01/26/2000 – Wolverines Drop A Pair On The Road

The young University of Michigan basketball team got two more reminders of how hard it is to win on the road in the Big Ten this week, losing to Iowa on Saturday night (01/22/2000), and to Indiana Tuesday night (01/25/2000). The Iowa game was respectable (83-78), but the Indiana game was a debacle (85-50). These two losses leave UM at 12-5 overall, 3-3 in the Big Ten.

Once again, I couldn't go to these games, so I listened to the Iowa game on the radio, and watched the Indiana game on TV. It's not the same as being there, but I think that I got a pretty good feel for the games.

There were some positives in the Iowa game, and the Wolverines were in a position where they could have won it, but they fell short. Free throw shooting was the biggest culprit, but mistakes down the stretch played a big part as well. These problems can be corrected, and some of them will disappear as the freshmen continue to mature. The play of Josh Asselin should be noted and commended.

The Indiana game was another matter. The lone positive was the play of LaVell Blanchard. Other than that, it was bleak. Indiana came to play, and Michigan did not. The Wolverines just don't have enough raw talent to come back from a sizable deficit on the road. They have to do whatever they can to keep the game close, especially in a place like Assembly Hall.

The schedule doesn't get any easier for Michigan. They do get a week off to try to work out some of the bugs, before Michigan State comes to Crisler Arena next Tuesday (02/01/2000). It will be a stiff challenge. After that, Ohio State comes to town on Sunday (02/06/2000), then UM travels to Illinois for a game on Wednesday (02/09/2000). Indiana comes to town four days after that (Sunday 02/13/2000), then Michigan plays at Wisconsin on Wednesday (02/16/2000). Illinois and Wisconsin are two more tough road games, and Michigan State, Ohio State, and Indiana are all in the Top 15. If Michigan wants to stand a chance of going to the NCAA Tournament this year, they need to win at least 3 of those 5 games. Beating any of the Top 15 teams will look very good on Michigan's record when the tournament teams are selected.

Remember, next Tuesday's game against Michigan State is a "Maize Out", so show up, cheer for the Wolverines, and wear something maize.