

Michigan State Defeats Indiana State for N.C.A.A. Title

Johnson's Magic Leads 75-64 Victory — Bird Held to 19

By GORDON S. WHITE Jr.

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SALT LAKE CITY, March 26 — Michigan State grounded The Bird with a touch of Magic and a magnificent zone defense tonight to win its first National Collegiate basketball championship and end Indiana State's chance to achieve an unbeaten season.

Despite a heavy load of personal fouls that created serious problems down the stretch, the Spartans held fast to an early lead and beat the Sycamores, 75-64, in the final of the 41st National Collegiate Athletic Association tournament before 15,410 persons in the Special Events Center of the University of Utah. The loss was the only one for Indiana State in 34 games this season. Michigan State finished with a 26-6 record.

Earvin (Magic) Johnson, who played the entire second half with three personal fouls, was his usual spectacular self, scoring 24 points for the winners. Larry Bird, the big man for Indiana State with a three-year career average of more than 30 points a game, was kept to only 19 points, his lowest scoring game in five N.C.A.A. tournament contests.

As a result, Indiana State, the eighth undefeated team to reach the final, became only the second of them to lose in the championship game. Ohio State was the first when the Buckeyes were losers to Cincinnati in 1961.

Big Week for Big Ten

Michigan State had been to three previous N.C.A.A. tournaments and only one previous Final Four, a semifinal loss to North Carolina in 1957. With tonight's victory, the Spartans gave the Big Ten Conference a sweep of the two major post-season college tourneys. Indiana won the National Invitation Tournament last Wednesday.

Jud Heathcote, who concluded his third season as head coach of Michigan State, summed up the Spartans' achievements well after the title was his. "I feel a combination of relief and elation," he said. "The players have

accomplished so much. And they saved their best play for the tournament."

Led by Johnson, Greg Kelsner and Terry Donnelly, the Spartans swept through five tournament games after gaining a third of the Big Ten crown with Iowa and Purdue. On the road to the N.C.A.A. title, the Spartans beat Lamar by 31 points, Louisiana State by 16, Notre Dame by 12, Pennsylvania by 34 and then the No. 1 ranked team in the nation, Indiana State, by 11.

No Losses in Tourney

In winning the title, Michigan State became only the second team to do so with as many as six losses for the season. Kentucky did it with six losses in 1958 and Marquette with seven in 1977.

But there was no beating the Michigan State defense during this tournament and there was little any team could do to stop the fast offense triggered by the magic of Johnson's passing.

This defense stopped Bird after no other team could do so in this tourney. The 6-9 senior had scored 22, 29, 31 and 35 points in his four previous tourney games. What's more, Michigan State closed down the Indiana State passing lanes, and held Bird to only two assists.

"We defended him with an adjustment and a prayer", Heathcote said.

But while Heathcote was praying on the bench, Johnson, Kelsner, Ron Charles and Jay Vincent shared the work of defending inside at the baseline. They crowded Bird like a flock of vultures every time he approached the baseline on offense. Bird's mates just could not get the ball to him very often and when they did, Bird would hesitate, something he rarely does.

Bird Only 7 for 21

A couple of times during the first half Bird got to the top of his jump and could not decide whether to shoot or pass off. This led to missed shots and missed

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United Press International and Associated Press
Johnson driving toward basket for 24 points in game Spartans won, 75-64.

Indiana State's Larry Bird, foreground, looking for a teammate from lower angle than usual after colliding with Michigan State's Earvin Johnson during the first half of N.C.A.A. championship game last night at Salt Lake City.

Mich. State Takes Title In N.C.A.A.

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passes as the Bird hit only seven of 21 field-goal attempts — 33 percent. He had hit 53 percent before tonight. The Sycamores' team percentage was 42.2, but their failure at the free-throw line, where they connected on only 10 of 22 attempts cost them.

Donnelly, the 6-2 junior guard for Michigan State, also contributed to the defense against Bird. His task was to play the Indiana State guard with the ball one-on-one in the zone and minimize his chance of passing the ball to Bird.

Donnelly also contributed 15 points, 13 in the second half.

But all of this hard defense led to trouble. Johnson and then Kelser were forced to the bench with three personal fouls before the first half ended. Vincent, who played with an injured foot all through the tournament, drew four personal fouls in only 19 minutes of play. Charles eventually fouled out.

Kelser, a senior playing his final game for the Spartans, went through the final 12 minutes with four personal fouls. He scored 19 points.

Although it was the defense that turned the tables on Indiana State, Michigan State got off to another of its spectacular offensive shows early in the game. This enabled the Spartans to go in front by 16 points in the first two minutes of the second half.

Too Much to Catch Up

After leading by 37-28 at intermission, Michigan

State did not let foul problems bother it as Kelser hit on a six-foot jumper in the lane that sent the Spartans on a string of 7 straight points.

During its unbeaten streak, Indiana State had rallied to win a number of times but never had to fight back from more than an 11-point deficit. The 16-point edge Michigan State built was just too much.

From the start, Michigan State began running points at high speed and when Donnelly hit from the right corner at 4:26 of the first half, the Spartans were in front by 9-8. Never again were they behind. That long corner shot set the Big Ten team on a 9-point string. During this surge, Bird made one bad shot missing the rim and Johnson took a rebound and made an outlet pass to Mike Brkovich, the other Spartan guard, who took it all the way for a basket and a 3-point play.

De Paul Takes Consolation

Through it all, however, Heathcote was obviously concerned about Bird. "I thought every shot the Bird took would go in," the Michigan State coach said.

Indiana State's man-to-man defense didn't appear to bother Johnson. He made one of the game's most exciting moves when he drove the baseline around Alex Gilbert only to be facing Bird, standing his ground under the basket.

Kelser was coming down the lane to Johnson's left and the Michigan State sophomore faked a pass to Kelser. Bird took the fake and moved just a bit to defend Kelser coming into the basket. Johnson kept the ball and made an easy layup.

Such spectacular play may have been Johnson's last for Michigan State. It is expected that the Lansing, Mich., athlete who stayed home to play college ball will declare hardship and be drafted into the pros for next season.

De Paul, which lost to Indiana State in the semifinal round Saturday, saved third place, beating Penn, 96-93, in overtime of the consolation game. Mark Agguire scored 34 points for De Paul and Tony Price had a career high of 31 points in his final game for the Quakers. Although they lost, the Quakers came out of the tournament with their heads high after having been embarrassed by Michigan State, 101-67, Saturday. Penn came from 23 points back to force the overtime.

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Associated Press

De Paul's Curtis Watkins, foreground, coming down with the rebound against Pennsylvania's Tom Leifsen, left, and Tim Smith during the N.C.A.A. tournament consolation game last night at Salt Lake City.