

[sports](#) / [women's basketball](#)

MSU women's basketball falls to No. 8 Maryland in emotional game

[Bella Johnson](#)
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Sophomore guard DeeDee Hagemann wearing her Spartan Strong shirt before the start of the Maryland game on Feb.18, 2023. The Spartans would go on to lose 61-66.

— Photo by [Henry Szymecko](#) | The State News

Saturday afternoon's matchup between Michigan State and No. 8 Maryland was the first game in the Breslin Center since the devastating shooting on campus Monday night that took the lives of three Spartans and sent five students to Sparrow Hospital.

For warmups, MSU wore t-shirts with the words “Spartan Strong” written on the front, while the Terrapins wore green and orange ribbons on their warmup tops to show support for the Michigan State community—orange is the color of gun violence awareness.

Before the game, a moment of silence was taken in remembrance of

My Research Folder  1, Alexandria Verner and Brian Fraser. The silence was heavy with the weight of what had transpired just days before, and the moment had players, coaches and fans choked up.

Interim Head Women's Basketball Coach Dean Lockwood said during the post-game press conference how proud he was of his players for making the decision to play in the game against Maryland, but there was no discredit or dishonor had they chosen not to play.

“Very, very proud of their effort, very proud of their resiliency, very proud of just how they responded to the events of the past week and how they kept their unity of purpose in this game,” Lockwood said. “We all need healing, and one of the things—sport can do that and be that, so we wanted to kind of be a healing element for our community”

The pregame energy was different Saturday afternoon — understandably so — as the Spartan community is going through something that no one should ever have to go through, but when the ball was tipped, Michigan State was ready to play.

The Spartans came out swinging and managed to end the first quarter with a nice lead over the Terrapins. They were making plays defensively, forcing turnovers, and attacking the boards for rebounds, but it was redshirt junior guard [Julia Ayrault](#) who stood out on the MSU side.

Ayrault was playing better than she had all season hitting a season-high in points, blocks and three points made. The redshirt junior hit two consecutive three-pointers to make it a one-possession game by the very end of the fourth quarter, but the Spartans ultimately fell 61-66.

The performance from the Spartans all-around was impressive against the No. 8th ranked team in the country and their ability to stay in it all the way up until the end despite the devastating week had the Breslin Center pumped up through to the end.

“Everyone says like basketball is an outlet. Basketball is a distraction, but I think some things — it's bigger than that. And I think I'm really proud of us for just showing up,” Ayrault said. “I know—even like for myself, it was, it's hard. It's hard to come back and try and just play this game that seems so small in those moments, and I think we did a good job of just, you know, having each other's backs. And I mean, everybody really showed up for each other no matter what.”

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The Spartans will be back in action for senior night at the Breslin Center on Wednesday at 7 p.m. to take on Minnesota. The game will also be streaming on BTN+.

