

# Michigan State players

## Senior forward Aisha Jefferson:

### **(How much do you know about Bowling Green and their tendencies)**

“Bowling Green is a good program, they have always been a good program in their conference and been a dominating program. It’s not that long ago since we played them, so it was refreshing to know that we get to play someone that we are familiar with their type of play. They are a very guard oriented team; they have a great point guard and a lot of great role players. It’s going to take a team effort from them; it’s not a one man show with them. They all make each other better and they are a great program.”

### **(Does Bowling Green remind you of anybody this year)**

“I think they remind me of Michigan the way they ball screen, well actually a lot of Big Ten teams. We have seen a lot of teams who play a similar style. We match up against different styles every night in the Big Ten. We are pretty familiar with their style and coach has us prepared.”

### **(Bowling Green’s 3-point shooting)**

“We have to keep our hands up in their face, they are all shooters. Their point guard has very deep range. We are just going to have to stay focused on our style of defense. Just keeping our hands up and defend the paint as well as we can.”

### **(Last two weeks of practice)**

“The last two weeks have been exciting. We are always excited to get started with the tournament. We are fired up on how our last game ended. It left a bad taste in our mouth. We tend to rebound well off of loses. We are in a good place right now and we are excited to get started with the tournament.”

### **(How has last year’s tournament run help you prepare for this year’s)**

“The biggest benefit is the experience. Everyone on our team has experience in the NCAA tournament except for the freshmen. Playing basketball is a lot different once you get to the tournament. Everyone is playing with a sense of urgency.”

### **(Being in the South Region)**

“I’m just excited to be playing in the tournament, and the site really doesn’t matter. I think our seed is fair. I’m excited that it is close to Michigan and it allows our family and friends to travel and support us. We are expecting to have a lot of people here. One of the things that I was happy about was our location.”

### **(Personnel of Bowling Green)**

“They are the definition of a real team. Lauren Prochaska is their best player, but without her teammates she wouldn’t get the opportunities and looks at the basket. The entire team makes each other better.”

### **(Sense of urgency to play well)**

"I think it's a process, I remember being a freshman and not understanding what seniors meant by how they felt and having a sense of urgency during the tournament. When you get to be a senior you realize how important it is and you don't get to come back. I think my teammates understand what it means to play for your seniors and what it feels like to play in one of your last games."

**(Competition with the men's team)**

"I feel like we are all part of the Spartan family. There is no envy, and we are proud of our men's program; if anything its motivation. Every day we see the Final Four banners which add more motivation. They help us throughout the year and it's exciting to have a successful program on the men's and women's side. Sometimes we compete but it's more of who had a better week and not who's better. We wish them the best."

**Senior center Lauren Aitech:**

**(How does Bowling Green compare when you played them two years ago, and how Lauren Prochaskas has grown and developed)**

"Back two years ago we were both very young teams, we both have grown in different ways. Prochaskas has gotten a lot better, but I also feel that our team has also gotten a lot better."

**(Rebounding coming off the Iowa game)**

"It's definitely something we are paying attention too. Everyone is ready to start rebounding."

**(Using size to a benefit)**

"Our size is going to be an advantage but they are definitely quicker. We are going to have to pay attention to our passes. We are going to have to be careful and not to over look anybody."

**(Bowling Green's 3-point shooting)**

"Long shots mean long rebounds. Our guards are ready and also boxing out is going to be a big point of emphasis."

**(Playing with urgency)**

"We are definitely excited and ready to play. We really want to advance in the tournament and I feel that we can with the team we have. I enjoy playing with this team."

**(On getting Bowling Green to turnover over the ball)**

"I feel like our team has had a very good defense throughout the year. I think if we play the defense that we are capable of playing we will do very well. Our team is feisty and we are going to come out playing hard."

## **Bowling Green State University**

Head Coach Curt Miller

(On how Michigan State has changed since they last played)

“If you look at the Michigan State program from December of this year they have developed into one of the best defensive teams in the country. They rewrote the Big Ten record books in defensive statistics this year. Actually over the past 17 or 18 games they have absolutely been shutting down people. I think that has been a gradual process over the last three years for Michigan State and now they make every shot hard and they contest. They do a great job at defending the arc and they are one of the best shot blocking teams in the country. I think the biggest change when you talk about Michigan State is how talented they are defensively. It is very difficult to get out of the 50’s against them, and that’s the Big Ten and some major competition. We don’t want to play a grind out game. We don’t want the game in the 40’s or 50’s or we don’t have a shot. It has been very hard for any team to do that. You have to give them a lot of credit at the defensive end.”

(On Michigan State’s 2-3 zone.)

“Clearly we’re one of the best 3-point shooting teams in the country. At times their zone is going to make mistakes. Our team has found ways to make shots against the zone. Hopefully we will break it down. Against man-to-man, we are a ball screen offense. We rely a lot on penetration. In the MAC where we have similar athleticism and similar skills, even though they know you and everything you’re trying to accomplish, our penetration has helped us create open shots with penetration and kick, penetration and dumps. Against a Michigan State team that can switch you one through five and their post players can be more athletic than your guards. It is a real challenge for us to be able to create shots for each other. That’s why you heard the players mention this; they have the ability to shut down our offense. They have the ability to shut us down and keep us in the 30’s. We have to make contested shots if we’re going to try to make a run at this. Our kids know that and they’re not going to shy from that and if its one of those nights where we can make some tough plays, we can hang in there.”

(On Michigan State’s game plan.)

“We can try to find the match-up advantages that we like. They’re going to post their big wings against our wings. They’re going to challenge Lauren (Prochaska) from the beginning to the end. They have the size advantage in the post so they’re going to want to spread us out and try to pound. We can pick out all the plays they’re going to do. We have to do the same thing. We’ve got to play hard on the perimeter. How can we attack them to get the switch that we want? These are chess matches and I’ve had chess matches for years. The great news is that we know a lot about each other. The bad news is that we know a lot about each other. We talked as a coaching staff; we were so genuinely excited that once we got to the NCAA Tournament we were going to play someone that didn’t know us. Low and behold we draw Michigan State and they know everything that we do. We lost that potential advantage that we had against Oklahoma State or that we had against Vanderbilt and the other teams that we played when we made that run in the NCAA Tournament.”

(On Suzy Merchant)

“I’m really proud of her. She is such a hard worker. She deserves all the credit because she is a workaholic. There are not very many people that are going to outwork Suzy in Division I. It is fun to see a MAC coach move on and have success. Our league is loaded with talented coaches and I don’t think they get the credit they deserve. Suzy does a really fantastic job and I really believe they are a sleeper team for the Final Four this year.”

(On a higher seed preparing for a lower seed)

"I think it is great for our players. It gives a boost to our players. We have talked about upsets and we can do this. I tried to goad Suzy into how is Kentucky looking. They are looking great. In Suzy's true form she says 'I haven't watched a second of Kentucky, I've only watched you and spent all my time preparing for you.' We're not going to get Suzy to overlook us. Now she has a rallying cry after seeing what happened in the men's tournament. I'm trying to get her attention on Kentucky but she won't bite."

(On relationship with Suzy Merchant)

"We have an unbelievable amount of respect for each other. All the years we've played against each other, obviously we had the two best teams in the MAC. It is a competitive rivalry and we really want to beat each other. It is a very respectful rivalry. The respect and how we prepare and what we put into it, our plans and preparation is very, very mutual. I think it all comes from respect. There are times when it was awkward because we so badly wanted to beat each other that we had to go through each others programs to win the MAC title. When you take a step back and you look at the discipline and the fundamentals, the teams reaching their potential that Suzy coaches, and vice versa, I think it's really taken on when you sit back and mature as a coach you really respect the job that the other does. We're each others fans. We follow each other closely."

(On defensive matchups Lauren Prochaska may face)

"I think we all foresee a matchup between Lykendra Johnson and Lauren Prochaska. What a great matchup this is going to be. Lykendra is a fantastic athlete at the offensive end. I doubt we'll change our game plan. At the offensive end I think they're going to post Lauren up and try to get on the offensive glass. Lykendra is one of the best offensive rebounders in the conference and playing in the tournament. At the other end I think Lykendra is going to dog her all over the floor. We do a lot of ball screens and we really believe in the ball screen offense. I think they'll keep trapping, hedging, and switching bigger people onto her. Could they triangle and two her or box and one her, and do something even that remote? Absolutely, I don't put anything past Suzy. I think they're going to give a lot of attention to Lauren and we realize that. We are going to have to get her open. I think the biggest compliment to Lauren is that she is really productive without a lot of volume. There are a lot of great players out there who need a lot of volume and a lot of opportunities to get their points. She is very patient in allowing the offense to come to her. She is a really, really sharp player. Her three point shooting is efficient and therefore she is unselfish and she realizes when people concentrate on her we have to get other people involved in our offense."

## Bowling Green Players

### Junior guard Lauren Prochaska

(What do you remember about the last time that you played Michigan State?)

"It was two years ago in the WNIT. They were a very physical team and very well coached, tough, strong, just a great all-around team. Their guards can post you up as well as step out and shoot an outside shot. Their post is the same. All of their players are very well-rounded and they are just an overall great team."

(The last time you played Michigan State you scored 24 points against them. What does that do for your confidence?)

"I don't really remember a whole lot about it. It was the last game of our season. It doesn't really carry over into this game at all. I'm going to have to work really hard to get open shots in the game tomorrow and to just get open on the wings. They are a great team defensively and it will be tough to get shots."

(You all faced Ohio State earlier in the year; can you compare and contrast them?)

"They're both in the Big Ten and really great teams. Against Ohio State we struggled in the first half and never really did get into rhythm. I think a lot of nerves got to us that game and that's what we need to try to do better by trying to come out ready to play this game. We know that they are a great team but we can't be scared to come out and play."

(Lauren you are the focal point of a lot of team's defenses. How do you get open for shots and what do they do against you?)

"Coach does a great job of calling plays to me where he knows that I can get open. He knows where I can get shots on the floor. My teammates do a great job of executing these plays and setting the screens in the right places to get me open. The point guards do a getting the ball down the floor and getting the ball to me."

(Does having played Michigan State before minimize some of the 12-5 factor in terms of seeds?)

"I think it will be a great game because we know them very well and they know us very well. We are very familiar with each other and I think that it makes it fun for both teams because there will be a large crowd from both schools and it will be a really exciting atmosphere."

(ESPN listed on their website a list of players to watch. You were one of them. Does that give you confidence or add pressure in any way?)

"I think it's a great honor for them to say that about me but I definitely have to go out and prove that I can play well. I have to show that I can play hard and that I can play good. It doesn't really do anything for me except show that I have to play good."

## Senior Guard Tamika Nurse

(What does Michigan State's length advantage do against your game?)

"Michigan State is a great defensive team; you can tell by their numbers that they are one of the greatest defensive teams in Big Ten history. We have to stick to our game plan and to continue to work to get open on the wings and to use start and stop to get them the ball. Basically, it's a team effort to move the ball around the court against them. They are a very good defense."

(What is different from the games that you lost in January?)

"I think that we peaked at the right moment. I think we came together and worked harder in practice. I think we felt that sense of urgency to finish our season on a positive note. I think in the MAC Tournament we showed a better balance of an inside/outside game and that helped us be more successful in the big scheme of things. I think we are more confident at this point in time and that we as a unit are really relying on each other and we have a lot of respect for one another."

(Will you talk about the importance of your three-point game as a team, and does their length affect that?)

“They are very, very long. It will be important for us to get uncontested shots and its going to be a game where you have to make some contested shots. You have to make big shots. I don’t think any of us have ever shied away from that moment. I think that we have the confidence to step up and make shots and to keep taking shots if they don’t go in. I think that is what’s essential; we don’t have that fear to not take the next one.”

(What makes Lauren so good?)

“Lauren is one of the best finishers that I’ve ever seen. She is definitely one of the best basketball players that I have ever played with. She can shoot with someone in her face and she is long. What is best about Lauren that a lot of people don’t realize is that Lauren is a phenomenal defender. She gets a lot of steals, lay-ups and she keeps you honest on both ends of the floor. That’s hard to go out there and score all those points and to come down and work just as hard on the defensive end every play of every game. She doesn’t sit on the bench very often during a game. Lauren is one of those special players that some get to play with and I am just glad that I have the opportunity to play with her.”

## Senior forward Tara Breske

(What inside against them are you expecting against (Allyssa) DeHaan? What do you remember and what can you do to neutralize her?)

“She definetly has a height advantage, wingspan. I’m a lot smaller than she is so I’m going to try to use my quickness to get my shot off or to go at her to just help my team. Just the length advantage, we still need inside presence against them.”

