

## Chapter 🏀 14-1 - Conner George

### Chieftain Years (2011-2015) & Spartan (2015-2018) Seasons



**Conner George**

**Personal** – Robert Conner George was born in Okemos, Michigan on February 18, 1997, the son of Jerry and Cathy George. [Cathy](#) is head coach of the Michigan State women's volleyball team. Even before Okemos High, a very young George already was playing basketball for the AAU Westside Slammers while in 8<sup>th</sup> grade in 2011. George is fourth from the left between #20 & #54 in the photo below.



### Okemos High School

#### 2011-12

George played on the freshmen team his first year as a Chieftain.



### 2012 Okemos High Yearbook

## 2012-13

As a sophomore, George played on the Chieftains' JV team.



2. Robert George (10) shoots and scores against Grand Ledge. As a player on the team full of future varsity basketball players, Robert said, "We know we have to work hard to uphold and maintain the Chieftain Tradition." The team ended the game with another great win. *(Picture by Alan Holben)*



(Back Row): Coach Eric Skusa, Jacob Faustyn, Hector Garcia, Robert George, Devon Tobben, Atticus Bohr, Bradon Persico, Mitchell Kazemarek, Trevor Perry, Assistant Coach Matt Dickerman (Front Row): Andrew Graham, Nathan Dane, Kyle Llano, Timothy Stagg, Kyle Krumm, Owen Petroff, Andrew Gordon, Danny Horne

## 2013 Okemos High Yearbook

**2013-14** – During the 2013-14 and 2014-15 seasons Okemos played in the Blue Division of the Capital Area Activities Conference (CAAC). The schools in the Blue Division were **East Lansing, Everett, Grand Ledge, Holt, Jackson, Okemos, and Sexton**. By the 2013-14 season, George was playing on the Chieftains' Varsity team.



## 2014 Okemos High Yearbook

## ***Regular Season***

On December 10, Okemos (1-0, 0-0) defeated **Lansing Catholic**, 65-58, with George scoring 21 points on five baskets (including two 3-point goals) and 7-9 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On December 13, Okemos (2-0, 1-0) beat **Everett**, 56-34. George scored 14 points on five baskets (including four 3-point goals) and 0-1 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On December 27, Okemos (3-0, 1-0) defeated **Bay City Glenn**, 54-34, with George scoring four points on two baskets ([Source](#)).

On January 3, Okemos (4-0, 1-0) downed **Haslett**, 68-41. While George may have played in this game, his name is not mentioned in the box score ([Source](#)).

On January 8, Okemos (4-1, 1-1) fell to **Grand Ledge**, 66-60. While George may have played in this game, his name is not mentioned in the box score ([Source](#)).

On January 10, Okemos (4-2, 1-2) lost to **Sexton**, 59-57. George scored seven points on a 3-point goal and 4-4 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On January 14, Okemos (4-3, 1-3) lost to **Jackson**, 66-66. George scored 17 points on six baskets (including three 3-point goals) and 2-3 on free throws ([Source](#)).

On January 17, Okemos (5-3, 2-3) defeated **Holt**, 55-50. George scored eight points going 8-for-8 from the foul line (two in the final 30 seconds) and had 16 rebounds ([Source](#)).

On January 21, Okemos (5-4, 2-4) lost to **Eastern**, 60-54. George scored seven points on three baskets including one 3-point goal ([Source](#)).

On January 24, Okemos (6-4, 3-4) defeated **East Lansing**, 71-60. George scored 21 points on five baskets (including three 3-point goals) and 8-10 on free throws ([Source](#)).

On January 29, Okemos (6-5, 3-4) lost to **DeWitt**, 67-58. George scored 12 points on three baskets (including two 3-point goals) and 4-4 on free throws ([Source](#)).

On January 31, Okemos (7-5, 4-4) defeated **Everett**, 51-49. George scored 10 points on four baskets including two 3-point goals ([Source](#)).

On February 4, Okemos (7-6, 4-5) lost to **Grand Ledge**, 54-47. George scored 17 points on five baskets (including four 3-point goals) and 3-4 on free throws ([Source](#)).



**Conner George (#30 near baseline on far right) had a game-high 23 points and 10 rebounds in Chieftain's 61-45 home win over Lansing Sexton (Feb. 7, 2014)**

On February 7, Okemos (8-6, 5-5) defeated **Sexton**, 61-45. George had 11 rebounds, four assists, and a game-high 23 points on seven baskets (including three 3-point goals) and 6-6 on free throws ([Source](#)).

On February 11, Okemos (9-6, 6-5) defeated **Jackson**, 63-55. George had 12 rebounds and scored 20 points on five baskets (including two 3-point goals) and 8-14 on free throws ([Source](#)).

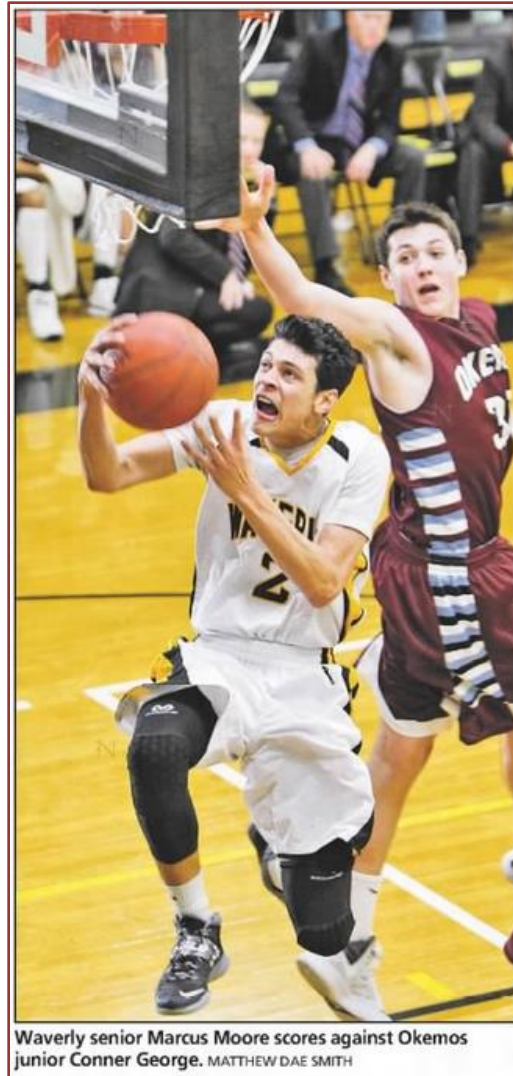
On February 14, Okemos (9-7, 6-6) lost to **Holt**, 62-48. George scored 11 points on three 3-point goals and 2-2 on free throws ([Source](#)).

On February 18, Okemos (10-7, 7-6) downed **Eastern**, 67-59, with George scoring 18 points on five baskets (including three 3-point goals) and on 5-10 from the free throw line, plus grabbing 13 rebounds ([Source](#)).

On February 21, Okemos (11-7, 8-6) defeated **East Lansing**, 53-49. George scored six points on two 3-point goals ([Source](#)).

On February 25, Okemos (11-8, 8-6) lost to **Waverly**, 58-46. "Conner George got Okemos off to a strong start, hitting two threes in the first three minutes of the contest to help stake his team to an early 8-3 lead" and added one more 3-point goal for a total of nine points ([Source](#)).





Waverly senior Marcus Moore scores against Okemos junior Conner George. MATTHEW DAE SMITH

On February 27, Okemos (12-8, 8-6) defeated **St. Johns**, 55-47. George scored 12 points on two baskets (including one 3-point goal) and 7-8 on free throws ([Source](#)).

### ***Districts***

On March 3, in a quarterfinal game, Okemos (13-8) defeated **East Lansing**, 57-54, in overtime. George scored 12 points on three baskets (including two 3-point goals) and 4-4 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On March 5, Okemos (14-8) knocked off **Haslett**, 59-50, in a semifinal game. "In the final minute, Conner George made four free throws...to seal Okemos' win" ([Source](#)). George had 11 points on three baskets (including one 3-point goal) and shooting 4-8 from the free throw line.

On March 7, Okemos (14-9) lost to **Eastern**, 42-38 in the district final. George scored nine points on three 3-point goals ([Source](#)).



**Eastern's E.J. Jackson puts up a driving shot between Okemos' Isaac Zin (45) and Conner George (left) during the Quaker's 42-38 Class A district championship victory on Friday night at East Lansing ([Source](#))**

For the 2013-2014 season, the Chieftains were 14-9 overall, placed third place (8-6) in the CAAC Blue division, and came close to winning the District championship.

### ***Laurels***

As a junior, George earned 2014 all-league honorable mention accolades while leading Okemos to the Class A district finals.

2014-15



*The best part of being on the basketball team is...*  
"The family and brotherhood we have developed."  
-Robert George (12)

## 2015 Okemos High Yearbook

On December 9, Okemos (1-0, 0-0) defeated **Lansing Catholic**, 62-59, with George scoring 33 points on eight baskets (including three 3-point goals) and 14-19 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

Conner George's 33-point performance helped Okemos hang on to defeat Lansing Catholic, 62-59, on Tuesday night at Lansing Catholic High School.

The Chiefs began the game on a 15-3 run that was sparked by the 3-point shooting of George and Grant Klaver. The seniors scored Okemos' first 13 points of the game.

"They were so excited to be playing a different team and have it mean something," Okemos coach Jeff Wonch said about his team's impressive start. "We came out in the first quarter ready to play."

George matched his 10-point first-quarter performance in the second by scoring another 10 points and helping the Chiefs head into halftime with a comfortable 29-17 lead.

"We came out with energy," George said. "We knew it was going to be a battle going against (Tony) Poljan and (Matthew) Fata. They're big-time players."

"We knew we had to bring it to them."





**Conner George (#30) leads Okemos past Lansing Catholic, 62-59 ([Source](#))**

On December 12, Okemos (1-1, 0-1) lost to **Everett**, 54-46. George scored 17 points on six baskets (including three 3-point goals) and 2-2 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On December 19, Okemos (1-2, 0-2) lost to **Grand Ledge**, 56-48. The Chieftains were led by George's seven rebounds and 20 points on six baskets (including three 3-point goals) and 5-8 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On December 20, Okemos (2-2, 0-2) topped **Rockford**, 58-55, in the Battle of I-96 Holiday Classic, with George leading the Chiefs, grabbing 10 rebounds and scoring 21 points on six baskets (including a 3-point goal) and 8-8 from the charity stripe ([Source](#)).



**2014-15 Boys' Team Beats Rockford on 12/20/14 in the Battle of I-96 Holiday Hoops Invitational (George 2<sup>nd</sup> from right in back row)**



On the day of the Chieftains' December 27<sup>th</sup> game against **Troy Athens**, the Lansing *State Journal* highlighted how Conner George would be key to Okemos having a successful season.

## Okemos

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better and this is a chance to do that."

The key to the Chiefs' success moving forward is the play of **Conner George**.

The senior, who is averaging 22.5 points per game this year, feels that a victory in the Holiday Hoops Invitational will be pivotal for Okemos down the road.

"It's going to be huge to get any type of winning streak," George said. "It's going to give us confi-

dence as we enter league play — after break. We're going to be very excited."

George has had a tremendous start to his season. And as his play has continued to pick up, Wonch has noticed the same from other members of the Chiefs' squad.

"Going into this season, we knew he (George) would have to be our guy if we were going to reach our goals," Wonch said. "Conner has been really consistent this year. It's good to see him step up right away."

"It's exciting how other guys have stepped up, as well. Atticus Bohr hit

five 3-pointers in the first half against Rockford. It's exciting when guys have started to step up like that."

George has credited his early-season success to his teammates. And while Okemos' record may not indicate it yet, the Chiefs' formula seems like it will eventually lead to the answer.

"My team has given me a bunch of opportunities and good looks," George said. "They help me with picks and getting the ball to me when I'm open. And if I'm not, we move it around and get better looks."

Later that day, December 27, Okemos (3-2, 0-2) downed **Troy Athens**, 71-66, in the Holiday Hoops Invitational Classic. George scored 40 points on 11 baskets (including four 3-point goals) and 14-16 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).



**George (#30) scores 41 in Okemos' win over Troy Athens (12/27/14)**



**Anthony Ianni** ✓

@AI44LYD

Follow



Shout out to my lil bro @ConnerGeorge3 for doing work tonight against Troy. 41 pts very impressive my guy, still can't beat me 1 on 1 tho ha

5:58 PM - 27 Dec 2014



**James Edwards III** ✓

@JLEdwardsIII

Follow



Conner George's 41 points earns him tournament MVP.

5:33 PM - 27 Dec 2014 from [Lansing, MI](#)

On January 10, Okemos (4-2, 1-2) topped **Sexton**, 58-49, with George leading the Chiefs with a game-high 25 points and 12 rebounds. George scored eight baskets (including a 3-point goal) and shot 8-11 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On January 13, a last-second putback resulted Okemos (4-3, 1-3) losing to **Jackson**, 67-66. George scored 30 points on eight baskets (including three 3-point goals) and 11-12 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On January 16, **Holt** handed Okemos (4-4, 1-4) a 65-50 loss. George scored 22 points on five baskets (including two 3-point goals) and 10-11 on free throws ([Source](#)).

On January 23, Okemos (4-5, 1-5) suffered a 46-30 loss to **East Lansing**. George led the Chiefs with 13 points on three baskets (including a 3-point goal) and 6-8 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On January 27, George hit a 3-pointer at the buzzer to give Okemos (5-5, 1-5) a 57-56 victory over **Dewitt**. George had 10 rebounds and 17 points on five baskets (including one 3-point goal) and 6-10 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On January 30, **Everett** topped Okemos (5-6, 1-6), 61-56 ([Source](#)). The Chieftains almost caught up with **Everett** in the game's last quarter:

With 4:30 remaining in the game, the Chiefs' Conner George, who had a game-high 29 points, scored the team's first field goal of the quarter. That bucket sparked a 10-2 run for Okemos, cutting its deficit to six.

"We have a lot of heart," George said. "Our team is not going to give up, ever. We knew we had to battle back. ... We tried to get back in there as quick as possible."



1. The gym falls silent as Robert George (12) shoots a free throw against Jackson. Connor's shot scored and helped gain a valuable point for the Chiefs.

### George Shooting Free Throw (2015 Okemos High Yearbook)



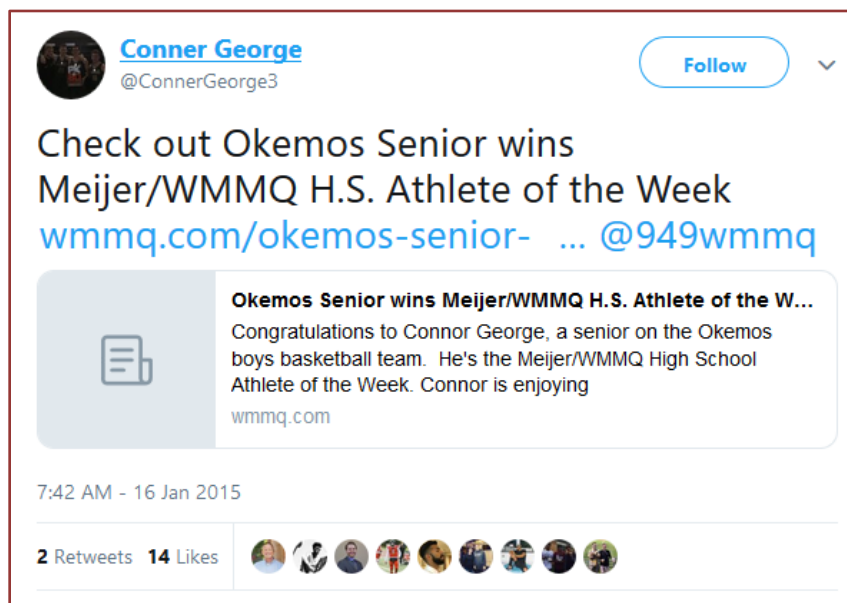
Okemos senior Conner George, left, fights for the ball against Everett junior LaAndre Wright.

MATTHEW DAE SMITH FOR LSI

On February 3, Okemos (6-6, 1-6) defeated **Haslett**, 67-53. [Note: Game-specific information not found in the Lansing *State Journal* for this game.]



On February 6, Okemos (6-7, 1-7) fell to **Grand Ledge**, 60-57. George led the Chieftains with 27 points on six baskets and 15-15 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).



On February 10, Okemos (7-7, 2-7) defeated **Eastern**, 64-38, George's 17 rebounds and 26 points led the Chieftains on 10 baskets (including three 3-point goals) and 3-3 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).



On February 13, Okemos (8-7, 3-7) downed **Sexton**, 56-38. George scored 20 points for Okemos on five baskets (including four 3-point goals) and 4-5 from the charity stripe ([Source](#)).

On February 17, Okemos (9-7, 4-7) beat **Jackson**, 50-42. George had 14 rebounds and scored 27 points on nine baskets (including three 3-point goals) and 6-6 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On February 20, Okemos (10-7, 5-7) topped **Holt**, 40-39, with George leading the Chieftains with 10 rebounds and 17 points on six baskets (including one 3-point goal) and 4-5 from the charity line, including the winning free throw ([Source](#)).

On February 24, Okemos (11-7, 6-7) downed **Eastern**, 49-36, with George scoring nine points on one basket and 7-8 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On February 27, Okemos (11-8, 6-8) fell to **East Lansing**, 57-42. George scored 11 points on three baskets (including a 3-point goal) and 3-7 on free throws ([Source](#)).



## 2015 Okemos High Yearbook

On March 5, in the final game of the regular season, Okemos (12-8) downed **St. Johns**, 40-38. George led Okemos' scorers with 21 points, grabbing 13 rebounds and knocking down a game-winning layup as time expired ([Source](#)).



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sWkCAyL-DRg>

## Conner George knocks in game-winner, sinks St Johns, 40-38 (Highlights)

### *Districts*

On March 9, Okemos (12-8) dispatched **Waverly**, 44-33. George scored 22 points on seven baskets (including two 3-point goals) and 6-9 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

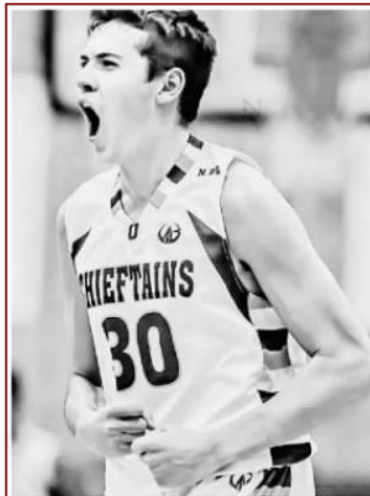
Okemos senior Conner George, who finished with 22 points to lead Okemos, scored eight points during the 12-0 spurt and helped give the Chiefs their biggest lead of the game.

"The game plan was to stop him and that beats Okemos, but he's very crafty," Fields said of George. "He's a very good player."

"I think everyone was just getting their jitters out - first game of districts in a big game with two good teams," George said. "We finally got comfortable and both teams started to hit more shots. Waverly was a very good defensive team and very athletic and we found ways to move the ball to the open spot and then we were able to make some shots."

As off as they looked at times, Waverly scored the final four points of the third quarter to keep the game within 10 points and found themselves down just three at the 4:38 mark of the fourth quarter after a hoop and foul shot from sophomore Jaden Sutton.

The Chiefs then scored 14 of the game's final 20 points, getting a big basket and foul shot from sophomore Luke Stagg early in the run to help bolster the lead as the Waverly defense focused on



KEVIN W. FOWLER/FOR THE LANSING STATE JOURNAL  
Connor George of Okemos cheers after hitting a 3-point shot during the Chiefs' Class A district quarterfinal win over Waverly.

George.

"They always try to stop Conner first, so if you set a screen for him you're going to be open yourself," Stagg said after ending the game with seven points. "I was looking to score and Conner passed me the ball a couple of times right underneath the basket. I just put it in with a pump fake. Those guys love to try and block your shot so you can use that against them and draw the foul."





On March 11, Okemos lost to **Grand Ledge**, 43-42, in the Class A district semifinal in which George scored a game-high 25 points ([Source](#)).



For the 2014-15 season Okemos had a 12-9 overall record and 6-8 in the CAAC Blue division.



**Okemos senior Conner George**

**(Left Photo: Kevin W. Fowler / for the *Lansing State Journal*)**

### ***Laurels***

As a senior, Conner averaged 23 points and 10.6 rebounds, averaged 23 points and 10.6 rebounds, shot 48 percent from the field and 83 percent from the foul line, and made 38 3-pointers. In 2015, he was a *Lansing State Journal* Dream Team honoree, Class A All-State honoree as selected by the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan, and Associated Press Honorable Mention Class A All-State.



**Conner George Named WMMQ Athlete of the Week (January 2015)**



The following provides a sample of video highlights of Conner George.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jd5yYUJhbJs>

**Cathy and Conner George Mother Son Duo (1/7/15)**





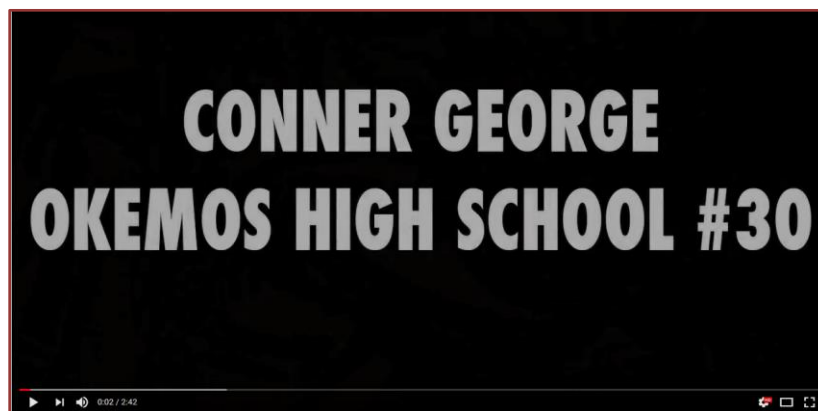
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbWqvufXJ4w>

**Hometown Heroes Conner George (2/11/15)**



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h\\_ow2tArtds](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_ow2tArtds)

**Senior captain Conner George knocks in his second game-winner on  
Senior Night (March 5, 2015)**



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9m61xkNWw30>

**Conner George Highlight #30 (3/7/15)**



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VT5hB9VAs9I>

**Conner George (#163) 6'3" 180 lb. Okemos High School MI 2015  
Unlisted (SCOUTSFOCUS.COM) (April 29, 2015)**



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AH-4WJ2AsqY>

**Okemos Captain Conner George to play for Michigan State and Tom Izzo (4/29/15)**

### **Michigan State University**

[Conner George](#) was one of the best basketball players to ever suit up for Okemos High School and was the recipient of scholarship offers from Ferris State, Grand Valley State, and most other Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) schools. But, as the *Lansing State Journal* reported on April 19, George chose to be a preferred walk-on and redshirt freshman at Michigan State and save the first year of his NCAA Division 1 eligibility for the 2016-17 season.

» **MSU GETS HOOPS WALK-ON:** What would a Michigan State men's basketball team be without a preferred walk on from Okemos? And the latest will be Conner George, the fourth former Chieftain to join Tom Izzo's team in the past eight seasons. George considered Grand Valley State to the final moments

but decided to take a shot at finding some playing time eventually with the Spartans. He has been a superb free throw shooter in high school, so maybe he can offer a few pointers to the current Spartans who struggled at the free throw line this past season. George is the son of MSU volleyball coach Cathy George. Hunch- I'll bet he plays some significant minutes before his college days are over.



**Power Sweep Radio**

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Follow

Michigan State's newest walk-on  
[@ConnerGeorge3](#) joins Press Pass: All Stars  
for our Lansing's Best segment tonight!



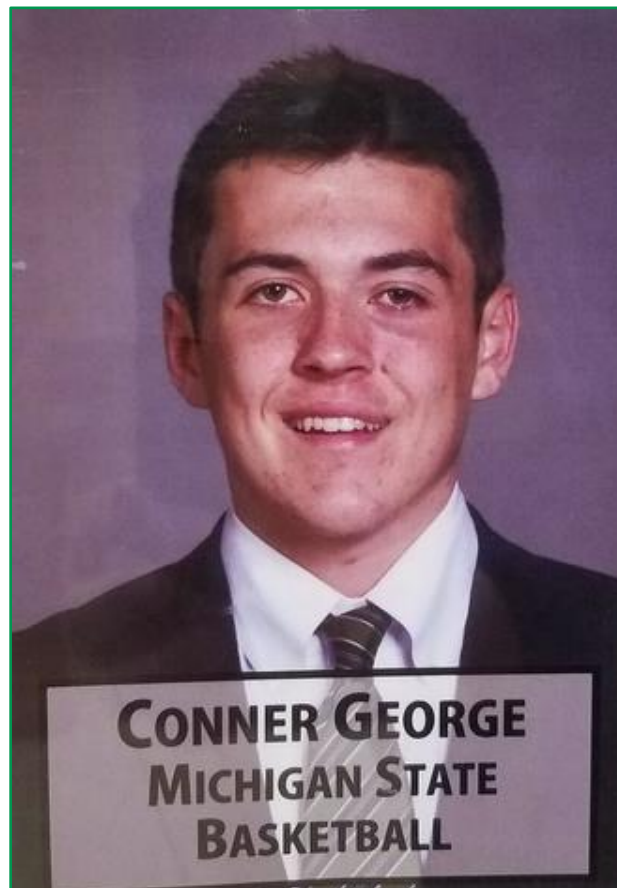
8:07 PM - 19 Apr 2015





“There were a lot of good options out there,” said George, who was being recruited by Division II GLIAC schools like Grand Valley and Northwood and Division III programs.

“I made a lot of great relationships with other coaches along the way. When MSU popped in, it’s been a dream of mine to play there and wear green. When that option came about, it took some serious thinking. After thinking and talking it over with my family, we decided MSU was the best decision with what I wanted to do.”



**Photo of Conner George in Okemos High School Display Case**

## 2015-16

George chose to go to Michigan State as a preferred walk-on, spending his first year with the Spartan basketball squad as a redshirt freshman.

“George...will enter his freshman season as a preferred walk-on. Despite having a plethora of Division II and Division III scholarship offers. ...assistant coach Dwayne Stephens...felt George would be able to contribute to the Spartans. The last player to be a preferred walk-on from Okemos, Mike Kebler, ended up having a pretty big role for the Spartans as he reached his junior and senior seasons” ([Source](#)).

Spartan coach Tom Izzo, reflecting on “walk-ons,” said: “I’m very partial to walk-ons, I picked that up from my playing days....My walk-ons got it made as good as anybody here. All the people at the bottom of the rung, because that’s where I was, I am appreciative of those people” ([Source](#)).





**Spartans in Rome in August 2015 (Conner George on Left)**



**Conner George (#13) in Top Left (Back Cover of 2015-16 Media Guide)**





**Freshman guard Conner George waits to speak to media during men's basketball media day, Oct. 27, 2015, Breslin Center [[Sundeep Dhanjal](#) (*The State News*)]**

On December 9, 2015, Hannah Sprague (MSU Athletic Communications), published the following profile on Conner George:



The first time [Conner George](#) stepped inside Breslin Center he was a seven-year-old, wide-eyed kid looking down at a 94-foot court and looking up at nearly 15,000 people.

It was December 2004 and the George family was turning in their Western Michigan ways to don the Green and White as [Cathy George](#) has just been named head coach of the MSU volleyball team.

Little did seven-year-old George know, he'd eventually get his shot at suiting up for the Spartans.

"When my mom got the job at MSU after coaching at Western, we came up for the first basketball game, and it was when Paul Davis was here," said George. "The free throw area was a basketball, so that was something that stuck out to me as a kid."

When your mom is the head coach of a power-five sport at MSU, you're thrown into a childhood of traveling the country, attending every game and being a part of something much bigger than yourself: a Spartan family.

"I would say that it was always a family atmosphere around here," said George. "Everyone treated me really well, and I really enjoyed growing up here."

Raised just a stone's throw away from East Lansing in Okemos, George thought he knew exactly what it meant to be a Spartan. Now, enrolled in classes and living on the campus of Michigan State, he has a growing sense of appreciation for the university.

"Coming in as a student, it was a lot different," said George. "It's kind of a different side of the story. You're inside of it now. You're a part of the family. It's a lot different, but it's a lot of fun. This is everything I could ask for."

It was third grade the first time George played organized basketball, and, with his dad as a coach, his love for the game blossomed and pushed him to become arguably one of the best basketball players to ever play at Okemos High School.

"I think it's a good way to find out different tactics on how to win something," said George. "It's competitive, and it's a lot of fun. If you're mad, sad or happy, it's a place you can always go to and count on. It's a great outlet."

A high-school standout averaging 23 points and 10.9 rebounds as a senior, George had an ever-growing list of scholarship offers to respectable Division II and Division III programs, but there was something else he always had his eye on.

George developed a relationship with associate head coach [Dwayne Stephens](#) throughout his high-school playing days, and when Stephens turned head coach [Tom Izzo](#)'s attention to George's long-rang shooting ability, Izzo agreed to bring him on as a preferred walk-on in 2015-16.

"I was really happy that I was able to join the team, but, at the same time, I knew that it was going to be a process, and I was going to have to work really hard," said George. "I was excited, but I knew I had a lot of work to do."

Thrown onto a roster of some of the hungriest and most dedicated players in college basketball, George quickly understood the expectations and has formed his role to best suit this goal-orientated squad.

"It's awesome when you're a part of a team that wants to win a National Championship," said George. "For that to be even in the conversation is amazing. Everyone has one goal, and we keep that in mind throughout each and every day. All of us are working to achieve it."

Many Spartan walk-ons have made their impact known at MSU, and with mentors like Austin Thornton, [Kenny Goins](#) and [Matt Van Dyk](#), George is very aware at the opportunities in front of him.

"They've been there to guide me through this process," said George. "Everyone has been really supportive. Izzo is the head man. He's the best at his job, so being here and witnessing the behind-the-scenes that goes into everything is a really great experience."

George, who will most likely redshirt this season, got the opportunity to sport his No. 13 jersey in the exhibition contest to start the year. His name was called, and he was ready.

"At the scorers table I was thinking, 'Who am I going to sub in for?'" said George. "And then I subbed in for [Matt Costello](#), and I thought to myself, 'So, I guess I'm the five now.'"

The journey has just begun for the hometown hero who chose to walk-on at Michigan State and pursue his dream in the Green and White. With a biological family and Spartan family as supportive as this, there's no limit to what he can accomplish.

"Ever since I was seven, this has been a dream," said George. "And now, watching the program get to this many Final Fours and just being a big fan of MSU, it's crazy wearing Green and White. It's definitely a dream come true." ([Source](#))



Following his first season as a Spartan Redshirt, [George](#) felt he was in the right place:

"I've grown up around here, watched all the MSU basketball games and it's always been a dream of mine....I always wanted to come here and play, and when I got the opportunity I knew I had to do it. It's too good of an opportunity to pass up." ...

With George's mother, [Cathy George](#), being the head coach of MSU volleyball in her now 11th season, Conner George has always felt as if he was part of the MSU family. He said being a part of the team makes it even more special because of the help his teammates give him, but the team and himself remain focused on one goal.

"The players are really pushing me, pushing all the freshmen," Conner George said. "Everyone's behind everyone to get better. We have one goal in mind, and that's national championship. To achieve that goal, everyone has to contribute and work as hard as they can."

The competitiveness and winning attitude is not something Conner George recently picked up. His older brother, TJ, was an athlete too, and with his mother Cathy George coaching a Division I volleyball program, it came with the family name.



“Throughout his life, as he was a little guy, he had to be towed around to all the ball games in every sport that TJ competed in and was always kind of miffed that he wasn’t in those games,” Cathy George said. “He was so eager to get in athletics. Conner loves to win, everything about it is winning, and in every sport he figures out how to score.”

While George as a Redshirt did not play in any games during his first season as a Spartan, off the court he looked to make even more improvements and contribute in every way possible, working to

“gain some strength and get some skills better, work on some stuff,” Conner George said. “In practice, I got to do a really good job of scouting the other teams, being on the scout team, knowing their plays. Getting the first string and second string ready for games” ([Source](#)).

Indeed, looking to the next season, George’s goal is to have a role beyond the scout team and mop-up duty free throws.

“I don’t want to go somewhere and be content not playing...I’m going to give it everything I have for this team to get better and for me individually, try to do something for this program on the court.” ([Source](#))



**Breslin Center Plaque Honoring 2015-2016 Spartan Squad  
(including #13 Conner George as Redshirt Freshman)**

2016-17

## Season Highlights



**41**  
**CONNER**  
**GEORGE**

2016-17 SPARTANS

SPARTAN BASKETBALL

### THE WORD

Joined the Spartans as a walk-on for the 2015-16 season • Excellent long-range shooter • Improved his physique over the summer.

### 2015-16

Redshirted.

### HIGH SCHOOL

2015 Lansing State Journal Dream Team honoree • 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 • Made 38 3-pointers on the season • 2015 Class A All-State honoree as selected by the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan • 2015 Associated Press Honorable Mention Class A All-State • Chose to walk-on at Michigan State over numerous Division II and III opportunities • Earned 2014 all-league honorable mention accolades, while leading Okemos to the Class A district finals.

### PERSONAL

Born Feb. 18, 1997 • Son of Jerry and Cathy George; Cathy is head coach of the Michigan State volleyball team • Plans to major in communication.

**41 CONNER GEORGE**

**6-3 // 200 // OKEMOS, MICHIGAN** **R-FRESHMAN // GUARD**



## 2016-17 Michigan State Spartans Media Guide

During the first part of the 2016-17 season, *Lansing State Journal* reporter James L. Edwards III interviewed George (41) about the challenges of becoming a Spartan basketball player. Excerpts from the [interview](#) (published 12/23/16) appear below.

**Q:** You've played in three games this year and recorded three rebounds. What was it like to have the ball in your hands in the Breslin [Center]?

**A:** "It was pretty crazy. When it's happening, it's all going by really fast. I got a rebound and was dribbling up the court, dribbled a couple of times, and I was really in shock. It was surreal."

**Q:** Mike Kebler and Anthony Ianni are Okemos grads who walked on at MSU and played decent minutes. Do you talk to them at all? And is that kind of what you were striving for, too, when you decided to forgo the other offers and come to MSU?

**A:** "I talked to Anthony and (Kebler) a lot before I got here. They helped me out. They told me what it was going to be like and what I would have to do relating to practices, games and helping out the team. Dan Chapman (Okemos grad) helped me, too."

**Q:** Was what happened to them part of the reason you came here? You grew up around them and watched them contribute to the program after being in the same position as you.

**A:** "Okemos tradition ... It was definitely in the back of my mind, but it wasn't a huge factor. Stories such as Travis Bader (Okemos grad) with Oakland are things I looked at, too. He was a walk-on at Oakland and was kind of like me — a scorer and skinny. But he just worked hard and ended up getting minutes. I figured I could do that here. We'll see."







Player	#	Class	Pos	Height	Weight	Hometown	High School	Summary
<a href="#">Kyle Ahrens</a>		SO	G	6-5	205	Versailles, OH	Versailles HS	2.9 Pts, 1.6 Reb, 0.4 Ast
<a href="#">Miles Bridges</a>	22	FR	G	6-7	230	Flint, MI		16.4 Pts, 8.1 Reb, 2.0 Ast
<a href="#">Ben Carter</a>	13	SR	F	6-9	225	Las Vegas, NV	Bishop Gorman	
<a href="#">Alvin Ellis</a>	3	SR	G	6-4	205	Matteson, IL	Chicago De La Salle HS	5.8 Pts, 2.5 Reb, 1.0 Ast
<a href="#">Conner George</a>	41	FR	G	6-3	185	Okemos, MI		0.4 Pts, 0.6 Reb, 0.2 Ast
<a href="#">Kenny Goins</a>	25	SO	F	6-6	215	Troy, MI	Warren Mott HS	3.5 Pts, 4.7 Reb, 0.6 Ast
<a href="#">Eron Harris</a>	14	SR	G	6-3	195	Indianapolis, IN	Lawrence North	12.3 Pts, 3.0 Reb, 1.7 Ast
<a href="#">Joshua Langford</a>	1	FR	G	6-5	210	Huntsville, AL		6.1 Pts, 2.1 Reb, 1.4 Ast
<a href="#">Matt McQuaid</a>	20	SO	G	6-5	185	Duncanville, TX	Duncanville HS	5.5 Pts, 1.7 Reb, 1.3 Ast
<a href="#">Lourawls Nairn</a>	11	JR	G	5-10	170	Nassau, Bahamas	Sunrise Christian Academy (KS)	4.0 Pts, 2.8 Reb, 3.9 Ast
<a href="#">David Nsengiyumva</a>	35		F	6-9	205			
<a href="#">Greg Roy</a>	40	JR	G	6-3	200	Fort Worth, TX	North Crowley (TX)	0.6 Pts, 0.2 Reb, 0.0 Ast
<a href="#">Gavin Schilling</a>	34	SR	F	6-9	240	Chicago, IL	Findlay Prep (NV)	
<a href="#">Matt Van Dyk</a>	30	SR	F	6-5	205	Imlay City, MI	Imlay City HS	1.8 Pts, 2.5 Reb, 0.6 Ast
<a href="#">Nick Ward</a>	44	FR	F	6-8	250	Gahanna, OH		13.2 Pts, 6.2 Reb, 0.5 Ast
<a href="#">Cassius Winston</a>	5	FR	G	6-0	185	Detroit, MI		6.5 Pts, 2.0 Reb, 5.4 Ast



On November 11, the Spartans lost, 65-63, to #10-ranked **Arizona** in the Armed Forces Classic in Honolulu, Hawaii. The photo below was “right after Tum [Lourawls Nairn Jr.] hit the game tying shot with about 5 seconds left. Unfortunately, **Arizona** ended up winning the game on a buzzer-beater” (Conner George, personal communication).

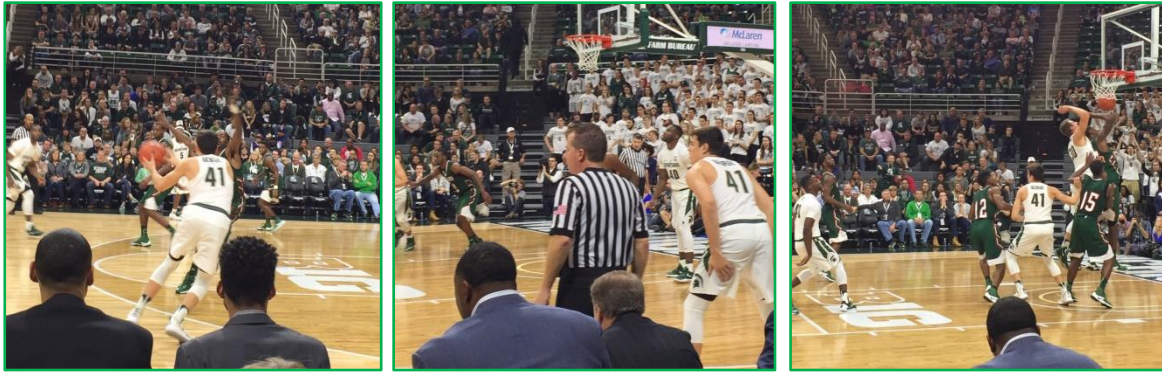


### Conner George and Teammates Celebrate Tum's Game Tying Basket

On November 18, the Spartans beat **Mississippi Valley State**, 100-53. This was the Spartans first non-conference regular season win of the season after starting the regular season with two away losses to #10 **Arizona** and #2 **Kentucky** – and provided George (41) some early season playing time.



### George (41) Enters Mississippi Valley State Game



**George (41) in Action against Mississippi Valley State**



**Conner George (41) passes the ball during the game against the Youngstown State Penguins at the Breslin Center on December 6, 2016**



**Connor George (left) cheers on his teammates during their home game with Oakland on Dec.21, 2016 (Photo: Kevin W. Fowler for the *Lansing State Journal*)**





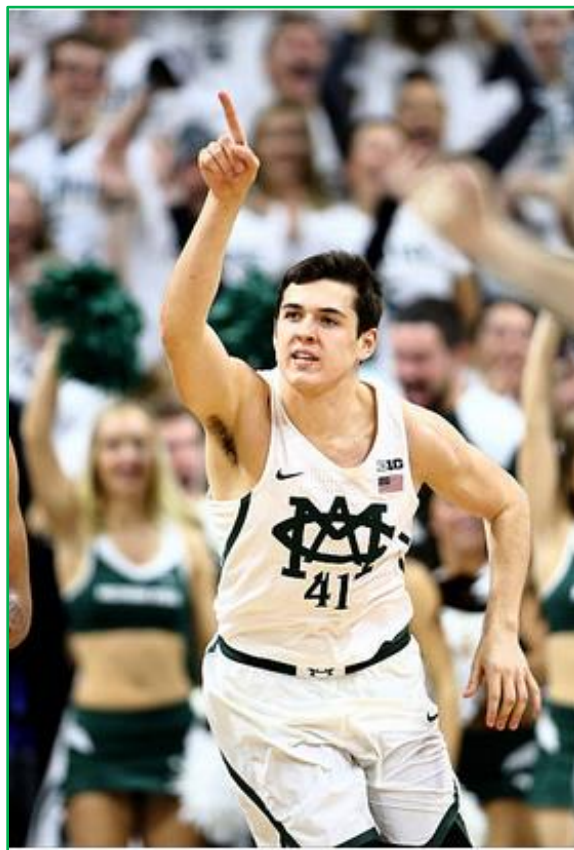
**Conner George and Eron Harris Celebrating Spartans 75-74 Overtime Win Against Minnesota (December 27, 2016)**



**Michigan State redshirt freshman Conner George makes layup against Minnesota (January 11, 2017)**



**Georges layup against Minnesota (January 11, 2017)**



**Conner George (41) reacts after scoring a basket at the Breslin Center (January 11, 2017)**

On January 25, [TheBlackSheepOnline.com](http://TheBlackSheepOnline.com), an online site specializing in university-related “[funny](#)” but “fake news” reports, featured the following report on Conner George.



## **Conner George & Greg Roy Form IM Basketball Team, Hoping to Get Playing Time**

Ben Lewis, Michigan State • January 25, 2017

With the Big Ten basketball season in full swing, Spartan fans are tuning in to see if Izzo’s squad can rise to the challenge and bring glory back to East Lansing. While big games provide notoriety and experience for players like Miles Bridges, Nick Ward, and Eron Harris, they also cause deep bench players to be more or less forgotten. To combat this lack of exposure, bench players Conner George and Greg Roy decided to form an intramural team to hone their skills.

“I’m completely at peace with my role on the team and love watching the other boys do their thing, but I still want to ball every once in a while,” said Roy. “Conner feels the same way, so we decided to figure out a way to get back on the court, and an IM team felt like the best option.”

The two players got to work building a team by spending 12 hours inside IM West and East scouting the most promising prospects, and eventually found eight other players willing to join their team, “The Beaumont Boyz.” After finding the personnel, a janitor willing to be coach, and declaring themselves captains, the team was ready for competition.

“I’m excited to finally get my chance to shine as a collegiate athlete,” said George, displaying a team logo that he created with Microsoft Paint. “I love being a part of the real team, and playing for Izzo is truly a dream come true, but I feel like a Division 3 IM team will be great place for Greg and I to truly stand out and build our brands as potential superstars.”

George and Roy hope that winning an IM championship might convince Izzo to give them more playing time in the big leagues. The duo originally planned to play in the slightly more competitive Division 2, but ultimately grew fearful after hearing rumors about a guy named Jeff who could dunk.



"I think this is going to be a great thing for their development as players," said head basketball coach Tom Izzo. "They're both great guys with tremendous heart and potential, but unfortunately, they just don't have much of an on-court role for our team at the moment. I'm excited to see what they do."

When asked whether an IM basketball championship would be enough to secure more playing time for Roy and George, Izzo started laughing uncontrollably and walked away.

"Hahahahahaha, ha!" He told the press.

As IM season gets fully underway, Roy and George are ready to finally make their mark on the basketball world. As of press time, The Beaumont Boyz lost their first game by 34 points to a team comprised entirely of engineering majors, and their janitor coach has decided to "reevaluate" their role on the team after a combined two points from the duo ([Source](#)).

A month later on March 9, the 2017 Big Ten Tournament was held for the first time in Washington, DC, and George, this time, was back in the headlines and back on the court for real when he subbed into the Spartans game against **Penn State**. With a 20+ point lead over the Nittany Lions and two minutes remaining, Coach Izzo put George into the game. *LSJ's* Graham Crouch reported as follows:

It might be a while before Conner George has such a good look at scoring six points in a Michigan State basketball game.

The redshirt freshman walk-on guard from Okemos played the final two minutes of MSU's 78-51 Big Ten tournament win over **Penn State** Thursday in Washington, D.C. He scored four points. And could have had six.

George was fouled driving to the basket with 14 seconds left. After Penn State's Josh Reaves committed the initial foul, Lamar Stevens and Tony Carr were both whistled for technical fouls, resulting in four more free throws. George took all six.



"I realized I was going to the free-throw line. I took two steps and I heard someone say something and the ref T'd him up and I heard someone else say something and the ref T'd him up, and there were six free throws to be had," George said. "(Tom) Izzo looked at me

and said, 'Are you going to make them?' I said, 'Yeah.' Unfortunately I missed two of them." [On the first four attempts, George missed the first and the fourth.]

George punched the ball at one point in frustration, leading Izzo to snap, "Take your damn time and make the free throws." He made the last two.

"I had a feeling I might go in (the game), but to shoot six free throws is something crazy," George said. ... ([Lansing State Journal](#))

Making four of his six free throws, George put an exclamation point on the Spartans 78-51 victory over **Penn State**, thereby avenging the Spartans' January 7, 2017 loss (72-63) to the Nittany Lions at the Palestra in Philadelphia.



### **Conner George on Shooting Six Straight Free Throws**

Did Conner set a record? Perhaps not quite as he "missed it by that much" of tying a possible record as a similar situation occurred to another Spartan basketball player a little over 23 years before on January 8, 1994 as recounted in the box below.

***Basketball—January 8, 1994 (H):*** Michigan State upset number 21 Illinois, 79-74, for their first conference win of the young season. The game came down to the final 2:38 with MSU leading 67-66 and Shawn Respert at the free-throw line for two shots emanating from an intentional foul. The Illini coach, Lou Henson, protested vehemently, claiming that the less accurate Anthony "Pig" Miller should be at line, not the more accurate Respert. The coach's complaint became so heated that he was charged with one technical foul, followed by a second technical and an automatic game ejection. As it turned out, Henson had a legitimate "beef." As Respert would later confess:

"I think the refs just got caught up in the confusion. Anthony was the one that was fouled, but I went to the line, figuring it couldn't hurt. All they could do was take me off and put Anthony up there."

The result was six foul shots for Shawn. He sank five, providing State a 72-66 lead. The visitors never recovered.

**Source: Jack Seibold's *Spartan Sports Encyclopedia: A History of the Michigan State Men's Athletic Program***

However, the win for the Spartans was special to my son Shannon, grandson Braden, and me (see photo below) as all three of us were at the game. Always hoping that a former Chieftain would get a chance to get into a game, I was happy when Conner George did and had the opportunity to shoot six straight free throws – making not only four but also for a very happy day for three Spartan fans from Reston, Virginia.



### Three Generations of the Byrnes Enjoying Spartan Victory over Penn State

The Spartans regular season ended 18-13 and 10-8 in the Big Ten (tied for fifth place). Due to tiebreakers, the Spartans were seeded No. 5 in the Big Ten Tournament. After a blowout 78-51 win over **Penn State** (who had beaten the Spartans during the regular season), the Spartans lost, 58-63, to **Minnesota** (who the Spartans had beaten twice during the season).

But George would play in one more game that season. With 42 seconds remaining in the Spartans first game of the 2017 NCCA Tournament, and holding a commanding 78-58 lead over the **Miami Hurricanes**, George (#41) entered the game. While he never got to touch the ball, he's in the record book as having participated in the game where his four freshman teammates made March Madness history when they set an NCAA tournament record by scoring a combined total of 57, the most points a team's freshmen have scored in the tournament: Nick Ward (19 points); Miles Bridges (18 points); Josh Langford (13 points); and Cassius Winston (17 points) ([Source](#)). But just as quickly as the Spartans defeated the Hurricanes 78-58, the Spartans fell a few days later, 90-70, to #1 seed **Kansas**.

### Laurels

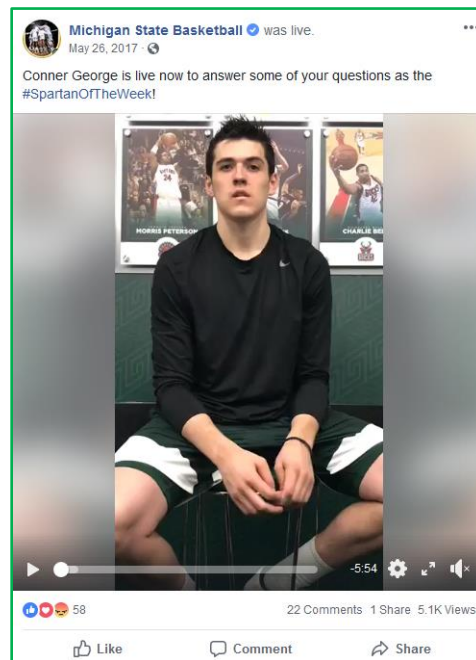
While not playing in the season-ending game, George appeared in 10 games, seeing his first action in the pre-season Green and White game. He scored his first career points on a layup vs. **Minnesota** (1/11) (see earlier video) and a week later grabbed two rebounds vs. **Mississippi Valley State**. He played in the Big Ten Tournament game (against **Penn State**) and a NCAA Tournament game (against **Miami**).



George nailed one basket during the regular season and made four of six free throws during the **Penn State** game, these six points his career high as of the end of the 2016-17 season. Overall, George averaged 0.6 points in 1.2 minutes.

## Laurels

George was the recipient of MSU's Tim Bograkovs Walk-On Award. George finished the season as one of three Spartans that achieved Academic All-Big Ten Honors.



## Spartan of the Week



Interview: <https://www.facebook.com/search/str/conner+george/stories-keyword/stories-public>



## Spartans Kyle Ahrens, Conner George, and Matt McQuaid Speaking at Okemos High Summer Camp (June 30, 2017)

### Looking Back

As of late 2016, George was in the midst of his redshirt freshman season (2016-2017), with his redshirt season (2015-2016) under his belt, and working hard to earn minutes off the bench and on the court. While it was yet early to look back on George's career as a Spartan, his personal story was already beginning to prove what a once Chieftain – like Chieftains before him – might achieve with hard work. Ryan Smith (MSU Athletic Communications Staff Assistant) told Conner's story in a 12/21/16 [article](#), excerpts from which are shared below.

Coming out of high school, [Conner George](#) faced the decision of being a star athlete with guaranteed playing time at a Division II school, or reaching for the stars and chasing his dream of playing for Michigan State.

Growing up just down the road from the Breslin Center in Okemos, Michigan, George recalls his days of watching former Michigan State standout [Paul Davis](#), amazed with his size and ability to score. With his mom being the newly appointed head volleyball coach at MSU, a young [Conner George](#) grew up witnessing the culture of Michigan State athletics, something he says opened his eyes to being on the big stage.

Unsure of what his future held towards the end of his high school career, George had a sit-down meeting with [Tom Izzo](#) to discuss his options. It didn't take long for the Hall of Fame coach to convince him to embrace the challenge.

"He was just talking to me about the team, the players, and what my situation would be with redshirting my first year and seeing what would happen after that," said George. "He mentioned how it has worked in the past and how many key walk-ons he has had through the years. Right there, he said he would love to have me and that is pretty much it and it wasn't too long of a decision after that."



In his first season on campus, George redshirted to save a year of eligibility and work on his strength and conditioning, all while continuing to elevate his game. Now, with a year in the program under his belt, George has gained 20 pounds and is feeling confident about his on-court progression, something [Tom Izzo](#) recognized at media day prior to the start of the season.

“If the rest of our guys changed as much in a year as [Conner George](#) has,” said Izzo. “He changed his body, his body fat. His shooting was always good, but the progression in his ball skills. I take my hat off to this kid. He’s really made incredible progress in a year.”

In the same way he has worked on his game since setting foot on campus, George used that same drive to get him to Michigan State in the first place.

“In high school, I just spent countless hours getting shots up, because that is a big part of my game,” said George. “I was trying to get as many reps in the gym when other people weren’t out there or they were sleeping. I wanted to be in the gym getting my shots up. I wanted to be working harder than anyone else because I knew I wasn’t as athletic as other people. I had to do it by passion and will and out-working people if I wanted to do it. That is what got me to today and that is what has guided my basketball success.”

Stepping on the court with something to prove isn’t new to George, but it all fueled the fire for his desire to be the best player he could be.

“When I was in high school, I wasn’t initially starting and that made me mad,” said George. “That was my ticker. I knew I wanted to play basketball and be serious about the sport. Really, I remember that to this day and still give my coach a hard time about it. He ended up being the guy I spent time in the gym with and he really helped me throughout my whole high school career. That was the biggest obstacle for me. After that, I started, but it was tough sitting at first and I wanted to change that.”



The work paid off, and as his game got better, he filled into his body. Going into his junior year of high school, George grew six inches from 5'8" to 6'3" and the possibility of playing at the next level started to become a reality. By the time he was a senior at Okemos High School, he was averaging 23 points and 10.5 rebounds per game on his way to becoming an All-State selection.

George joins the list of Okemos High alumni to walk-on at Michigan State with the likes of [Anthony Ianni](#), [Dan Chapman](#) and [Mike Kebler](#). He also hopes to add his name to the ever-growing list of impactful walk-ons to play for Michigan State.

"This is one of the best programs in the country, so going up against these guys every day is a challenge and is helping me as a player to get better. Coaches let you know when you are doing stuff right, so it gives you confidence. I think being in the program builds you into a good player and that's why so many walk-ons have had success here. Playing up against these guys every day is a huge advantage because by the time my junior year rolls around, that will be my fourth year. If you just do your job, you can play."

George saw his first career action for his hometown team against **Mississippi Valley State** earlier this season and grabbed two rebounds in two minutes. While it is just the beginning for him, he has four years to continue playing the game he loves while wearing the jersey he once could only dream of sporting. . . .

"It is amazing getting to put a Michigan State uniform on. There are a lot of people that care about MSU with such an invested fan base. This is a big-time program with a lot of people surrounding it and watching it and wanting them to succeed. People are all about this program and it is cool to be a part of that." ([Source](#))

Over the summer of 2017, George participate in the Moneyball Pro-Am games.



**Matt McQuaid (right) shoots against Conner George in Moneyball Pro-Am game, June 29, 2017, in Dimondale, Michigan. (Al Goldis/For the Lansing State Journal)**

## 2017-18

At the end of the George's redshirt freshman season (2016-17), he had three years of eligibility remaining, with the prospect of earning more playing time during his redshirt sophomore season (2017-2018). That prospect grew brighter when, a month or so before the start of practice for the season, Conner learned the Spartans had assigned the last remaining scholarship to him.



**First Day of Practice**

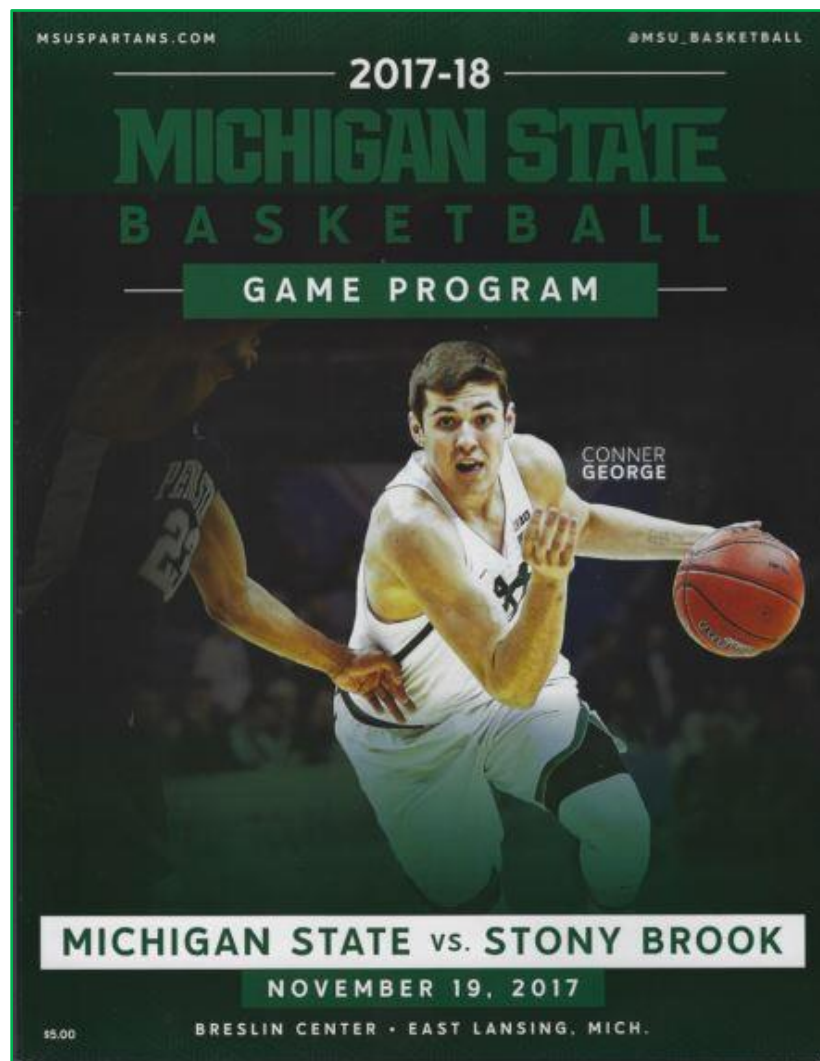
Pos.	#	Name	Height	Weight	Year
G	0	Kyle Ahrens	6 ft 5 in (1.96 m)	215 lb (98 kg)	Jr
F	22	Miles Bridges (C)	6 ft 7 in (2.01 m)	230 lb (104 kg)	So
F/C	40	Braden Burke (W)	6 ft 11 in (2.11 m)	220 lb (100 kg)	So
F	13	Ben Carter	6 ft 9 in (2.06 m)	225 lb (102 kg)	GS
G	41	Connor George	6 ft 3 in (1.91 m)	200 lb (91 kg)	RS Fr
F	25	Kenny Goins	6 ft 6 in (1.98 m)	230 lb (104 kg)	RS Jr
G	10	Jack Hoiberg (W)	5 ft 9 in (1.75 m)	175 lb (79 kg)	Fr
C	2	Jaren Jackson Jr.	6 ft 11 in (2.11 m)	225 lb (102 kg)	Fr
G	1	Joshua Langford	6 ft 5 in (1.96 m)	210 lb (95 kg)	So
F	20	Matt McQuaid	6 ft 5 in (1.96 m)	200 lb (91 kg)	Jr
G	11	Lourawls Nairn, Jr. (C)	5 ft 10 in (1.78 m)	175 lb (79 kg)	Sr
F	34	Gavin Schilling	6 ft 9 in (2.06 m)	240 lb (109 kg)	RS Sr
C	23	Xavier Tillman	6 ft 9 in (2.06 m)	250 lb (113 kg)	Fr
F	44	Nick Ward	6 ft 8 in (2.03 m)	250 lb (113 kg)	So
G	14	Brock Washington (W)	6 ft 4 in (1.93 m)	175 lb (79 kg)	Fr
G	5	Cassius Winston	6 ft 1 in (1.85 m)	185 lb (84 kg)	So

## 2017-18 Michigan State Spartans Men's Basketball Team



### George (Front Left) Watching McQuaid Doing Pull Ups in the Weight Room

George's profile rose a bit more early in the 2017-18 season when it was his turn, on November 19, 2017, to be featured on the cover of the *Michigan State Basketball Game Program* for the Spartans match against **Stony Brook**.





The program also included a “Getting To Know...Conner George” page (see next page).

## GETTING TO KNOW...

### CONNER GEORGE



<b>MAJOR</b> Communications	<b>HOBBY</b> Playing video games	<b>FAVORITE SUMMER VACATION</b> Lake house
<b>FAVORITE MEAL</b> Hamburgers	<b>FAVORITE TEAM</b> Detroit Pistons	<b>I'M UNBEATABLE AT/IN</b> Ping Pong/Fifa
<b>FAVORITE DESSERT</b> Cheesecake	<b>FAVORITE CURRENT ATHLETE</b> Draymond Green	<b>I DON'T GO ANYWHERE WITH- OUT...</b> My phone
<b>FAVORITE BAND</b> Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band	<b>MY NICKNAME IS</b> Big Poppa/C.G.	<b>BIGGEST SPORTS THRILL...</b> March
<b>SPORTS HERO</b> Derek Jeter	<b>WHAT MOM COOKS BEST</b> Steak & salmon	<b>CELEBRITY I MET...</b> Floyd Mayweather

Just one game later, against **DePaul** on Thanksgiving Day (11/23/17), George showed that he well deserved the scholarship award. With four Spartans in foul trouble (Nick Ward, Cassius Winston, and Matt McQuaid - three fouls each, and Joshua Langford with four fouls), Coach Izzo put George in the game. Coach's decision soon translated into these Lansing *State Journal* and *Detroit News* accounts of the game.

## Conner George's inspired play gives MSU lift in DePaul win

### Conner George's big night for Michigan State vs. DePaul doesn't need exaggeration

Graham Couch, *Lansing State Journal* Published 5:58 a.m. ET Nov. 24, 2017 | Updated 5:21 p.m. ET Nov. 24, 2017

PORTLAND, Ore. – The idea that Conner George saved Michigan State's basketball team Thursday night against DePaul is, to put it mildly, overstated.

But he did matter. And to actually matter in an MSU basketball game of consequence is no small thing for a walk-on from Okemos known mostly for being his mother's son. This was, without need for exaggeration, a monumental night in George's life and basketball career.

To matter on the court when the game is in doubt, to be in the playing rotation, at MSU, that's something. That's different than playing the final two minutes of a blowout home game and trying to get a bucket to the delight of the student section. Way different.

George played it cool after MSU's 73-51 win over DePaul late Thursday night at the PK80 Invitational. He behaved like one of the guys, like any other MSU player being interviewed in the locker room after a game. Because, for the first time, he was any other player.

I think, inside, he was jumping out of his skin with excitement.

"At the end of the game (in mop-up duty), you've still got the adrenaline," George said, "but the first real time that you go in and it's a tie game in a big game versus DePaul, we're on the ropes ... "I just knew I needed to be solid."

For every player, there is a different definition of solid. For George, this was it: Seven rebounds, five of them offensive, two points, one steal and a plus-10 point differential in a whopping 16 minutes, partly in place of injured star Miles Bridges.

"Ho, oh, that was way more (than I hoped for)," MSU coach Tom Izzo said of George's performance.

"Give him credit. He got every loose ball and made a helluva..... drive there, didn't turn the ball over and played pretty good defense. He gave us as much ..."

I think Izzo was going to say "as he's possibly capable of," or something like it, but Izzo changed course midstream, as he often does, perhaps not wanting to convey entirely how surprised he was or George's limitations as a player.

"As Miles said (in the locker room), (George) saved us," Izzo continued. "He said, 'He saved me. And saved us.' I kind of would have to agree with that."

George did not do that. But he was an important part of the collective response.

The 6-foot-3 redshirt sophomore entered the game for the second time with the Spartans trailing 24-20 and facing severe foul trouble with 5 minutes left in the first half. MSU needed

quality minutes. He provided them, playing through a 9-2 run that became a 31-31 game at the half.

"He knew his role was just to bring energy," MSU point guard Cassius Winston said. "His role wasn't going to be no bigger than that. We didn't need him to go out there and score or anything like that. We just needed him to sop up some minutes, get some dudes some breaks so they won't get into foul trouble and play his hardest. He went out there and played his heart out."

George's Dennis Rodman-like rebounding numbers came after halftime. He checked in as the Spartans were beginning to seize control, ahead 48-37, and grabbed three offensive rebounds in the first 70 seconds he was on the court. He much later had a sweeping layup over defenders, but that shot came in the final minutes, with the game long since decided. Essentially mop-up duty. It's just that he was already in the game this time.

"He's got guts, and he knows his role, and he played his role," MSU assistant coach Mike Garland said of George, whose mother, Cathy, is MSU's long-time volleyball coach. "I told him, 'You've been watching Spartans play probably since you were 6 years old, so you know what to do.'"

"It's par for the course with what Tom has built here," Garland continued. "Guys just, it's a culture. Guys come in, and they do their part, and they hustle, and they play hard, and they change the whole game. (He) changed the whole game entirely. And, you know, he can shoot the ball. He didn't take a shot because he's not in game rhythm yet. If we get him few more minutes each game, he'll start knocking some 3s down, too. Because he's one of our better shooters."

George did change the game. He gave it "a lot of life, a lot of energy," as Winston said. He put some fight into the Spartans.

"When I walked on here, obviously my goal was to play at some point and help this team out no matter what," said George, who was put on scholarship for this year because the Spartans had one available. "First things first, I knew I was going to be on the scout team. I just was patient. I'm not saying I'm going to get significant minutes tomorrow or the rest of the year. But I'll be ready to go. This is what I came here for."

He'll have a spot in the rotation at least as long as Bridges is out. After that, given injuries to Kyle Ahrens and Kenny Goins and the Spartans' lack of backcourt depth, he might find his way into a few meaningful minutes anyway. It's a lot more likely after Thursday.

"Now Coach (Izzo) won't be afraid to stick him in there," Garland said. "He's going to help us. He was guarding. He did what he needed to do. We needed rebounding. We needed defense. We needed hustle plays. He changed the game."



X



**Conner George battles for a rebound with DePaul's Tre'Darius McCallum during the first half of MSU's win Thursday at the PK80 Invite in Portland Oregon. George finished with seven rebounds in 16 minutes. (Troy Wayrynen / AP)**



[Matt Charboneau](#) (*The Detroit News*) also reported on George's play against **DePaul**.

*Portland, Ore.* — Conner George saved Michigan State [late Thursday night in a win over DePaul](#). At least, that's the way Miles Bridges saw things.

Michigan State's star sophomore was on the bench with an ankle injury for the opening game of the PK80 Invitational at the Moda Center and, along with a knee injury to junior Kenny Goins, the Spartans were a little thin.

Enter George, the former walk-on who was awarded a scholarship this season. Before Thursday, the sophomore was best known as the son of Michigan State volleyball coach Cathy George who is a crowd favorite at the Breslin Center when he gets in late in one-sided games.

"Give him credit, he got every loose ball and made a helluva drive there, didn't turn the ball over and played pretty good defense," Michigan State coach Tom Izzo said. "As Miles said (after the game), he saved us. He said, 'He saved me. And saved us.' I kind of would have to agree with that."

The numbers for George wouldn't jump off the page to the average fan. But for those that follow the Spartans, they were impressive.

George finished with a career-best seven rebounds, including five on the offensive end as Michigan State pulled away in the second half. He also played 16 minutes, by far a career high. He scored two points on a late drive, too, though it was the spark he gave on the glass that stood out.

"Just trying to bring energy, attack the glass any way possible," George said of his approach. "Just get rebounds and create a spark for our team because when I went in it was 31-31. Those are big moments in the game and I was just trying to spark something for our team."

It's clear George got his shot because of the injuries the Spartans are facing. Junior Kyle Ahrens (foot) is also out and could miss the season, which leaves open the door for George to remain on the edge of the rotation.

For now, with Bridges' status uncertain and Goins still out, he's trying to make the most of his opportunity.

"It was a different experience, one I've never had before," George said. "The coaches told me (I would play) earlier in the day and in the week once Miles went down so I was ready for it. I talked with Miles and Gavin (Schilling) on the bench and they got me mentally ready."

And they were there to congratulate their teammate when he made a difference on the court.

"They were just happy for me," George said. "Obviously, I don't play as much so they were just excited to see me out there and contributing to the team. I'm just going to be ready if this happens again. I'm glad it happened today so it's off my chest and we can continue to go from there."

Below are video captures of George's big night contributing to the Spartans win over **DePaul** (images captured during a recording of the DePaul game).



**Miles Bridges Has Got Conner George's Back**



**Conner George at Foul Line to Shoot a Free Throw**



**Conner George Controlling the Ball as the Game Clock Ticks Down**





**Conner Cheers from Bench vs DePaul**

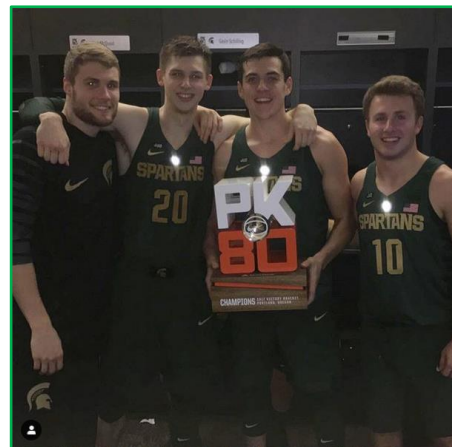
On November 26, the Spartans defeated #9-ranked **North Carolina**, 63-45 in the final game of the Victory Bracket at the PK80-Phil Knight Invitational.



**North Carolina forward Luke Made (32) shoots over Michigan State's Conner George (41) in the championship game of the Victory Bracket at the PK80-Phil Knight Invitational (November 26, 2017)**



**North Carolina guard Joel Berry II (2) puts up a shot against Michigan State guard Conner George (41) in the championship game of the Victory Bracket at the PK80-Phil Knight Invitational at Moda Center in Portland, Oregon (November 26, 2017)**



**Conner & Team Receive PK80 Trophy**

On December 3, the Spartans hosted **Nebraska**. With 0:27.3 left in the game (see photo below), George scored the evening's final basket to give the Spartans an 86-57 win.



**Conner George (41) puts up a shot against Nebraska's Tanner Borchardt, right, and Nana Akenten (Al Goldis, For the Lansing State Journal)**



**Conner George vs. Nebraska – He Made It! – MSU Wins 86-57 (Dec. 3, 2017)**



On December 16, the Spartans defeated **Oakland**, 86-73, in game two of the Hitachi College Basketball Showcase at Little Caesars Arena in Detroit, Michigan, a game in which George played.



**Kendrick Nunn #1 of the Oakland Golden Grizzlies drives to the basket against Conner George (41) and Nick Ward (44)**

On December 18, 2017, the Spartans downed **Houston Baptist**, 107-62, George, on the bench (see top photo on next page), intently followed Coach Izzo giving Cassius Winston some game pointers.



**Coach Izzo Mentors Cassius Winston (5) & Conner George during Houston Baptist University Game (December 18, 2017)**



**Conner George (41) drives to the basket while playing the Houston Baptist Huskies at the Breslin Student (December 18, 2017)**

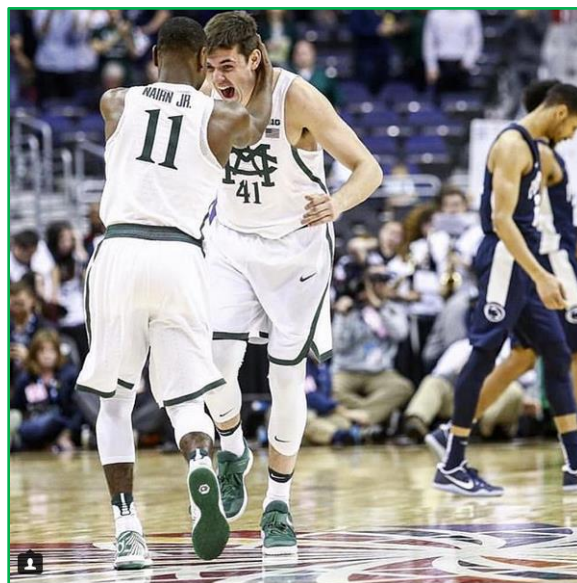
On December 21, against **Long Beach State** and with just over a half minute remaining in the game and the Spartans fast breaking down the court, Gavin Schilling (click on first image below for You Tube video) threw a no-look pass to George who scored on a layup, upping the game's final score to 102-60 in the Spartans favor.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLY8S9jMPyk>



**Conner George (41) battle for position against LaRond Williams (22) of the Long Beach State 49ers at the Breslin Center (December 21, 2017)**



**George (41) and Nairn Jr. (11) Celebrate 76-68 Victory over Penn State (1/31/18)**

Later that season, prior to the Iowa game in early February of 2018, it was reported that George had suffered a temporary setback when he injured his tailbone, an injury he took in stride as reported by [theblacksheeponline.com](http://theblacksheeponline.com):





MICHIGAN STATE

### Conner George Out With Bruised Tailbone From Sitting on Bench for Too Long

Conner George was spotted on the Michigan State bench sitting softly on a cushion during the Iowa basketball game. When confronting Conner about the current condition of his butt cheeks, he told *The Black Sheep* that his tailbone was actually severely bruised.

"Sitting for too long isn't great for your butt," Conner George tells *The Black Sheep* while adjusting his icepack onto his upper left butt cheek. George stares at the chair he typically sits in during the game, his butt imprint very evident. "My ass can take a lot of things, but apparently not that chair."

Conner will be out for approximately 4 weeks. Whether or not this changes anything with the team's normal routine we will leave up for interpretation. *The Black Sheep* decided to get a more professional opinion on the matter after catching Conner silently chuckling to himself while looking at pictures of his X-rayed butt.

"My team is built for strength. Sometimes I have the players that don't get too much playing time practice standing up and sitting down from the bench to strengthen their glutes," Tom Izzo explains to *The Black Sheep*. "I don't want anyone pulling a muscle on or off of the bench."

Others in the program agreed.

"The man is trying his best," says Miles Bridges with a bouquet of flowers and a teddy bear in hand. "Oh, this? It's just a little something to raise his spirits. I always have this man's back, and now I have his butt." Miles squinted and looked to the upper right, appearing to replay what he just said in his head.

Later in 2018, while interviewing George at the MSU Student Union on November 13, Conner mentioned a couple of things not factually correct in the draft George vignette I had shared with him prior to the interview. First, referring to [theblacksheeponline.com](http://theblacksheeponline.com) article, Conner said: "That never happened. I didn't have a bruised tailbone!" He added that Miles Bridges had never said the quote attributed to him. Nor, for that matter, had Izzo quipped that he didn't want any of his players to pull "a muscle on or off of the bench." Further research turned up that, indeed, *The Black Sheep Online* is, in effect, a "fake news" publication that specializes, like *The Onion*, in publishing satirical or humorous articles. In effect, Conner had figuratively been made the butt of a joke!



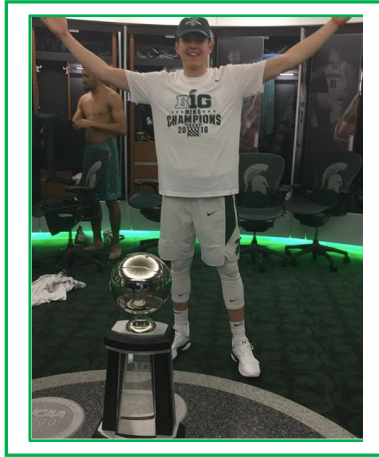
**George (front center) & Spartans celebrate after 63-60 win over Wisconsin in Big Ten Conference tournament Quarterfinal Game at Madison Square Garden (March 2, 2018)**



**2017-18 Spartan Locker Room (Conner George #41 – 7<sup>th</sup> from the right)**

During the 2017-18 season, George played in 16 games compared with only 10 games during the 2016-17 season, his minutes played per game increasing to 3.4 (compared with 1.2 the prior season). He scored three two-point field goals on seven attempts for an average of .429. Compared with 3 rebounds during the 2016-17 season, George hauled in 18 rebounds during the season ([Source](#)).

With a win over **Illinois** on February 20, 2018, the Spartans secured a share of the Big Ten title, their first regular season title since 2012. It marked the Spartans eighth regular season title under Izzo. The Spartans finished the season 30–5, 16–2 in Big Ten play to win the regular season championship.



**Conner George Celebrating  
with Regular Season Big Ten  
Championship Trophy**

### ***Big Ten Tournament***

As No. 1 seed in the Big Ten Tournament, MSU beat **Wisconsin** in the quarterfinals before losing to **Michigan** in the semifinals.

### ***NCAA Tournament***

Michigan State received a bid to the NCAA Tournament, their 21st consecutive trip under Izzo, as the No. 3 seed in the Midwest region. The Spartans defeated No. 14 **Bucknell** in the First Round before losing to No. 11-seeded **Syracuse** in the Second Round. The Spartans' 16 Big Ten wins marked a school record and the 30 overall wins was only the fourth time in school history the Spartans had won at least 30 games (all under Izzo) ([Source](#)).




**2017-18 Spartan Men's Basketball Squad (#41 Conner George)**





Photos of Conner George in Breslin Center Displays (Nov. 29, 2017)

## Season Stats

 <b>41 CONNER GEORGE G</b> MICHIGAN STATE SPARTANS	KEY STATS						
	GP	MIN/G	PPG	REB/G	AST/G	FG %	
	16	3.4	0.4	1.1	0.0	20	

GAME LOG														
NOVEMBER 2017														
DATE	OPPONENT	RESULT	MIN	FG	3PT	FT	OREB	DREB	TOT	AST	PF	BLK	STL	PTS
11/10	vs. North Florida	W 98-66	3	0-1	0-1	0-0	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	0
11/19	vs. Stony Brook	W 93-71	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11/23	at DePaul	W 73-51	16	1-2	0-0	0-2	5	2	7	0	2	0	1	2
11/26	vs. North Carolina	W 63-45	6	0-1	0-1	0-0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
DECEMBER 2017														
DATE	OPPONENT	RESULT	MIN	FG	3PT	FT	OREB	DREB	TOT	AST	PF	BLK	STL	PTS
12/03	vs. Nebraska	W 86-57	3	1-2	0-1	0-0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	2
12/09	vs. Southern Utah	W 88-63	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
12/16	at Oakland	W 86-73	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
12/18	vs. Houston Baptist	W 107-62	3	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12/21	vs. Long Beach State	W 102-60	4	1-2	0-1	0-0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
12/29	vs. Cleveland State	W 111-61	4	0-0	0-0	0-0	1	2	3	0	0	0	0	1
12/31	vs. Savannah State	W 108-52	3	0-2	0-1	0-0	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	0
JANUARY 2018														
DATE	OPPONENT	RESULT	MIN	FG	3PT	FT	OREB	DREB	TOT	AST	PF	BLK	STL	PTS
01/04	vs. Maryland	W 91-61	3	0-1	0-1	0-0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
01/19	vs. Indiana	W 85-57	2	0-2	0-1	0-0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
01/26	vs. Wisconsin	W 76-61	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FEBRUARY 2018														
DATE	OPPONENT	RESULT	MIN	FG	3PT	FT	OREB	DREB	TOT	AST	PF	BLK	STL	PTS
02/13	at Minnesota	W 87-57	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
02/20	vs. Illinois	W 81-61	1	0-1	0-1	0-0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

## 2017-2018 Game Log for Conner George

**Note:** This Conner George chapter (14-1) continues in Chapter 14-2 which covers Conner's redshirt junior season (2018-2019) as a Michigan State Spartan.