

Breslin Center followed by a trip to Ohio State on Saturday. It offers the Spartans (11-2, 2-0 Big Ten) a chance to take advantage of the two early conference victories and continue working toward defending their regular-season championship. # " It's big time and going to be really important, " senior forward Kenny Goins said. " We need to win all of our home games, so we need to come out strong against Northwestern. Ohio State always gives us fits down there. I think those first two games really give us a chance to make a statement around our league. " # That statement was made during a difficult stretch for the Spartans that included games against No. 1 Kansas, Louisville and Florida along with UCLA and Texas in the Las Vegas Invitational. The only losses were in the season-opener against Kansas in the Champions Classic followed by an overtime loss at Louisville in the ACC/Big Ten Challenge. # Mixed in that run was a stretch of six games in 16 days with just one at home. It was a tough road but one that helped Tom Izzo learn plenty about his team heading back into Big Ten action. # " I think that we had a hell of a run if you look at who we played, where we played, and when we played them. I thought we did a good job, " Izzo said. " I still get frustrated over that Louisville loss and I was so frustrated that I watched it (again) with my staff to figure out where were we back then and where are we now. If you remember, (Matt) McQuaid didn't play in that game and Cassius (Winston) got into foul trouble and we