

Where there's smoke...there's fire

Michigan State set for Smoker-Rogers show

EAST LANSING (AP) — One look at the south side of Spartan Stadium shows what Michigan State's season is all about.

There are larger-than-life images of quarterback Jeff Smoker and receiver Charles Rogers on both sides of the Spartans' home schedule, which includes five home games by Sept. 28 and eight total.



**MSU
PREVIEW**

Next to Smoker are the words: "Where there's smoke," and next to Rogers are the words: "There's fire."

"It's crazy. It's wild," Smoker said. "I think back to when I was a freshman and coming here not knowing what was going to happen, then having a rough year as a freshman. Now things are going well and I'm on the front of the media guide and on a huge billboard.

"It's a little overwhelming at times."

Smoker and Rogers created the hype with their spectacular sophomore seasons.

Rogers set school single-season records for catches (67), receiving yards (1,470), touchdown receptions (14) and 100-yard receiving games (six), an impressive feat considering Michigan State produced receivers such as Plaxico Burress, Andre Rison and Muhsin Muhammad.

Smoker led the Big Ten in passing efficiency and set a school record with 21 touchdown passes.

With their entire offensive line back from last year's team, which finished 7-5 with a win over Fresno State in the Silicon Valley Bowl, even more is expected out of Smoker and Rogers.

"I don't see any reason why we shouldn't be better this year," Rogers said. "Everything is lined up for us."

The schedule is, that's for sure.

Michigan State, which has converted Spartan Stadium's surface from artificial turf to grass, will play Eastern Michigan, Rice, California, Notre Dame and Northwestern at home before setting foot on a bus to play elsewhere.

The Spartans will play seven of eight games at home before their showdown with Michigan on Nov. 2 in Michigan Stadium.

"It's always an advantage to play at home, but you still have to compete and execute to win," said Michigan State coach

Bobby Williams. "We can't fall into a false sense of security with our schedule."

The Spartans have been their own worst enemy in the past.

When much is expected, they have failed. When they've come off big wins, they have faltered.

And they know it.

"One of the keys to our year is consistency," safety Thomas Wright said. "We know that we can't get too high off a win, or let one loss ruin us. We know what's happened here in the past, so we just got to work hard to not let it happen again."

The Spartans are confident they will be able to overcome the loss of running back T.J. Duckett, who skipped his senior season and was Atlanta's first-round pick.

They think Dawan Moss, who will move from fullback to running back, and freshman David Richard will be a duo similar to the one Michigan State had two years ago when Lloyd Clemons and Duckett led the Spartans to their only 10-win season since 1965.

Michigan State returns seven starters to a defense, which struggled to stop the run and teams from keeping up with the Spartans' high-scoring offense.

The secondary should be a strength with cornerbacks Broderick Nelson, Cedric Henry and DeMario Suggs along with safeties Thomas Wright and Jason Harmon.

Middle linebacker Mike Labinjo, who led the team in sacks and tackles for losses last season, will attempt to fill the void left by four-year starter Josh Thornhill, a free agent with the Detroit Lions.

Wright said the defense doesn't mind that Smoker and Rogers are attracting so much attention.

"They deserve everything they're getting because it doesn't get any better than that combination in college football," Wright said. "If we win, the team wins."

Smoker tries not to stare at the billboard-like posters of himself and Rogers, but admits it's difficult.

"You can't help but look at it and pull into the parking lot once in a while," Smoker said with a smile. "When me and Chuck are driving down the street, we might take a left in there and say, 'Hey what do you think?'"

"These are some of the best times of our lives, so you got to enjoy it while you can."



The Associated Press

Junior wide receiver Charles Rogers, a Saginaw High product, set several single-season records last year for the Spartans and will team with QB Jeff Smoker again in 2002.

SPARTANS AT-A-GLANCE

SCHOOL COLORS: Green and white.
FOUNDED: 1855
ENROLLMENT: 44,227
LOCATED: East Lansing, Mich.
COACH: Bobby Williams, 3rd season at Michigan State, 13-11
2001 RECORD: 7-5 (3-5 Big Ten, tied for 8th)
LAST BOWL: 2001 Silicon Valley Classic, beat Fresno State 44-35
STADIUM: Spartan Stadium (72,027).
RETURNING STARTERS: 8 offense, 7 defense, place kicker.
KEY PLAYERS: WR Charles Rogers; QB Jeff Smoker; RB Dawan Moss; C Brian Ottney; OT Ulish Booker; LB Mike Labinjo; CB Cedric Henry; SS Thomas Wright; DT Kyle Rasmussen.
KEY DEPARTURES: RB T.J. Duckett; WR-KR Herb Haygood; TE Chris Baker; DT Josh Shaw; LB Josh Thornhill; P Craig Jarrett.
WHAT THEY'RE SAYING: "We've got to show the nation what Michigan State is about." — WR Charles Rogers.

2003 SCHEDULE

date	opponent
Aug. 30	vs. Western Michigan
Sept. 6	vs. Rutgers
Sept. 13	vs. Louisiana Tech
Sept. 20	at Notre Dame
Sept. 27	vs. Iowa
Oct. 4	vs. Indiana
Oct. 11	at Illinois
Oct. 18	at Minnesota
Nov. 1	vs. Michigan
Nov. 8	at Ohio State
Nov. 15	at Wisconsin
Nov. 22	vs. Penn State

2002 MICHIGAN STATE SCHEDULE				
Day	Date	Opponent	Time	
Sat	Aug. 31	vs. Eastern Michigan	3:30 p.m.	
Sat	Sept. 7	vs. Rice	1:05 p.m.	
Sat	Sept. 14	vs. California	12:10 p.m.	
Sat	Sept. 21	vs. Notre Dame	TBA	
Sat	Sept. 28	vs. Northwestern	TBA	
Sat	Oct. 12	at Iowa	TBA	
Sat	Oct. 19	vs. Minnesota (homecoming)	12:10 p.m.	
Sat	Oct. 26	vs. Wisconsin	TBA	
Sat	Nov. 2	at Michigan	TBA	
Sat	Nov. 9	at Indiana	TBA	
Sat	Nov. 16	vs. Purdue	TBA	
Sat	Nov. 23	at Penn State	TBA	

2001 STATS

RUSHING

player	ATT	YDS	TD
T.J. Duckett	263	1420	12
Little John Flowers	69	269	1
Dawan Moss	25	93	0
Tyrell Dortch	9	57	0

RECEIVING

player	REC	YDS	TD
Charles Rogers	67	1470	14
Herb Haygood	57	808	4
Chris Baker	40	548	4
Little John Flowers	25	299	2

2001 RESULTS

Michigan St. 35, Central Mich. 21
Michigan St. 17, Notre Dame 10
Northwestern 27, Michigan St. 26
Michigan St. 31, Iowa 28
Minnesota 28, Michigan St. 19
Michigan St. 42, Wisconsin 28
Michigan St. 26, Michigan 24
Indiana 37, Michigan St. 28
Purdue 24, Michigan St. 14
Penn St. 42, Michigan St. 37
Michigan St. 55, Missouri 7
Michigan St. 44, Fresno St. 35*

*Silicon Valley Classic - San Jose, Cal.

PASSING						
player	ATT	COMP	PCT	YDS	TD	INT
Jeff Smoker	262	166	.634	2579	21	8
Ryan Van Dyke	67	37	.552	569	4	1
Damon Dowdell	56	27	.482	362	2	2

DEFENSIVE						
player	SOLO	AST	TOTAL	SACK	FUM	INT
Josh Thornhill	90	38	128	0	1	0
Thomas Wright	65	26	91	1	0	2
Mike Labinjo	39	20	59	5	1	0
Duron Bryan	46	13	59	0	0	5
Kyle Rasmussen	24	30	54	1	1	0