12/04/1999 – The Wolverines' Victory Over Chattanooga

After a sluggish first half, the Wolverines came out of the blocks fast in the second half, and put away the Tennessee-Chattanooga Moccasins 72-61. Once again, a couple of the freshmen lead the way, this time LaVell Blanchard (21 points) and Kevin Gaines (16 points). Jamal Crawford chipped in 9 points, which was well below his average. He didn't have a very good game, but he did contribute.

That's one of the most encouraging things about this year's team: everyone is capable of contributing. If a couple of the players are having an "off" game, some of the others will step up the pick up the slack. There has been a different combination of "stars" for each of the games. Leon Jones started the season off hot, but has had a couple of mediocre games lately. In his absence, other players have picked up their games.

This is a talented group of freshmen, but it will take time for them to gel. Crawford needs to keep working on his shot selection. Gavin Groninger needs to consistently hit the open 3-pointer, like he did vs. Georgia Tech. Blanchard needs to avoid the mini-slumps he goes into during some games, where he just sort of disappears out there. Gaines needs to work a little more on his scoring. Leland Anderson just needs practice and playing time. Once they've all worked out these bugs, they'll do just fine.

One of Michigan's biggest concerns has got to be the play of their big men. Against Chattanooga, Josh Asselin and Chris Young each only had 2 points and 4 rebounds. Peter Vignier (4 points) and Anderson (7 points) did a little better, but we need more production from all of them. Vignier needs to do a better job hanging onto rebounds and loose balls.

So far, I'd have to say that the running game is working. Our half-court offense isn't bad, but our fast-break offense is much better. True, we do turn the ball over more often when we run, but we also score more often.

A this point, the outlook is positive for the team. They've got a tough test coming up this weekend vs. Duke, with a bunch of winnable games after that until the Big Ten season starts. The Big Ten looks tough again this year, but we might be able to steal a few wins from "the big boys". We shall see...