01/20/2000 – Wolverines Overwhelm Northwestern in Second Half

The University of Michigan basketball team finally won a Big Ten game in regulation, after a pair of overtime wins, by beating Northwestern in Crisler Arena last night (Wednesday, 01/19/2000) by a score of 93-70. The Wolverines were very sloppy in the first half, and could have had a 20 point lead at halftime, instead of 7. Michigan was clearly superior, but kept making little mistakes that kept the game close. Someone would make a great steal, then try too hard to force the ball down the floor, and throw it away. The team would play good defense for 34 seconds, then let Northwestern hit a 3-pointer at the buzzer. On offense, the team would work the ball around well, set up a good shot, then travel. It was pretty frustrating.

Fortunately, Michigan cut out a lot of those mistakes in the second half, and won easily. It's the first "easy" Big Ten win, and only the 2nd or 3rd "blowout" win of the year. Michigan is now 3-1 in the Big Ten, and 12-3 overall.

The Big Three Freshmen (Jamal Crawford, LaVell Blanchard, and Kevin Gaines) all looked good again, and so did Brandon Smith. Josh Asselin looked OK, but Chris Young looked even better. Peter Vignier was unimpressive, again. Gavin Groninger finally got back on track, and contributed. Leon Jones had a pretty good game. Jamal came back strong from his one-game disciplinary action, and lead the team with 20 points, including three big 3-pointers. His best basket was a jam on a pass off the boards from Brandon Smith on a 3-on-none breakaway in the second half. It really got the crowd excited, although Coach Ellerbe probably didn't like the "showmanship".

The most amazing stat from the game is the rebounding edge: Michigan owned the boards, 35-10.

Michigan travels to Iowa to play the Hawkeyes on Saturday night (01/22/2000) in an important game. The Wolverines need to win at least half of their road games, and this is one of the more winnable ones. Iowa is having a decent year, although they're 1-4 in the Big Ten. This would be a big win.