

michigan state kickers history

Michigan State kickers history is a rich and storied narrative that reflects the evolution of college football in the United States. Among the many positions on the field, kickers often stand out, not only for their specialized skill set but also for their ability to shape the outcomes of games in critical moments. Michigan State University (MSU), a prominent program in the Big Ten Conference, has seen its fair share of talented kickers who have made significant contributions to the team's success over the decades. This article will explore the history of Michigan State kickers, highlighting notable players, memorable moments, and the evolution of the position within the program.

Early Years: The Foundation of Kicking at MSU

Michigan State's football program began in the late 19th century, but the role of the kicker did not take center stage until the early 20th century. In these formative years, the kicking game was often an afterthought, with many teams using position players to handle kicking duties.

The 1950s: The Rise of Specialization

With the advent of more organized training regimens and a greater understanding of the game, the 1950s marked a turning point for kickers at Michigan State. The importance of specialized kicking began to be recognized, leading to the emergence of players focused solely on this aspect of the game.

- Notable Players:

- Bob Apisa (1956-1958): Apisa was not primarily a kicker but was known for his versatility. His contributions on special teams helped lay the groundwork for future specialists.

- Influence on the Game: The 1950s also saw the introduction of the two-point conversion, which added a new strategic layer to kicking.

The 1960s and 1970s: Establishing a Legacy

The 1960s and 1970s were significant decades for Michigan State football, with the team achieving national prominence. During this period, kickers began making a name for themselves, becoming essential components of the team's success.

Notable Kickers from the Era

- Morten Andersen (1978-1981): Often regarded as one of the greatest kickers in NFL history, Andersen's time at MSU solidified his reputation. He was known for his powerful leg and accuracy, setting records during his collegiate career.

- Jim Miller (1976-1979): Another standout kicker, Miller was instrumental in several key victories for the Spartans. His ability to handle pressure in close games earned him respect among teammates and coaches alike.

Memorable Moments

- 1974 Rose Bowl: In one of the most memorable games in MSU history, kickers played a crucial role in the Spartans' victory against the University of Southern California. The ability to score through field goals proved instrumental in their success.

The 1980s and 1990s: A New Era of Kickers

As college football evolved, so too did the role of the kicker. The 1980s and 1990s saw the rise of more specialized kickers, with teams beginning to recruit players who focused primarily on this position.

Key Players of the 80s and 90s

- John L. Williams (1981-1984): Although primarily a running back, Williams also contributed significantly in the kicking game, showcasing the versatility that characterized this period.

- Scott Greene (1990-1993): Greene gained recognition for his consistency and ability to perform in high-pressure situations, making him a reliable option for the Spartans.

Notable Achievements

- 1990 Citrus Bowl: Greene's kicking was vital in securing a victory over the University of Georgia, further establishing Michigan State's reputation as a competitive program.

The 2000s: A Decade of Change

The early 2000s brought about many changes for Michigan State football, including coaching changes and shifts in offensive strategy. The kicking game became more vital, and specialists began to receive more attention in recruiting classes.

Prominent Kickers in the 2000s

- Dave Rayner (2002-2005): Rayner became a standout kicker during his tenure at MSU, setting several school records for field goals made and scoring. His ability to perform under pressure led to a successful professional career in the NFL.
- Jason Hanson (1988-1991): Although he started his career in the late 80s, Hanson truly made his mark in the 90s and early 2000s. He became one of the most reliable kickers in NFL history, being selected in the second round of the NFL Draft.

Impact on the Program

- Increased Focus on Special Teams: The success of players like Rayner and Hanson led to a greater emphasis on special teams in recruiting and training, marking a shift in how MSU approached the kicking game.

The 2010s and Beyond: Modern Kickers at MSU

The 2010s were characterized by further advancements in training and analytics, impacting how kickers prepared for their roles. With the introduction of new technologies and training methods, kickers at MSU began to push the boundaries of what was possible.

Recent Kickers of Note

- Michael Geiger (2013-2016): Geiger gained fame for his clutch kicking, notably hitting the game-winning field goal against Ohio State in 2014. His performance in critical moments showcased the importance of a reliable kicker.
- Matt Coghlin (2016-Present): Coghlin continued the legacy of successful MSU kickers, becoming the all-time leading scorer for the Spartans. His consistency and ability to handle pressure in big games solidified his status as one of the top kickers in school history.

The Evolution of the Position

- Training Techniques: Modern kickers at MSU benefit from advanced training techniques, including biomechanics and mental conditioning, allowing them to maximize their performance.
- Increased Importance of Analytics: The use of analytics has transformed how teams approach kicking situations, leading to more strategic decisions regarding when to kick and how far.

Conclusion: The Legacy of Michigan State Kickers

The history of Michigan State kickers is a testament to the evolution of the position within college football. From the early days of the program to the modern era, kickers have played a crucial role in the Spartans' success. As the game continues to evolve, the legacy of those who have donned the green and white will undoubtedly inspire future generations of kickers at Michigan State. With each new season, there lies the promise of new talents emerging to carry on this proud tradition, contributing to the history of Michigan State kickers for years to come.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is the all-time leading scorer among kickers at Michigan State University?

The all-time leading scorer among kickers at Michigan State University is Dave Rayner, who accumulated 347 points during his career from 2000 to 2004.

What notable achievement did Michigan State kicker Michael Geiger accomplish in 2015?

In 2015, kicker Michael Geiger made the game-winning field goal against Ohio State, helping Michigan State secure a significant upset victory.

How has the role of kickers evolved in Michigan State football history?

The role of kickers at Michigan State has evolved from primarily extra point responsibilities to being key players in close games, often relied upon for long field goals and game-winning attempts.

Which Michigan State kicker was selected in the NFL Draft?

In 2005, kicker Dave Rayner was selected in the NFL Draft, being picked by the Green Bay Packers in the sixth round.

What impact did the kicking game have on Michigan State's 2013 season?

In the 2013 season, the kicking game was crucial for Michigan State, with kicker Michael Geiger making several important field goals that contributed to their Big Ten Championship victory.

Who was the first Michigan State kicker to earn All-American honors?

The first Michigan State kicker to earn All-American honors was Morten Andersen, who played for the Spartans from 1978 to 1981 and went on to have a successful NFL career.

What is the significance of the 1999 Michigan State kicking squad?

The 1999 Michigan State kicking squad is significant because it featured both a punter and a kicker, who were both recognized for their exceptional performances, setting a standard for future special teams.

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