

hosting Maryland. Last week: 14. Abbie Parr, Getty Images # 14. Illinois (4-9, 0-2) -- The Fighting Illini are young, but they're heading in the wrong direction as Big Ten play resumes. Illinois opened the second half 4-for-17 at home against Florida Atlantic on Saturday which led to an overtime loss, the second straight. To make matters worse, the Illini hit the road twice this week against Indiana and Northwestern. Last week: 12. Jeff Roberson, AP Interested in this topic? You may also want to view these photo galleries: # From left, Cassius Winston, coach Tom Izzo, Matt McQuaid and the rest of the Spartans will continue their quest to defend their Big Ten regular-season title when conference play resumes Wednesday. (Photo: Dale G. Young, Detroit News) # East Lansing -- With the month of December finally in the rearview mirror, it's time to get back to work for Michigan State, not to mention the rest of the Big Ten. # After playing just three games in a little more than three weeks, it's time for conference play to resume for the Spartans as the Big Ten continues navigating its 20-game schedule after each team played two games back in late November and early December. # For No. 8 Michigan State things tip off at 8:30 p.m. Wednesday with Northwestern visiting the 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