

Imagine; your heart is pounding as you prepare for the game ahead. You're waiting to run out of a tunnel and enter the field where over 70,000 fans are watching in the stands. That's what tight end Connor Heyward, quarterback Payton Thorne, and wide receiver Jayden Reed do every game day. This year, the Michigan State Spartans had an outstanding streak in the Big 10 football tournament.

"My favorite thing about football is the team aspect and how all types of different people from all types of different backgrounds come together and all play for one common goal. And the things you learn about life and the things you learn about people through the game of football I think is something you don't really get anywhere else." This is what sophomore quarterback, Payton Thorne, says is his favorite thing about football. Payton Thorne says he's been playing football since fourth grade. "But really," he explains, "I've been playing football my whole life, one way or another." Why does he play football? "I play football for a lot of reasons. "I play football because I love it. I play football because I believe that God gave me talent and gifts, and I think that he has called me to play the game of football and to influence people through football. That's why I play." Heading into a 'game day' is a lot more work than you would realize. "Game day preparation really starts on Sunday of the previous week," Thorne states. "You work all week to get your body feeling good from the previous game. And then you also have to watch a ton of film and have good practices for your upcoming opponent. You have to study them and understand what they're going to do. That's what you focus on during the week." This season, Thorne says he would put the game against Michigan on a highlight reel because of the excitement in the game and the crowd. Now, in his sophomore year, Thorne has passed about 2618 yards this season alone! But who better to put on the receiving end than junior wide receiver, Jayden Reed.

Jayden Reed chose Michigan State because of the university's education and great fan base. "I always dreamed of playing at a school like this," he says, "with a great fan base, a great program where winning is important, and you can also get a great education. That's why I came to Michigan State." This season, Reed has 857 receiving yards and scored seven touchdowns! "My favorite part of playing this year was running out of the tunnel and seeing Spartan Nation in the stands to cheer us on." With a win-loss record of 10-2 so far this season, Reed says, "The team this year has been bonding ever since the winter. We bonded pretty well overall. I think it's become more of a brotherhood here." He too says his favorite game this season was beating Michigan and for a highlight reel, "I would put the punt returns for touchdowns from the Nebraska Game and the Western Kentucky game."

"The team aspect and the team camaraderie, getting to practice every day with my teammates, just hanging out with everyone. It's also an amazing opportunity to be able to play football in front of 75,000 fans." That's what senior tight end, Connor Heyward, said was his favorite thing about football. But, why did he choose Michigan State? "The family atmosphere," he explains, "the tradition of winning. The university can do so much for you after football." He says his top highlights for this season would be at the Nebraska and Miami game. "I would put the Nebraska play, where I caught the ball and got past a couple of defenders. Also, the block at

Miami that gave Jayden Reed a touchdown in the fourth quarter.” He states, “I would put highlights of all the other guys that have made big plays this season, from Kenneth Walker III to Payton Thorne to Jalen Nailor to Jayden Reed.” Heyward says his favorite part of playing with the team this year was winning. “We haven’t won this many games since my freshman year in 2017. To go out this way has been extremely fun. When you’re winning, everything is that much better.”

Of course, their wins wouldn’t be possible without the terrific coaching of head coach, Mel Tucker. The players referred to him as “a great coach” that brings a lot of energy to the team and “someone that knows how to coach his players and do the things to motivate the team.” Some of the younger players say they are “looking forward to the future with him.” Without a doubt, Michigan State University has had an outstanding season thanks to teamwork and excellent coaching.

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Football Season -- 2021

Players Interviewed:
Connor Heyward
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