Welcome to Spartan Stadium for the 2009 home opener as Michigan State plays host to Montana State in the first-ever meeting between the two schools.

Last season, the Spartans won nine regular-season games for the first time since 1999, made its first New Year’s Day bowl appearance in nine years and finished No. 24 in the final Associated Press and USA Today Polls. The Spartans finished third in the Big Ten standings at 6-2 – their highest finish in the league standings since tying for second place in 1999 (6-2). This season, the Spartans welcome back 18 starters from last year’s 9-4 team, including seven on offense, eight on defense and three specialists.

FIRST-AND-10

• Today’s game is the first for Michigan State against an FCS (Football Championship Subdivision, formerly Division I-AA) opponent. Montana State, a member of the Big Sky Conference, went 7-5 last season with a 5-3 conference record.

• In its 112-year football history, Michigan State is 73-36-3 (.665) in season openers, including an 8-2 record (.800) in its last 10 games.

• Michigan State has compiled a 30-10 record (.750) in games played against non-conference opponents since 1999. The Spartans have won 13 of their last 17 non-league games.

• Third-year Michigan State head coach Mark Dantonio has compiled a 3-2 record (.600) in season openers during his five-year career. Dantonio is 1-1 in season openers at MSU, defeating UAB in his Spartan debut, 55-18, while falling at California last year, 38-31.

• The Spartans are 91-21 (.813) all-time in home openers, including a 10-game winning streak that began in 1999.

• Senior cornerback Ross Weaver, senior wide receiver Blair White, junior linebacker Greg Jones and sophomore quarterback Kirk Cousins were named team captains for the 2009 season following a team and coaches vote on Thursday, Aug. 27. Cousins is only the second sophomore in Michigan State football history to be named captain. Robert McCurry is the only other sophomore to be named captain, in 1946. In addition, McCurry is Michigan State’s only three-time captain (1946-47-48).

• Coach Dantonio has won 16 games in his first two seasons, securing the highest total by a Spartan coach in his first two years, while also leading MSU to its first back-to-back bowl appearances since 1996-97 and its first consecutive winning seasons since 1989-90.

• With placekicker Brett Swenson and punter Aaron Bates returning this season, the Spartans feature the No. 1 special teams unit in the Big Ten, according to ESPN.com. Swenson tied an MSU single-season record with 22 field goals last season and enters his senior year ranked third all-time in Spartan history with 52 field goals made. Bates, a second-team All-Big Ten selection by the media last season, ranked fourth in the Big Ten and No. 30 in the nation with his 42.0-yard average in 2008.
• Jones is the first Spartan to be named Big Ten Preseason Defensive Player of the Year. A first-team All-Big Ten selection by the coaches in 2008, he has led the Spartans in tackles the past two seasons.

• Michigan State was picked third in the Big Ten Preseason Poll, behind Ohio State and Penn State. The Spartans do not play Ohio State this season and host the Nittany Lions Nov. 21 in Spartan Stadium.

PRESEASON HONORS
Several Spartans earned preseason honors over the summer heading into the 2009 season. Here’s a look at the players who garnered preseason recognition:

TREVOR ANDERSON (Sr., Defensive End)
• Named to watch list for the Hendricks Award (defensive end of the year).
• Ranked among the Big Ten’s Top 30 players by ESPN.com (No. 30).
• Preseason All-Big Ten selection by Lindy’s (second team), Athlon Sports (second team) and Phil Steele’s College Football Preview (third team).

AARON BATES (Jr., Punter)
• Featured on All-America checklist compiled by the Football Writers Association of America.
• Preseason All-Big Ten selection by Athlon Sports (second team).

CHARLIE GANTT (Jr., Tight End)
• Named to watch list for the Mackey Award, given annually to the nation’s top tight end.
• Preseason All-Big Ten selection by Phil Steele’s College Football Preview (second team) and Athlon Sports (third team).
• Ranked No. 3 tight end in Big Ten by BigTenNetwork.com and No. 11 in the nation by Phil Steele.

MARK DELL (Jr., Wide Receiver)
• Ranked No. 4 wide receiver in the Big Ten by BigTenNetwork.com and No. 19 in the nation by Phil Steele’s College Football Preview.

• Preseason All-Big Ten selection by Lindy’s (second team), Phil Steele (third team) and Athlon Sports (third team).

JOEL FOREMAN (Sr., Left Guard)
• Preseason All-Big Ten selection by Sporting News (first team), Phil Steele’s College Football Preview (first team), Lindy’s (second team) and Athlon Sports (second team).

ERIC GORDON (Jr., Linebacker)
• Ranked No. 23 inside linebacker and second-team preseason All-Big Ten selection by Phil Steele’s College Football Preview.

GREG JONES (Jr., Linebacker)
• Big Ten Preseason Defensive Player of the Year.
• Named to watch lists for three major national awards: Nagurski Trophy (defensive player of the year), Butkus Award (top collegiate linebacker) and Lombardi Award (college lineman of the year).
• Named Big Ten’s hardest hitter by the Sporting News.
• Ranked among the nation’s top players by CollegeFootballNews.com (No. 28) and Rivals.com (No. 39).
• Ranked among the Big Ten’s top players by Sports Illustrated (third team) and ESPN.com (No. 11).

JOEL NITCHMAN (Sr., Center)
• Named to watch list for the Rimington Trophy, awarded annually to the nation’s top center.
• Preseason All-Big Ten selection by Lindy’s (second team) and Athlon Sports (second team).

CHRIS L. RUCKER (Jr., Cornerback)
• Ranked among nation’s top 50 cornerbacks by Phil Steele’s College Football Preview.
• Preseason All-Big Ten selection by Athlon Sports (second team).

BRETT SWENSON (Sr., Kicker)
• Ranked among nation’s top 50 kickers by Phil Steele’s College Football Preview and one of the top 15 favorites for the College Football Performance Awards’ Placekicker Trophy.
• Listed on the preseason All-America checklist by the FWAA.
• First-team preseason All-Big Ten selection by Phil Steele’s College Football Preview and Athlon Sports.
Michigan State (0-0)
Head Coach: Mark Dantonio (South Carolina, 1978)
MSU Record: 16-10 (.615), third year
Overall Record: 34-27 (.557), sixth year

Sept. 5 MONTANA STATE ................. 12 p.m.
Sept. 12 CENTRAL MICHIGAN ............. 12 p.m.
Sept. 19 at Notre Dame ................. 3:30 p.m.
Sept. 26 at Wisconsin ................... TBA
Oct. 3 MICHIGAN ......................... TBA
Oct. 10 at Illinois ....................... 12 p.m.
Oct. 17 NORTHWESTERN ................. 12 p.m.
Oct. 24 IOWA ............................. 7 p.m.
Oct. 31 at MINNESOTA ................. 8 p.m.
Nov. 7 WESTERN MICHIGAN ............. TBA
Nov. 14 at Purdue ....................... TBA
Nov. 21 PENN STATE ..................... TBA

Team Statistics | MSU | OPP
--- | --- | ---
Scoring | 326 | 287
Points per game | 25.1 | 22.1
Rushing Yards | 1692 | 1852
Average per rush | 3.3 | 4.1
Average per game | 130.2 | 142.5
TDs rushing | 24 | 16
Passing Yards | 2773 | 2774
Att.-Comp.-Int. | 399-214-10 422-224-14
Average per game | 213.3 | 213.4
TDs Passing | 11 | 18
Total Offense | 4465 | 4626
Average per game | 343.5 | 355.8
Fumbles-Lost | 22-12 | 18-10
Third Down Conversions | 56/191 | 78/190
Sacks By-Yards | 26-191 | 24-196

2008 MICHIGAN STATE LEADERS
Rushing | Att. | Yds. | Avg. | TD
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Javon Ringer | 399 | 1837 | 4.2 | 22
Andre Anderson | 26 | 97 | 3.7 | 0
Passing Yards | Att. | Comp. | Yds. | TD
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Brian Hoyer | 353 | 180 | 2404 | 9
Receiving | No. | Yds. | Avg. | TD
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Blair White | 43 | 659 | 15.3 | 1
B.J. Cunningham | 41 | 528 | 12.9 | 0

Tackles | Solo | Asst. | Total | TFL
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Greg Jones | 80 | 47 | 127 | 14.0
Eric Gordon | 41 | 44 | 85 | 7.5
Ottis Wiley | 44 | 34 | 78 | 2.0
Danny Fortener | 42 | 27 | 69 | 1.0

Montana State (0-0)
Head Coach: Rob Ash (Montana State, 1965)
MSU Record: 13-10 (.565), third year
Overall Record: 189-109-5 (.632), 30th year

Sept. 5 at Michigan State ................. 12 p.m.
Sept. 12 DIXIE STATE .................... 3:30 p.m.
Sept. 26 at Northern Colorado ............ 3:30 p.m.
Oct. 3 at Weber State ................... 3 p.m.
Oct. 10 NORTHERN ARIZONA ........... 3:30 p.m.
Oct. 17 SOUTH DAKOTA ................ 3 p.m.
Oct. 24 Eastern Washington .............. 4 p.m.
Oct. 31 IDAHO STATE .................... 3:30 p.m.
Nov. 7 at Portland State .................. 4 p.m.
Nov. 14 SACRAMENTO STATE ............. 2 p.m.
Nov. 21 MONTANA ....................... 2 p.m.

Team Statistics | MSU | OPP
--- | --- | ---
Scoring | 319 | 332
Points per game | 26.6 | 27.7
Rushing Yards | 2103 | 1066
Average per rush | 4.2 | 2.6
Average per game | 175.2 | 88.8
TDs rushing | 20 | 21
Passing Yards | 1934 | 2703
Att.-Comp.-Int. | 323-161-19 395-239-17
Average per game | 161.2 | 225.2
TDs Passing | 14 | 17
Total Offense | 4037 | 3769
Average per game | 336.4 | 314.1
Fumbles-Lost | 24-16 | 13-8
Third Down Conversions | 60/170 | 57/174
Sacks By-Yards | 36-204 | 17-30

2008 MONTANA STATE LEADERS
Rushing | Att. | Yds. | Avg. | TD
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
DeSean Thomas | 24 | 407 | 17.0 | 4
Tyler Lulu | 23 | 252 | 11.0 | 0
Receiving | No. | Yds. | Avg. | TD
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
DeSean Thomas | 24 | 407 | 17.0 | 4
C.J. Palmer | 63 | 312 | 5.0 | 7

Tackles | Solo | Asst. | Total | TFL
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Bobby Daly | 36 | 46 | 82 | 8.0
Jeff Price | 37 | 30 | 67 | 6.0
Chase Gazzarro | 43 | 19 | 62 | 11.0
Kevin Retaranio | 31 | 27 | 58 | 2.5

SCOUTING MONTANA STATE
Montana State is led by third-year head coach Rob Ash, who has led the Bobcats to a 13-10 record this year as a head coach, including successful stints at Division III Juniata (Pa.) and Drake.

Last year, the Bobcats closed the season on a five-game winning streak to finish at 7-5 overall and 5-3 in the Big Sky Conference. The Bobcats played two FBS (Football Bowl Subdivision) opponents in 2008, falling to Kansas State, 69-10, and Minnesota, 35-23.

Forty-one letterwinners return for Montana State in 2009, including 15 starters, led by preseason All-America candidates Dane Fletcher and Jeff Hansen. Fletcher, who anchors the Bobcat defensive line, produced 6.5 sacks (48 yards) and 14.5 tackles for loss (65 yards) in just nine games last season. At right guard, Hansen leads the offensive line that helped Montana State average more than 175 yards a game on the ground in 2008.

Starting quarterback Cody Kempt also returns after throwing for 2,136 yards and nine touchdowns in nine games as a sophomore. The Bobcats lost their top two rushers but do welcome back leading receiver DeSean Thomas, who had 24 receptions for 407 yards and four touchdowns last year.

A GLANCE AHEAD

For all of the latest information on the Spartan football team, including videos, podcasts, notes and features, check out www.msuspartans.com, the official Michigan State Athletics website, and CoachDantonio.com, the official website of MSU head coach Mark Dantonio. Fans can also follow Spartan Football on Twitter at www.twitter.com/msu_football and Facebook at www.facebook.com/msuathletics.
Adam Decker grew up a Spartan. From grade school on, Decker always knew he wanted to wear the Green and White. For some, it’s a dream and that’s it. For others it’s something that with hard work — and a little pedigree — can become a reality.

Decker, now in his last season, is like most seniors — wondering where time has gone.

“When you are younger, everyone says college is going to go by really fast but at the time you really don’t believe it,” Decker said. “To be here now, knowing I’ve been here for about four-and-half years — it just doesn’t seem like it at all.”

While his career has seen the ups and downs of that of a typical college football player, Decker has always maintained a team-first, blue-collar attitude. It’s this workman-like mentality that Decker inherited from his father, Michael, a three-time letterwinner at linebacker for the Spartans from 1977-79.

“It’s a bond that we have,” said Decker. “We both love Michigan State. As a kid, I always looked up to him and as I got older and into high school, I realized how special it was and how much of a challenge it is to make it to this level.”

The Rochester Hills native’s first year at MSU was 2005. After redshirting his first season, he saw action in all 12 games in 2006 and looked to be in line for an increased role the next season. However, an injury limited him to just two games as a sophomore in 2007.

Last season, Decker saw all of his hard work over the previous three seasons pay off. He started eight games and was a force in the middle of the Spartans’ linebacking corps. He finished the season with 56 tackles (fifth most on the team) and proved to be an invaluable piece of MSU’s rush defense.

Oh yeah, and there was that one huge play he made last season that will be talked about and shown in highlight reels for years to come. But since the humble Decker doesn’t really like to talk about “the play”…

(Pssst, if you don’t remember — and how could you not — Decker hit
Iowa All-American running back Shonn Green for a 3-yard loss on a fourth-and-inches play in the final minutes of the fourth quarter that preserved the Spartans’ 16-13 victory over the Hawkeyes.)

"You are always going to experience setbacks but you need to keep pushing and know that things will get better if you just work hard."

Decker admits he was “just doing his job” on the game-saving play and nothing more. While it may have increased his confidence as a player going forward, he insists it did more for a team that was seeking to play in its first January bowl game since 1999.

“It helped our team confidence more than anything,” Decker said. “We were in a position where it was still pretty early in the season and we had won the games early on that we were expected to win. The Iowa game was really our first challenge of the year and after coming out on top I think we all kind of realized that we had the chance to do great things and beat a lot of good teams.”

Decker sees last year’s success as a major catalyst for this season.

“I think we realize that last year was a stepping stone to getting to where we want to be,” he added. “If we all can get our jobs done individually, we will be able to look back at the end of the season and say we were Big Ten Champions and we achieved our goals.”

It’s leadership like that and strong team-first values that makes Decker not only such a valuable piece to the Spartans’ success this season, but critical in the development and mindset of the team’s younger players. As a fifth-year senior, he embraces the role of mentor to his younger teammates.

“Seniors are expected to be leaders – Coach Dantonio makes a big point of that and says he expects the seniors to have their best years on and off the field in their final year,” Decker said. “Being in the position where we’ve been through it all, you are able to relate to the underclassmen because we have been through all those situations. We can use what we’ve learned to try and encourage them and help them through the tough times.”

As he prepares for his final season on the field, Decker is hoping to savor the moments he has left as a player. All of his experiences as a Spartan football player will surely help him in the years to come, as the finance major and two-time Academic All-Big Ten selection is preparing to attend law school next year.

If he follows the simple advice he gives the underclassmen, the success Decker has experienced on and off the field will continue for years to come.

“There are always going to be ups and downs,” said Decker. “You are always going to experience setbacks but you need to keep pushing and know that things will get better if you just work hard.”

---

**GETTING TO KNOW ADAM DECKER**

**HOMETOWN:** Rochester Hills, Mich.  
**HIGH SCHOOL:** Brother Rice  
**NUMBER:** 55  
**MAJOR:** Finance  
**FAST FACTS:** Earned Big Ten Distinguished Scholar Award for having over a 3.7 GPA last year … Named to the CoSIDA Academic All-District second team in 2008 … Participated in the July 2009 Heroes for Kids golf outing, benefiting Saginaw youth recreation programs … His father, Michael, was on the 1978 Spartan team that won the Big Ten Championship.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Hometown</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Johnny Adams</td>
<td>CB</td>
<td>So.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denicos Allen</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
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<td>Andre Anderson</td>
<td>RB</td>
<td>Jr.</td>
<td>Barrington, Ill.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trevor Anderson</td>
<td>DE</td>
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<td>David Barrent</td>
<td>OT</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>Clive, Iowa</td>
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<td>Aaron Bates</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Jr.</td>
<td>New Concord, Ohio</td>
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<td>Nick Benczuck</td>
<td>FB</td>
<td>Jr.</td>
<td>Strongsville, Ohio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jordan Benton</td>
<td>WR</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
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<td>WR</td>
<td>R-Fr.</td>
<td>Villa Park, Ill.</td>
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<td>B.J. Cunningham</td>
<td>WR</td>
<td>Sr.</td>
<td>Westerville, Ohio</td>
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<td>Kendall Davis-Clark</td>
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<td>FB</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Danny Folino</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Fr.</td>
<td>Okemos, Mich.</td>
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</table>
2009 MICHIGAN STATE SPARTANS

62 Chris McDonald
OG • R-Fr.
Sterling Heights, Mich.

75 Jared McGaha
OG • So.
Powell, Tenn.

36 Jon Misch
LB • Jr.
Waterford, Mich.

64 Brendon Moss
DT • Sr-5
Bay Village, Ohio

17 Kevin Muma
QB • Fr.
Troy, Mich.

69 Colin Neely
DE • Jr.
Bethlehem, Pa.

7 Keith Nichol
QB • So.
Lowell, Mich.

17 Kyle Nichol
QB • Fr.
Lowell, Mich.

65 Joel Nitchman
C • Sr-5
Kalamazoo, Mich.

10 Chris Norman
LB • Fr.
Detroit, Mich.

69 Blake Pacheco
NT • So.
Salinas, Calif.

14 Chase Parker
CB • So.
Mason, Mich.

42 Andrew Pendy
FB • Sr-5
Shelby Township, Mich.

96 Kevin Pickelman
DT • Sr.

73 Arthur Ray Jr.
OL • So.
Chicago, Ill.

24 Caulton Ray
RB • So.
Southfield, Mich.

60 Micajah Reynolds
OG • Fr.
Lansing, Mich.

39 Trenton Robinson
S • So.
Bay City, Mich.

54 David Rolf
DE • So.
Piqua, Ohio

44 Josh Rouse
FB • Sr.
Newtown, Conn.

16 Chris D. Rucker
WR • So.
Detroit, Mich.

29 Chris L. Rucker
CB • Jr.
Warren, Ohio

68 Ethan Ruhland
OG • R-Fr.
Lake Orion, Mich.

76 Mike Schmeding
OT • Sr-5
Rutherford, N.J.

20 Kyle Selden
P • So.
Waterford, Mich.

47 Adam Setterbo
FB • So.
Spring Lake, Mich.

56 Alex Shackleton
SN • Jr.
Breckenridge, Colo.

80 Dion Sims
TE • Fr.
Detroit, Mich.

6 Fred Smith
WR • So.
Detroit, Mich.

81 Brad Sonntag
WR • So.
Saginaw, Mich.
COACHING STAFF:

Front Row (L-R): Brad Lunsford, Dave Warner, Mark Staten, Dan Roushar, Dan Enos, Don Treadwell, Mark Dantonio, Pat Narduzzi, Mike Tressel, Ted Gill, Harlon Barnett, Tim Allen.


Third Row (L-R): Bob Knickerbocker, Zak Willis, Nick Ruffing, Reed Schuitema, Tom Shepard, Randy Gillon.

ATHLETIC TRAINING STAFF:

Front Row (L-R): Mike Chapman, Ken Bergin, Brooke Largay, Jennifer Seid, Candy Anderson ATC, Clarissa Hall, Jerrin Guindon, Dave Whisenant.

Back Row (L-R): Sally Nogle PhD ATC, Brett Penning ATC, Jeremy Metzler MD, Mike Shingles DO, Andy Schorhaaer DO, Doug Dietzel DO, Jit Mookergee DO, Brooke Lemmen DO, Jeff Monroe MS ATC. Not pictured: Randy Pearson MD.