news talk in 2006. Currently, he hosts "Ebling and You" weekday afternoons and co-hosts "The Jack and Tom Show" Saturdays on 1320 WILS in Lansing. A two-time graduate of MSU, he has lived in the area for 36 years and has helped to raise two remarkable young adults.



The Final Fix for the Sports Junkie



JACK EBLING



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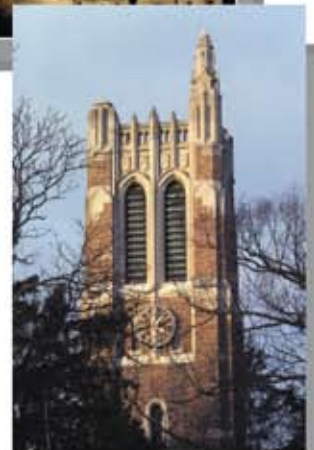
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Something For Everyone

BY DOUG WARREN & SPORT STAFF



Jordyn Wieber, a 13-year-old gymnast from DeWitt, has had a very busy 2008. She won the all-around title at the U.S. Junior Elite National Championship in Boston in June. Earlier, she won the junior all-around at a four-nation event in Italy in March and captured five titles in May at the U.S. Classic in Houston. The eighth-grader and member of Gedder's Twistars Gymnastics Club hopes to make the U.S. Olympic team in 2012.



Michigan State named Eastern Michigan's Jake Boss Jr. as its 16th head baseball coach on July 1, replacing LSU-bound David Grewe. The former Michigan assistant and son of local coaching legend Jake Boss led the Eagles to the NCAA Tournament in his first season in charge in Ypsilanti. On July 29, Boss named Mark Van Ameyde, his aide at EMU, and Billy Gernon, a nine-year head coach at IPFW, as Spartan assistants.



Michigan State junior Jack Newman surprised the field with his victory in the 83rd United States Amateur Public Links Golf Championship on July 19. He defeated UC Irvine's John Chin in the final match at Murphy Creek Golf Course in Aurora, Colo. Newman, who helped the Spartans win their second straight Big Ten title last spring, qualified for The Masters next April with the Public Links crown. He will become the first MSU player to compete in the year's first major in Augusta, Ga.



Samantha Baty, a 16-year old power-lifter from Eaton Rapids, set a world record on July 26 at the AAU Junior Olympics, bench-pressing 215 pounds, smashing the old record of 165 pounds. It is her first world record. She already had 10 state and three American records on her resume. But with

this win, she qualified for world competition, scheduled for November in Las Vegas.



Portland's C.J. Griffin will attend Michigan State to continue his tennis career. The reigning Division 4 No. 1 singles state titlist picked the Spartans over Big Ten champion Ohio State. Griffin is ranked No. 89 nationally and No. 7 in the Midwest for singles players 18 and younger by the United States Tennis Association. He joined Portland High's team midway through last season and never lost a set during his 16-0 championship run.



Shannon O'Connor of DeWitt competed recently in AAU Junior Olympics at Eastern Michigan in Ypsilanti. She ran in the Bantam age group girls division, finishing fifth in the 800-meter run with a time of 2:58.01 and 44th in the 1,500-meter run with a 6:38.31 clocking.



Bobby Albers won his first Greater Lansing Amateur Golf Association All-City Tournament on Aug. 3 at MSU's Forest Akers West Golf Course. The former Okemos High golf and basketball standout finished the 54-hole event with a 3-under-par 213 to grab the \$1,635 purse.



The Lansing Community College softball team won the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) 2007-08 Academic Team of the Year award. Coach Bob Every's squad posted a combined 3.11 team grade-point average.



Al Werbish, who retired after 34 years in 2006, has been rehired as the St. Johns High boys tennis coach. Werbish won 27 conference championships and had just three losing seasons in his first stint with the Redwings.



Michigan State track and field All-American Nicole Bush won the gold medal in the 3,000-meter steeplechase (10:42.17) at July's 2008 North America, Central America and Caribbean Athletic Association (NACAC) Under 23 Track & Field Championships in Toluca, Mexico. Nicole also finished fourth at the recent U.S. Olympic Trials.



Former Michigan State hockey player (1997-2001) Damon Whitten has joined Rick Comley's staff as the Director of Hockey Operations. He arrives from Alaska Anchorage and replaces Keith McKittrick, who joined the staff of the Stanley Cup Champion Detroit Red Wings in July. In his role at MSU, Whitten will be in charge of all facets of the Spartans video operations, as well as all team travel, alumni relations and will serve as a liaison with the Blue Line Club.



Michigan State incoming freshman forward Delvon Roe, Tom Izzo's highest-ranked basketball recruit in five years, underwent successful exploratory surgery on his left knee on Aug. 5. Dr. Michael Shingles performed the procedure, removing small particles of cartilage while Roe continued his rehab from a more serious operation on the other knee. He could be cleared to practice with the Spartans in mid-September.



Former MSU President Cecil Mackey and his wife, Clare, were winners in mixed doubles at the Michigan Senior Olympics in August and are eligible to represent the state in the National Senior Olympics next summer in California. Among the other area entrants were Mike Tsai, Elaine Hatton, Maggi Mossholder, Clare and Joyce Goff, Jack Shingleton, Ray Burdett, Willie Vinson, Doug Dancer, Meredith Moshkauer and

Thomas Almer in tennis and former East Lansing High football and track coach Jeff Smith in cycling.



The Lansing Center will play host to the Second Annual Fall Into Fitness Weekend, including the Capital City River Run and the Healthy and Fit Magazine Expo, on Sept. 27-28. Saturday's activities include the Capital City Kids Mile and the Capital City Kids Dash as well as free interactive health and fitness activities for the entire family. Sunday's race day festivities include the Capital City River Run Half Marathon as well as the CCRR 5K run/walk. For more information regarding the Fall into Fitness Weekend visit www.lansingfallintofitness.com and for information and registration for all races visit www.ccriverrun.org



The Michigan State men's basketball team will open the 2008 Old Spice Classic against the Maryland Terrapins on Thursday, Nov. 27, at 7 p.m. on ESPN2. The eight-team tournament will be held on Thanksgiving weekend at Disney's Wide World of Sports Complex near Orlando, Fla. The winner of the Michigan State-Maryland contest will face the winner of the game between Oklahoma State and Gonzaga. Other first round-games include Tennessee against Siena and Wichita State against Georgetown.



The NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Committee has selected Michigan State's Jack Breslin Student Events Center as one of the 17 additional sites for the expanded 2009 Division I Women's Basketball Championship. The games are set to take place from Saturday, March 21, through Tuesday, March 24, 2009.

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The Art of Soccer Officiating

Common-Sense Interpretations Mean Everything

BY STEVE GRINCZEL

It can be savagely panned and excessively praised: *On the same play, by members of the same team, and almost at the same time.*

Several years ago, while refereeing a men's Division III college match on the west side of the state, I observed a fairly significant tripping foul by a member of the home team near midfield in front of the visitors' bench. The visiting coach, known for his volatility, was instantly livid but my instinct told me to hold off on penalizing the obvious transgression.

The more I delayed to see what was going to develop, the angrier and louder the coach became.

Finally, I yelled "play on!"—universal soccer speak indicating the foul has been acknowledged but that whistling the play dead and awarding a free kick would result in a more favorable outcome for the team that committed the foul than the wronged party.

The play unfolded even better than I envisioned. After gaining some 50 yards of field position with a series of nifty passes, the visiting team shot and scored.

Had I given in to the protesting coach's wishes by awarding his team a direct free kick near midfield, he would have been happier at that moment. It would also have deprived his team of an important goal.

In 33 years (and counting) of soccer officiating, I have encountered nothing quite as

rewarding as an artful "play on" that results in a goal, especially when it strikes dumb the coaches, players and fans who were chewing my ears off seconds earlier.

The concept of awarding advantage has applications in other sports, as well. Football traces its roots to soccer through its option of declining a penalty if the result of the play is better than a 5- or 10-yard walk-off. In hockey, the delayed penalty can provide the aggrieved team with a super-advantage if it can get its goalie off the ice in favor of a sixth attacker before the offending team regains possession of the puck.

The sport that drives me absolutely crazy, however, is basketball. Referees routinely stop the game to call petty fouls that wipe out what would be easy or certain baskets.

This is even more maddening in the final minutes of a close game when the constant calling of touch or innocuous reach-in fouls repeatedly gives the advantage to the cheating team by:

Possibly taking points off the board, preventing the winning team from running out the clock and often putting the other team's worst free-throw shooter at the line in a pressure-packed situation.


Memphis might have won the national championship if the advantage clause was in play against Kansas.

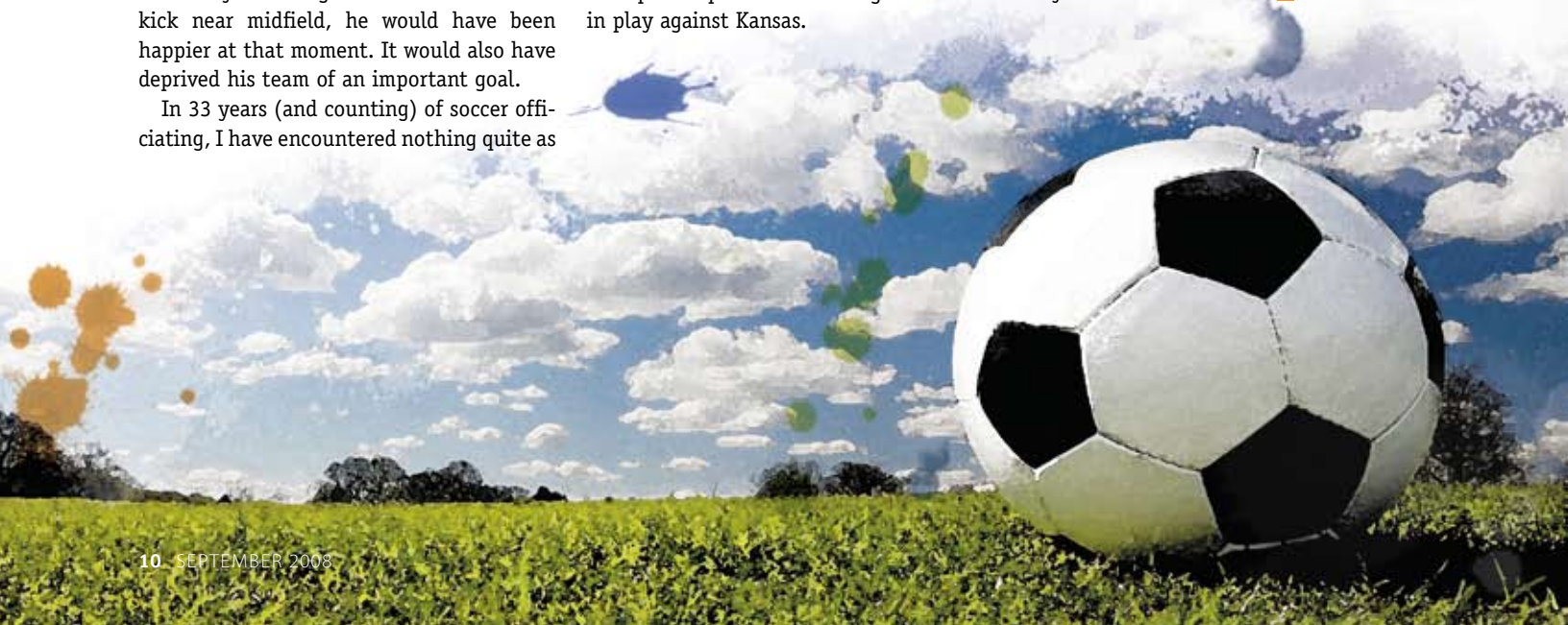
In soccer, flow of the game is everything. We are instructed to base our foul calls on annoyance vs. hindrance. If the player isn't being stopped from what he's trying to do, play usually should be allowed to continue. It should be stopped and a free kick awarded only when his effort is thwarted with a hold, push or a trip, or misconduct is involved.

I believe basketball is the sport that gave us "no blood, no foul," but playground justice apparently has no place on college basketball's stage.

I once sat next to Hank Nichols, the recently retired NCAA coordinator of officials, on a shuttle bus during the NCAA Tournament in Atlanta. I suggested that college basketball would be better if the referees had the discretion to ignore what we soccer refs call "trifling fouls"—especially those that negate a field goal—by applying the advantage.

I was stunned when Nichols said they did have that prerogative. I asked why they never impose it, and I believe his answer was something to the effect of, well, they should.

For whatever reasons, it isn't put into practice. But if I'm a basketball coach, I want the ability to decline the penalty or hear the official yell "play on" if that's in my team's best interest. 





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Exercise: From 11 to 70

Everyone Has Motivation To Get Moving

BY DR. JEFFREY KOVAN

Summer often means warm weather, vacations on the lake, barbecues and the opportunity to get out and exercise.

Exercise? That's right!...I said exercise.

Many may see this as a cruel form of torture, by no means having any place interrupting the joys of summer. Others become overwhelmed with the need to be active.

While spending a rainy week on vacation in Vermont this summer, I had plenty of time to reflect on exactly why we exercise.

In brutal heat with the start of two-a-day football practices in August or jogging along a frigid, windy road in January, we still push on. But why? Why do we, the truly obsessed, always make time for exercise?

Of course there are the others, the exercise haters. Many find exercise as another chore in the midst of hectic schedules, family obligations and daily chaos.

We all live there to some degree. But why can some make exercise a priority, while others dread the mention of it?

As I looked across beautiful Lake Champlain and the Green Mountains of Vermont after another rainy, muddy run, I asked myself, "What keeps me running?"

I decided to ask that question to others and see what motivated them. A family on vacation provides warmth, comfort, honesty and a small research sample to ask the question, "Why do you exercise?"

First, a few of the medical recommendations:

The American College of Sports Medicine, in a recent position statement regarding aerobic exercise and cardiovascular health, increased its requirement to 30 minutes, three to five days a week.

Three intervals of 10 minutes will suffice for those that can't complete a full 30 minutes at once. A brisk walk or jog, swimming, cycling, treadmills and steppers are all acceptable methods to get moving and increase that heart rate.

Target heart rates help achieve a higher level of fitness and weight loss. Consult your

physician with any concerns and determine which target heart rate fits your current level of fitness and desire.

Strength training at least twice a week has also been recommended. Free weights, machines and exercise bands, at home or in a gym, all satisfy this requirement. Training should focus on the large muscle groups: the chest and back, the arms and legs and the core muscles of the abdomen and pelvis.

So what did my family survey reveal? Regardless of age, from 11 to 70, exercise provided an emotional release and an ability to refocus on the day at hand.


It provided health benefits to control and stabilize long-standing diabetes for one person. For others, it provided an avenue for fun and friendship with teammates.

Exercise created "a wonderful high" and a

healthier sense of living. It allowed for the simple things, "being able to tie my shoes, climb the stairs and touch my toes—things that many my age can't do."

It made another "feel better, sleep better and work better." Finally, "Running brought hope, strength, insight and clarity, while pushing life forward and closer to nature."

Each description provided a personal sense of being. Exercise created the ability to see beyond the moment and relieve the tensions of the past, even if for just a brief time. The method of exercise may have differed. The experience was the same.

A modification of the quote from Ronald Rook in the April 2008 Runner's World sums it up best for me: "I do not exercise to add days to my life. I exercise to add life to my days." 



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Jodi Burgess
Vice President, Marketing
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Respect Your Team, Yourself

Fans Can Be Winners And Losers, Too

BY DR. JOHN H. BRACCIO

Lack of civility at sporting events began long before the soccer mayhem around the world and parents fighting each other at hockey and basketball games.

I can imagine Stone Age people fighting over who could throw stones the furthest.

As I was writing this article, I read that three Chicago Cub fans face felony charges after a Chicago White Sox fan was allegedly beaten so severely he lost his right eye.

Try to imagine that this happened at a themed "Sesame Street" birthday party!

It is critical we respect the rights of others. The boorish and sometimes drunken fan blasting a coach or a player on the team is a distraction and great annoyance to those who come to the game for excitement in a wholesome atmosphere.

I have talked to parents who've heard their children being screamed and yelled at by fans totally unaware of their presence. Even worse, some couldn't have cared less.

At the Champs Sports Bowl in Orlando, the father of Michigan State quarterback Brian Hoyer overheard a fan in the bathroom complaining about his son's play in the most derogatory terms, then introduced himself.

When you criticize, remember you could be talking to a parent who loves his or her child and may be hurting more than you because of some mistakes on the field.

Parents bring their children to sporting events for family fun and to be in an upbeat, respectful atmosphere. Crude, insulting fans are modeling very inappropriate behaviors for all children, including their own.

People must realize that sporting events are for the entertainment and fun of all involved. We need to take into account the needs and desires of others.

There are few things more embarrassing to a child than to have a parent rage at him or her or at other players, coaches or officials. It demeans the coaches, the child, the team and, most of all, the person doing it.

Every year I work with at least two or three parents in therapy who have been

"ordered" by the family to see me to help overcome their behaviors.

I remember a very embarrassing moment when a parent in a high school soccer game was thrown out of the stadium by the referee. The parent and coach were told the game would not continue until he left. That type of a thing is hopelessly inappropriate and should never happen.


A few rules for parents to follow:

- 1** **Respect your child by not making a fool of yourself** and having this reflect back on him or her.
- 2** **Be supportive of the team** and coaches publicly. As with politics and religion, too many of us believe we are experts in coaching and too ready to criticize the coaches.
- 3** **Recognize that the coaches have a very tough job** – at many levels, for little or no compensation.
- 4** **Be a model that recognizes the importance of not just trying to win** but to play with integrity and fair play.

I admit to being a Detroit Lions, Michigan State University and Lansing Catholic fan. I hope all of you have some teams you follow and support. It is good mental health to have an allegiance and identify with community teams.

There also can be good-natured and maybe even outlandish fun between rivals. The critical elements are to be reasonable, well-behaved and sensitive to all involved. This is not always easy to do in victory or defeat.

Most fans and parents are wonderful. They recognize the benefits of playing the game. Winning is important and good on the day it occurs and for a few days afterward, but good sportsmanship prepares us for a lifetime.

Let the games begin! 



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25 SPORTS

ONE PLAYBOOK

New Spartan Strategy: Teamwork

BY JACK EBLING

As much as any school in the nation, Michigan State needs to say "We are one!" before it can shout "We're No. 1!"

That first phrase has finally been spoken.

Together...with feeling.

For almost four decades, the Spartans have struggled to be all they can be in collegiate athletics. Some would say the same is true for MSU as an institution.

For all the great moments, for all the tremendous work by individuals, there hasn't been one coordinated effort with everyone pulling in the same direction.

Suddenly, all egos have been checked at the door. And if they handle it right, the Spartans are positioned to do things they haven't done since John Hannah ran the university and kept opponents on the run with political clout and personality.

For once along the banks of the Red Cedar, continuity is more than a dream. It's a real possibility.

So is cohesion. The MSU president, director of athletics and marquee head coaches are all on the move. Their GPS points forward, relentlessly so.

And if the Spartans lose a football game to Michigan or Ohio State, if they fall in basketball to Purdue or Wisconsin, one thing is clear.

Their toughest opponent is no longer themselves.

"The best thing Michigan State has going for it now is that this great university is united, from President Lou Anna K. Simon to

Mark Hollis, the athletics director, all the way to the Board of Trustees," said Hall of Fame broadcaster George Blaha, who saw the Spartans' first Big Ten football game in 1953.

"Everyone is behind the head football coach, Mark Dantonio. I think you can say that this whole program, from top to bottom, is headed in the right direction."

It's such a simple concept. But as much as any institution in the country, MSU has been plagued by instability and infighting.

That internal carnage has ended, or at least stopped for now. How long we'll be able to say that is anyone's guess. At least the Spartans aren't starting a season with weapons of self-destruction.

"No question, our worst enemy has been ourself," said arguably the school's most valuable employee and No. 1 team player, Tom Izzo, beginning his 14th season as head basketball coach and his 26th in the program.

"The big thing is to pull together and not do the dumb things, the embarrassing things that kill you.

If ever there's a time to really make it go here, especially with Michigan a little unsure in football, this is our chance. I'd say we have about a three- or four-year window to make it go."

Three or four years?

MSU has changed football uniforms more often than that.

The Spartans have had 10 head football coaches in the past 36 seasons. And of the last nine leaders, only one, George Perles, has completed year number five.

In contrast, some believe that Michigan

has moved in just one direction with one game plan since 1969, "The Bo-Mo-Llo Era," with Schembechler, Moeller and Carr in charge for all but one of the program's 40 consecutive winning seasons.

That comparison, inevitable as it may be, is a step in the wrong direction for MSU. Before the Spartans can say they belong in the same discussion with the Wolverines on Saturday afternoons, they have to pull even with the Iowas, Wisconsin and Illinois of the Big Ten. And they have to stop losing to themselves.

Since the start of the 1967 season, MSU has finished ahead of U-M in the league standings exactly once. The Spartans have a Rose Bowl victory to show for that stunning effort 21 years ago. But they're just 8-30 against the Wolverines since the '70s.

MSU has been one play from victory in three of the last four games in the series, losing in triple-overtime in 2005, in overtime in 2006 and in a bizarre finish last season after leading by 10 points midway through the fourth quarter.

"The best thing Michigan State has going for it now is that this great university is united..."

-George Blaha, Hall of Fame broadcaster

Dantonio understands the rivalry as well as anyone since Perles and saw Ohio State turn the tables on U-M while he was a Buckeyes assistant from 2001-03. He understands that winning consistently is a process, not a prayer.

"We have a brand new facility in football

and a lot of excitement," said Dantonio, entering his second season as the Spartans' head coach and his eighth in East Lansing. "We'll take some steps forward and a step or two back. But as I said before, I think this state is getting greener. I really believe that. If we do things the right way and put the team first, we have a great chance to win at Michigan State."

People have often referred to MSU as "The Sleeping Giant." If that's true, it's time to stop hitting the snooze alarm and to hop out of bed before it's too late.

"We're trying to wake up that giant," Hollis said at his first Football Media Day in his dream job. "We're surrounded by Notre Dame, Michigan and Ohio State, three of the most revered programs in the country. We deal with that every day. And we compete against the team down the road every day on every playing surface imaginable. That will continue. But our biggest goal is to win championships, to be in the Rose Bowl and the Final Four."

The Spartans have played in Pasadena just once since January 1, 1966, but have been in 11 straight NCAA men's basketball tournaments and reached the Final Four four times in the past nine years.

Perhaps it's revealing to look at men's

basketball and hockey, programs with multiple national titles over the past three decades, and see what continuity can do.

MSU has had three head coaches in basketball in the last 39 seasons (Gus Ganakas, Jud Heathcote and Izzo). And it has had three hockey leaders in the last 57 years (Amo Bessone, Ron Mason and Rick Comley).

Compare that stability with coup d'etat-style turnover in the president's office, the A.D. chair and the football program. With nine presidents, 11 A.D.s and 10 head football coaches in the past 40 years, MSU has averaged a change in one of those jobs every 1.4 seasons.

"It's not just here," Simon said. "If you look at programs around the country, continuity is very important. But it's more than continuity. It's stability with the right values. We've had that in basketball but not football since the Biggie (Munn)-Duffy era."

Dantonio has never been anywhere longer than the six years he spent as an MSU assistant. But he understands that winning programs aren't pre-fab housing. They're constructed with blueprints (okay, greenprints, in this case), solid foundations and carefully laid bricks.

"Continuity breeds success," Dantonio said, recalling the Spartans' 10 wins in his

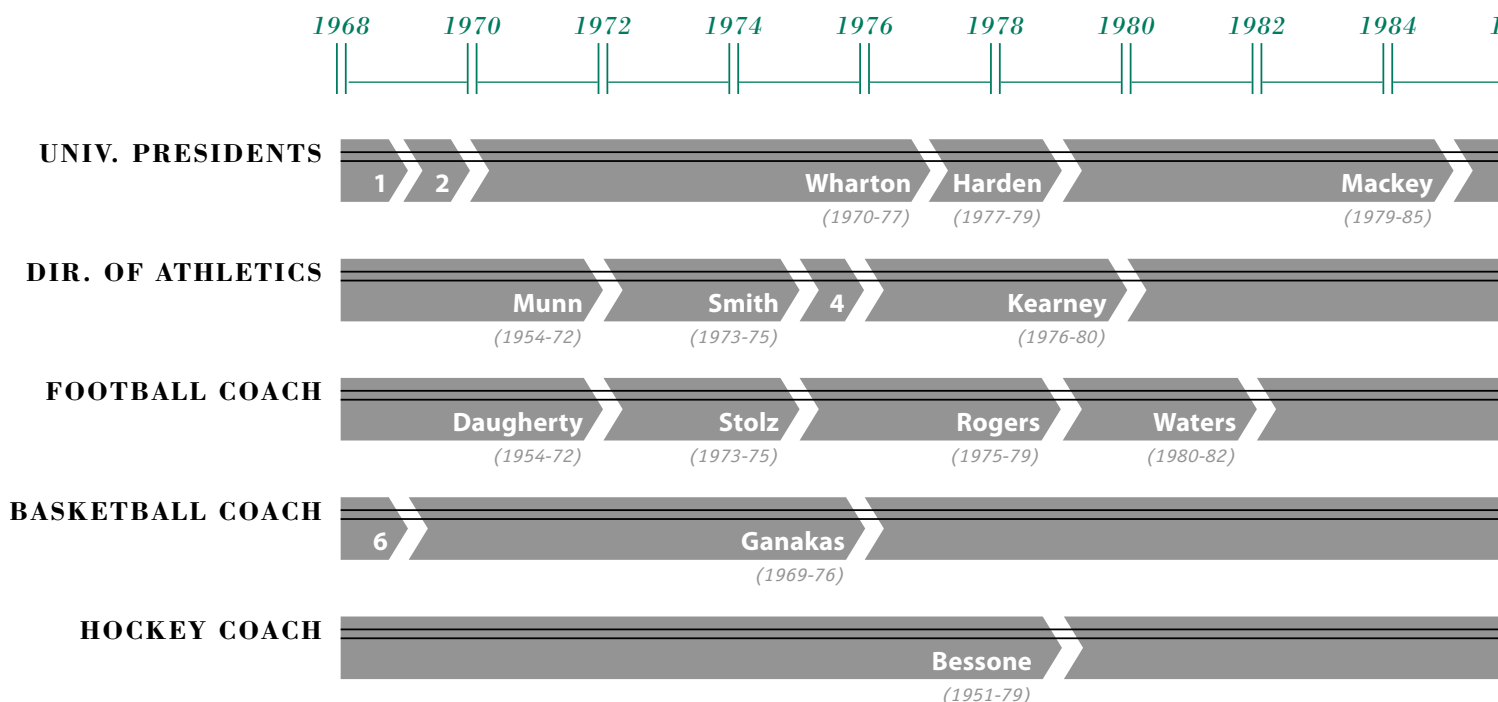
fifth year as a Nick Saban assistant and the Buckeyes' national title in year two under Jim Tressel. "If people have been in place, you're not teaching them what they need to do. You're critiquing what has already been done. The longer a coach is in a program, the better it is. And we've been very fortunate at Cincinnati and MSU. This will be the fifth year we've been together as a complete defensive staff."

With nearly twice the tenure of any other Big Ten basketball coach, Izzo can understand that. He also knows the danger of knee-jerk hirings and firings and environments that have driven others away.

"If that standard had been applied everywhere, Mike Krzyzewski would've been fired at Duke. And Dean Smith wouldn't have lasted at North Carolina. But I don't think that's any different than any walk of life. When Lee Iacocca says the key to leadership is getting everyone on the same page, he's right. And when you constantly have new game plans, you make bad decisions."

One of the best decisions any boss can make is to hire qualified, committed people, convey the expectations and guidelines, then get out of the way. Micromanaging from the top in athletics is a sure path to microscopic success.

SPARTAN TRANSITIONS 1968-2008



"There's a major policy framework the board and the president have to provide," Simon said, insisting she'd rather be a supporter of the Spartans than a surrogate A.D. "We approve the hiring of some coaches, the same way we do with deans. That's not as unusual as it's made out to be. But I got a chance to work with Mark Hollis during the search for a new football coach. That was when I knew what he could do."

For all his creativity and success as a promoter, Hollis wasn't a cinch to be promoted (ideally, with power) until he led the push to hire Dantonio, with input from Izzo. More importantly, he did that by keeping the necessary people informed instead of involved in areas beyond their reach.

"The most important thing is communication," Hollis said. "That sounds trite. But as we move forward, we have to make sure the president and, through the president, the board understands where we're trying to go. If we're told, 'Go in a different direction,' you have to respect that leadership. But if you make sure they understand why you're trying to get where you're going, you can keep the guessing out of it. That hasn't always been the case."

When the MSU Board of Trustees has been at odds with the president, when the

president hasn't respected or trusted his A.D. or when the A.D. has undermined or undervalued a head coach, the results have been predictably chaotic.

Success in the Big Ten is never easy. But it isn't as difficult as the Spartans have made it seem. It takes trustees who can trust the chief executive, a president who doesn't have to call plays, an A.D. who makes things easier, not harder, and head coaches who aren't head cases.


With that group, Team MSU, in place for the foreseeable future, it may not matter who gets the longest ovation or the largest paycheck. Glory in collegiate athletics isn't a flashlight. It's a floodlamp. And it sure beats being in the dark all the time, as a lot of people still are about the Spartans' potential.

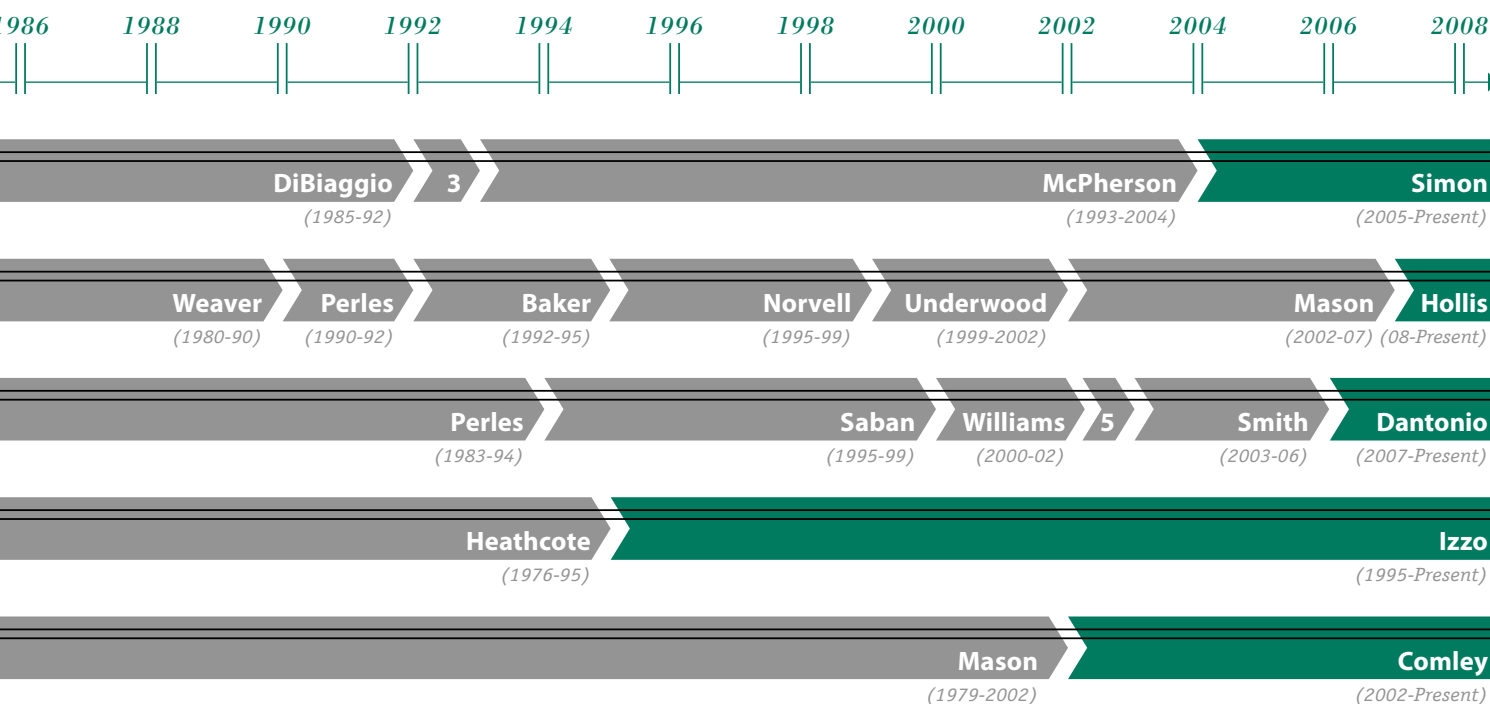
"For the first time in a long time, we have a group of head coaches and administrators who want to be here and nowhere else," Izzo said. "They grew up wanting to be here and went through the development it took to get here. Sure, we've had national championships. But this is the first time in a long time that we've had an A.D. hired for all the right reasons. When I talked to Krzyzewski, he'd had two A.D.s. The first one hired him and was there 22 years. Mike got to pick the second one."

At some point, Hollis will have to pick a head coach in one of the three major revenue sports. From an age standpoint, if nothing else, that figures to be in hockey. But Hollis knows anything can happen at any time. And after filling the head baseball job this summer, with considerable help from senior associate A.D. Shelley Appelbaum, he knows how important having the right people can be.

"As you look at who we have on board right now and collaboration between Coach Izzo, Coach Dantonio, President Simon and myself, you'll find that we cross over quite often to help in other areas," Hollis said. "When the president needs something on the academic side, all three of us extend a hand and say, 'Where can I help?' And when you see someone like Tom, who could be a rock star, be as gracious as he has been, especially with Mark, that helps everyone."

Two more wins in the next Final Four would help the Spartans even more. But so would a Rose Bowl win for the second time in 53 years.

We might even see some genuine embraces away from the cameras and hear the "MSU Fight Song" sung in one key. 



- 1 John Hannah (1941-69) 2 Walter Adams (1969-70) 3 Gordon Guyer (1992-93) 4 Jack Shingleton (1975-76) 5 Morris Watts (1992) 6 John Benington (1965-69)



BEAR MAXIMUM

Grand Ledge Girl Bags Record Canadian Bear

BY DOUG WARREN



Autumn in Michigan means many things; *back-to-school days, baseball's post-season and football's prime time as holidays approach. As temperatures begin their descent, summer's green leaves turn radiant orange, red, yellow, then finally brown after falling to the ground below.*

For many Michiganders, fall means hunting. For Grand Ledge's Marisa Covert, last fall meant breaking a family tradition and becoming the first female to join the Covert males on their annual hunt in North Branch.

But Marisa wasn't satisfied with just being there. She wanted to bag a deer.

And she did. Twice. At age 14.

A week later, the young lady who had nearly been left home came back to Mid-Michigan with more deer to her credit than anyone in camp.

"The girl got two bucks, dad got one and everyone else had zero," her father Paul said, beaming with pride.

For young hunters, the thrill of bagging their first deer – and the bragging rights that go with it – is as strong a sensation as they will ever feel in the wild. If a youngster is lucky enough and good enough to fulfill that dream on his or her first hunting trip, it makes those memories even sweeter.

However, for Marisa Covert, North Branch is only part of her hunting story.

Earlier this year, Marisa joined her father on a trek to Northern Saskatchewan to bow hunt black bear.

Once again, Marisa wasn't just along for the ride.

From 12 feet up a tree stand, with a 40-pound compound bow, Marisa shot and killed a 435-pound black bear from 15 yards, a record for a female in Canada.

"It was about to rain," Marisa said. "It was windy and got real quiet. The boar (male bear) was sitting. And the sow (female bear) was leaving. So he was going to leave, too. I'd already passed up another big bear, because I couldn't get a clean shot at it. Once he pulled his right shoulder forward, moving his shoulder blade out of the way, that gave me a chance."

At first, Marisa wasn't sure that she had even hit the bear.

"Our guide filmed the shot," Marisa said. "She thought it was a bad shot. We reviewed the tape like 80 times. It didn't look like the arrow got good penetration. So we thought it was a bad shot. We were



📷 **Marisa Covert poses with her record, 435-pound black bear.**

going to come back the next morning and try and find the bear."

As they were heading back for the night, Marisa saw the bear on the ground.

"I thought it was still alive," she said. "So I started yelling, 'Bear! Bear!' But it was dead."

When the opportunity comes to shoot, many hunters can't close the deal. Anyone who has spent any time in the woods knows that. When lining up the sights on a trophy kill, a pounding heart, shallow breathing and sweaty palms come with the territory.

"It's a rush that is different than other sports. You're freaking out. It's hard to describe," Marisa said. "The bow had a 40-pound draw, so I was shaking from having to hold the shot."

For Paul Covert, hunting is a family tradition. And he likes to let his children get a taste of it at an early age.

"When I was 3, my dad bought me a little bow," Marisa recalled. "It was pretty cool."

It was clear early on that Paul's daughter would be a part of that tradition, as he watched her stalk deer around the house.

"She'd sneak out there almost every night," Paul said. "I'd see Marisa crawling out to the feeders on her belly so she could get a look at the deer. The deer would all be standing around, looking at her. Sometimes, she would be hiding under a pine tree."

So how close did Marisa get to a deer in the backyard?

"About 3 feet," Marisa said with a laugh. "I was lying on the ground, and it just kept coming closer and closer to me."

She's as close to being A Girl for All Seasons as anyone in Greater Lansing could be. Outdoors...indoors...no doors can keep her away.

"I play softball in the spring. I ride horses mostly in the summer. And I'm on the bowling team at school," Marisa said.

So is Marisa a naturally gifted shot? Or is there a lot of hard work behind her success?

"I never really practice with my gun, because I'm pretty good with it," Marisa said. "I practice with my bow a little more often. As the season gets closer, my dad makes me practice more."

"When it gets closer to the season, I like Marisa and her brother to practice every day," Paul said. "Around Labor Day, I want them to do it every day. It doesn't have to be long, just 10 or 15 minutes a day. It's more to build your muscles and your muscle memory. Sometimes, you have to hold your shot a long time while the target moves into a good sightline."

Marisa already has another adventure in her sights.

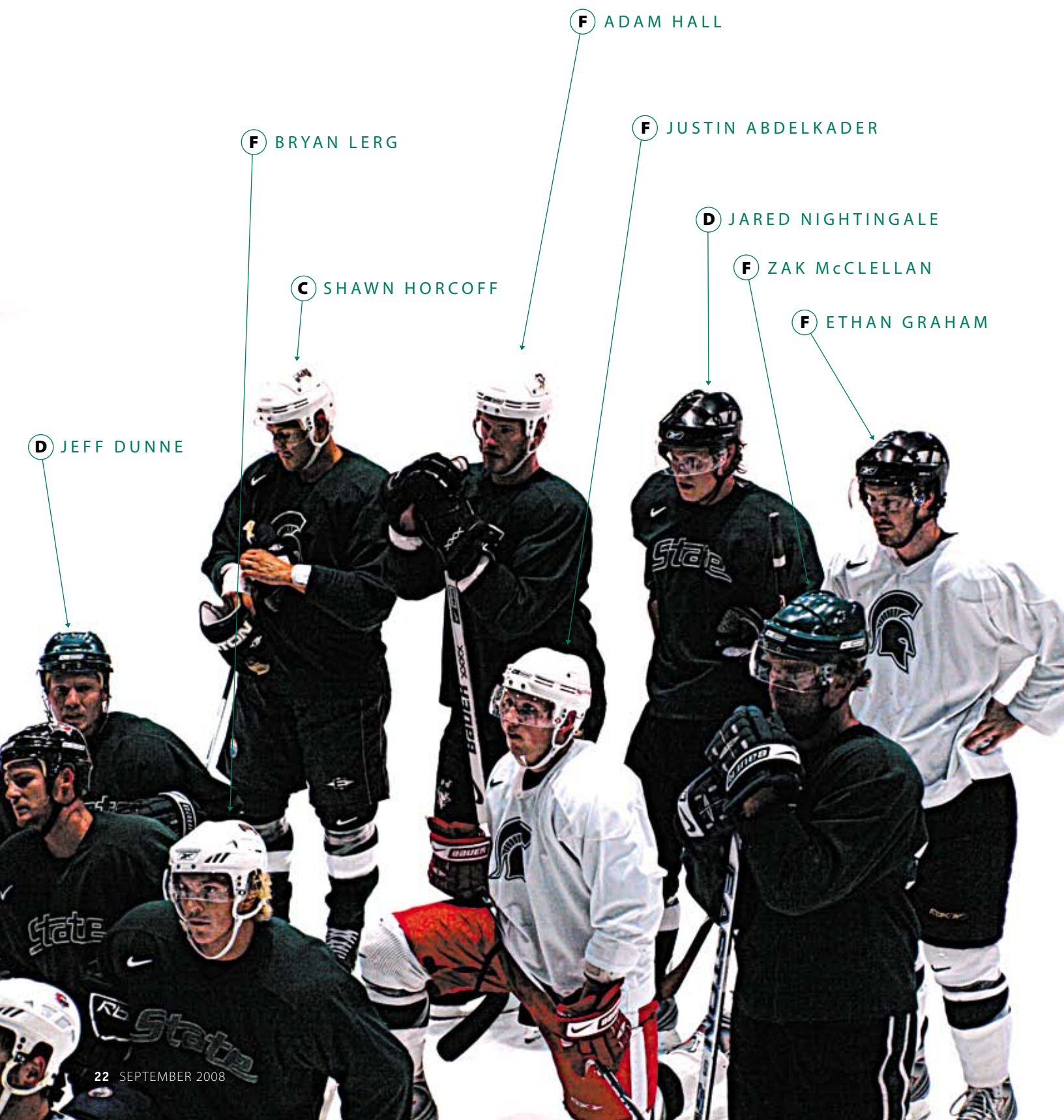
"I'd like to hunt elk," Marisa said. "I'd like to ride a horse up into the mountains and do that. That would be cool."

No cooler than the icy composure she showed in Saskatchewan or the memory of winning another game. 🏹

Spartans Stick Together

MSU's Hockey Pros Return To Their Roots

BY RICARDO COONEY



F ADAM HALL

F JUSTIN ABDELKADER

D JARED NIGHTINGALE

F ZAK MCCLELLAN

F ETHAN GRAHAM

F BRYAN LERG

C SHAWN HORCOFF

D JEFF DUNNE

Mention the Michigan State- *Michigan hockey rivalry and steer clear of Jason Muzzatti.*

The former MSU goalie once squared off against a U-M netminder in a game at Joe Louis Arena. So when he heard a rumor eight summers ago that another ex-Spartan had traveled to Ann Arbor to train with some Wolverines and prepare for their pro seasons, like any good goalie, he had to make a save.

That's when Muzzatti approached the MSU hockey program about a week-long, pro-style camp that would help Green and White alums get a jump-start on training.

Ever since, for one week in late summer, a group of about 20 former players have run through organized drills, workouts and scrimmages to get them ready for their seasons in the NHL, minor leagues or European play.

For many, the chance to get a head start on what can be a grueling preseason is invaluable. Take the case of former Spartan Shawn Horcoff.

An MSU standout from 1996-2000, Horcoff will begin his eighth season with the Edmonton Oilers and try to bounce back from shoulder surgery in February. Without any sustained workouts for months, the intense sessions with Muzzatti and Spartan assistants Tom Newton and Brian Renfrew were vital.

"It's a really good opportunity for me to get my legs back underneath me," said Horcoff, who recently signed a six-year extension to stay in Alberta. "It has been a good six months since I've skated. So to come out here, where the tempo is always high, and practice for an hour is nice.

"I think that's where you really get your tempo, your feel and your timing back. And scrimmaging at the end really helps you get in shape. I wish it was more than a week, to tell you the truth."

After an 82-game regular season, players can go hard until June if they make it to the Stanley Cup Finals. But August is bonding time for ex-Spartans who don't get a chance to spend quality time together while with their respective teams.

While a text message or a quick phone call can serve as a "Hello, how are you doing?" returning together to the place where dreams grew into reality is therapeutic. It grounds athletes who deal with the pressure of performing at a top level each day.

"It gives them a step up on their conditioning and timing," said Newton, an assistant under former coach Ron Mason and current leader Rick Comley. "And it's real big for

our program to get these guys back so they still feel they're part of this and are a huge part of our success. It's just great to have them back in town."

While drills concentrate on passing, skating and defense, they also help top goalies like Lansing native and Hobey Baker Award winner Ryan Miller, who just signed a five-year deal to stay with the Buffalo Sabres.

"I feel like it's a great place to train. We have a history with everybody at the rink here," said Miller, who will begin his sixth season with Buffalo. "You can always find ice time when you need it, advice, somebody to skate with or somebody to help you out with some drills. Next week I have a goalie coach coming down. And I always find guys to shoot, so it's ideal for me."

So ideal that Miller chooses to return to his hometown for the personal touch he wouldn't get if he traveled elsewhere to work with a trainer or coach.

"It's good because this week is challenging," Miller said. "It's our first real tests five days in a row. Two hours on the ice with some regimented drills makes you focus a little more. For me, it's my balance on the ice. For these guys, they can work on some passing. Early on in the summer, you just kind of flip the puck around, get a breakaway and see what happens."

While training is the most important part, reconnecting with old teammates and getting to know guys who played before or after you doesn't hurt either.

Muzzatti calls the return of such a diverse group of players something special that not many Division I college hockey programs can claim.

"It's not a money-making thing, just a pride thing," said Muzzatti, who played five years in the NHL and finished his career in the last Winter Olympics with Italy. "We tried to make it organized and turn it into a bit of a tradition, which it has become. It has worked out great. It passes on the tradition of the program to the young guys. It also shows that the work ethic we're known for in the pros starts here. It's a brotherhood."

So much so that other players say they

are aware of the reputation that MSU players carry into the pro ranks.

"In hockey circles, everyone knows what Michigan State hockey is about," said for-




"...it's a great place to train. We have a history with everybody at the rink here..."

-Ryan Miller, Lansing Native

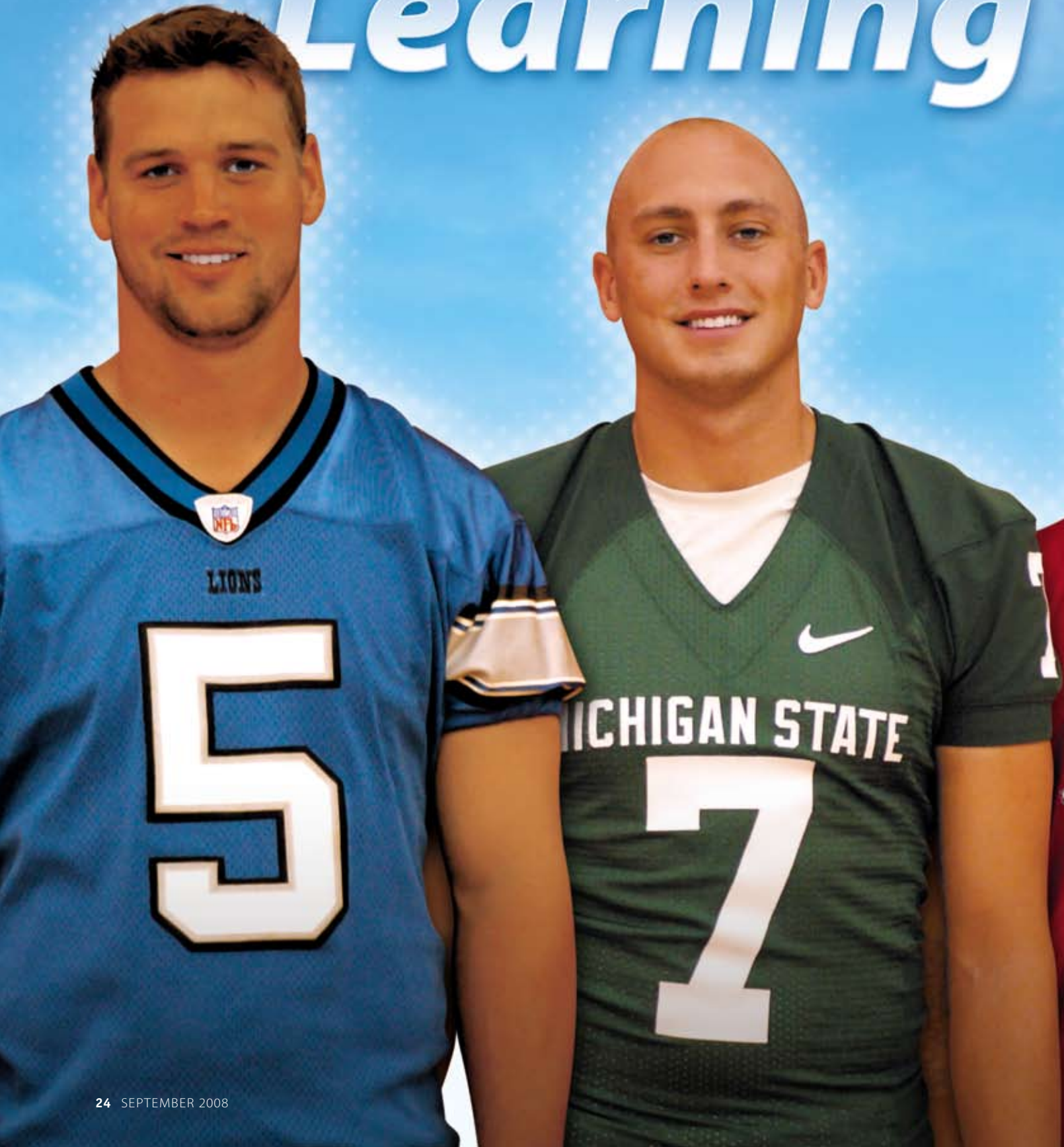
mer Spartan captain Jim Slater, entering his fourth season with the Atlanta Thrashers organization. "With the players who came before me and will come after me with the great talent that steps through these doors, once you make it to the NHL, you definitely have a lot of friends. People know it's like a family here."

For Adam Hall, who just completed a Stanley Cup runner-up run with the Pittsburgh Penguins, then signed with the Tampa Bay Lightning, the numbers that show up in August only legitimize the reputation MSU's players have around the NHL.

"Every year Michigan State does such a great job of having a good, structured environment," Hall said. "For whatever reason, every guy they bring through here has such a tremendous work ethic, no matter what the age. I think that's why a lot of the pros come back here 10 years later, 15 years later.

"Guys stick around, buy homes and start families here. It's just a mentality that's kind of grown here at Michigan State, where work ethic is number one. No matter what skill level, if your work ethic is better, you're going to make everybody around you better." 

Learning



To Lead

BY JACK EBLING



**The level of competition changes.
The challenge remains the same.**

From middle school to high school to college to pro football, success always starts with a dream. With more helping hands than an octopus, the best prospects develop their skills and outwork, not just outplay, their opponents.

For quarterbacks, that means leading their teammates and turning life's lemons into lemonade. Bad snaps, missed blocks, blown routes and, yes, errant throws are the enemy. Intelligence and inner strength are a true leader's best friend.

That much was clear from a round-table chat with Detroit Lions second-year QB and second-round draft pick Drew Stanton; his successor under center at Michigan State, Brian Hoyer; walking highlight tape Reggie Williams of CAAC favorite Lansing Everett and a glimpse at the future in seventh-grade standout Austin Kent.

*Before training camp began, but long after their preparation started, Stanton, Hoyer, Williams and young Master Kent sat and spoke about leadership and championships with **SPORT** editor and columnist Jack Ebling:*

SPORT: "Drew, do you remember the first time you dreamed the dream of being a pro football player?"

STANTON: "No, actually I don't. As a little kid, you look up to your idols and hope you can be there with them some day. But I don't think there was an isolated instance. It was always there in the back of my mind. I always said, 'I'd love that opportunity.' And

now that I'm living that dream, it has been unbelievable."

SPORT: "Brian, you might have that opportunity, too. First, you have to do what Drew did and lead the team as a senior at Michigan State. But the two of you have something else in common. You were both outstanding baseball pitchers."

HOYER: "Yeah, Drew talked about not remembering the first time he wanted to be a pro football player. I remember wanting to be a professional baseball player. So playing big-time college football is a dream that's somewhat new for me. Still, the opportunity to play in front of 80,000 people on Saturday afternoons is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. And I'm going to have as much fun as I can."

SPORT: "Reggie, you have a big opportunity at Everett. You have a chance to lead your team to a CAAC championship and impress enough people to reach the next level. Can you talk about your priorities and focus?"

WILLIAMS: "I want to come out this year and show my teammates I'm there for them. We have a lot of things we need to accomplish. Personally, I want to play in college. But I have to handle my business here first. After that, I'll have time to look forward to the next level."

SPORT: "Austin, do you remember the first time you saw the Holt Rams play? And what will it be like in a couple of years when you're playing on Friday nights for Holt?"

KENT: "The first time I saw Holt play, I was just a little kid. But having the chance to wear that jersey and play for the Rams would be awesome. I've always dreamed about being the starting quarterback for the varsity. Now, that day is getting closer."

SPORT: "It's just a couple of years away now. Thinking back, Austin, did you have a favorite player you watched and said, 'That's who I want to be!'"

KENT: "Yeah. He didn't play for Holt, though. My hero has always been Brett Favre. I want to see him play some more."

SPORT: "Reggie, what about an idol for you or someone you patterned yourself after when you started? You have a special skill set as a quarterback. But was there someone you watched and said, 'I can do those things!'"

WILLIAMS: "I'd have to say my dad. Growing up, I watched my dad play football as far back as I can remember. He showed me a lot of things. And I've always looked up to him. That's why he's still my idol."

SPORT: "Reggie, what makes him so special?"

WILLIAMS: "He's always there for me. He knows all the tricks of the trade. I just take the things he gives me, and I run with it."

SPORT: "Brian, growing up in Cleveland, with the Browns so important there, did you have a favorite player or someone you patterned yourself after?"

HOYER: "Actually, this is going to sound bad back home, but I really liked John Elway. I was young when he beat the Browns in back-to-back playoffs. But that's why I wear No. 7. He was a big-game quarterback. And seeing him come through in the clutch, even though I was a Browns fan, I had tremendous admiration for him. I loved the way he put his team on his back and carried it to the AFC Championship. I also liked Bernie Kosar, though he was a little too wacky, a different kind of guy."

SPORT: "Will they disown you in Cleveland for saying that?"

HOYER: "Probably. The pain from those two losses still lingers. But it looks like the Browns are finally turning it around."

SPORT: "Drew, was there a quarterback you modeled yourself after or someone you could compare yourself to in certain aspects?"

STANTON: "I don't know if I modeled myself after anybody. The big thing I've always tried to do is worry about the things I can do and go out there and have fun. You see that in my scrambling and being able to make some plays with my feet. I've tried to use that to break defenses down. So I've watched guys like Matt Hasselbeck and Jeff Garcia, who can move in the pocket and make things happen downfield."

SPORT: "Is there a coach or anyone else you have to give a shout-out to and thank for what they've done for you?"

STANTON: "There are so many people who've helped me get where I am. My whole family, No. 1 – especially my brother for beating me up when I was little. My dad, for always working with me. My coaches at Michigan State. But it's an ongoing process. I'm still trying to learn and be the best that I can be. And my new quarterbacks coach in Detroit (Scott Loeffler) is phenomenal."

I'm thrilled to have him. Just the difference he has made in such a short time is night-and-day."

SPORT: "Brian, is there someone who has helped you develop to the level you're at now?"

HOYER: "I have to start with the guy right next to me. A lot of guys want to play right away. But I was fortunate to play behind Drew, an NFL quarterback. Obviously, I learned a ton from him – not so much the physical part, but the hard work, the film work and importance of studying defenses. We both had tremendous coaches at Michigan State. I've had three of them and have gotten something different from each one. Then, I can't forget my dad. We'd play catch in the backyard till his arm would get sore, then keep going. He also made sure I had any kind of gear I needed. I remember he overnights a bat to a hotel in Columbus, just so I could use it in a home run derby."

SPORT: "Do you remember any bit of advice or any one thing that Drew might have told you?"

STANTON: "Oh-oh!"

SPORT: "Aside from the girlfriend thing."

HOYER: "Not including social life? I just remember when he was getting ready for the draft, he said the most important thing for me was to lead the team. Being a quarterback, that's what you have to do. You have to exude confidence, even when you're in a bad position. Drew was a great quarterback and a better leader. By watching him, I was able to model myself that way and try to be the leader our team needs."

SPORT: "You mentioned your dad, Reggie. Was there anyone else who helped to develop you or said something that really stuck with you?"

WILLIAMS: "Wow, there have been so many. My whole life, I've had people there to help me...Coach (Marcelle) Carruthers, Coach (Kerry) Keyton, my mom, my teachers, so many people I could look up to or go



to for help. It's great to have so many people there. I hope I can keep them coming."

SPORT: "Austin, has anyone given you good advice? I know Drew said to stay away from the girls and concentrate on your classes."

KENT: "Yeah, my parents and my coaches are always telling me that stuff."

SPORT: "Brian mentioned the concept of leadership. Drew, when you get to the NFL level, it's even more important. Everyone can play or they wouldn't have a contract. But what does leadership mean at the highest level?"

STANTON: "You're the guy out front when things are going bad. You're carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders. And when things are going good, you're pushing everyone else to the front. Your offensive line, your defense and your wide receivers are the ones who helped you get there. Once you realize that, you earn respect in the locker room. This position isn't about how hard you can throw the football or how quick you are. It's much more than that. It's getting the guys to believe in themselves and to know you've got their back, no matter what."

SPORT: "Brian, you're in the glare of the spotlight every second you're on campus — and when you're off campus, too. But the adoration is fleeting. When you beat Penn State, people were saying you'll be one of the best quarterbacks in the country as a senior. Then, when things don't go well in a bowl game, there was a totally different reaction. How do you deal with that?"

HOYER: "You just have to take it in, then realize it's a game. I remember saying after the Boston College game that I'd learned so much about myself as a player. You take the bad and turn it into good. For me, there's another season coming. And I took that as a major learning experience. You can't let it hold you down. Going back to baseball, if you're a pitcher and you give up a home run, you've got to face the next batter. If you throw an interception, you've got to get your team into the end zone on the next possession. You've got to let it roll off your back and not let the outside people affect you. You have to ignore the noise."

SPORT: "Reggie, anyone who has even seen you at Everett knows that can make spectacular plays. But quarterbacks are measured by championships. Can you talk about what leadership means and what you have to do this year?"

WILLIAMS: "I just think of leadership as being confident, not just in myself but in the rest of team. It's knowing that you can do whatever it takes. And it's having your teammates trust you that way, too."



"I just think of leadership as being confident, not just in myself but in the rest of team."

-Reggie Williams, Lansing Everett

SPORT: "Austin, if you could ask a question of any of these guys, knowing you're sitting with one of the best high school quarterbacks in the state this year, with a guy who's up for the Johnny Unitas Award as one of the best in college football and with a guy who has been in both those situations and is playing on Sundays, what would you ask him?"

KENT: "I'd ask him how to be the best quarterback I can be. I'd ask him how to lead a team. And I'd ask him how to stay confident, even if I throw an interception."

SPORT: "You'll have a chance to ask those questions in just a few minutes, Austin. But I have to ask one more question of each of you. Drew, you've had dreams, dreams fulfilled and dreams not quite realized. When you think about your dream with the Detroit Lions, three years from now, what's it going to be?"

STANTON: "It's going to be leading my team to the playoffs. It's going to be taking a franchise that's starved for greatness and being a big part of it. It's going to be a kid who grew up watching the Lions, wishing some day he'd be in this position, really being there. And it's going to be doing the job of restoring the roar in the city."

SPORT: "Brian, three years from now, when we look back at what 2008-10 have been for you, what are we going to see?"

HOYER: "We're going to see important steps in making Michigan State the powerhouse it once was. We were fortunate to get a new coach and to change the mindset of the program. We had to re-establish that toughness. And if you look at what last year's seniors started — the Kaleb Thornhills, the Travis Keys and the Jehuu

Caulcricks — you see how this year's team is trying to carry that another step. We're shooting for a Big Ten championship and definitely a New Year's Day bowl game."

SPORT: "And pro football?"

HOYER: "That's definitely something I strive for and a goal I can reach if I take care of my business and help my team win this year. If I do that, the next level will take care of itself."

SPORT: "Reggie, what will the next three years of the dream hold for you?"


WILLIAMS: "I hope it's starting at Michigan State. If that doesn't happen, I just want to go somewhere, play winning football, get a great education and have a successful life."

SPORT: "Austin, you have two more years at Holt Middle School before you even get to the Rams. When we all come see you that first Friday night of your sophomore year, what are we going to see?"

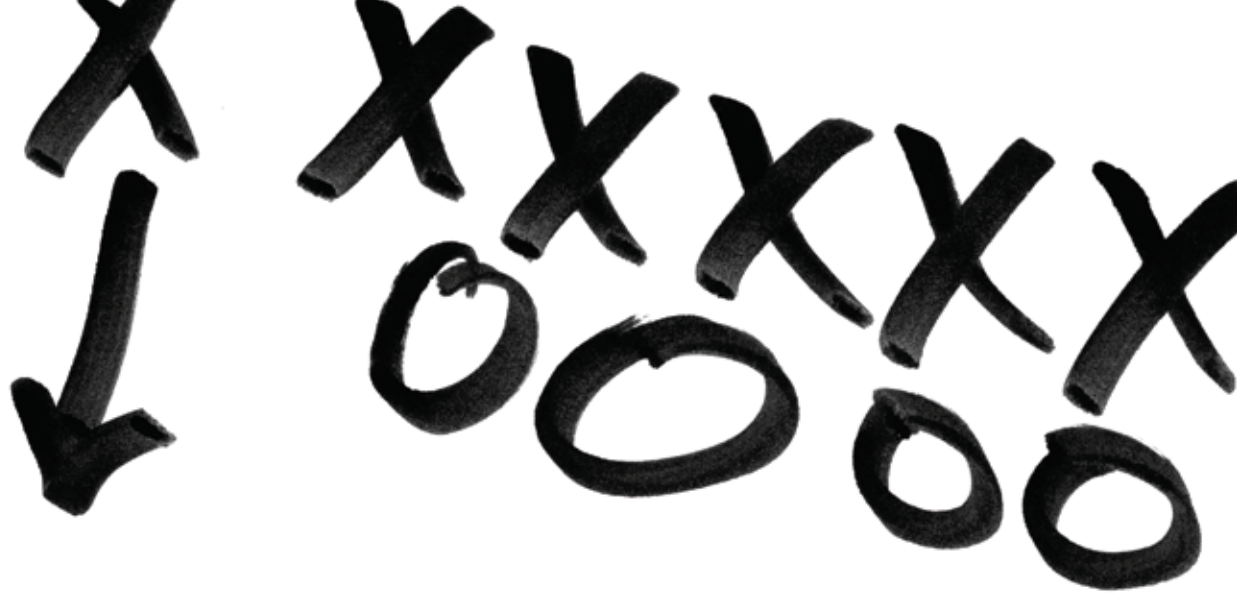
KENT: "I'm not sure. I hope I'll at least make the varsity team. No one can say for sure what's going to happen in three years. All you can do is keep working and hope for the best."

When the mic was turned off and the camera stopped clicking, Stanton and Hoyer made Kent a promise.

"I'll be there for your first varsity start, OK?" Stanton said. "None of this JV stuff. You just have to keep working."

As Kent drove off with his family, he looked a bit taller than he did when he arrived. Ten feet tall, in fact. 





Brand New Familiarity

New Lansing Area High School Football Coaches

BY CHUCK KLONKE

Three "new" coaches will be patrolling the sidelines for the 2008 high school football season.

However, those newcomers aren't really new.

They're familiar faces to Lansing area prep football fans.

Lansing Eastern's **Tommie Boyd** was a standout player for the Quakers during the early 1990s before a record-setting stint at the University of Toledo and a pro career with the Detroit Lions and the Detroit Fury.

Charlotte's **Eddie Ostipow** was a successful coach for the Orioles for six seasons before leaving to guide the East Kentwood program for three years.

Al Slamer, the new coach at Holt, is well-known to area fans for the fine teams he produced for 21 seasons at Battle Creek Central.

When Boyd arrived at Lansing Eastern for his introductory press conference, he got chills running up and down his spine.

That's how much it means to Boyd to have the chance to resurrect a program that hasn't won since the sixth game of the 2006 season.

Last season, the Quakers were 0-9 and they finished the year with fewer than 20 players dressed.

It's quite a challenge but it looks like Boyd is already meeting it head-on. The number of players coming out for football has exceeded the new coach's expectations.

"We've had between 52 and 60 players at our camps," Boyd said. "I'd have been happy with 40."

Boyd's background gives him instant credibility with the players, but he still has to earn their respect and trust.

"Even though I went here, they don't know me," Boyd said. "You still have to gain that respect factor, and they have to know that they can trust you. Some of them have had issues in their lives where they can't trust somebody right away. A lot of them are buying into what we're doing, and they're starting to see the results."

"They're starting to have fun, and they're starting to achieve, and they're happy with what they're doing."

There's some talent on the Eastern squad. Now Boyd and his staff have to drill the

players with the techniques. They also have to teach them what it's like to win.

Whenever the Quakers break a huddle, they yell "Champs."

"We want to instill in them to be what they say they are," Boyd said. "Every time we break down, we say 'champs,' and they have to believe it. Then we go out and work to make it come true."

Coming back to Eastern has been in the back of Boyd's mind for several years, but he never felt that the time was right until now.

"I've always kept up with the Eastern program and I knew it was going through a down time," he said. "I'm a firm believer that God has a plan for all of us, and there's a time when He wants us to do something."

"I had been approached before about coming back here, but I felt it wasn't the right time. Now when I was approached again, I prayed on it and it seemed like everything weighed totally different. I had more experience coaching at the high school level and I was more prepared to help this program turn around."

Boyd literally takes a businesslike approach to his coaching duties.

"We're always talking about 'taking care of business,' whether it's on the practice field or in the classroom," Boyd said. "I try to get them to look at things a little different than they have been."

This isn't the first time that Boyd has had

to rebuild a program from the ground up. He was the head boys track coach at Fraser (and also a football assistant) and took over a team that had won only one meet.

Shortly after that season ended, Boyd walked into the athletic director's office and predicted that the Ramblers would win their division the next year.



"They say you can never go home. Well, I think you can."

-Eddie Ostipow, Charlotte

"He said, 'Don't put too much pressure on yourself,'" Boyd said. "But I'm such a competitor, I walked the halls and got people to try it out. Once they realized we had a family-oriented thing where everybody cared about each other we went from 42 kids to 110 in my second year."

Boyd's prediction of winning a conference title came true and Fraser sent seven athletes to the state meet. Last spring, he had another 100 members on the team and this time the state meet delegation swelled to 13.

"Every year we got better and it's all because of a mind-set," Boyd said.

His biggest influence was his coach at Toledo, Nick Saban.

"It was his mentality," Boyd said. "He'd say, 'I'm going to make you a better player or I'll break you.' What he meant was he'd make you a player that would excel or a player that would say, 'I can't take it.'"

Wherever he's been, he's been successful. He knows how to relate to athletes, but he also knows how to push them. That's how I've approached this team, and I've seen them do some good things.

"I'm a student of the game and I'm continuously trying to improve everything I do," Boyd said.

Boyd has one promise for Eastern's followers: "We're not going to be the same team they saw last year. The attitude is different. They're a lot tougher. And the execution is much more precise.

"Everything is a building block. We're laying the foundation. We're putting pieces together and the final project will be done on August 28."

There's one thing that Ostipow learned from his experience at East Kentwood.

"The grass isn't always greener," he said, happy to be back at Charlotte.

Ostipow had close ties with Tom Sneckenberg, who had been Ostipow's defensive coordinator with the Orioles and succeeded him as head coach.

"Tom and I talked at the end of the year and neither one of us was very happy," Ostipow said. "That got things rolling as far as the opportunity for me to come back. It all just worked out."

It's going to be like old times at Charlotte with Sneckenberg returning as Ostipow's defensive coordinator.

"Tom did a good job here," Ostipow said. "We had six or seven years of real good athletes come through here, and in high school sports those things go in cycles. He didn't have the Chad Richardsons and Kyle Haskells, and the conference got tougher."

Charlotte is coming off a pair of 3-6 seasons, and although the Orioles lost several close games, the fans had been spoiled by Ostipow's teams winning league titles and earning state playoff berths.

"Once people get a taste of (success) they expect it every year and that's not always realistic in high school," Ostipow said.

Football is a high priority item in Charlotte and that's the main reason Ostipow wanted to come back.

"That's what I missed," he said. "In Kentwood, football is way down the list of what's important on Friday nights. Here it's a big

deal. People talk about it all week. They know the players.

"Another nice thing is this is a blue-collar community with hard-working kids and hard-working parents. Kids go to school here from kindergarten to graduation. At Kentwood, players were moving in and out all the time."

Although the East Kentwood experience wasn't all that Ostipow expected it to be, he's glad he tried it.

"I wouldn't trade the experience at Kentwood, but I'm glad to be back," Ostipow said. "Sometimes you have to get out of your comfort zone. Now I know this is where I belong. This is a special place, not just because we won, but because I've had a chance to work with good people—the coaches, the administration, and the community—who have been so supportive.

"Even if we didn't win games, I knew that they knew that we had done a good job and that they'd support us regardless. That's refreshing as a coach to know you don't have to be looking over your shoulder all the time."

Ostipow got his start in coaching at his alma mater, Owosso High School, then moved to Jenison where he was an assistant under Tony Annese.

Like most high school coaches, Ostipow has learned to be flexible.

"I always consider an offensive system like a toolbox," he said. "From year to year you might get different tools, depending on your personnel. Our strength this year is in the offensive line, so we might be more run-oriented, but we'll still throw the ball.

"You throw to score and you run to win, and I think that's a good way to say what we do."

Defensively, Charlotte will run the same system it has for the last 10 seasons.

With Sneckenberg staying on as defensive coordinator and long-time aide Eric Emery working with the linemen, Ostipow feels that there is good continuity among the staff. A newcomer is former Charlotte standout Ben Sherman.

"When you get a staff chemistry at a place, it's hard to recapture, but since I've come back, things have been almost like I've never left," Ostipow said.

"They say you can never go home. Well, I think you can."

Slamer is excited about the challenge of keeping Holt among the top programs in the state. The Rams won their fourth straight Capital Area Athletics Conference Division I title last fall. Holt posted 11 straight victories before losing to Novi Catholic Central in the third round of the state playoffs. One of those victories was a 25-18 win against Slamer's Battle Creek Central squad in the opening round of the playoffs.

The Rams haven't lost a league game since Lansing Everett beat them 20-14 on September 17, 2004.

The Holt job opened when Mike Smith left to join the staff at Olivet College. Although Slamer had some excellent players returning at Central, including Michigan State-bound running back Larry Caper, he decided to apply at Holt.

"This is an exciting challenge to come to a program as outstanding as Holt," Slamer said. "What characterizes Holt is great community support, young athletes that will put forth tremendous effort and facilities that are second to none. It's a tremendous package."

Slamer has great respect for the job Smith and his staff did at Holt and he kept two of Smith's assistants, Jack Rairick and Don Green.

He got to know the Holt coaches quite well

"One of the things we like to build our program on is that 'Attitude Makes The Difference...'"

-Al Slamer, Holt



because Battle Creek Central met the Rams four times in the last seven postseasons.

The transition isn't quite complete. Slamer caught himself while talking about the playoff battles between the Rams and the Bearcats.

"We split the four games with them—I don't want to say 'we'. It's 'them' now," Slamer said. "I have to catch myself."

Fans are likely to see Holt's players with shirts carrying the letters "AMTD." That's an acronym for one of Slamer's three axioms for success.

"One of the things we like to build our program on is that 'Attitude Makes The Difference,'" Slamer said. "You have no control over what happens to you in life. What you have control over is how you respond to what happens. It's a great lesson for life, but it's also a great lesson for what happens out on the football field."

"How you respond and react to all the inevitable adversities that happen on the field is the difference between being a great team and an average team. You need to make a conscious commitment to excellence whether in the weight room, the classroom or your home."

That's not the only axiom of Slamer's that the Holt players will become familiar with.

"In the face of inevitable adversity, are you going to get better or are you going to get bitter? Bad things are going to happen, and they can make you better or they can make you bitter," Slamer said. "The great teams and people just say 'I'm going to get better.'"

"Our theme all summer has been, 'it's all about team.' We have to sacrifice some individual needs for the good of the team. TEAM is an acronym for 'Together Everyone Achieves More.' These are the things I believe in as a culture of success."

That philosophy of TEAM even affects the coach. Slamer's offensive background is in the option and wing-T, but he's thinking of making some adjustments.

"In the course of preparing for teams in the playoffs and for the tough teams in our league at Battle Creek, I always thought Holt was the toughest to prepare for," Slamer said.

"They did a tremendous job of running the college-style offense. I'm not going to make the kids and staff adjust to me. I'm going to adjust to a great football system. We're going to run the inside-outside zone."



"You still have to gain that respect factor, and they have to know that they can trust you."

-Tommie Boyd, Lansing Eastern

Defensively, Slamer won't have to make any adjustments. Holt has run the 4-3 defense for years, and that's the system that Slamer is bringing over from Battle Creek.

After a fine high school career at Wayne Memorial, Slamer was a four-year starter at defensive tackle at Eastern Michigan, and after graduating he signed with the Toronto Argonauts of the Canadian Football League. His pro career was cut short by a neck injury he suffered in training camp and a successful coaching career was born.

Slamer is the winningest football coach in Battle Creek Central history with a 128-73 record that included 10 league championships and two undefeated seasons.

Slamer is a fanatic about strength and conditioning, and the excellent facilities at the new high school should only make it easier for him to make the players see his point of view.

"How can you not want to get in that weight room? It's air-conditioned," the new coach said with a laugh. 🍌



The Youngest & The Restless

Christine Bader Takes the Reigns at 21

BY DOUG WARREN



Most new college grads are *mailing resumes, chasing interviews and seeking entry-level jobs. Maybe they've landed an internship before grad school. Or maybe they're just hitting the beach, taking a rest from classes and exams.*

Then, there's Christine Bader. The former Okemos High and Michigan State tennis standout became one of the youngest leaders in NCAA history on June 24. At just 21 years old, she was named the women's head tennis coach at the University of Evansville.

"I was debating whether to take a job as a grad assistant," Bader said. "But I just kept thinking, 'I'm going to be bored.' I had so many things going on in my head. I wanted to do it all. So, for me, this job was perfect."

Bader earned a bachelor's degree in business management in May. She also became just the third Spartan women's tennis player to be All-Big Ten a second time and was the first first-team selection from MSU since 1983.

One of only three Spartans with a national ranking, Bader was even better off the court. She was Academic All-Big Ten three times and won the Big Ten Sportsmanship award in women's tennis in 2005 and 2007.

One more honor came Bader's way this year. She and senior football player Kaleb Thornhill were picked by new MSU Director of Athletics Mark Hollis to speak at his introductory press conference.

Soon, she would have a new assignment of her own.

"My whole last semester, I had been thinking about trying to get a college coaching job," Bader said. "I feel like I can handle a lot. And I looked at a lot of other places. I looked at some grad assistant jobs and had a couple of opportunities. But when the Evansville job became available, I went after it and thought it was a great opportunity."

"I told John (Stanley, Evansville's A.D.), 'I'm a single, young female, and all I want to do is build this program. My Dad and I had talked about this for a long time. He was really excited and told me, 'Just go out there. Get your feet wet. Get experience. You're going to be really great for this program.'"

Her father, Richard Bader, is a former MSU men's swimming coach. Now an assistant A.D. and Tom Izzo's director of basketball operations, he knows an impressive leader when he sees one.

"Christine had the whole thing laid out for the Evansville A.D.," he said. "She had a map of the United States with all the teams in the (Missouri Valley) conference and where all the recruits were coming from. She sat down and showed me her philosophy, where she wanted to go and all her ideas. She had a plan of action for the first 21 days on the job. And I was like, 'Wow! Where were you when I was coaching? I could have used you!'"

Besides being Evansville's A.D., Stanley is the school's assistant women's tennis coach. That put him in the strange position of having to hire his boss.

"We interviewed a lot of candidates," Stanley said. "Many of them were in their mid-20s. Many had previous coaching experience. But none of them came to that initial interview as prepared as Christine."

It was preparation that couldn't occur in a week, a month or even a year. It took nearly 22 years to develop a coach and less than two months to land the perfect opportunity.

"I'd always looked at the NCAA website's coaching openings to see what was available," she said. "I coached a lot at different country clubs and taught tennis. So it was always in the back of my mind that after a great four years at Michigan State and helping to build that program up, I'd stay in the game and become a coach."

Some would consider Bader's age to be a negative. But she doesn't see it that way, not when her future players have seen her compete.

"Three girls told me, 'Yeah, we came to your match this spring,'" Bader said. "I was cracking up, thinking, 'OK, which match did you come to see?' As soon as they told me, I said, 'OK, I played really hard in that one. We're fine.'"

That won't be determined until we see if Bader's athletes can approach her excellence as a student-athlete. But if there's a problem, her A.D. won't be hard to find.

"John and I are one of the greatest (coaching) duos in sports," she said. "I'm young and really energetic and positive. I can relate to the athletes. And John is the biggest supporter. He has been A.D. for a long time and understands Evansville. I think we're a really great team."

The thing that strikes most people immediately is her unique blend of enthusiasm and maturity. Perhaps that came from having to grow up at an early age.

"I'll never forget it," her dad said. "Christine



was 13 and playing tennis and volleyball. And she was trying to be a perfectionist in school.

Her mother (Cathy) and I were getting a little concerned that she was starting to look thinner. We just thought she was trying to do way too much.

"Cathy had already made an appointment with the doctor to find out what was going on. I remember getting a phone call and going home. And those two walked in and just started bawling. The doctor had said that she needed to go to the hospital to have tests done because they thought she was a juvenile diabetic."

When that suspicion was confirmed, Richard and Cathy dreaded the idea of poking their daughter with needles for insulin shots. As usual, Christine had other ideas.

"She wouldn't let us give them to her," Richard said. "She wanted to give them to herself. And that's what she has done since Day One."

Her first head coach at MSU, Tim Bauer, talked about a surprising level of development that was always well beyond her years.

"She has the youth and spirit of someone her age," Bauer said. "But she was brought up with all the right ethics and morals. When you talk to Christine about serious things, you get a very mature, serious response. I credit her mother and father for that. I put a lot on her shoulders at Michigan State. Even though she was young, you knew that she'd respond well. And she did."

"She has been presented with a great opportunity at Evansville. And she has such a strong network of people around her. Anyone who thinks that she's too young and can't handle it will soon find out that isn't the case. She has been groomed for this since she was a very little girl."

So, which tennis program does Coach Bader want to use as a model for the Lady Purple Aces? Why not another program that wears purple and has all the right priorities?

"I've always been really impressed with Northwestern," she said. "I think that Claire Pollard has done an unbelievable job. And one of the things I need to do here is just set goals and chip away at them. I understand that building a program takes time."

"I know I have to change the mindset of our players. One of my main goals in the next couple of years is to win a conference title. The next goal is to get into the NCAAs and start scaring some people. We want to show everyone that a small school like ours can compete."

And that a coach's age doesn't matter if she has Bader's ability and determination. **S**





All In It Together

Sports Authority Advances Greater Lansing

BY BRANDON DWYER

Sporting events *have long been seen as fun for the communities in which they're held. They also mean big business.*

Every year thousands of athletes and their families travel to Greater Lansing to participate in a wide range of amateur athletic events. From hotels and local sports venues to area restaurants and retailers, there is a measurable impact on the local economy. With potential for such big numbers in a regional economy struggling to diversify, this is a growing business driver that is really turning heads.

Who is there to cultivate, nurture and develop this vein of new business activity? Enter, the Greater Lansing Sports Authority (GLSA).

The mission of the GLSA is to be the leading voice of sports tourism in the Greater Lansing area and to attract a diverse range of quality sporting events to the region. While attracting new events is critical to growth, bringing along and helping to further develop existing local events is also an essential part of the GLSA's goal.

"We are the first dedicated entity focused on sports event development for the region, but that is not to say there is no history here of great amateur athletic events," said Mike Price, Manager of Sports Development with the GLSA. "We're just looking to provide a big-time boost to help them grow."

"The Greater Lansing Area Hockey Association (GLAHA) has been affiliated with local youth tournaments for years, but by entering into a partnership with the GLSA, GLAHA now hosts the Capital City Showdown, a local event which will host an unprecedented 100 teams from Canada and the U.S. in 2009."

Grounded in a history of past sports successes, the GLSA is future-focused on this growth market and has played a critical role in development of totally new sports events for the area.

The list includes the U.S. Junior Olympic Racquetball Championships, Senior Softball Eastern National Championships and

Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) events of nearly every kind.

According to Price, the future is looking very bright with upcoming events such as the USBC Men's State Bowling Tournament in 2009 and the 2nd Annual Capital City River Run and Half-Marathon just a few weeks away.

As you may have guessed by now, competition for these sports groups is very tough. No one knows that better than John Young, Manager of Events and Sponsorships for the GLSA.

"Greater Lansing has a natural advantage with location," Young said. "Our central location cuts down on travel time and costs for teams, spectators and sponsors. Local venues are also great. There are playing surfaces of every kind at over 40 different area facilities. But the biggest thing that singles out Greater Lansing as top choice for sports events is the services provided by the GLSA."


Specific GLSA services include venue recommendations and negotiations, hotel proposals, assistance with event publicity,

event management counseling, assistance with marketing and sponsorships, volunteer recruitment and entertainment options.


"We tell incoming groups to consider the GLSA as part of their own event planning staff," Young added. "We'll go out of our way every time to help groups of all sizes have successful events and truly feel welcome."

The views of the GLSA are in lock-step with its parent organization, the Greater Lansing Convention and Visitors Bureau.

"Through sports event development we're enriching the community in a lot of ways," said Lee Hladki, President of the Greater Lansing Convention and Visitors Bureau. "From the influx of money into the economy by traveling sports teams, to development and growth of current local sports events to offering opportunities in sports to the under-served youth in the community, we're leveraging the assets of the region to drive tourism and strengthen our economy. Truly, destination marketing at its best."

To learn more about the Greater Lansing Sports Authority call (517) 371-1406 or visit www.lansingsports.org. 



 John Young (left) and Mike Price

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Randy Kinder

Where Is He Now?

BY ANDREW BRENT

Mid-Michigan football was a playground for the East Lansing Trojans in 1991-92. And there was no bigger reason for that dominance than No. 25, record-smashing runner Randy Kinder.

"We were fortunate to have a lot of great players, guys like Steve Maidlow, Kirk Caruthers and Antoine Bagwell," East Lansing coaching legend Jeff Smith said. "But Randy may have been the most highly recruited guy we've had in this area."

Smith didn't know immediately that Kinder would be the star he became or be 6-foot-1, 204 pounds.

"I didn't know for sure," Smith said. "But he sure could run. I saw him in ninth grade and thought, 'Ooh, he has a little zip!' Then, I saw him in track and thought, 'Oh, my goodness!'"

Kinder was helped in no small part by the irrepressible running attack his coaches emphasized year after year.

"To me, East Lansing is Jeff Smith and Jack Piotter running '42 Belly' over and over," Kinder said. "I'll never forget that. Just a steady beat of runs all the way down the field."

Kinder's career at East Lansing was highlighted by a State Championship in 1991 and an All-America nod in 1992. He was a clear No. 1 in the Lansing State Journal "Catch 22," The Detroit News "Blue Chip List" and the Detroit Free Press "Best of the Midwest."

He rushed for 2,464 yards as a senior, a Mid-Michigan record that stood for 15 years until it was broken last fall by the Trojans' Issac Harper.

But his favorite memories are the relationships he formed with teammates and coaches.

"The guys on the team and the coaching staff were really close, very fond of each other," Kinder said.

Also a standout in track and field, he won 200- and 400-meter dash state titles in 1992 with times of 21.87 and 48.88, respectively.

Although highly recruited as a running back by powerhouse Division I schools, Kinder didn't let it go to his head.

"That only happened one time," Smith said. "We were playing Detroit King, and

he was getting on his teammates for not blocking. I said, 'Shut your damn mouth!... Okay, this play is going to be a handoff to Kinder, and no one is going to block!' That's exactly what happened. King had a great strong safety who played at Michigan. He came flying in and blew the play up. But Randy got up and handled it perfectly."

He handled a tough recruiting decision with just as much class and finally chose Notre Dame over a crushed Michigan State, Michigan and Stanford.


"Tradition was very attractive to me," he said. "I didn't really understand what Notre Dame was until I went down for a visit and met Coach (Lou) Holtz. Plus, it was a great academic school less than 2 1/2 hours from home. All my friends still say, 'You should've stayed here!' But I had four great choices and could've made a case for any of them."

At Notre Dame, Kinder continued his success, rushing for 824 yards and a 5.7-yard average in 1995. But when he signed with the Green Bay Packers, they decided to try him on defense.

"I hadn't played defense since high school," Kinder said. "Even then, I was a safety in Smith's 6-2, which was basically like playing center field. So it was a big transition."

He played part of the 1997 season with Green Bay and eventually landed in Philadelphia, where he made The Sporting News NFL All-Rookie Team as a special-teamer.

Kinder currently lives in his birthplace, Washington, D.C., where he works for the AFL-CIO, building investment funds, maintaining union pensions and creating jobs. He is also engaged to be married.

"I still view things through the prism of athletics," Kinder said. "Working with people has come easy for me because of the time I spent playing for Coach Smith and Coach Holtz. Coach Holtz used to ask, 'What do you need to do now to get where you need to go?' I've found that to be very useful in life, as well as in football." 



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Bad Axe	WLEW-AM	1340
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Cadillac	WKCK-FM	107.1
Caro	WKYO-AM	1360
Detroit	WJR-AM	760
Escanaba	WDBC-AM	680
Flint	WWCK-AM	1570
Gaylord	WAVC-FM	93.9
Grand Haven	WGHN-FM	92.1
Grand Rapids	WBBL-AM	1340
Greenville	WBSG-AM	1380
Greenville	WSCG-FM	106.3
Hastings	WBCH-AM	1220
Hastings	WBCH-FM	100.1 (varies)
Holland	WPNW-AM	1260
Iron Mountain	WMIQ-AM	1450
Jackson	WIBM-AM	1450
Kalamazoo	WKZO-AM	590
Lansing	WJIM-AM	1240
Lansing	WMMQ-FM	94.9
Ludington	WKLA-AM	1450
Manistee	WMTE-AM	1340
Marquette	WDMJ-AM	1320
Midland	WLUN-FM	100.9
Mount Pleasant	WMMI-AM	830
Newberry	WIHC-FM	97.9
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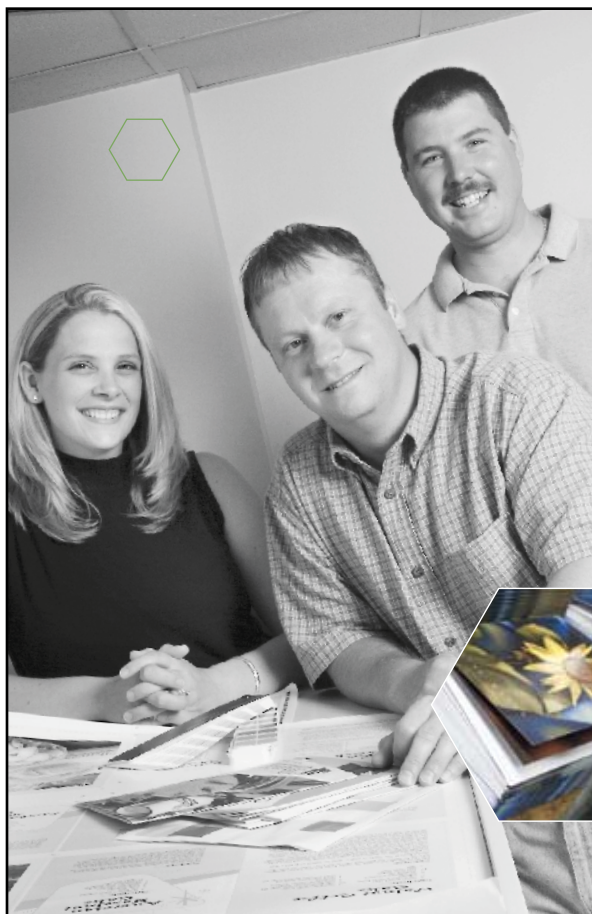
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Special Olympics Salute

Shelley Wagner Skates To World Winter Games

BY CRYSTAL KRAUSKOFF

Artists aren't typically known for great athletic accomplishments.

Likewise, athletes aren't the most talented people outside the competitive arena.

Shelley Wagner is proof that there are exceptions to everything.

The East Lansing resident has shown her talents in the art world and in sports.

With a solid reputation in Greater Lansing for her drawings and weaving projects, Wagner's natural figure-skating talent has her headed to the world's spotlight.

Wagner earned a trip to the 2009 Special Olympics World Winter Games with nearly 3,000 athletes from more than 85 nations February 7-13 in Boise, Idaho.

"This is something special, and I love it a lot," the 44-year-old Wagner said.

Athletes will compete in alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, figure skating, floor hockey, snowboarding, snowshoe racing and speed skating.

In figure skating alone, approximately 180 athletes will represent 26 Special Olympics programs around the world.

It will be Wagner's first appearance on an international stage after more than 35 years in various sports in the Special Olympics at the state level.

"I'm little nervous," said Wagner, who has Down syndrome.

Wagner qualified by winning gold medals in the singles compulsory and freestyle programs in the Michigan's Special Olympics Winter Games. But that didn't earn her an automatic bid.

All the gold medalists' names from state competitions were put into a bin, then selected via random drawing.

Additionally, the qualifiers had to be cleared by their parents to make the trip to Idaho, to act independently and to socialize with other athletes for a week to 10 days.

"It's like being struck by lightning getting your name pulled," said Charlene Decker, Wagner's coach the past four years. "But you have to understand, every year she been skating with me, she has won gold and silver

medals. She has earned it."

Team USA representatives will meet and bond in December when they head to Colorado for a special training camp.

"It's just a great opportunity for athletes to see the world," said Ann Guzdial, chief program officer for the Michigan Special Olympics.

The athletes' travel and accommodations, roughly \$4,500 per person, are paid by Team USA and state and local Special Olympics chapters.

Michigan will be represented by 10 athletes, with Wagner the oldest competitor.

She will perform her Level III freestyle program, roughly three minutes long, to the Ice Castles theme song.

Wagner's routine will include everything from a spiral to a lunge to a move called "shoot the duck."

"The free skating is what you see on TV," said Decker, who works with Wagner about four hours each week at Suburban Ice. "It's skating to music. They do the very same things, just maybe not at the highest skill level, that you see on TV."

Wagner skates with fellow Special Olympian and long-time friend Erika Stork each week.

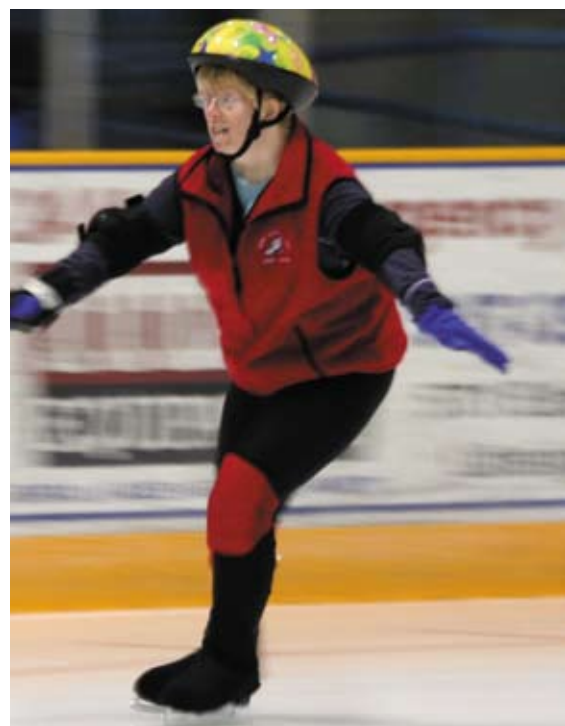
She also stays in shape by biking and inline skating around town with her pals and by taking nightly walks through her neighborhood with her mom, Judy Wagner.

Dating back to her childhood days in Ohio and Maine, Shelley has competed in everything from track and field to softball throwing to bocce ball.

She didn't take up figure skating until five or six years ago but fell in love with the sport in part because her sister-in-law, Charmaine Wagner, was a long-time skater-turned-coach.

Shelley has also enjoyed watching her favorite skater, Olympic gold medalist Scott Hamilton, perform on TV throughout the years.

"She just really, really wanted to be an ice skater," said Judy, who moved to the area with her daughter in 1985. "This is definitely the one sport she's had the most enjoyment with and made a total commitment and connection to. She can take any sport and say, 'Fine. I'll do it.' But with ice



skating, it's like, 'I'm an ice skater! I'm a figure skater!'"

There's so much more that Shelley does.

The Okemos High School graduate is a member of the Michigan Weaver's Guild, where she sells hand-made scarves, table runners, blankets and wall hangings.

Shelley also draws and paints in her spare time. Those talents are on display each holiday season when she sends each family member a personalized Christmas card.

Wagner also enjoys helping her mother with household chores, including yard work and cooking.

"She's a great help," Judy said. "She's a very, very social person and really quite independent, which she has to be with me."

Shelley's independence will be on full display next February.

For more information on the 2009 World Games, go to www.somi.org. To make a monetary donation and help support our local Area 8 Olympians, call (517) 887-1175.



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"The Gem" Shines Again

Detroit Lions Great Preaches & Teaches Life's Lessons Through Football

BY DOUG WARREN



Dressed in a red Nike warm-up and shiny white shoes, the NFL legend called to a backpedaling defender, "Back, Back, Back!... Turn!... Okay!... Nice job, DB!"

Player after player went through the drill, each one tutored by the man Detroit News sportswriter Jerry Green once nicknamed "The Supernatural."

Most of the pre-teens attending a recent Detroit Lions youth football camp at Waverly High School had likely never heard Lem Barney's name before he presented the fine points of defensive back play.

That didn't stop them from listening and watching as the graying, still-fit grandfather crouched into his cornerback's stance, backpedaling into a sweat.

The four-day camp was the second time the Lions had been here for their summer camp series. Last year's visit was a two-day event. But the work ethic of Mid-Michigan's young athletes made a lasting impression on Lions Director of Youth Football Chris Fritzsching.

"Last year's program was just to gauge interest," Fritzsching said. "The response to that camp was so great we needed to have a four-day camp in Lansing. Right from the get-go, this group of kids has been unique. They're here to work."

"No knock on the other groups we see. But there's a focus here. The kids were working their tails off at the agility stations each day. I didn't hear any complaints. I didn't see anyone try to back out because of the heat. You can see they want to get better. They're asking good questions. We've really enjoyed our time here. And as long as Waverly wants us back, we will be back."

Barney was the featured speaker at the 11th and final stop on the youth camp tour. After nearly three hours of drills and teaching, the campers sat on the grass while the 1967 NFL Defensive Rookie of the Year and 1992 Hall of Fame inductee talked about

hard work, effort, mastering fundamentals and keeping the right company.

"Stay away from guys who are into drugs, steroids and alcohol," Barney said. "They will take you away from what you need to achieve. Those kids of guys are knuckleheads. Don't hang with guys like that. Knuckleheads will lead you down the wrong path and keep you from being the best you can be."

At his flamboyant best, Barney was the first of three great No. 20s for the Honolulu Blue and Silver, preceding Billy Sims and Barry Sanders. But he spent more time on education than on the NFL dream.

"I want you to study hard and be a student of football and in class," Barney said. "You can't read your school books at home if you leave them in your locker. Work to get scholarships. Not all of you are going to get



📷 *Tristen Matthieu (age 11, Lansing) handing ball to Lem Barney.*

an athletic scholarship. But you can get an academic scholarship. You want to make it as easy as you can on Mom and Dad when it comes to your education. Make your Moms and Dads proud of you."

Barney finished his talk with a message for young and old alike.

"How many of you tell Mom and Dad every day that you love them?" he asked. "That's one of the greatest things in life. The greatest gift in life is love. The greatest expression of love is time. And the greatest time to love is now." 📺

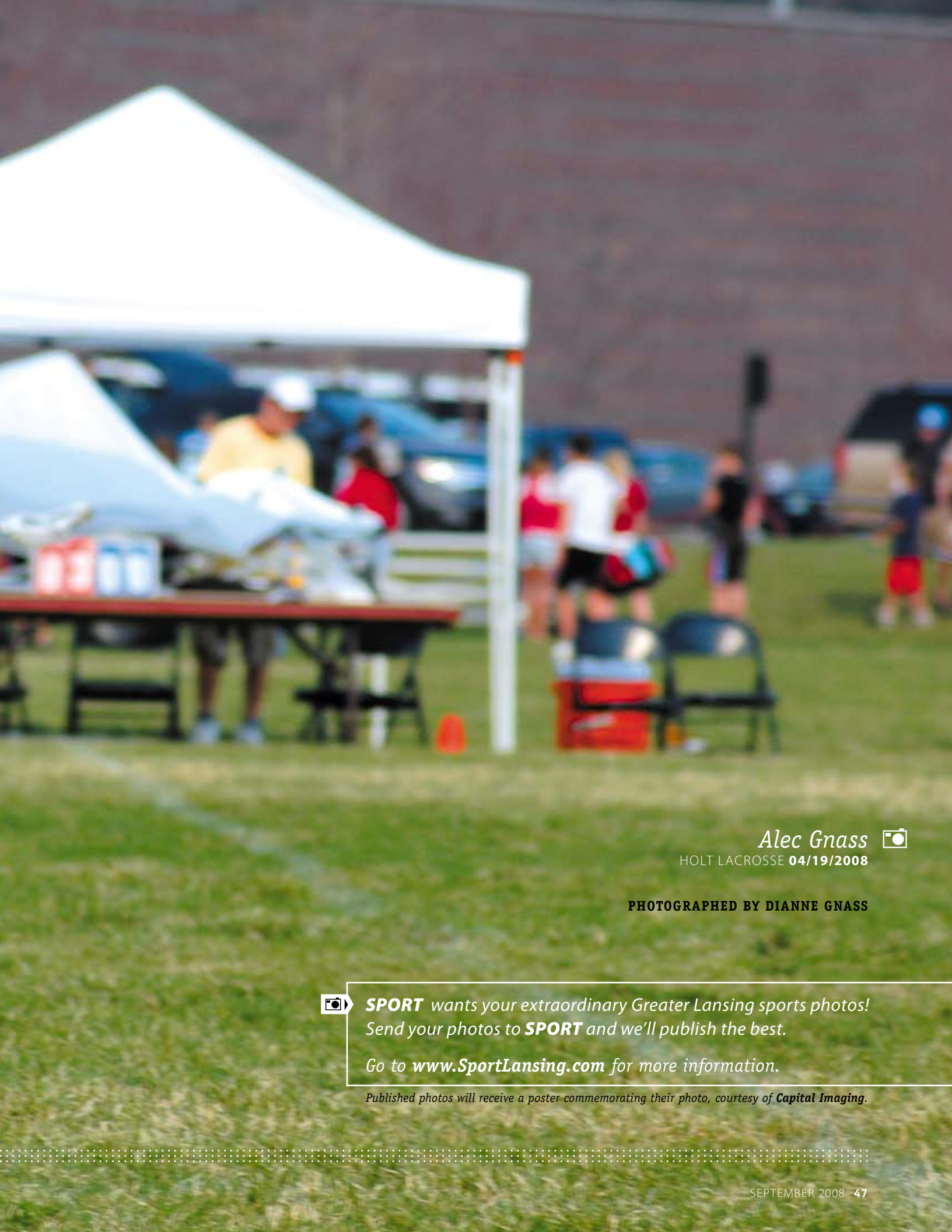
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She Loved L.A.

An Olympic Reflection

BY JUDI BROWN CLARKE

My experience in the 1984 Olympics was amazing. *I truly felt as though I was an ambassador for the United States and I wanted to perform at a level that represented our nation's reputation as a "powerhouse". As with many young people, it took time for me to process the experience and appreciate the lessons learned.*

Each year athletes set performance goals they want to achieve. Typically, goals are shared between the athlete and his or her coach only. It is a very uncomfortable feeling when the general public has the same (or even higher) performance expectation. This was the case for me when I was picked to win the gold medal. Of course, that was my personal goal. But the expectation of gold became public.

I don't know how to describe the feeling of walking onto the Olympic track that day, other than to equate it to being the winning quarterback at the Super Bowl. The stadium held 90,000 enthusiastic spectators who showed their overwhelming appreciation for me. The cheering was deafening, and the electricity of the anticipation made the hair on your arm stand on end. I was in awe of watching the Olympics from the inside, looking out.

I was assigned to lane eight for the finals, which was the worst lane I could have drawn due to my signature slow start. If I had just one person in front of me, I could concentrate on them as a point of reference. I got in the blocks and heard the

familiar commands..."On Your Mark"... "Get Set"... "BANG!"

As usual, I got out of the blocks slow.... Hurdle #1, hurdle #2...I didn't see anyone yet and thought, "Maybe I am in good shape."...Then came hurdle #3, where three runners passed me....Now, I was in fourth place...Hurdle #4, two more...wait, make that four more runners passed me....Suddenly, I was in LAST place!


That was when I experienced my epiphany. I was running and thinking up excuses to justifying my upcoming loss, when it hit me..."I have trained too hard, made countless sacrifices, and studied every aspect of the event, to give up my goal."

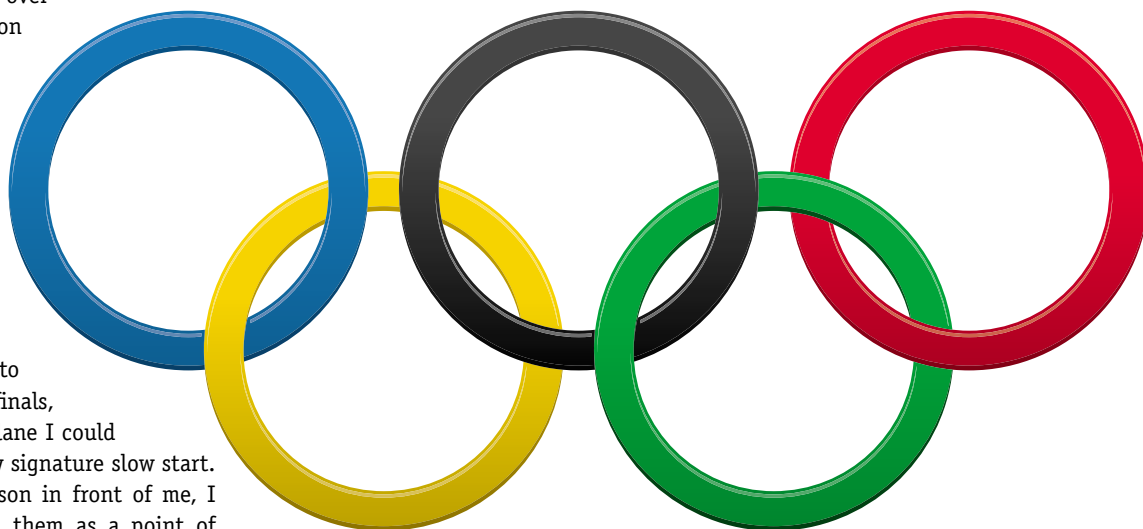
With that realization, I commanded my body to react and fight back to second place. This was the one and ONLY time that I wished the race was longer. My epiphany was in the realization that we limit ourselves with self-imposed boundaries grounded within our comfort zone. Therefore, to be a true champion, we have to redefine and stretch personal limits that border discomfort and challenge every cell in our body.

The 2008 Beijing Olympics have been spectacular. The facilities, the ceremonies,

the ambiance and the hospitality have set a precedent that will be difficult for future host countries to match. You have to admire the bar-setting innovations in green and renewable energy.

However, I have some criticisms. The media has trained the public to expect gold medals and world records, and a lot of them. Some Olympians who fail to perform at that level are labeled "failures", the actual verbiage used in recent headlines. This, coupled with the potential for "life-changing" payouts, has compromised the essence of athleticism. While I **strongly** condemn performance-enhancing drugs, I believe these unrealistic expectations foster their attractiveness and usage.

Unfortunately, the Olympic Games have become increasingly commercialized. NBC Sports negotiated for some events to be shown "live" in the United States. While I appreciate this privilege, it certainly conveys a stronger "audience-focused", as opposed to "athlete-focused", value. Somehow, we need to take a step back and appreciate the Olympics as the incredible platform that transcends politics, religion, cultural differences...and Nielsen Ratings. 



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