Chapter 🏀14 - Conner George

14-2 - Spartan Years (2018-2019) - Redshirt Junior Season

Conner George

With the Spartans 2018-19 season approaching and three seasons (redshirt, redshirt freshman, and redshirt sophomore) of experience under his belt, George continued to work hard to play a key role on the Spartans squad, especially with the team's new mix of players, given the loss of five players (three to graduation plus both Miles Bridges and Jaren Jackson, Jr. to the NBA) and the addition of an incoming freshman class of five new players.

Name	Hometown	High school / college	Height	Weight	Commit date
Marcus Bingham *PF*	Grand Rapids, MI	Catholic Central High School	6 ft 9 in (2.06 m)	200 lb (91 kg)	Jun 30, 2017
	Recruiting star ratings: Scout: ★★★★☆ Rivals: ★★★★☆ 247Sports: ★★★★☆				ESPN grade: 83
Gabe Brown *SF*	Belleville, MI	Belleville High School	6 ft 7 in (2.01 m)	200 lb (91 kg)	Jun 20, 2017
	Recruiting star ratings: Scout: ★★★★☆ Rivals: ★★★★☆ 247Sports: ★★★★☆				ESPN grade: 84
Aaron Henry *SF*	Indianapolis, IN	Ben Davis High School	6 ft 5 in (1.96 m)	200 lb (91 kg)	Sep 11, 2017
	Recruiting star ratings: Scout: ★★★☆☆ Rivals: ★★★★☆ 247Sports: ★★★☆☆				ESPN grade: NR
Thomas Kithier *PF*	Macomb, MI	Dakota High School	6 ft 9 in (2.06 m)	225 lb (102 kg)	Nov 22, 2016
	Recruiting star ratings: Scout: ★★★☆☆ Rivals: ★★★★☆ 247Sports: ★★★★☆				ESPN grade: 81
Foster Loyer *PG*	Clarkston, MI	Clarkston High School	6 ft 0 in (1.83 m)	157 lb (71 kg)	Nov 22, 2016
	Recruiting star ratings: Scout: ★★★★☆ Rivals: ★★★★☆ 247Sports: ★★★★☆				ESPN grade: 85
Overall recruiting rankings: Scout: *No. 14* Rivals: *No. 11* ESPN: *No. 12*					
Note: In many cases, Scout, Rivals, 247Sports, and ESPN may conflict in their listings of height and weight.					

However, before the start of the 2018-19 season, *The Black Sheep MSU*, was again up to its "fake news" reporting with breaking news that the "Phoenix Suns planned to select Conner George with the first pick in the 2018 NBA Draft." With this now being the third time that Conner was the "butt" of a *Black Sheep* article, a now tough-skinned George took the ribbing in stride and tweeted the perfect comeback: "First of all I just want like to thank God…"

2018-19

Going into his third season of NCAA eligibility (redshirt junior), George was listed in his MSU bio at 6’4”, 200 pounds. The Spartans’ team composition for the 2018-19 season changed significantly from 2017-18 season between departures (those who graduated or left early to enter NBA) and the incoming 2018 Recruiting Class (see team roster at bottom of next page).

2018-19 Spartans Men’s Basketball Squad (#41 Conner George)

Pos.	#	Name	Height	Weight	Year
G	0	Kyle Ahrens	6 ft 5 in (1.96 m)	215 lb (98 kg)	RS Jr
F	30	Marcus Bingham	6 ft 10 in (2.08 m)	210 lb (95 kg)	Fr
F	22	Gabe Brown	6 ft 7 in (2.01 m)	205 lb (93 kg)	Fr
C	40	Braden Burke **(W)**	6 ft 11 in (2.11 m)	220 lb (100 kg)	RS So
G	41	Connor George	6 ft 3 in (1.91 m)	200 lb (91 kg)	RS So
F	25	Kenny Goins	6 ft 6 in (1.98 m)	230 lb (104 kg)	RS Sr
F	11	Aaron Henry	6 ft 6 in (1.98 m)	218 lb (99 kg)	Fr
G	10	Jack Hoiberg **(W)**	5 ft 9 in (1.75 m)	175 lb (79 kg)	RS Fr
F	15	Thomas Kithier	6 ft 8 in (2.03 m)	225 lb (102 kg)	Fr
G	1	Joshua Langford **(C)**	6 ft 5 in (1.96 m)	210 lb (95 kg)	Jr
G	3	Foster Loyer	6 ft 0 in (1.83 m)	170 lb (77 kg)	Fr
F	20	Matt McQuaid **(C)**	6 ft 5 in (1.96 m)	200 lb (91 kg)	Sr
F	23	Xavier Tillman	6 ft 9 in (2.06 m)	250 lb (113 kg)	So
C	44	Nick Ward	6 ft 8 in (2.03 m)	250 lb (113 kg)	Jr
G	14	Brock Washington **(W)**	6 ft 4 in (1.93 m)	175 lb (79 kg)	RS Fr
G	5	Cassius Winston	6 ft 1 in (1.85 m)	185 lb (84 kg)	Jr

While George is listed as a Guard, in games he normally plays on the left or right wing (as forward), with the guard position covered by the starters (Cassius Winston and Josh Langford) or subs (Kyle Ahrens, freshman Foster Loyer, or Jack Hoiberg), leaving George with the challenge of competing for playing time at forward with taller players: starters Matt McQuaid (6’5”) and Kenny Goins (6’6”), 6’9” Xavier Tillman who also backs up center Nick Ward, and four freshman all listed at forward: Aaron Henry (6’6’), Gabe Brown (6’7”), Thomas Kithier (6’8”), and Marcus Bingham (6’10”). For Coach Izzo, this presents the challenge of how to get more time on the court for George at the forward position when Izzo also need to give his team’s freshman (younger and taller) players more time on the court at the forward position, while relying on the more experienced George to provide leadership and mentoring to the new kids on the block.

2018-19 Men's Basketball Roster

George, Conner

41 CONNER GEORGE

POSITION: G	**HEIGHT:** 6-4
WEIGHT: 200	**CLASS:** Redshirt Junior
HOMETOWN: Okemos, Mich.	**HIGHSCHOOL:** Okemos

BIO RELATED STATS

Â· Career Stats
Â· 2015-16 Game-by-Game Stats
Â· 2016-17 Game-by-Game Stats

THE WORD

Awarded a scholarship for 2017-18, after initially joining the Spartans as a walk-on for the 2015-16 season - Earned his bachelor's degree in three years and is currently enrolled in graduate school - Excellent long-range shooter.

2017-18

Appeared in 16 games - Averaged 0.4 points and 1.1 rebounds in 3.4 minutes per game - Played a career-high 18 minutes, scored two points, grabbed a career-best seven rebounds, including five on the offensive end, in the first round of the PK80 Invitational against DePaul (11/23) - Also hit baskets in wins over Nebraska and Long Beach State (12/21) - Selected to the National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) Honors Court, recognizing men's basketball players who carry a grade-point average of 3.2 or higher.

2016-17

Appeared in 10 games, averaging 0.6 points in 1.2 minutes Â· Recipient of MSU's Tim Bograkos Walk-On Award Â· Scored a career-high four points, going 4-for-6 from the free throw line in the Big Ten Tournament vs. Penn State (3/9) Â· Scored his first career points on a layup vs. Minnesota (1/11) Â· Saw his first action in the Green and White and grabbed two rebounds vs. Mississippi Valley State (11/18) Â· Academic All-Big Ten.

2015-16

Redshirted.

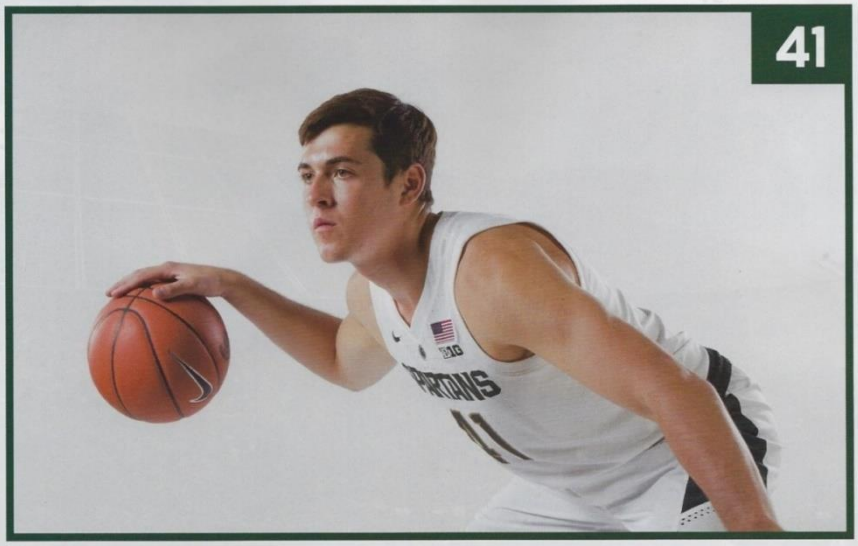
HIGH SCHOOL

2015 Lansing State Journal Dream Team honoree Â· Averaged 23 points and 10.6 rebounds as a senior, shooting 48 percent from the field and 83 percent from the foul line, playing for Coach Jeff Wonch Â· Made 38 3-pointers on the season Â· 2015 Class A All-State honoree as selected by the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan Â· 2015 Associated Press Honorable Mention Class A All-State Â· Chose to walk-on at Michigan State over numerous Division II and III opportunities Â· Earned 2014 all-league honorable mention accolades, while leading Okemos to the Class A district finals. **PERSONAL**
Born Feb. 18, 1997 Â· Son of Jerry and Cathy George; Cathy is head coach of the Michigan State volleyball team Â· Communication major.

Conner George Readies for the Spartans 2018-19 Season

CONNER GEORGE

G • 6-4 • 200 • R-JR • OKEMOS, MICH./OKEMOS



GEORGE LIVES AND BREATHES MICHIGAN STATE

By Angie Bazzano

Conner George grew up as a member of the Spartan family, but being able to suit up and represent Michigan State on the basketball court gives being a Spartan a whole different meaning for the Okemos, Mich. native.

When George was in third grade his mom, Cathy, became the head coach of the volleyball team at MSU and since then, George has lived and breathed Michigan State athletics.

George joined the Spartan squad as a walk-on in 2015, but last season, he was awarded a scholarship. For him, earning that honor was significant because it spoke volumes to his dedication to the team.

"It was special for Coach to notice the amount of work that I've put in and (what I've) done to try to help the team as much as possible, whether or not it's on the floor or not," George said. "He rewarded me with a scholarship and I couldn't thank him enough for it. It's a dream come true to play here on scholarship."

Last May, George was able to walk across the stage and earned his bachelor's degree in communication, doing so in three years.

"It felt good to work hard and not just come here to play basketball but to be at a school like MSU and graduate in three years," George said. "Being able to graduate and do it with Kenny (Goins), Ben (Carter) and Tum (Nairn) was really cool."

Currently George is pursuing a master of arts and education as he continues to explore his next steps. With his family pedigree in coaching, that area has always interested him and is something he can see himself doing in the future.

Every year his goal has been to contribute as much as he can and this season, he hopes to have a stronger presence on the court.

"I'm really trying to expand my game here and try to get on the court, see more playing time and whether that evolves over the course of this year and next year," George said. "That's definitely a goal of mine and something I want to accomplish, to get on the floor more often and I'm trying to set myself up for that."

Besides George, the Izzone will be happy to see more court time for the redshirt junior, as they commonly start chants of "Conner George" in support of the fan favorite guard.

"It's fun to see and hear. You get nervous when you know everyone's trying to get you to shoot the ball and trying to get you to score, but it's awesome," George said. "I love the support of all the fans every time I go in. I get a little nervous but I'm used to it now, it's more just fun."

The support of the team, his family – both the George's and his Spartan family – and the fans have made the difference in his first three years and he's eager to continue giving back to a school and family that has had such a big impact on who he is.

2018-19 Michigan State Basketball Preview

Non-Conference

Up first for the Spartans, on November 6, was a narrow loss to #1-ranked **Kansas**, 92-87, a game in which George did not play (Source).

On November 11, in the season's second game against **Florida Gulf Coast University**, the Spartans won, 106-82. George played one minute but otherwise did not get into the stat book (Source).

Florida Gulf Coast's Christian Carlyle #3 shoots over Conner George (41) the second half at the Breslin Center (Nick King/Lansing State Journal)

On November 13, 2018, only three games into the 2018-19 season, and a day before the Spartans took on the **University of Louisiana-Monroe** at the Breslin Center, this writer interviewed Conner George at the Student Union on the Michigan State campus. At the risk of violating an NCAA rule, I invited Conner for lunch but he declined, noting that he had eaten a big breakfast and didn't want anything else before practice later that afternoon. I proposed that we discuss the questions I had emailed to him and he agreed to email his written responses to me as soon as he had some breathing room during his busy schedule. Throughout the interview Conner was most generous with his time and responses, including responding to other questions that occurred to me.

Conner George and Kerry Byrnes

You recently graduated with a degree in communication – is that correct?

Correct. I graduated with a BA in Communication.

In studying for a BA in Communication, did you have a specific career goal? What kind of work career did you want to pursue – communication-related or other?

I did not have a specific career goal. Communication is a broad major with a wide selection of jobs afterwards.

Having graduated and with two years of NCAA eligibility remaining to play, you re-enrolled to study for a Master's degree. In Communication or another field?

Masters of Arts in Education

Even as you are now studying for your Master's degree, have your work career goals remained the same or have they changed?

I'm thinking of possibly going into coaching, or doing something business/sales-related.

When you come into a game, is your primary offensive role to play wing on the left or right? Or are you more comfortable as a shooting guard or point guard? Or do you need to be able to play in all of these positions when all of the offensive players are rotating?

When I enter a game it will be as a shooting guard, and as a 2/3 guard you will have to be able to run both lanes. For some reason I am generally on the left side.

You were a prolific scorer for the Okemos Chieftains, especially in shooting 3-pointers. Playing for the Spartans, does Coach Izzo want your role in games to focus on your other strengths (e.g., setting screens, passing, rebounding)?

Coach wants my role to be playing hard, and getting rebounds; however, if I get a good shooting opportunity, he will want me to shoot the ball without hesitation.

When you are at practice and playing as a member of the scout team, which Spartan starters or subs are you assigned to guard?

On the scout team I will end up guarding everybody but most of the time I will start out guarding Josh Langford

Does the scout team also play offense, running plays against the MSU starters or subs?

We do play offense and it will be against both the starters and subs.

Is there any part of your offensive or defensive game (e.g., rebounding, setting screens, shooting, ball handling, etc.) where Coach Izzo is constantly pushing you to improve?

Coach looks for people who can defend first. He pushes everyone including me to get better at defense. If you can play defense and know the scouting report you will have a much better chance of getting into the games.

After your basketball career at MSU, do you have any aspirations to pursue a pro career (e.g., in Europe) or possibly even to get into coaching at some level?

If the opportunity presented itself and was a good situation I would be very interested. I also would consider coaching, again, if it was a good situation.

When Coach Izzo puts you into a home game, the home crowd reacts differently than when any other player is substituted into the game. I noticed this with Dan Chapman earlier in his career as a Spartan. How do you feel when you experience the home crowd cheering when you come into a game?

I love the support of the IZZONE and the rest of the fans show. At first it was a lot to take in and I would get nervous. Now that I am in my 4th year I have gotten more used to it and take it all in each and every time. It is a great experience and a feeling I will never forget.

During your first year or so at Okemos High School, you are identified in the *Tomahawk* yearbook as Robert George. Then all of a sudden in the yearbook and the media, you are Conner George. Might there be an interesting story the behind the "name change" from Robert (Bob) to Conner?

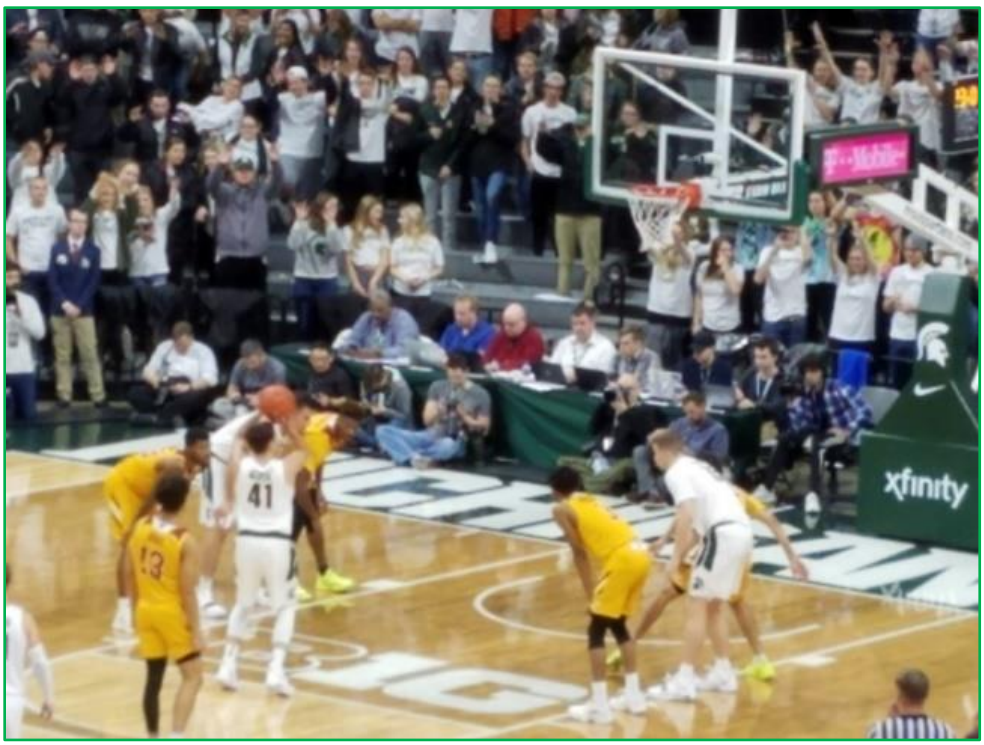
Conner is my middle name, and at a very young age I noticed that I liked Conner all of a sudden more than Robert, so I just told my mom and she wondered if I was sure, and I was set on Conner ever since I was about 6!

The next day, on November 14, the Spartans beat **University of Louisiana-Monroe** (**ULM**) at East Lansing, 80-59. While George (#41) played only one minute and missed a free throw attempt, he grabbed a rebound and scored a layup near the game's end.

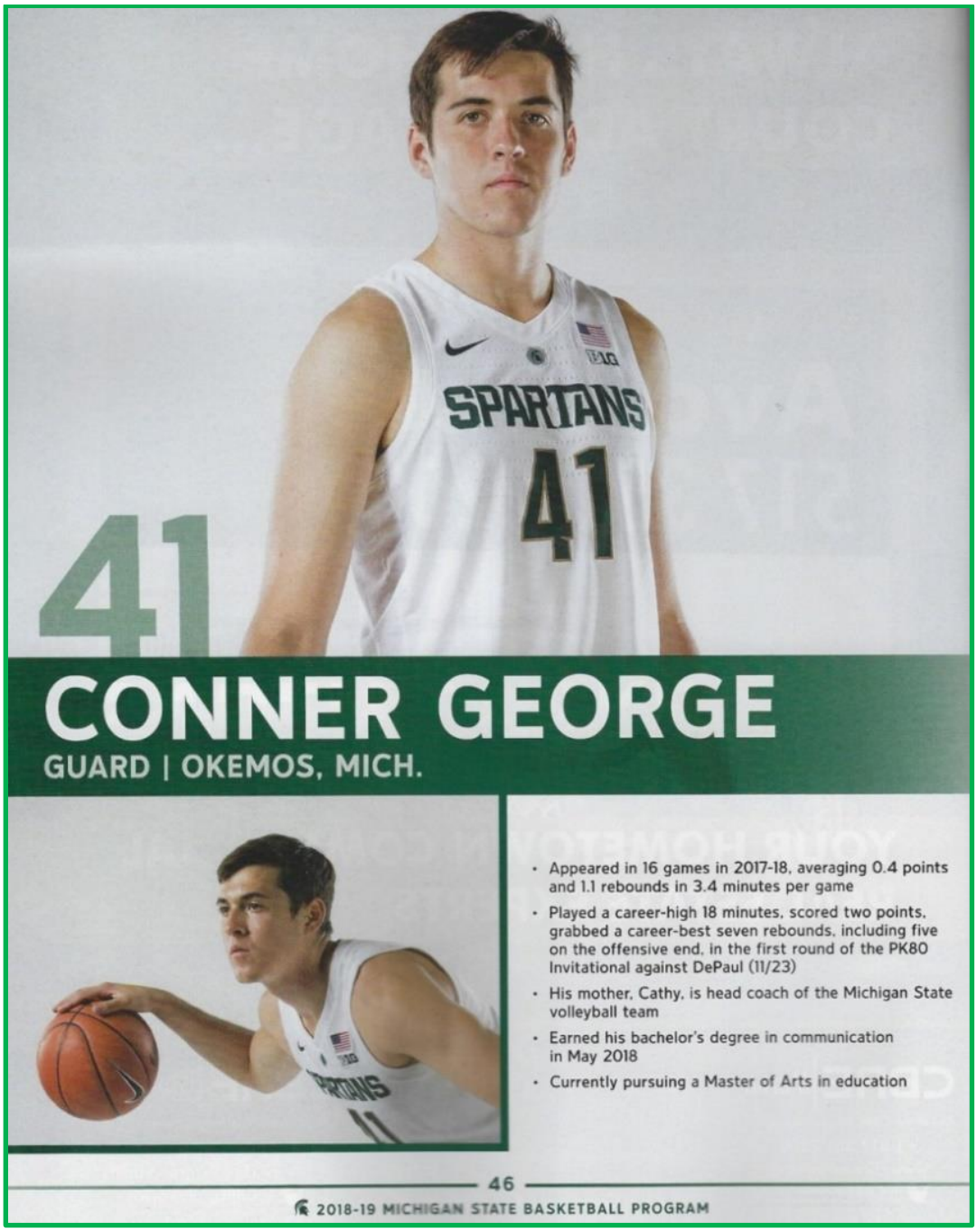
Louisiana-Monroe Guard Jalen Hodge defends against Conner George

Conner George (41) scores against Louisiana-Monroe at the Breslin Center. (Matthew Dae Smith/Lansing State Journal)

George (#41) Defending Against ULM



George Misses a Free Throw but Kerry Scores a T-Shirt



2018-19 Michigan State Basketball Program vs. LOUISIANA Monroe – November 14, 2018

On November 18, the Spartans downed **Tennessee Tech**, 101-33, with George getting one rebound in one minute of play (Source).

On November 22-23, MSU played #17-ranked **UCLA** and unranked **Texas** in the Las Vegas Invitational Tournament. On November 22, the Spartans downed **UCLA** (87-67). On November 23, the Spartans topped **Texas**, 78-68, a team that just the night before had beaten #7-ranked **North Carolina**. George did not play in either game.

Spartans Win Las Vegas Invitational Tournament (November 23, 2018)

On November 27, the Spartans narrowly lost at **Louisville**, 82-78 (in overtime). George did not play in the game.

Big Ten Conference

Three nights later, on November 30, the Spartans won at **Rutgers**, 78-67, but Conner did not play in the game.

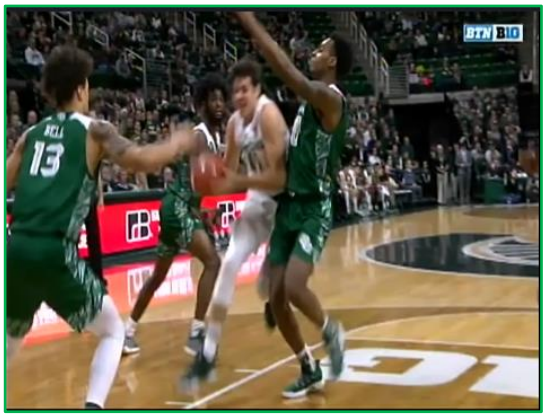
On December 3, the Spartans defeated **Iowa**, 90-68; while George played two minutes, he had no stats other than a personal foul (Source).

Conner George (41) defends Iowa forward Riley Till (20) at the Breslin Center (December 3, 2018)

Iowa's Maishe Dailey (1) drives to the basket and draws a foul against Conner George (41) in the second half at Breslin Center on December 3, 2018

On December 8, in a non-conference game, the Spartans won again at **Florida**, 63-59, though George did not play in this game.

On December 16, in a non-conference game, MSU beat **Wisconsin-Green Bay**, 104-83. With 1:26 remaining, the Spartans got their last basket on George's drive to the right side of the net for a layup (see two photos below), upping the score to 103-77. On the next possession, George drove to the left side of the basket; spinning to his left to avoid contact, he shot the ball over his right shoulder (see the two photos on the next page) but the ball went over the hoop, with MSU getting its last point on a free throw after a Spartan grabbed George's "pass" (or the rebound from his "shot") and was fouled in the process of shooting the ball. Overall, George had one rebound and scored one basket shooting .500 (1-2) on field goal attempts (Source).



BTN BIG
GREEN BAY 77
MICHIGAN STATE 103
2nd Half 1:09 25

FARM BUREAU
SPARTANS

On December 21, in a non-conference game, the Spartans defeated **Oakland**, 99-69. Playing four minutes, George stole the ball once and scored two points shooting .500 (1-2) from the field (Source).

Oakland guard Stan Scott defends Conner George (41) during the second half. 21, 2018, in East Lansing, Mich. (Carlos Osorio/AP)

Christmas Greetings from Conner George & the Spartans

On December 29, in a non-conference game, the Spartans defeated **Northern Illinois**, 88-60. During one minute of playing time, George had an assist but was 0-1 on field goal attempts (Source).

Conner George (41) drives against Northern Illinois' Zaire Mateen
(Al Goldis | For the Lansing State Journal

On January 2, the Spartans crushed **Northwestern**, 81-55. While George had only one minute of playing time and was 0-1 on field goal attempts (Source), the game's program cover featured Conner.

Conner George on Cover of Northwestern Game Program

the game program's "Getting To Know" page also featured Conner (see below).

GETTING TO KNOW

CONNER GEORGE

MAJOR: Communications, Masters in Sports Leadership/Coaching

FAVORITE MEAL: Qdoba/Mexican

FAVORITE DESSERT: Chocolate Milkshake

FAVORITE BAND: E-Street Band

FAVORITE MUSIC: Hip Hop

MY NICKNAME IS: C.G.

BEST SUMMER VACATION: Cottages up in north Michigan

DREAM CAR: Lamborghini

FAVORITE ICE CREAM: Chocolate

FAVORITE SNACK: PB+J

FAVORITE CANDY: Sour Patch

BIGGEST FEAR: Squirrels

FAVORITE KIDS BOARD GAME: Monopoly

FAVORITE COLOR: Green

FAVORITE CLASS: Recess

FAVORITE MOVIE: Step Brothers

FAVORITE ACTOR: Will Ferrell

FAVORITE ACTRESS: Sandra Bullock

WHAT MOM COOKS BEST: Salmon

FAVORITE TV SHOW: The Office

FAVORITE CARTOON: SpongeBob

FIRST TROPHY WAS FOR: Baseball

FAVORITE THING TO DO WITH DAD: Golf

I'M UNBEATABLE AT: Spikeball

MY INSPIRATION IS: My parents

WHY I CHOSE MICHIGAN STATE: Lived here my whole life

FAVORITE SCHOOL TRADITION: Fight song

FAVORITE HOLIDAY: Thanksgiving

BIGGEST SPORTS THRILL I WITNESSED: MSU/UM 2015 "Trouble with the snap"

CELEBRITY I MET: Floyd Mayweather, ARod

6

2018-19 MICHIGAN STATE BASKETBALL PROGRAM

On January 5, the Spartans won, 86-77, at #14-ranked **Ohio State,** though George did not play.

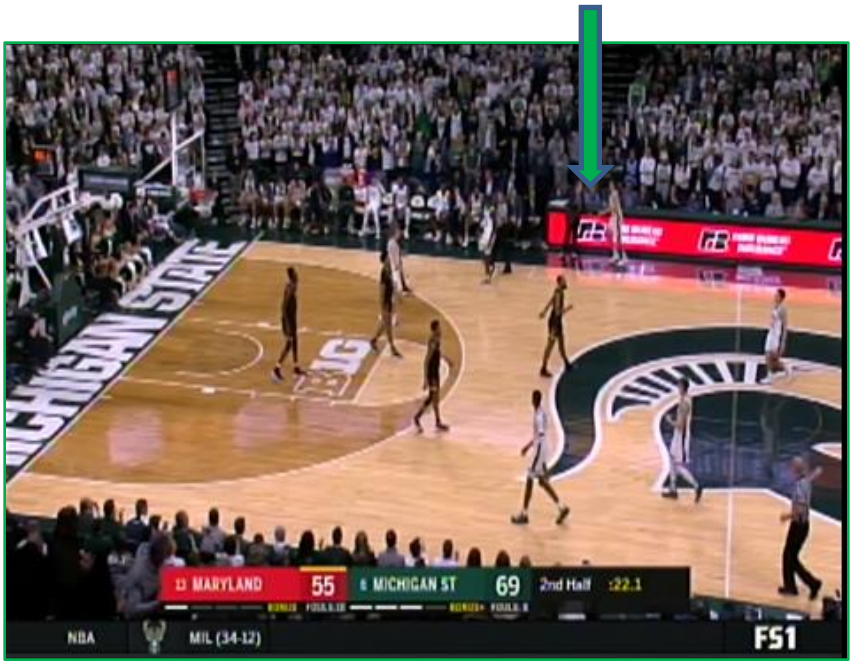
Conner George #41 stretching before the game against Ohio State at the Value City Arena in Columbus, Ohio (January 5, 2019)

On January 8, the Spartans topped **Purdue**, 77-59, with George hauling in one rebound during one minute of playing time (Source).

On January 17, the Spartans were at **Nebraska** without two of their starters in the lineup: guard Joshua Langford (on the bench with an ankle injury) and Kyle Ahrens (who didn't make the trip due to a back injury). Near the end of the first half, with freshman Foster Loyer struggling to guard the Huskers' more experienced and quicker point guard Glynn Watson Jr., Spartans Coach Izzo subbed George to shore up the Spartans defense which helped preserve a 33-28 lead for the Spartans at halftime. Here is how *Lansing State Journal sportswriter* Graham Couch reported this in one of his "3 quick takes" on the Spartans' 70-64 win over the Huskers.

> "The freshman who had a hard night was Foster Loyer, who played two first-half minutes and no more. When he checked in, you could see the eyes light up on Nebraska point guard Glynn Watson Jr., who went to work. That's a matchup Loyer can't handle defensively at this point in his career. He also had one rough turnover on a swing pass. When Tom Izzo pulled Winston for the final defensive position of the first half to keep him from picking up another foul, Izzo put Conner George in the game instead." (Source)

On January 21, at the Breslin Center, the Spartans defeated **Maryland**, 69-55. With about a minute remaining in the game, George went to the scorer's table to wait for the clock to stop so he could enter the game. But with about 30 seconds remaining George's teammates began to run out the clock and Coach Izzo beckoned George back to the bench. As George made his way to the bench Izzo reached out and shook George's hand (see video capture below) as if to say "Sorry I didn't get you into the game sooner!"



Michigan State's Kenny Goins, left, celebrates with teammates Conner George, center, and Ben Carter during the first half of MSU's win over Maryland Thursday at Breslin Center. (Nick King/Lansing State Journal)

On January 24, at **Iowa**, the Spartans downed the Hawkeyes, 82-67. While George was in the game for its last minute and twenty seconds, he didn't make it into the stat book even though he was clearly fouled by an **Iowa** player who tripped and/or pushed George to the floor when that player tried to intercept a pass that Spartan teammate Jack Hoiberg was attempting to throw to Conner. That incident is shown at about -20 seconds remaining in the Facebook video below.

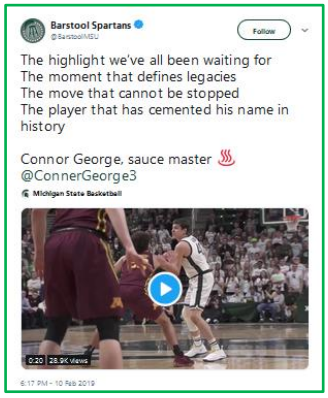
Up next for the Spartans was a three-game losing streak. On January 27, the Spartans, down by 23 points in the second half at **Purdue**, mounted a near record comeback by cutting the lead to four points before losing, 73-63. That loss was followed on February 2, by an overtime 79-75 loss to visiting **Indiana**. Then, on February 5, at **Illinois**, the Spartans lost 79-74. George did not play in any of these three games.

On February 9, home at the Breslin Center (hosting a tribute to the Magic Johnson-led 1979 NCAA Championship team), the Spartans downed **Minnesota**. George played the last 2:39 of the game, first grabbing one rebound (see first image below) and then, with 49 seconds remaining and holding the ball beyond the top of the circle (see next two images), drove to the basket, faked out the defender, and netted a layup, upping the Spartans winning margin to 79-55.

George (#41) Grabs the Rebound

George (#41) Drives from Top of the Circle to the Basket and Scores

George's drive, layup, and basket were quickly celebrated on Twitter with the following tweet and retweets thereof:



Click on Link for Video of George Taking It to the Hole

Conner George (41) shoots over the Golden Gophers forward Jarvis Omersa (21)

George's basket, upping the game's final score to **79**-**55**, resulted in a tribute to the Spartans' 19**79** NCAA Championship team—a great capstone for a post-game photo of both teams!

On February 12, #11 **Michigan State** was at #20 **Wisconsin** and won, 67-59. That same evening, in a tight race for the Big 10 Championship, #6-ranked **Michigan** (1st in the Big Ten) lost at **Penn State** (last place in the Big 10), while #12 **Purdue** lost at #24 **Maryland**. As a result, **Purdue**, **Maryland**, and **Wisconsin** fell 0.5, 1.0, and 2.0 games, respectively, behind the Spartans who moved into a first place tie with **Michigan**.

Big Ten Standings - 2018-19

Year: 2018-19

STANDINGS	CONFERENCE			OVERALL	
Big Ten	W-L	GB	PCT	W-L	PCT
#6 Michigan	11-3	--	.786	22-3	.880
#11 Michigan State	11-3	--	.786	20-5	.800
#12 Purdue	10-3	.5	.769	17-7	.708
#24 Maryland	10-4	1	.714	19-6	.760
#20 Wisconsin	9-5	2	.643	17-8	.680
#21 Iowa	8-5	2.5	.615	19-5	.792
Ohio State	6-6	4	.500	16-7	.696
Minnesota	6-7	4.5	.462	16-8	.667
Illinois	5-8	5.5	.385	9-15	.375
Indiana	4-9	6.5	.308	13-11	.542
Rutgers	4-9	6.5	.308	11-12	.478
Northwestern	3-9	7	.250	12-11	.522
Nebraska	3-10	7.5	.231	13-11	.542
Penn State	2-11	8.5	.154	9-15	.375

While only three Spartans (Kyle Ahrens, Xavier Tillman, and Foster Loyer) came off the bench, George was featured not only in a pre-game promotion (see first image below) but also in the bright lights of the Kohl Center's Jumbotron (see second image below).

connergeorge_3 @tum_tum11 caught the camera man sleepin man... 😵‍💫😵‍💫

connergeorge_3 @tum_tum11 camera was on the ground just chillin and it was synced to the Jumbotron 😂

On February 17, the Spartans (11-3 in the Big 10) were back in the Breslin Center, desperately needing a victory over **Ohio State** to keep pace with **Michigan** (12-3) who had won their game the day before, putting the Wolverines back on top of the Big Ten.

Team	Record	*Ranked opponents in bold*					
Michigan	12-3	at MINN	**MSU**	NEB	**at UMD**	**at MSU**	
Michigan State	11-3	OSU	RUT	**at MICH**	at IND	NEB	**MICH**
Purdue	11-3	at IND	at NEB	ILL	OSU	at MINN	at NW
Maryland	10-5	**at IOWA**	OSU	at PSU	**MICH**	MINN	
Wisconsin	9-5	ILL	at NW	at IND	PSU	**IOWA**	at OSU
Iowa	9-5	**UMD**	IND	at OSU	RUT	**at WISC**	at NEB

Standing of Ranked Big 10 Teams prior to Spartans 62-44 Victory over Ohio State

With 57.2 seconds remaining and the Spartans having built up a commanding lead over the Buckeyes with a 20-2 scoring run to close out the game, Coach Izzo pulled Cassius Winston (5) and Matt McQuaid (20) whose play was crucial in the Spartans coming from behind. George quickly was off the bench to greet and congratulate his two teammates as they made their way to the bench. A few seconds later, with 44.0 seconds remaining, Izzo called on George to enter the game. With 7.5 seconds remaining, Conner grabbed the Spartans last rebound on the Buckeye's last field goal attempt. Final score: 62-44 – victory for MSU and putting the Spartans back into a tie with **Michigan** for first place in the Big Ten.

#41 Conner George contributing to and celebrating Spartans victory over the Buckeyes

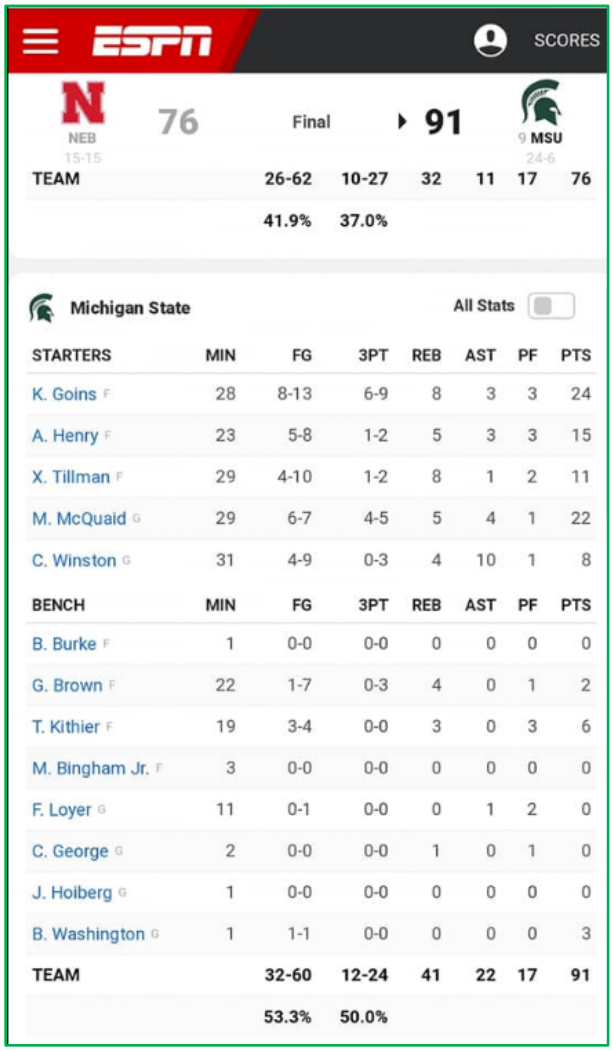
On February 20, MSU hosted **Rutgers** at the Breslin Center, with two of the Spartans' starters on the injured list: Josh Langford out for the rest of the season with a left foot stress injury and Nick Ward out indefinitely with a hairline fracture in his left hand sustained three days before in the game against **Ohio State**. The Spartans struggled in the first half and were behind, 32-25, at the half. **Rutgers**' lead grew to 11 points (36-25) at 18:39 in the second half before the Spartans began to rally when Matt McQuaid's 3-pointer tied the game at 40-40 with 12:35 remaining. In the images below, George (behind McQuaid's right shoulder), Izzo, and the Spartans bench celebrated, after which the Spartans built its lead to 62-46 with 3:35 remaining, a 27-point turnaround rally! While George was not among the three Spartans who came off the bench, his sideline support cheered the Spartans to a 71-60 victory over the Scarlet Knights.

On February 24, #10 MSU was at #7 **Michigan**, and while behind by double digits in the second half, the Spartans battled back for a 77-70 victory. While George did not play in this game, he gave it his all from the bench to cheer his teammates on to the win. Below Conner was off the bench cheering Cassius Winston's looper that upped the Spartans' lead to 62-55 with a little over six minutes remaining in the game.

Conner George and the Bench Reaction after Big Baskets in Road Win at Michigan

On March 2, the Spartans were at **Indiana** to revenge the loss to the Hoosiers a month earlier on February 2; however, **Indiana** rallied to win the game, 63-62. George did not play.

On March 5, George subbing into the game in both the first half and second half, the Spartans defeated **Nebraska**, 91-76. Playing a total of two minutes, George had one rebound (Source)



ESPN SCORES

NEB 15-15 76 Final 91 9 MSU 24-6

TEAM	26-62	10-27	32	11	17	76
	41.9%	37.0%				

Michigan State All Stats

STARTERS	MIN	FG	3PT	REB	AST	PF	PTS
K. Goins F	28	8-13	6-9	8	3	3	24
A. Henry F	23	5-8	1-2	5	3	3	15
X. Tillman F	29	4-10	1-2	8	1	2	11
M. McQuaid G	29	6-7	4-5	5	4	1	22
C. Winston G	31	4-9	0-3	4	10	1	8
BENCH	**MIN**	**FG**	**3PT**	**REB**	**AST**	**PF**	**PTS**
B. Burke F	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0
G. Brown F	22	1-7	0-3	4	0	1	2
T. Kithier F	19	3-4	0-0	3	0	3	6
M. Bingham Jr. F	3	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0
F. Loyer G	11	0-1	0-0	0	1	2	0
C. George G	2	0-0	0-0	1	0	1	0
J. Hoiberg G	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0
B. Washington G	1	1-1	0-0	0	0	0	3
TEAM		**32-60**	**12-24**	**41**	**22**	**17**	**91**
		53.3%	**50.0%**				

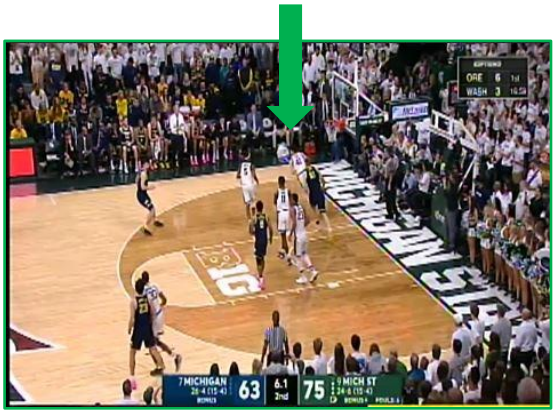
On March 9, MSU hosted **Michigan**, the day starting off with the Spartans tied for first place in the Big Ten with **Michigan** and **Purdue**. With **Purdue** beating **Northwestern** earlier in the day and taking sole possession of first place, the Spartans had to defeat **Michigan** in order to move back into a first place tie with **Purdue** and share the Big Ten Championship. Trailing **Michigan** by as much as 12 points during the first half before cutting the lead to six points at the half, the Spartans roared back in the second half and built as much as a 13-point lead, a turnaround of 26-points, before winning the game, 75-63.

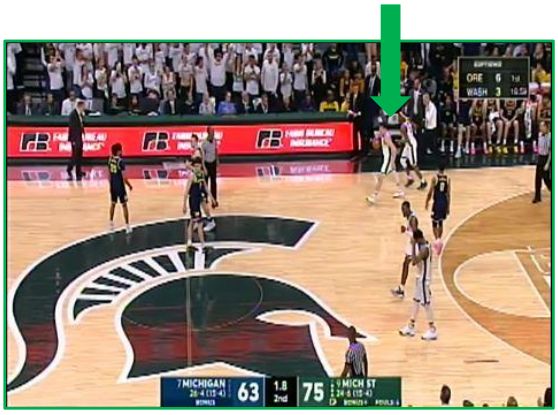
With 13.2 remaining and the Spartans leading, 75-63, the Spartans called a timeout so that seniors Matt McQuaid and Kenny Goins could be recognized as each kissed the Sparty logo at center court. As this was happening George was subbed into the game and on the court ready to congratulate both of these teammates as they headed to the sidelines, before turning his attention to helping close out the game.

Conner greets Matt McQuaid and Kenny Goins during Timeouts

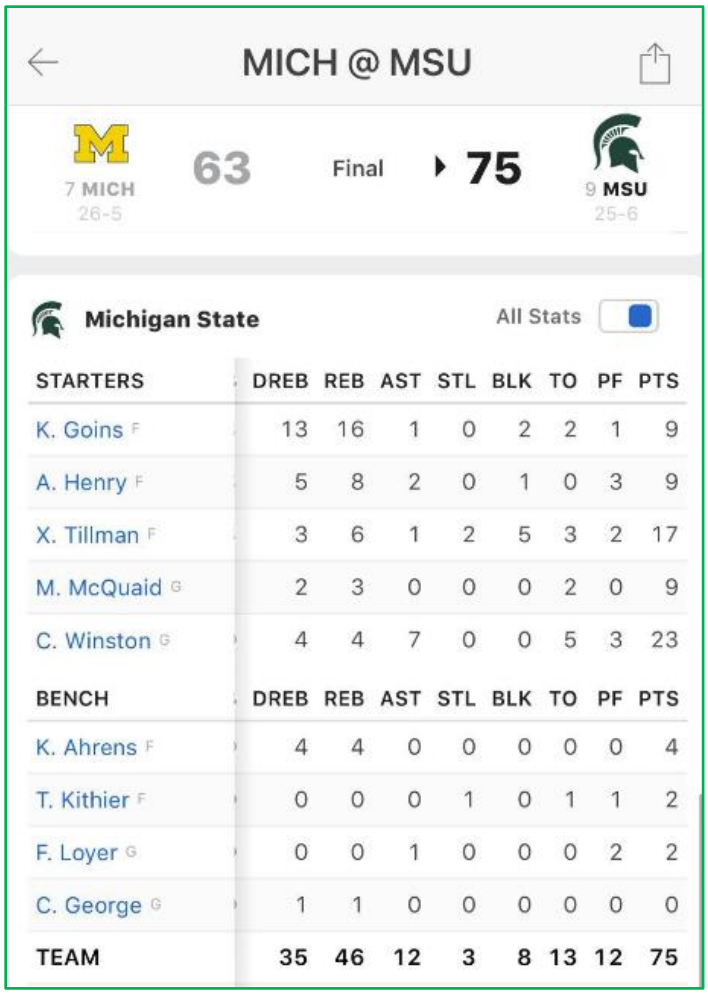
Conner's Attention turns to Running out the Game's Last 13.2 Seconds

When the game resumed, **Michigan** missed its last shot and Conner grabbed the rebound (see left arrow below). As Conner dribbled the ball up the court, he briefly stopped for a short chat with Cassius Winston as time ran out (see right arrow below). George's rebound ensured that the game's stat book would reflect that he played in the game.





Conner Controls Rebound & Runs Out the Clock



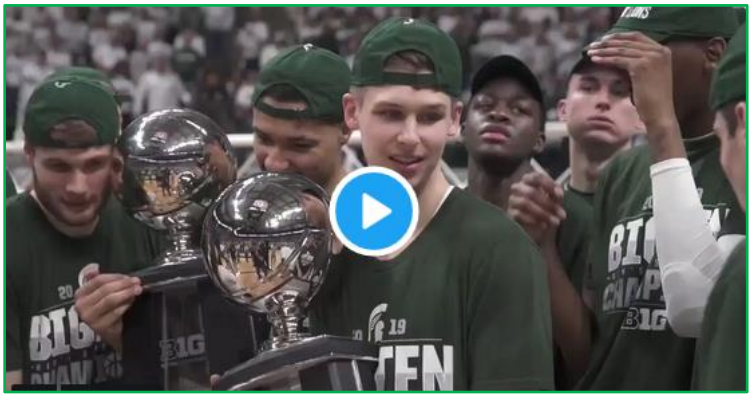
MICH @ MSU

7 MICH 26-5 | 63 | Final | 75 | 9 MSU 25-6

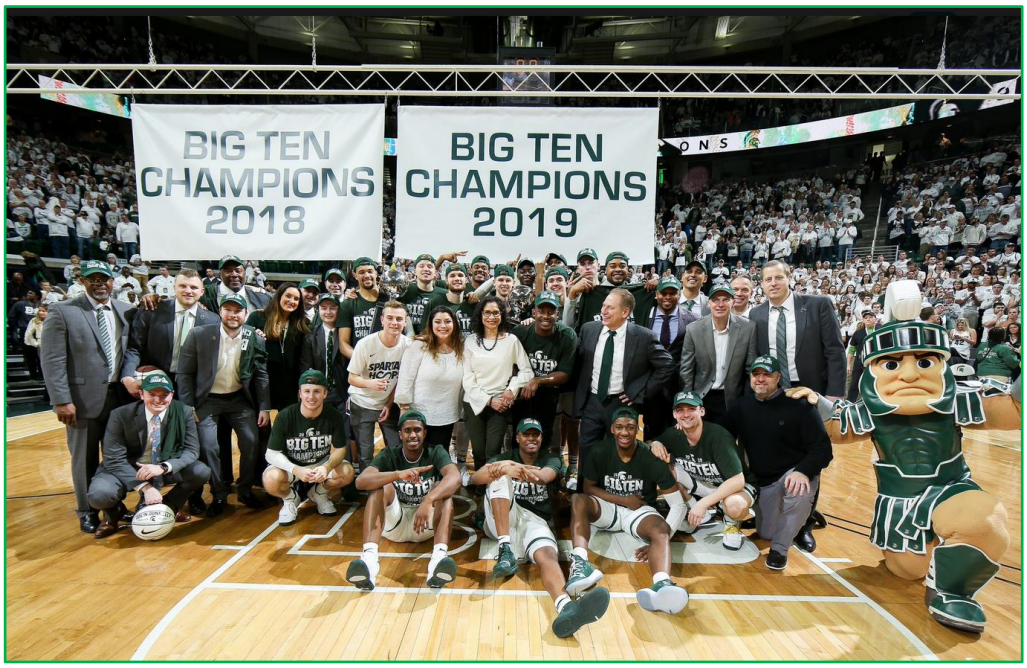
Michigan State — All Stats

STARTERS	DREB	REB	AST	STL	BLK	TO	PF	PTS
K. Goins F	13	16	1	0	2	2	1	9
A. Henry F	5	8	2	0	1	0	3	9
X. Tillman F	3	6	1	2	5	3	2	17
M. McQuaid G	2	3	0	0	0	2	0	9
C. Winston G	4	4	7	0	0	5	3	23
BENCH	**DREB**	**REB**	**AST**	**STL**	**BLK**	**TO**	**PF**	**PTS**
K. Ahrens F	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
T. Kithier F	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	2
F. Loyer G	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
C. George G	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
TEAM	**35**	**46**	**12**	**3**	**8**	**13**	**12**	**75**

After the Game Conner Shakes Hands with Michigan's Ignas Brazdeikis



George Celebrates (just to left of Matt McQuaid after start of video)

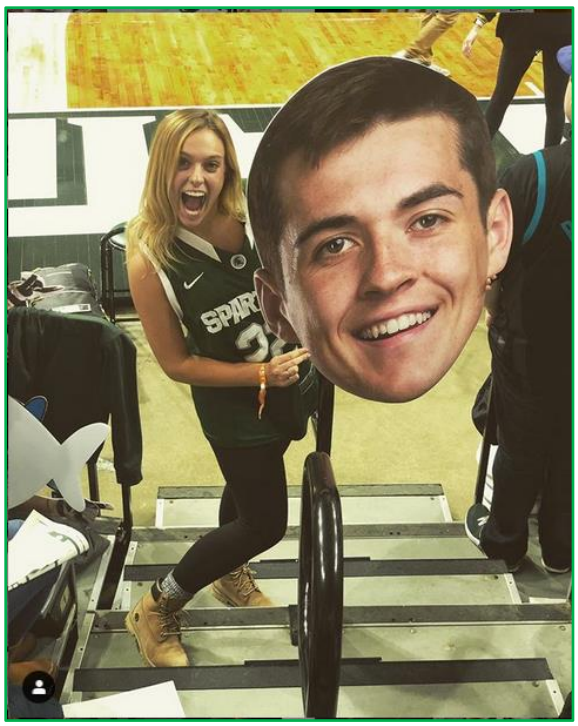


On March 11, AP's Top 25 ranking had moved Michigan State up to #6. On the same day, while the Big Ten announced Spartan Cassius Winston as the Big Ten Player of the Year, the Spartans announced his teammates, Kyle Ahrens and Conner George, as co-recipients of the team's "Unsung Hero" award.

George and Teammates Rocking the Cassius Winston Headband

2019 Michigan State Men's Basketball Banquet Award Winners:
Most Valuable Player Award (Team Vote): Cassius Winston
Most Valuable Player Award (Media Vote): Cassius Winston
Scholar-Athlete Award: Xavier Tillman
Unsung Player Award: Kyle Ahrens & Conner George
Tim Bograkos Walk-On Award: Jack Hoiberg & Brock Washington
Most Improved Player Award: Xavier Tillman
John E. Benington Best Defensive Player Award: Matt McQuaid
Stephen G. Scofes Inspirational Player Award: Joshua Langford
Jumping Johnny Green Chairman of the Boards Award: Kenny Goins
Antonio Smith Glue and Guts Award: Kyle Ahrens

Redshirt junior guard/forward Kyle Ahrens (Versailles, Ohio/Versailles) and redshirt junior guard Conner George (Okemos, Mich./Okemos) were the co-recipients of the Unsung Player Award. Ahrens has battled through a lingering back injury all season, causing him to miss four full games and parts of others, but has still averaged 5.1 points and 2.7 rebounds per game while being a defensive leader. George has appeared in 16 games and has been a vocal leader for the Spartans on and off the court throughout the season. In addition, Ahrens was also named the Antonio Smith Glue and Guts Award winner.



Big Ten Tournament

On March 15, the Spartans were at Chicago's United Center to take on **Ohio State** (the day before OSU had defeated **Indiana**) in a quarterfinals game (click on images below for GIFs of George and his teammates).

While the Spartans won the game, 77-70, with just a little over four minutes remaining in the game, they held a 75-53 lead. At this point Coach Izzo decided to give his starters a rest and put his five freshmen onto to the court for most of the rest of the game. While George didn't sub into the game, he was active from the bench cheering on his time (see image captures on the next page).

Conner George (41) Supporting His Teammates

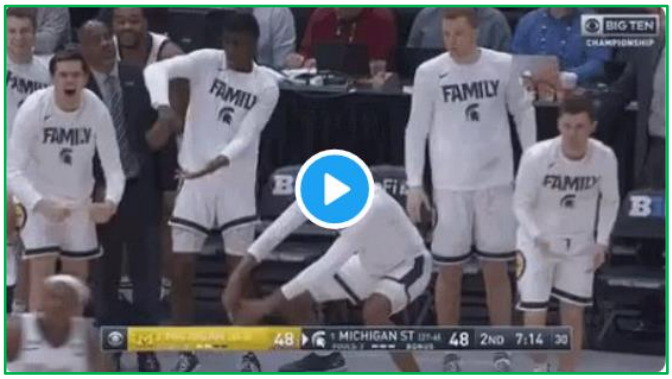
Post-Game Celebration…George & Teammates Have Got Coach's Back

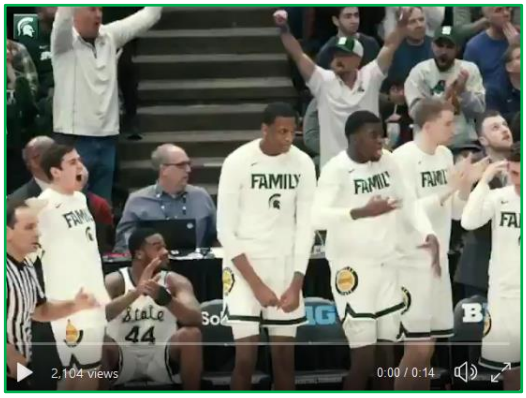
On March 16, the Spartans took on **Wisconsin** in a Big Ten Tournament semifinal game, topping the Badgers, 67-55. While George did not get into the game, after the game Conner and his teammates shook hands with their Badger opponents.

On March 17, the Spartans had their third match against **Michigan**, in the final game of the Big Ten Tournament. Having defeated the Wolverines twice in the regular season, the Spartans were down by 13 points, 39-26, with 17:12 remaining in the game. But the Spartans fought their way back to win the game, 65-60. While George did not appear in the game, he was active on the bench and got a lot of coverage during CBS' telecast of the game as the below screen captures and videos show.

OUR BALL!!!

2:35 PM - 17 Mar 2019





'W0-3Lverines': Michigan State fans react to beating Michigan for Big Ten ...

Michigan State fans had plenty to be happy about after being Michigan for the third time, this one for the B1G tourney title.

lansingstatejournal.com

BIG TEN
CHAMPIONSHIP
BIG TEN CHAMPIONSHIP
60
(28-6)
58
(27-6)
3 MICHIGAN WOLVERINES
2ND HALF 2:01
1 MICHIGAN ST SPARTANS

3 MICHIGAN
60
1 MICHIGAN ST (27-6)
58
2ND

60
1 MICHIGAN ST (27-6)
60
2ND 30.9

BIG TEN
CHAMPIONSHIP
60
1 MICHIGAN ST (27-6)
65
2ND 2.3

BIG TEN
CHAMPIONSHIP
60
1 MICHIGAN ST (27-6)
65
2ND 2.3

BIG TEN
CHAMPIONSHIP
60
(28-6)
65
(28-6)

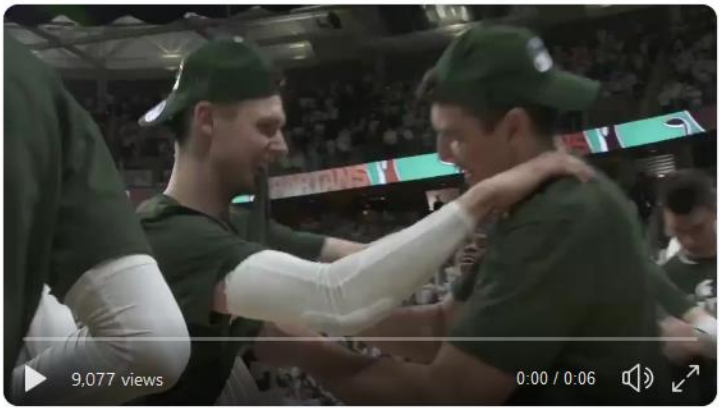
Mar 17, 2019; Chicago, IL, USA; Michigan State Spartans guard Matt McQuaid (20) and guard Conner George (41) celebrate their championship against the Michigan Wolverines in the Big Ten conference tournament at United Center. (David Banks-USA TODAY Sports)

Michigan State Basketball
@MSU_Basketball

Following

When you're playing for a championship and it's #SelectionSunday...

#GoGreen



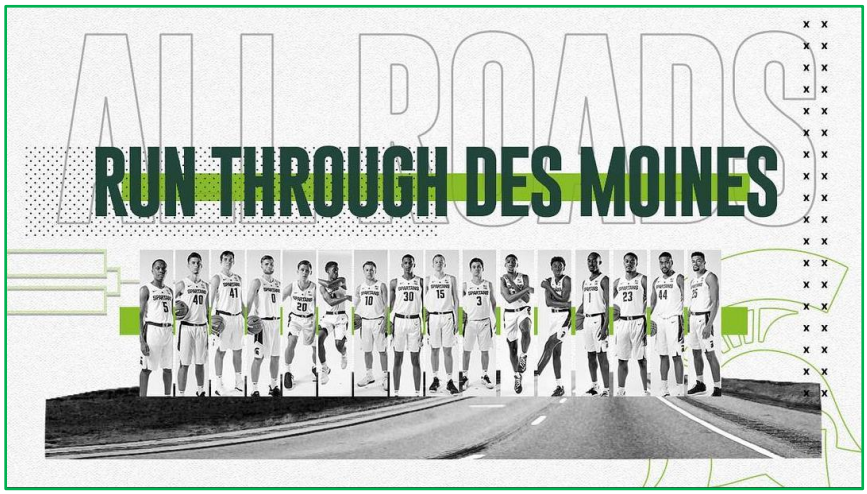
Conner George (right behind Tom & Lupe)

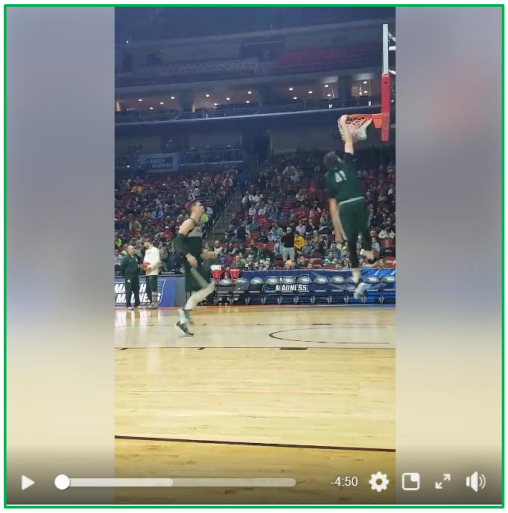
While the game ended on a high note for the Spartans, the sweetness of the victory was dampened by Kyle Ahrens suffering a perhaps season-ending severe ankle sprain near the end of the first half.

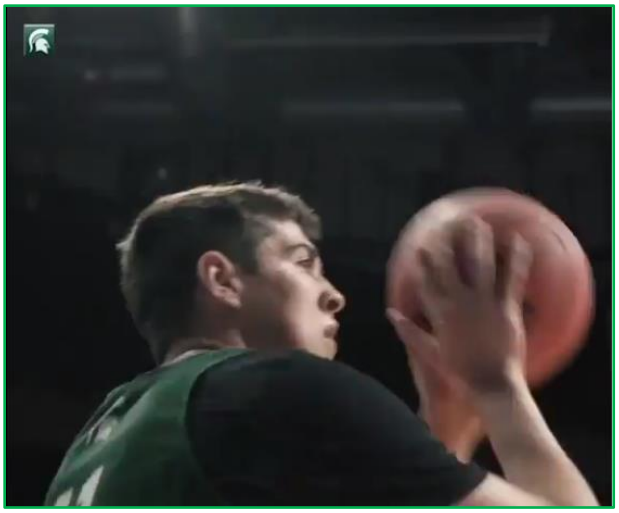
NCAA Tournament

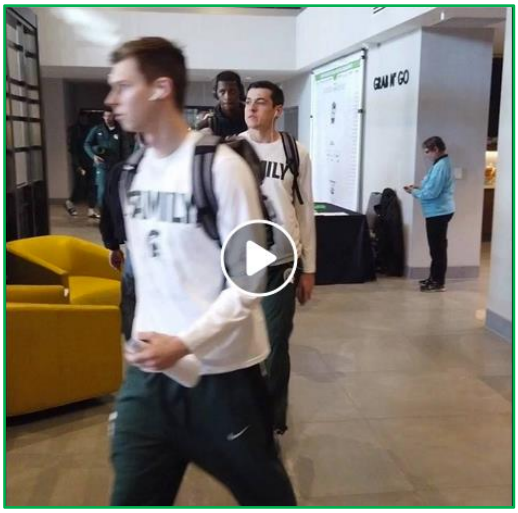
After the game, MSU learned the selection committee for seeding the 64 teams into the NCAA Tournament's four regions not only didn't seed the Spartans #1 in any region but added insult to injury by seeding Michigan State #2 in the East with **Duke** is the overall #1 seed. Thus, to make it to the Final Four, the Spartans likely would have to face and beat **Duke** in the East Regional Fina l— assuming both **Duke** and the Spartans have not already been eliminated in prior tournament games in their region.

The Road to the Final Four began in Des Moines with a First Round game against **Bradley**. The Spartans began preparing for the game with an open practice on the basketball court of the Wells Fargo Arena.



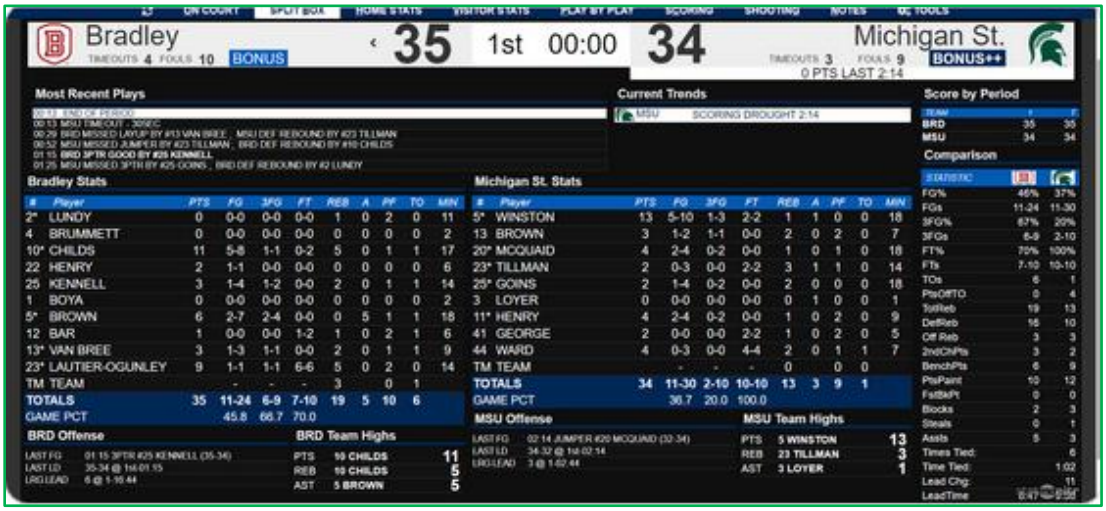






Round of 64

On March 21, the Spartans defeated **Bradley**, 76-65. With 5:12 remaining in the first half, the Spartans behind, 24-23, and two Spartans (Aaron Henry and Gabe Brown) in foul trouble with two fouls each, George entered the game. Over the next 4:59 minutes, George shored up the Spartans defense though got two fouls defending the opposition, blocked a Bradely pass out of bounds, was fouled on a defensive rebound attempt, and made both free throws for two points. His two free throws raised the score from a 29-28 lead for **Bradely** into a 30-29 lead for the Spartans . As a result, the Spartans went into halftime down by only one point, 35-34.



Conner George (41) Checks In for Gabe Brown (13) at 5:12 in First Half

Spartan Hall of Fame head coach Tom Izzo said of the contest, “These guys probably did a better job than I did. I felt like we were ready to play. I just felt like, in all honesty, Bradley played well the first half. They made shots. I think we covered real well. We missed shots. Kenny Goins really struggled. I thought he had some great looks. Then we had some bizarre lineups, and Conner and Gabe are not household games right now and just because of foul trouble we had to play with them. But you know, we wanted to get Nick Ward more

George (on knees) Fouled on Defensive Rebound Attempt

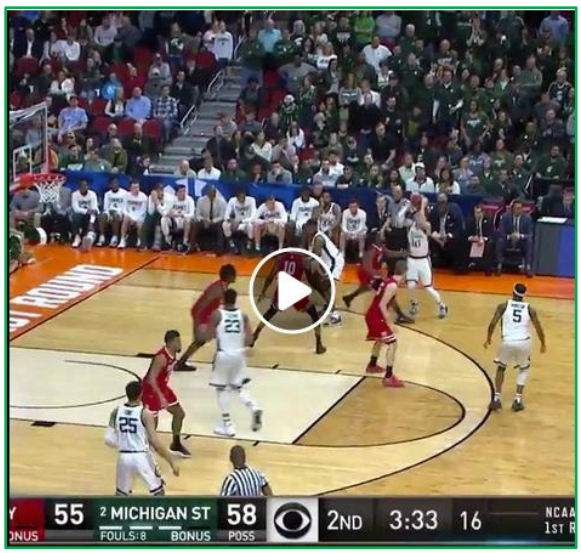
George's Two Free Throws Put Spartans Ahead, 30-29

UNSUNG HERO

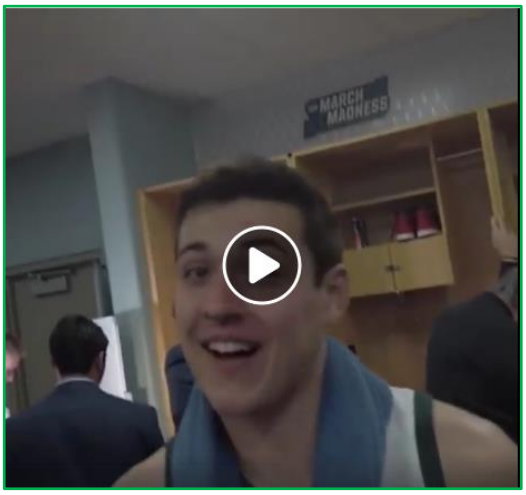
With Gabe Brown and Aaron Henry in foul trouble, Tom Izzo turned to an unexpected bench player in the first half: Conner George. The former walk-on had only made four appearances since Jan. 24, seeing no more than three minutes in any of those contests. But George played five important minutes in the first half, contributing two points, two fouls, a rebound and some hustle play as the Spartans avoided the upset.

George in Spartans Timeout with 0:13 Remaining in First Half

During the second half, with the Spartans up by only 3 points and 3:33 remaining in the game, the Spartans Matt McQuaid hit a 3-pointer and the Spartans bench and Conner George exploded. Let's go to the video below.



With that basket and the Spartans up by six points, the Spartans went on an 18-10 run to win the game, 76-65.



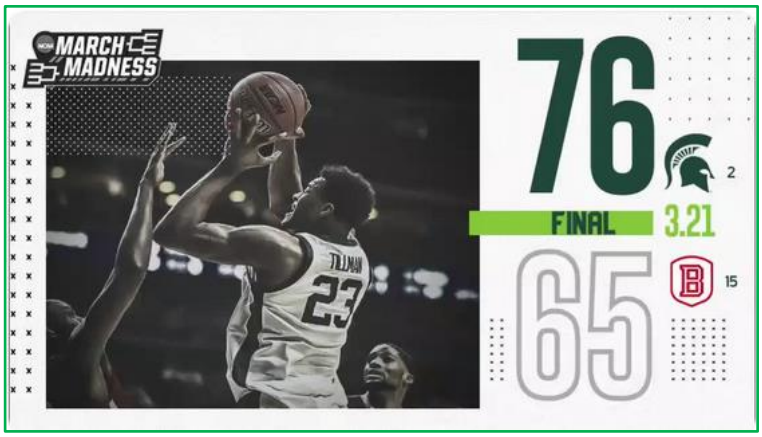
MEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP - EAST REGION - 1ST ROUND

15 BRAD 65 | CBS Final | 76 2 MSU

42.3% 42.9% 66.7%

Michigan State — All Stats

STARTERS	DREB	REB	AST	STL	BLK	TO	PF	PTS
K. Goins F	6	9	1	1	2	0	0	3
A. Henry F	2	3	1	0	1	4	3	8
X. Tillman F	9	11	1	1	1	1	4	16
M. McQuaid G	2	2	1	0	0	0	3	10
C. Winston G	3	3	4	0	0	2	2	26
BENCH	**DREB**	**REB**	**AST**	**STL**	**BLK**	**TO**	**PF**	**PTS**
N. Ward F	4	5	0	0	0	2	2	8
G. Brown F	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	3
F. Loyer G	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
C. George G	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	2
TEAM	**28**	**36**	**9**	**3**	**4**	**9**	**18**	**76**



George's Two Free Throws Helped Spartans Tie NCAA Tournament Record

The day following the game, *The State News*' Casey Harrison filed the following report:

Conner George used off depleted bench in MSU's win over Bradley

DES MOINES, Iowa — Conner George knew he had to be ready if the time came.

When Gabe Brown, Michigan State's backup wing, checked out after picking up his second foul with 5:12 left in the first half of No. 2 MSU's 76-65 win over 15th-seeded Bradley on Thursday, George ripped off his warmup and ran to the scorer's booth to check into the game.

"Gabe picked up his second and I looked out like 'This might be it,'" George said.

The 6-foot-4 George entered as the Braves (20-15) took a 25-24 lead after a pair of free throws from forward Dwayne Lautier-Ogunleye. George played five minutes until 13 seconds remained in the half, when Brown returned after a timeout to run a scripted play.

That stretch was all George played in MSU (29-6)'s NCAA Tournament opener at the Wells Fargo Center, but despite committing two fouls in a 42-second span he also snagged two rebounds and made a pair of free throws, which gave the Spartans a 30-29 lead with 3:30 until the break.

"To be able to come in and help us and help us get stops, that was the most important thing," forward Xavier Tillman said of George. …

George, a redshirt junior, and Brown, a freshman, combined for 12-plus minutes off the bench but will be MSU's go-to wings since Kyle Ahrens suffered a Grade 3 sprain in his left ankle in the team's 65-60 win over Michigan in the Big Ten Championship last Sunday. Coach Tom Izzo said Brown and George will receive most of Ahrens' 18.8 averaged minutes, given a return this season is unlikely.

"Conner and Gabe are not household games right now and just because of foul trouble we had to play with them," Izzo said at the postgame news conference. …

Thursday marked a season-high in minutes for George and marked the 17th game he's appeared in. It also eclipsed his previous season best of four minutes against Oakland on Dec. 21.

George was also used in 16 minutes when MSU played DePaul in the PK80 Tournament in Portland in November 2018.

But as long as George can contribute, he's OK.

"I'm ready, the coaches talked to me about it," George said. "If that's the type of role I'm given and that's the type of role I'm ready to play then I'll be ready to play." (Source)

That same day *LSJ* sportswriter Graham Couch filed the following feature on George:

Couch: Conner George is on the edge of his dream, on the fringes of MSU's playing rotation

DES MOINES, Iowa – Conner George was nowhere to be found in Michigan State's locker room Friday, as players sat at their lockers at Wells Fargo Arena for a mandated media access period.

Instead, he was tucked away in a connected room, going over scout-team assignments on an iPad with graduate assistant Chris Fowler, ahead of the Spartans' practice for Saturday's second-round NCAA tournament game against Minnesota.

That's George's primary role — to lead the scout team, to impersonate future opponents, like Bradley sharpshooter Nate Kennell and Minnesota's Gabe Kalscheuer.

His value to MSU's basketball team, for the rest of this NCAA tournament, is more visible. As in, you might see him on the court a few more times. Thursday, with MSU's freshman wings Aaron Henry and Gabe Brown in foul trouble and Brown struggling defensively, George played the final 5-plus minutes of the first half, grabbed one rebound, hit two free throws and, memorably, passed up one wide-open 3-point shot that his teammates all thought he should have taken and his coaches commended him for passing up.

> "I shoot that all the time in practice and most of the time, I'll hit that," said George, a 6-3 guard and once a sharpshooter at Okemos High School. "In an NCAA tournament game, when I haven't shot a 3 all year, I'm sure everyone knows that — well, probably not actually — I figured that wasn't my time to come in and shoot in a tight game like that."

George is used to studying opponents. It's safe to say none of them have studied him. I could almost hear disappointment in his voice as he realized that.

His teammates pushing him to shoot Thursday gave him confidence. "If it happens again, I'm going to shoot it," he said.

It's likely to happen again. Kyle Ahrens' season-ending injury suffered in the Big Ten tournament put George on the outer fringes of the rotation after playing just 11 total minutes during the Big Ten season. He had a taste of this once before, when Miles Bridges missed a game against DePaul last season at the PK80 tournament in Portland. He hauled in seven rebounds that night in 16 minutes, providing a critical boost of energy that propelled a 9-2 run, helping blow the game open.

The goal then, as it is today for the fourth-year junior walk-on known primarily for being the son of MSU's volleyball coach, is to one day be in the rotation. Maybe be on an opponent's scouting report. George is running short on time for that. He's got one year of eligibility left. The numbers aren't in his favor, either. Aaron Henry, Gabe Brown, Joshua Langford and Rocket Watts are all expected to be on MSU's roster next season, all ahead of George in the pecking order.

"The dream is the same, to work my way up and be a guy that Iz (that'd be Tom Izzo) can count on as a rotation guy," George said. "But if that doesn't happen, it's not like I'm going to hold a grudge or be mad, because I know what I got myself into. If it doesn't work out, I know I gave it my all."

George could leave after this season and finish up as a grad transfer at a lower level and take all the shots he wants. He debated that experience coming out of high school, considering offers from Division-II schools and Division-III Hope College.

He wasn't planning to do that before Thurday. He'd rather chase the dream at MSU. Thursday's meaningful minutes in an NCAA tournament game only cemented his desire to return.

"I actually had time to reflect on it (Thursday) and that's kind of one of the first things I thought of, 'Man, there's no place I'd rather be than here,'" George said. "Opportunities like this, where you get into an NCAA tournament game, and you've got people texting you after the game that've been cheering you on since you got here and hoping for that to happen and it did. It was all really cool."

George's heart was racing Thursday. Not just as he saw associate head coach Dwayne Stephens get up to go talk to Izzo — "I knew what they were talking about," George said. "Two seconds later, DJ (Stephens) called my name. I knew it was time." — but also because he hadn't exerted himself like that all season.

"It was way different than in practice or anything else, especially with it being March Madness," George said. "You could kind of feel that. It was a different atmosphere than any other game I've ever been in. I had a lot of things going on in my mind, like where to be. It just took its toll on me physically, too. It was fun to be out there. Your head's scrambling. You're running out of breath, 'Dang, when's the next dead ball?'"

George remembers his one glaring mistake, letting his man drive right along the baseline. "That was a mistake because that was in the scouting report," he said. "We had a couple good switches. I thought for the most part, I held my own out there defensively."

That's all MSU is asking of him, to hold his own. The coaches are confident he can do that. They're lucky to have him right now.

"There wasn't an ounce of doubt once he went in the game that he'd be able to do what we needed him to do," MSU assistant coach Mike Garland said. "We have the utmost confidence that he can go in and hold the fort down. That's what he's given us. Last year, in the PK80, I mean he won the game for us. The kid can play."

He can shoot, too. The irony of him passing up that open 3-pointer is that shooting was about the only thing he did at a Division-I level when he arrived at MSU.

"I wanted him to shoot it," said Ahrens, who lives with George, Matt McQuaid and Jack Hoiberg. "OG (Garland) was in my way. I didn't realize how open he was. I wanted to him to hit that. I was going to go nuts."

"We know he deserves it," Ahrens continued. "He's in there working every day, always there, always on time, always putting in extra time. When someone like him gets an opportunity, you just have so much trust in him, you know he deserves it. You're just happy for him."

Graham Couch
@Graham_Couch
Following

Conner George's 5 meaningful minutes of NCAA tournament playing time Thursday reminded him why he chose Michigan State over a bigger role at a smaller school.

"I actually had time to reflect on it. Man, there's no place I'd rather be than here."

Column.

Couch: Conner George is on the edge of his dream, on the fringes of MS...
Injuries have left MSU with a short bench. Walk-on Conner George is suddenly in play.
lansingstatejournal.com

Michigan State Basketball
@MSU_Basketball
Following

6 6

Number of NCAA tournament wins we have all-time, tied for best in the #B1G

#SpartanDawgs x #MarchMadness

Spartans Win over Bradley Moves MSU into 1st Place
Tie for Big Ten Team with Most NCAA Tournament Wins

On the same afternoon the Spartans downed **Bradley**, **Minnesota** was the victor over **Louisville** who earlier in the season had defeated the Spartans in overtime, 82-78, thus setting up a March 23 Round of 32 game between the Spartans and **Minnesota** (whom the Spartans defeated, 79-55, at the Breslin Center during the Big Ten's regular season. The video below shares some moments from the Spartans preparations for **Minnesota**.

Round of 32

Last Day in Des Moines Preparing to Take on Minnesota

On March 23, the Spartans downed **Minnesota**. Despite 22 turnovers during the game, the Spartans were up by 14 points at halftime (33-19) and pushed the lead to 20+ points during second half, led by Cassius Winston on the court and Conner George cheering on his time from the bench (see video on left below).

Near game's end, the Spartans fully in control, George entered the game at 1:37 and, while he did not score, picked up a defensive foul.

Conner George (41) Helps Spartans Close out the Win

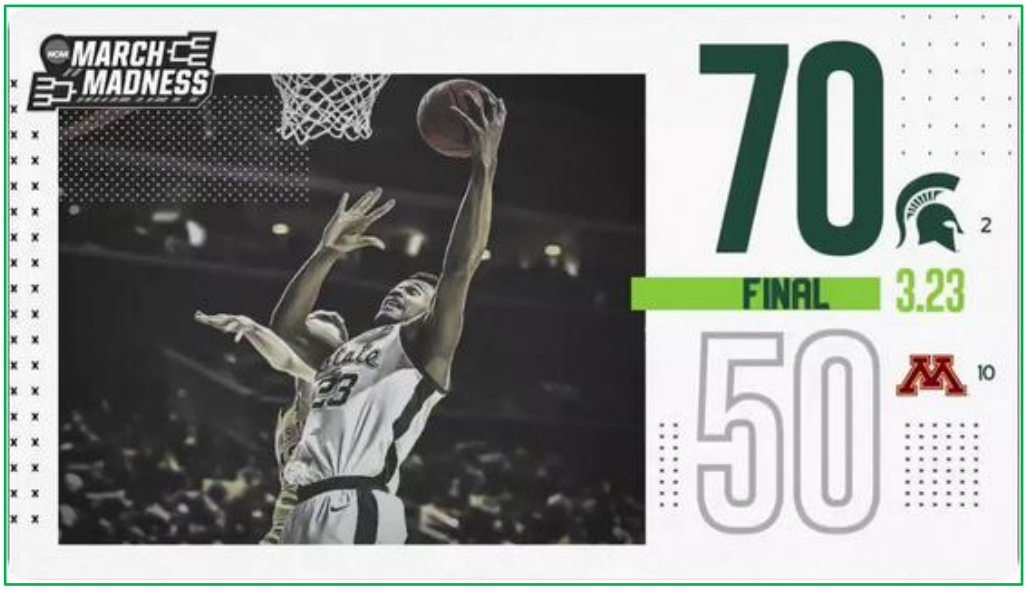
MINN vs MSU

MEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP - EAST REGION - 2ND ROUND

10 MINN 22-13 **50** Final **70** 2 MSU 29-6

Michigan State All Stats

STARTERS	MIN	FG	3PT	REB	AST	PF	PTS
K. Goins F	--	3-5	2-4	8	2	4	9
A. Henry F	--	4-5	1-1	9	3	3	9
X. Tillman F	--	6-8	0-0	6	1	4	14
M. McQuaid G	--	4-6	1-3	4	0	1	9
C. Winston G	--	5-11	1-4	4	9	1	13
BENCH	**MIN**	**FG**	**3PT**	**REB**	**AST**	**PF**	**PTS**
N. Ward F	--	4-8	0-0	7	0	2	9
G. Brown F	--	0-2	0-1	1	0	2	0
T. Kithier F	--	1-2	0-0	0	0	0	2
M. Bingham Jr. F	--	1-1	1-1	1	0	0	3
F. Loyer G	--	0-1	0-1	0	0	0	0
C. George G	--	0-0	0-0	0	0	1	0
J. Hoiberg G	--	0-0	0-0	0	1	0	2
TEAM		**28-49**	**6-15**	**45**	**16**	**18**	**70**
		57.1%	**40.0%**				



Matt Charboneau
@mattcharboneau
Following

Final: No. 2 Michigan State 70, No. 10 Minnesota 50. MSU back in the Sweet 16 for first time since 2015

Chris Solari
@chrissolari
Following

FINAL: MSU 70, Minnesota 50. Spartans advance to first Sweet 16 since 2015 and earn Tom Izzo's 50th NCAA victory, moving him alone in fifth place all-time in tournament history.

Michigan State Basketball
@MSU_Basketball
Following

#SpartanDawgs feelin' SWEET

#SpartanDawgs x #MarchMadness🏀

Michigan State Basketball
@MSU_Basketball
Following

Back-to-back 30 win seasons 🙌

#SpartanDawgs x #MarchMadness🏀

MSU now has the most #B1G NCAA Tournament wins (all-time):

1. Michigan State (67)
2. Indiana (66)
3. Michigan (54)
4. Ohio St (51)
5. Maryland (42)
6. Illinois/Purdue (40)
8. Wisconsin (38)
9. Iowa (30)
10. Penn St/Minn (9)
12. Rutgers (5)
13. Northwestern (1)
14. Nebraska (0)

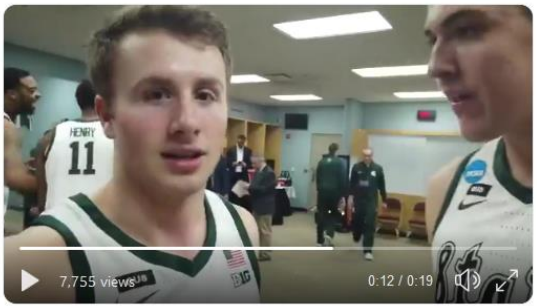
Adam Ruff
@AdamRuffPhoto

✅ Las Vegas Invitational Champs.
✅ Big Ten Champs.
✅ Big Ten Tournament Champs.
✅ 3-0 vs. Michigan
✅ Sweet 16.

Still work to be done.

The @JackHoiberg and @ConnerGeorge3 Chronicles are coming 👀

#SpartanDawgs x #MarchMadness🏀

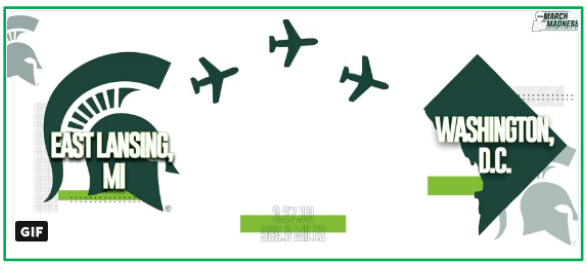


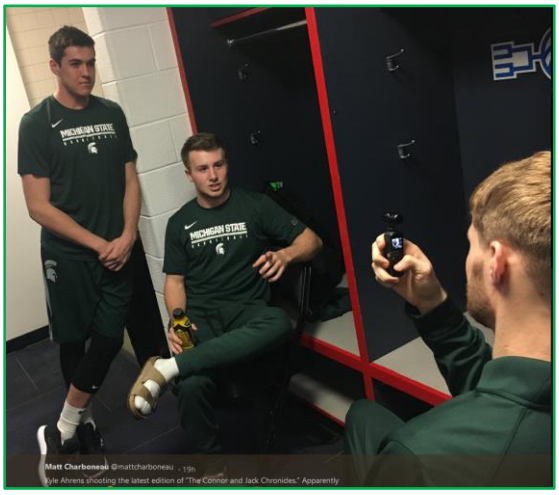
The @ConnerGeorge3 and @JackHoiberg Chronicles: Part 1

With the win, the Spartans moved on to a Sweet 16 game on March 29 in Washington, DC against the #3-seeded **LSU** team that earlier in the afternoon had beaten **Maryland**, thus helping the Spartans to avoid having to play its next game against another Big Ten Conference opponent.

Sweet 16

On Sunday (3/24) Coach Izzo gave the Spartans the day off to relax but it was back to practice on Monday (click on GIF below) to begin preparing for the 3/29 game with **LSU**.



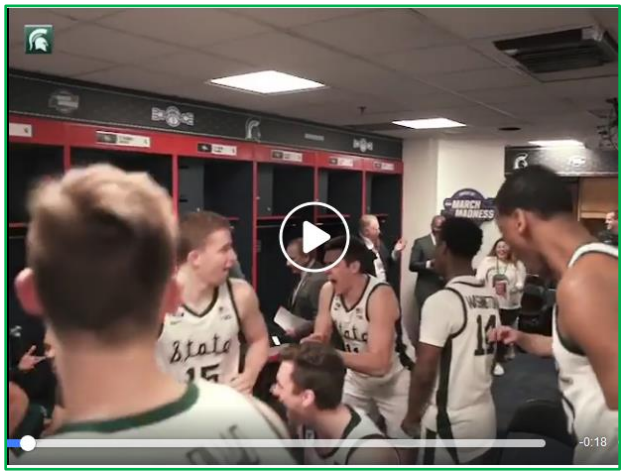


Spartans at Practice in Washington, DC (March 28, 2019)

The @ConnerGeorge3 and @JackHoiberg Chronicles: Part 2

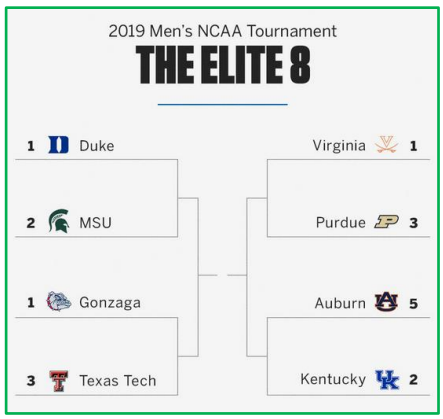
George Meets CBS Television Team (Bill Raftery, Tracy Wolfson, and Grant Hill) During Practice in Washington, DC (click on image for video)

On March 29, the Spartans advanced to the Elite Eight by defeating **LSU**, 80-63. While George did not get playing time on the court, he cheered his team on from the bench.



Conner George and Teammates Celebrate the Win

With the win, MSU joined the Elite Eight and the team's attention turned to the March 31 East Regional Championship game where MSU would take on **Duke** who had narrowly edged **Virginia Tech**, 75-73, in the evening's second semifinal.



Elite Eight

On March 31, #2-seeded Spartans defeated #1-seeded **Duke**, 68-67, to advance to the Final Four in Minneapolis and take on #3-seeded **Texas Tech** that the day before had ousted #1-seeded **Gonzaga**. While George did not appear in the game against **Duke**, here are some image highlights.

Conner George and MSU Bench Cheer on the Spartans

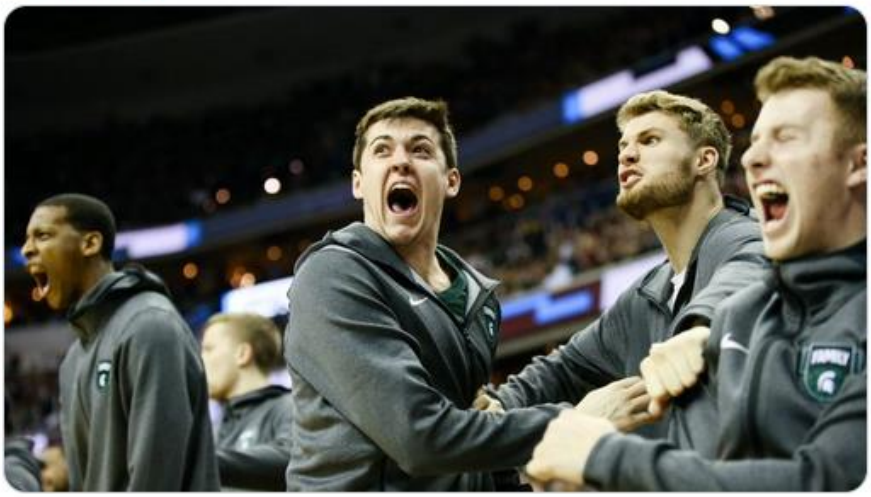
Michigan State Basketball @MSU_Basketball · 11h

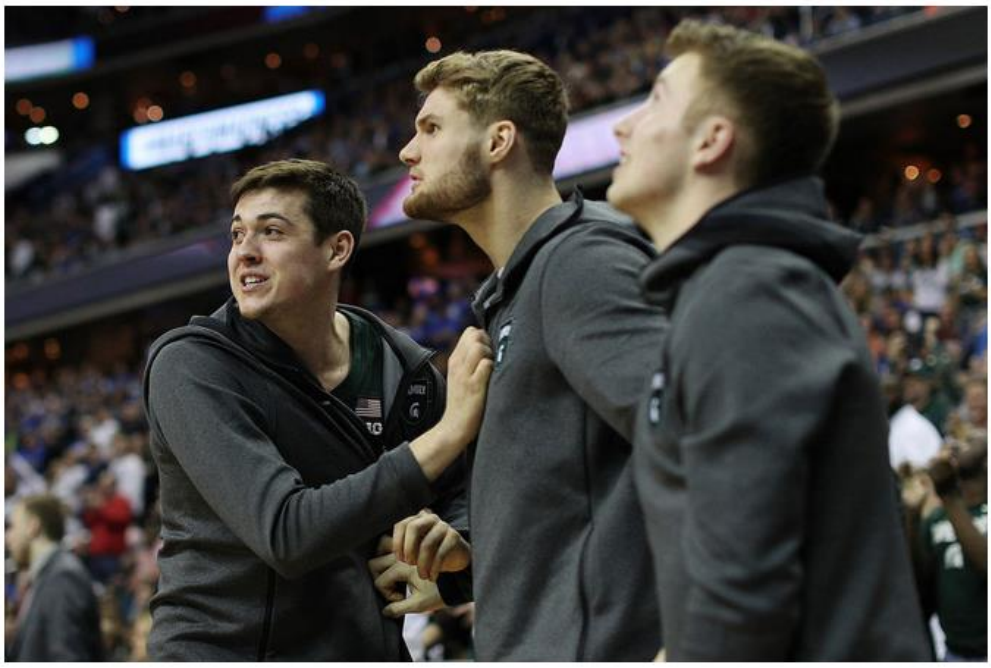
Back and forth we go in the second half...

How about the bench bringing the ENERGY all game long? 🙌

CC: @ConnerGeorge3, @JackHoiberg, @KyleAhrens33, @marcusbingham0

#MSUMadness





Mike Mulholland

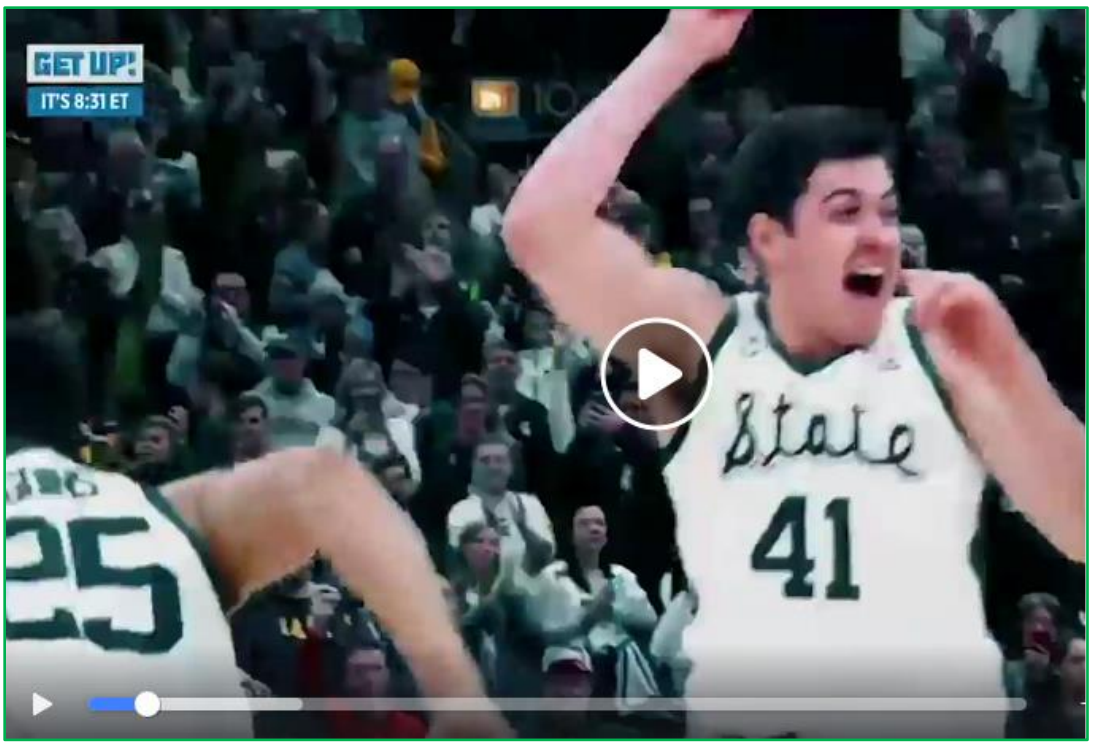
Michigan State guard Conner George (41) reacts with teammates after a dunk by forward Xavier Tillman (23) during the second half of their Elite 8 game against Duke at Capital One Arena in Washington, D.C., on Sunday, March 31, 2019. Michigan State won the game, 68-67, to advance to the Final Four in Minneapolis. (Mike Mulholland | MLive.com)

Final Seven Minutes of MSU's Win over Duke

Tom Izzo OK'd the play of his life. Then Michigan State stunned Duke

Michigan State Basketball: 5 most memorable plays from win over Duke

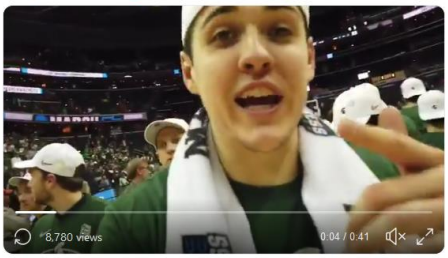
Click on Above Image for Five Videos

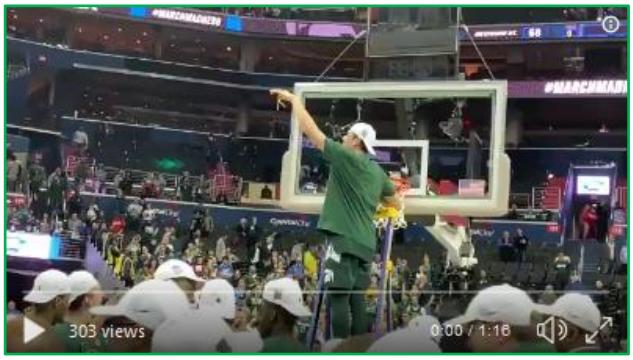


Net Cutting with Conner George (click on two videos below)

Cut the net with @ConnerGeorge3!!!

#SpartanDawgs x #FinalFour🏀🍀





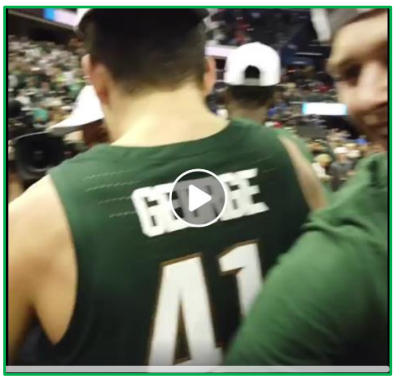
OHS alum Conner George cutting down the net..his team is headed to the NCAA Final Four! Congrats Conner!

Okemos Basketball
@OkemosBoysHoops

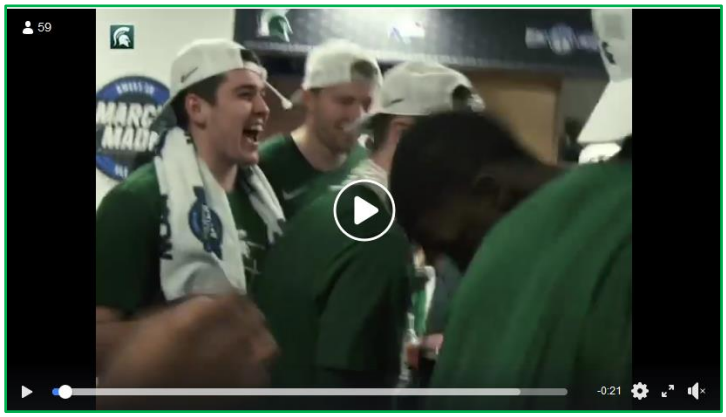
Following

Congratulations @ConnerGeorge3 we are so proud of you! #chieftain

Ira Childress, AD @OkemosAthletics
OHS alum Conner George cutting down the net..his team is headed to the NCAA Final Four! Congrats Conner!



George (back left) Signals the Spartans as #1 in NCAA East Region



Spartans Look Forward to Final Four in Washington, DC

Michigan State Spartans: 2019 NCAA East Regional Champion

Spartans Celebrate at Breslin Center (Can You Spot Conner?)

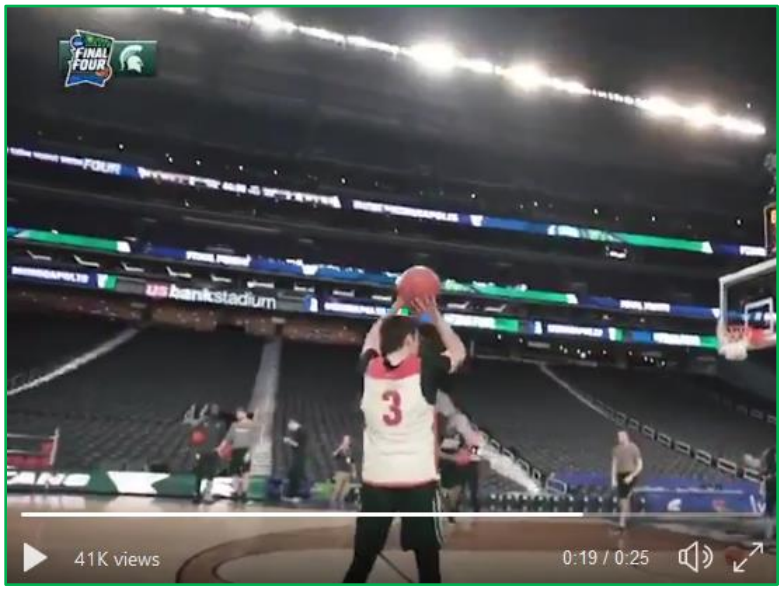
New Addition to the Office

Final Four

The Road to the Final Four

Spartans Arrive in Minneapolis

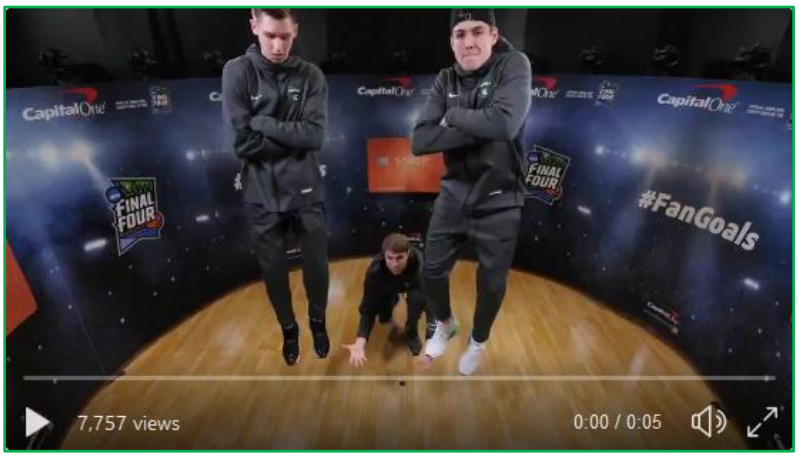
Media Day…No Media Questions…What to Do? Shout Out to Kirk Cousins



George Shoots in Practice at US Bank Stadium…All Net!

Behind the Scenes at the Final Four

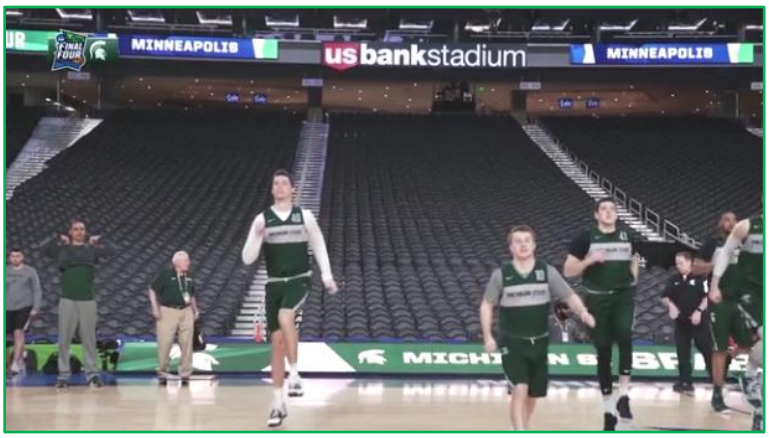
Having ourselves a DAY at the @FinalFour!



Fan Fest featuring @mattblast3, @ConnerGeorge3, and @KyleAhrens33

The Spartans at the Final Four Fan Fest

First Day of Practice (Conner George on Left)

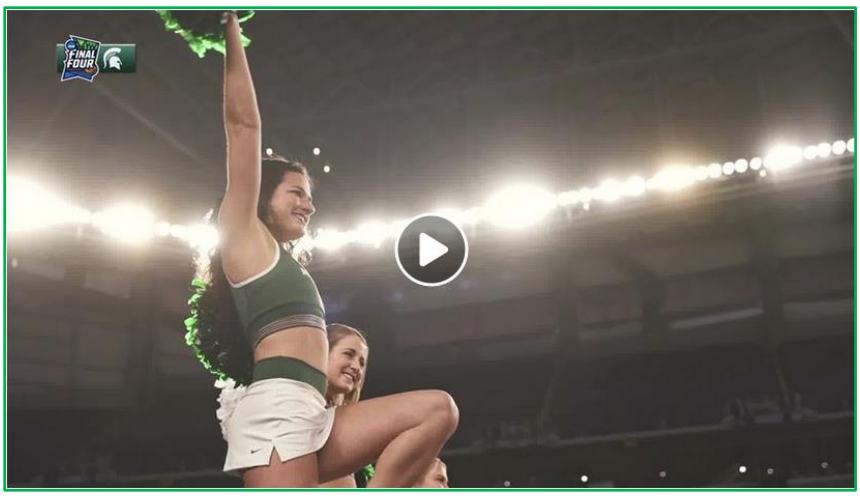


First Day of Practice (Conner George on Right)

George Dunks the Ball in Practice

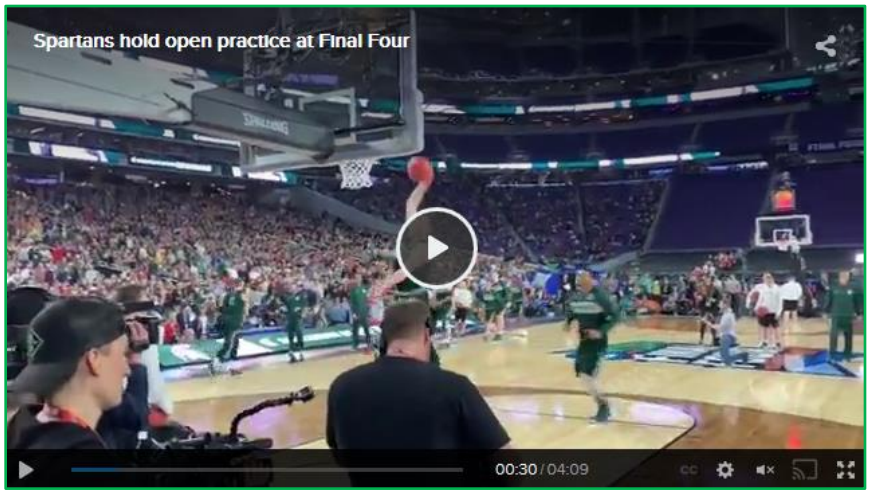
A Final Four Challenge: Pronounce the Minnesota City

Feelin' GOOD today @usbankstadium



Final Four Open Practice

George (41) & Teammates Doing Drills



George (41) Dunking at Practice

Spartan pride can carry MSU to a national title

Michigan State forward Gabe Brown fires up his teammates during Friday's practice at U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis.

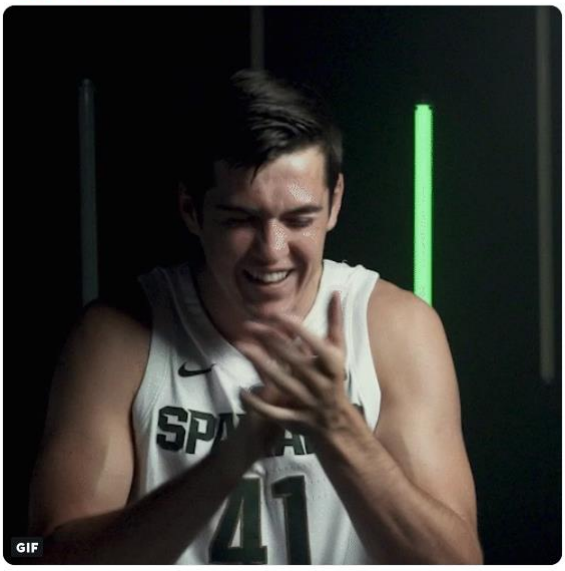
KIRTHMON F. DOZIER/DETROIT FREE PRESS

Empire State Building to flash green and white as Michigan State plays in Final Four

Michigan State Basketball
@MSU_Basketball
Following

LET'S GO!!!

#Spartans x #FinalFour



Semifinal

While the Spartans had memorable Final Four experiences with the Media Days, Fan Fest, Open Practice, and the Spartans Pep Rally on the eve of their game against #3 seed **Texas Tech**, the challenge for MSU during the week was to prepare the Spartans starting five and rotation to play against the Red Raiders' highly touted defense.

A major role in preparing the Spartans to compete against **Texas Tech** was played by the Spartans scout team as described in the following excerpts from Stephen Brooks' report on "How MSU's 'high level' scout team became Texas Tech."

> "Our scout team is so high-level that there's nothing that's that difficult at this point, especially this point in the year," said [Spartans] video coordinator Drew Denisco, who oversees a scout team featuring [Thomas] Kithier, Jack Hoiberg, Conner George, Brock Washington and Marcus Bingham Jr.
>
> "… They do an unbelievable job, like chameleons, of changing their game based on a scout."
>
> The "no-middle" scheme Texas Tech uses to suffocate its opponents can be explained simply, but it's much trickier to execute, said MSU graduate assistant Chris Fowler, who assists Denisco with scout team preparation. . . .
>
> "Our defense at Michigan State isn't necessarily built to force guys to the baseline side, where theirs is," Fowler said. "They keep people out of the middle of the paint. So keeping our guys out of the middle of the paint, by principle, was difficult for us…." . . .
>
> An effective scout-team player has minimal ego and gives maximum effort. That's the only way to achieve a proper semblance of realism. They're like method actors getting into character.
>
> Denisco and Fowler have to work with what they have. Hoiberg, at 5-foot-11, is four inches shorter than his assignment, Texas Tech's Davide Moretti. George can't match the length and quickness of 6-6 Jarrett Culver, who is projected as a high first-round NBA Draft pick this summer.

Yet the measurables aren't as important as the ability to process data and tendencies. As long as they get to their respective players' spots and do what they do, it doesn't matter how fast it happens or how pretty looks.

"I kind of take my game out of it," George said. "If I make the shot or miss the shot, I'm doing my job. I'm trying to make every shot. But if I don't, if I give a good look, I feel like that's winning on our part because we got a good look out of something he does all the time." . . .

Whereas the prep for MSU's starters and rotation players is a slow burn, the scout team has to be fully submerged roughly 24 hours after the buzzer sounds on the last game. They're the first to see film cutups of the next opponent, and they stop by MSU's basketball offices between classes and meals to go in-depth with the Spartan coaches. . . .

…Fowler was most impressed with George's imitation of Culver.

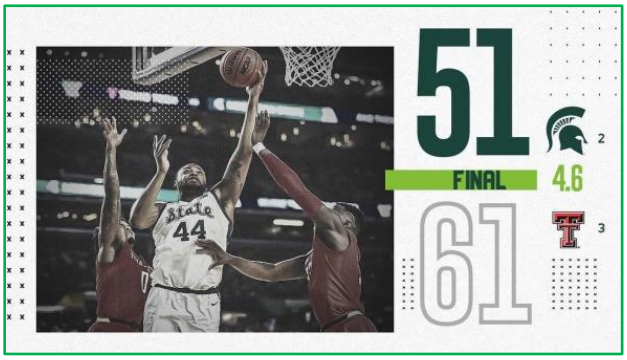
"Even though Culver's talented – Culver's a projected lottery pick – CG is really good and really talented at trying to get his own shot off and driving through contact and creating contact and trying to draw fouls," Fowler said. "He's just a talented player. There's a lot of schools in the country that CG could probably play on, but he has decided to put himself second and put this team first. And that's a credit to who he is as an individual to come out every day and play his guy to the best of his ability." . . .

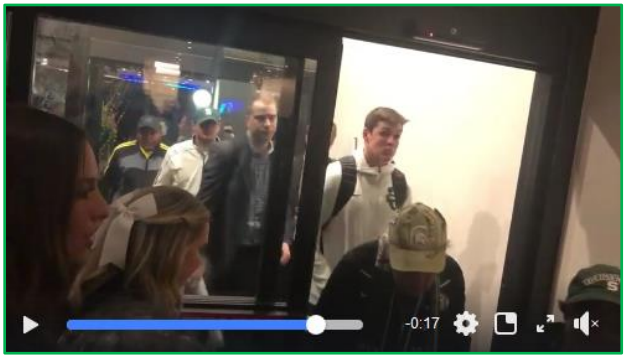
There's no more thankless job than going all out and playing an often unfamiliar style while knowing the chances of contributing in the actual game are a hair above zero. The scout team players are pushed to exhaustion in the shadows because they aren't expected to play a role when the lights go on. (Source)

Conner George Wearing Scout Jersey

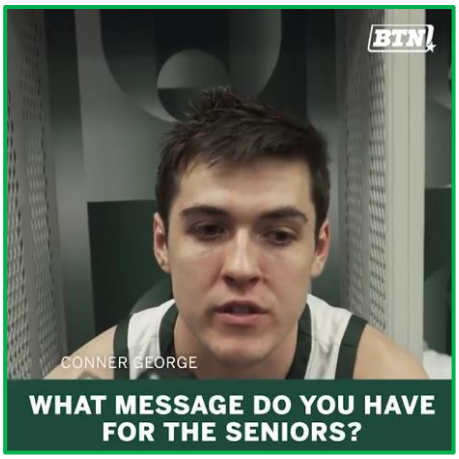
However, as much as the Spartans scout team helped prepare the team's starters to take on **Texas Tech**, the Spartans fell short, 61-51, of winning the game after having fought back in the game's late stages to cut **Texas Tech**'s 13 point lead to one, before the Red Raiders took control of the game hitting a mix of baskets and free throws.

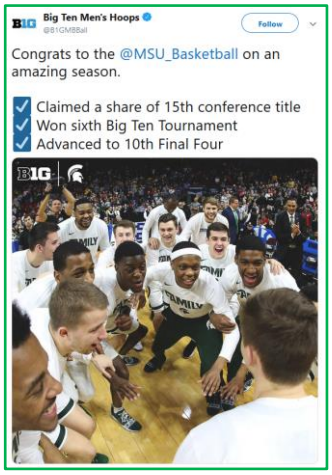
George & Teammates Cheering the Spartans to Fight Back

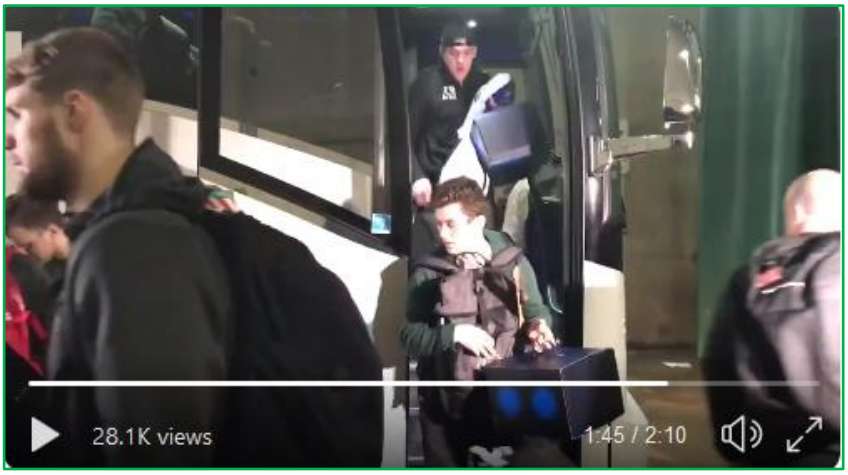




George (@ 1:28) & Spartans Team Return to Hotel after Loss to Texas Tech







Conner & Spartans Disembark Bus on Return to the Breslin Center (April 8, 2019)

Despite the Final Four Semifinal loss to **Texas Tech**, the Spartans finished the season with an overall 32-7 record.

Laurels

While George appeared in only 18 games during the 2018-19 season, he contributed throughout the season in his primary role on the scout team but also during several games in which Izzo subbed Conner when a starter or rotation player got into foul trouble, including against **Bradley** and **Minnesota** in the NCAA tournament. Also, George was honored by receiving the Spartans “Unsung Hero” award as well as being one of the five Spartans from the Final Four squad named as Academic All-Big Ten. George’s stats on the season are presented in the next section.

George with Teammates & Coach Izzo at Breslin Student Events Center (April 15, 2019)

This evening, we recognize MSU student athletes for their academic achievements at the 2019 Spartan Academic Excellence Gala!

Conner's academic performance off the court also contributed to the Spartans men's basketball team earning the NCAA Academic Progress Rate (APR) Public Recognition Award for the fourth straight year.

> The Spartans earned an NCAA APR Public Recognition Award award , meaning the team scored in the top 10% of NCAA schools in the latest Academic Progress Rate results.
>
> APR is a metric used by the NCAA to evaulate "eligibility, graduation and retention each semester or academic term," according to a release from MSU. This team's number was based on scores from the 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 academic years.

George (to left of Coach Izzo)

2019 NCAA Final Four Ring

Conner George 2018-19 Game Log

41 CONNER GEORGE G

MICHIGAN STATE SPARTANS

KEY STATS

GP	MIN/G	PPG	REB/G	AST/G	FG %
18	1.6	0.6	0.5	0.1	50

GAME LOG

DATE	OPPONENT	RESULT	MIN	FG	3PT	FT	OREB	DREB	TOT	AST	PF	BLK	STL	TO	PTS
NOVEMBER 2018															
11/11	vs. Florida Gulf Coast	W 106-82	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11/14	vs. Louisiana-Monroe	W 80-59	1	1-1	0-0	0-1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
11/18	vs. Tennessee Tech	W 101-33	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
DECEMBER 2018															
DATE	OPPONENT	RESULT	MIN	FG	3PT	FT	OREB	DREB	TOT	AST	PF	BLK	STL	TO	PTS
12/03	vs. Iowa	W 90-68	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
12/16	vs. Green Bay	W 104-83	2	1-2	0-0	0-0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
12/21	vs. Oakland	W 99-69	4	1-2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
12/29	vs. Northern Illinois	W 88-60	1	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
JANUARY 2019															
DATE	OPPONENT	RESULT	MIN	FG	3PT	FT	OREB	DREB	TOT	AST	PF	BLK	STL	TO	PTS
01/02	vs. Northwestern	W 81-55	1	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
01/08	vs. Purdue	W 77-59	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
01/13	at Penn State	W 71-56	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
01/17	at Nebraska	W 70-64	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
01/24	at Iowa	W 82-67	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FEBRUARY 2019															
DATE	OPPONENT	RESULT	MIN	FG	3PT	FT	OREB	DREB	TOT	AST	PF	BLK	STL	TO	PTS
02/09	vs. Minnesota	W 79-55	3	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
02/17	vs. Ohio State	W 62-44	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
MARCH 2019															
DATE	OPPONENT	RESULT	MIN	FG	3PT	FT	OREB	DREB	TOT	AST	PF	BLK	STL	TO	PTS
03/05	vs. Nebraska	W 91-76	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
03/09	vs. Michigan	W 75-63	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
03/21	vs. Bradley	W 76-65	5	0-0	0-0	2-2	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	2
03/23	vs. Minnesota	W 70-50	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

2018-19 Season Statistics for Conner George

Career Statistics as a Spartan (through end of 2018-19 season)

CBSSports.Com reported the following profile on George's stats as a Spartan through his first three seasons of eligibility as a Spartan:

CAREER SHOOTING STATS

SEASON	TEAM	G	MIN	FG	FGA	FG%	FG3	FG3A	FG3%	FT	FTA	FT%	PTS	AVG
2016-17	Michigan State	10	12	1	2	50	0	1	0	4	6	66.7	6	0.6
2017-18	Michigan State	16	54	3	15	20	0	8	0	0	2	0	6	0.4
2018-19	Michigan State	18	28	4	8	50	0	0	-	2	3	66.7	10	0.6
TOTAL		**44**	**94**	**8**	**25**	**32**	**0**	**9**	**0**	**6**	**11**	**54.5**	**22**	**0.5**

MORE STATS

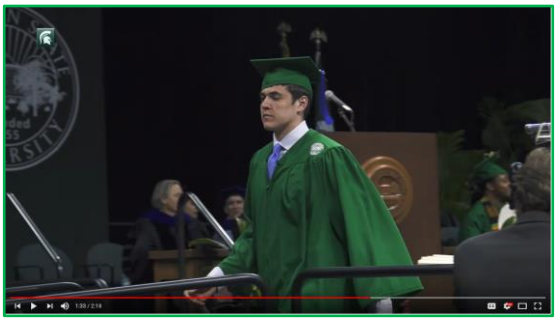
SEASON	TEAM	G	MIN	REB	RAVG	A	AAVG	STL	SAVG	BLK	BAVG	TO
2016-17	Michigan State	10	12	3	0.3	1	0.1	0	0	0	0	3
2017-18	Michigan State	16	54	18	1.1	0	0	3	0.2	0	0	2
2018-19	Michigan State	18	28	9	0.5	1	0.1	1	0.1	0	0	0
TOTAL		**44**	**94**	**30**	**0.7**	**2**	**0**	**4**	**0.1**	**0**	**0**	**5**

No Lack of Focus, Intensity, of Enthusiasm on Conner's Part!

Conner George Speaking to Younger Players at Summer Basketball Camps

On completing the 2018-19 season, George (a redshirt for the 2015-16 season) had used three of his four years of NCAA Division I eligibility, thus leaving him eligible to play during the 2019-20 season. Interestingly, when not playing basketball during his first three academic years at MSU, George loaded up on courses and "hit the books"—so much so that in May 2018, after only three years, Conner had graduated with a bachelor's in communication.

The two videos below show George at the graduation ceremony (left) and celebrating (right) with Coach Tom Izzo and fellow graduating teammates Kenny Goins, Lou Rawls ("Tum Tum") Nairns, and Ben Carter.



On earning his BA degree, George re-enrolled at Michigan State to study for a Master of Arts in Education, this academic status allowing him to play Spartan basketball over the 2018-19 and 2019-20 seasons.

Following the 2018-19 season, *LSJ* sportswriter Graham Couch provided the following assessment of George's potential role to continue being on the Spartan squad during the 2019-20 season.

Connor George, Sr., G

George, from Okemos, has been on the fringes of the playing rotation the last two seasons, used in emergencies. His dream is to be a regular in the playing group. The odds of that are long, given the glut of wings and guards on MSU's roster.

Laurels

M. Basketball | 7/17/2019 4:43:00 PM

Ahrens, George Selected to NABC Honors Court

East Lansing, Mich. – The National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) announced the 2018-19 NABC Honors Court on Wednesday, recognizing those men's collegiate basketball student-athletes who excelled in academics during the past season.

MSU was represented on the Honors Court by redshirt junior *Kyle Ahrens*, who earned his bachelor's degree in advertising management and is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Education, and redshirt junior *Conner George*, who earned his bachelor's degree in communication and is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Education.

In order to be named to the Honors Court, a student-athlete must meet a high standard of academic criteria.

They must be a junior or senior and a varsity player, carry a cumulative grade-point average (GPA) of 3.2 or higher at the conclusion of the 2018-19 academic year, must have matriculated at least one year at their current institution and a member of an NCAA Division I, II, III or NAIA Division I school with an NABC member coach.

Looking to the 2019-2020 Season

Within a day of **Virginia** defeating **Texas Tech** for the NCAA national championship, the Internet was aflutter with 2019-2020 preseason Top 19 and Top 25 projections for the **Michigan State Spartans** men's basketball team.

Just as the glow from Michigan State's decorated 2018-19 basketball season starts to fade, there's plenty of reasons to start thinking about the next run. **ESPN bracketologist Joe Lunardi's latest NCAA Tournament projection** is just more evidence supporting the widespread belief that the Spartans won't just be very good next season, but elite.

Lunardi has MSU penciled in as a No. 1 seed in the projected bracket he released Thursday. And unlike last year, the Spartans are slotted in a way that should please their fans. MSU starts off in Cleveland and would play in Indianapolis (host of the Midwest Region) for the second weekend in Lunardi's bracket. The 2020 Final Four will be held in Atlanta.

Lunardi pits MSU against the 16th-seeded winner of a play-in game between Fairleigh Dickinson and Norfolk State. The Spartans would then face the 8-9 winner of North Carolina State and Marquette in the round of 32. Potential Sweet 16 opponents include No. 5 seed Iowa State, No. 12 seed Toledo, No. 4 seed Memphis and No. 13 seed Northern Kentucky.

Kansas is the No. 2 seed and Virginia the No. 3 in MSU's region in this hypothetical tournament.

With the Michigan State Spartans winning their last two national championships 20 years apart (in 1979 and 2009), hopes were high that Coach Izzo would guide the Spartans to winning a national championship in 2020.

Pundits such as John Gasaway and CBS Sports' Jon Rothstein (see two images below) were predicting the Spartans at #1 in "Top five" and a "way too early Top 25."

Similarly, Dick Vitale and Sports Illustrated also jumped on the “way too early top 25” bandwagon also projecting the Spartans as a pre-season #1. Further, ESPN, NBC Sports Center, and USA TODAY (see the three images below) also have the Spartans #1 in their 2019-20 pre-season rankings.

While NBC Sports projected the Spartans roster for the 2019-20 season (see below), that analysis fell short of recognizing four Spartans on the 2018-19 squad (namely, Braden Burke, Jack Hoiberg, Brock Washington, and **Conner George**), who likely would and did return to the Spartans squad for the 2019-20 season.

With four years on the Spartans team, during which George practiced with the team initially as a Redshirt and then three seasons during which he was on the scout team and competed in real games, Conner's experience would be an asset for the team as the Spartans sought during the 2019-20 season to win the Big Ten Championship, the Big Ten Tournament, and make a deep run through the 2020 NCAA Tournament for a chance to win the national championship.

1. MICHIGAN STATE

- **WHO'S GONE**: Matt McQuaid, Kenny Goins
- **WHO'S BACK**: Cassius Winston*, Nick Ward, Xavier Tillman, Joshua Langford, Aaron Henry, Kyle Ahrens, Gabe Brown, Foster Loyer, Marcus Bingham, Thomas Kithier
- **WHO'S COMING IN**: Rocket Watts, Malik Hall, Julius Marble
- **PROJECTED STARTERS**: Cassius Winston, Joshua Langford, Aaron Henry, Xavier Tillman, Nick Ward

Even when Nick Ward declared for the NBA draft and hirdc an agent, CBS' Gary Parrish still had Michigan State pre-season ranked at #1.

1 **MICHIGAN ST.**

Coach: Tom Izzo

2018-19 record: 32-7

Notable players definitely gone: Nick Ward, Matt McQuaid, Kenny Goins

Other expected departures: N/A

Notable players expected to return: Cassius Winston, Joshua Langford, Xavier Tillman, Aaron Henry, Kyle Ahrens, Gabe Brown, Foster Loyer, Thomas Kithier, Marcus Bingham

Expected additions: Malik Hall, Rocket Watts, Julius Marble

In May of 2020, with the start of the 2019-20 seasons just a few months down the road, the following headline appeared:

ESPN Bracketology: Spartans projected as No. 1 seed in 2019-20

Just as the glow from Michigan State's decorated 2018-19 basketball season starts to fade, there's plenty of reasons to start thinking about the next run. **ESPN bracketologist Joe Lunardi's latest NCAA Tournament projection** is just more evidence supporting the widespread belief that the Spartans won't just be very good next season, but elite.

Lunardi has MSU penciled in as a No. 1 seed in the projected bracket he released Thursday. And unlike last year, the Spartans are slotted in a way that should please their fans. MSU starts off in Cleveland and would play in Indianapolis (host of the Midwest Region) for the second weekend in Lunardi's bracket. The 2020 Final Four will be held in Atlanta.

Lunardi pits MSU against the 16th-seeded winner of a play-in game between Fairleigh Dickinson and Norfolk State. The Spartans would then face the 8-9 winner of North Carolina State and Marquette in the round of 32. Potential Sweet 16 opponents include No. 5 seed Iowa State, No. 12 seed Toledo, No. 4 seed Memphis and No. 13 seed Northern Kentucky.

Kansas is the No. 2 seed and Virginia the No. 3 in MSU's region in this hypothetical tournament.

Note: This Conner George chapter (14-2) continues in Chapter 14-3 which covers Conner's redshirt senior season (2019-2020) as a Michigan State Spartan.