

Izzo makes Michigan State history at Boardwalk Hall

By SUSAN LULGJURAJ, Staff Writer | Posted: Sunday, November 29, 2009 |

ATLANTIC CITY - The Michigan State Spartans knew coach Tom Izzo would break the school's win record soon. They planned their own private celebration the day it happened.

Izzo got his record 341st victory with a 106-68 win over Massachusetts (2-4) in the consolation game of the Legends Classic on Saturday.

The players gave Izzo a plaque and dumped water on him in the middle of the locker room.

The plaque read, "341 leaves a footprint in the sand," and was complete with sand and a footprint.

"That's something we want to do with every year, leave something, some kind of footprint," Izzo said. "I was not expecting it. In some ways, I am happy they appreciate I want to leave some footprint somewhere. I think they are genuinely excited about it, and I hope they feel a part of it."

Izzo had to wait an extra day to break the record after losing to Florida 77-74 on Friday.

The loss left the Spartans' fans stunned and Izzo brushing off the upcoming milestone.

However, the Spartans (5-1) were feeling much better after Saturday's rout. In the final seconds of the game, Michigan State fans stood and held up "341" signs as they chanted Izzo's name.

"I'm amazed how many people would know about it," said Izzo, who is 341-138 in his career. "I humbly feel 341 is so far below my coaching buddies. I'm still not sure I've had 900 practices. If I had to say that 15 years ago I would break the record of most wins, I would probably answer no."

Izzo used to sit beside Jud Heathcote as an assistant at Michigan State.

He was named head coach in 1995 after spending 12 seasons on the staff. In total, Izzo is in his 28th season with the program.

He has led Michigan State to five Final Fours in the past 11 seasons, including the national title in 2000 and a national championship game appearance last season. He has won Coach of the Year four times.

With all that success, Izzo isn't looking at his lone record, but rather combining his win total with Heathcote.

"I hope he feels good about the joint record," Izzo said. "I look at it as we have 681 between the two of us."

Izzo's players tricked him in the locker room. They huddled around and gave him high-fives.

When he thought they were done patting him on the back, a few players threw water from a jug over his head, soaking the coach from head to foot.

"Three seconds after, everyone moved out of the way and we just splashed him," said junior Chris Allen, who had a team-high 18 points. "Just as he is going to be remembered forever, we are going to be remembered for the team that got him there."

Izzo never talked about the milestone with his team. The Spartans only learned of the record after they defeated Valparaiso on Nov. 22 to put Izzo at 340.

But once that happened, the players were ready.

"We had it planned for Friday, but it didn't work out so well," Allen said. "But we got him today."

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**MICHIGAN ST. (5-1)Totals 41-70 10-16 106.MASSACHUSETTS (2-4)Totals 21-55 19-25
68.Halftime3-Point Goals-Fouled Out-Rebounds-Assists-Total Fouls-A-**

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