



November 28, 2009

MSU 106, UMass 68

Spartans blow out Minutemen

With victory, MSU coach Tom Izzo becomes MSU's all-time wins leader

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ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. – Michigan State finished third in the Legends Classic after throttling Massachusetts, 106-68, in the consolation game on Saturday at Boardwalk Hall.

The No. 2 Spartans (5-1) suffered their first loss of the season in the semifinal game on Friday night, falling to Florida 77-74. The Gators (6-0) went on to win the tournament, 73-58, beating Rutgers in the final game.

Although the consolation game was an afterthought for the tournament, it proved beneficial for the Spartans in two ways. MSU's win was the 341st for coach Tom Izzo and pushed him past former all-time leader Jud Heathcote, who retired at the end of the 1994-95 season. Izzo took over the following season.

Near the end of the game, Spartan fans began holding up signs with the number "341" written in bold black type. Members of MSU's New York alumni chapter in attendance at the game created and distributed the signs.

After the game, the team held an impromptu "ceremony" for Izzo in the locker room. Equipment manager Dave Pruder had a plaque designed to recognize the achievement and the team carried it with them to Atlantic City. The plaque was engraved with a footprint, and a message that read:

"You've left your footprint. 341 wins."

Senior forward and captain Raymar Morgan presented it to Izzo after Austin Thornton and Draymond Green poured a bucket of water over his head.

"We had it planned for Friday, but it didn't work out so well, so we had to get him today," said junior guard Chris Allen, who scored a team-high 18 points.

The win also gave the Spartans a boost of confidence for the long-awaited rematch with North Carolina in the ACC/Big Ten Challenge. MSU will travel to Chapel Hill, N.C., to take on the Tar Heels on Tuesday night.

"This is a big game," Allen said. "In the last 10 minutes of this game, that's all we were talking about on the bench. 'Alright, now we gotta get back to the drawing board, go back to the crib and get ready for North Carolina.'"

The Spartans had plenty of time to start thinking about the Tar Heels. After falling behind 8-2 with 17:36 on the clock in the first half, MSU went on a 30-3 run and took a 32-11 lead with 7:45 left in the

half. UMass got no closer than 11 points for the rest of the game, and MSU led by as many as 46 points.

"It was a better game for us," Izzo said. "They played well early, but I think our break hurt them a little bit. We shot the ball so much better from the three. It was a different game, a game where we needed to get a lot of people involved. I'm proud of my team for bouncing back, but the road gets tougher."

Five MSU players scored in double figures -- Allen, Morgan (17), Kalin Lucas (16), Korie Lucious (13), Delvon Roe (11). The Spartans shot 58.6% from the field and were 14-of-22 from 3-point range (63.6%).

Morgan had gone scoreless against Florida and was 0-of-7 from the floor. Against UMass, he was 8-of-10.

"It was really important for me to keep shooting, get out there and stay aggressive," Morgan said. "Once I'm knocking some shots down early and getting some easy baskets, I think I'm a lot better off."

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