02/21/2000 – Wolverines Lose Three More, But Who's Counting?

The University of Michigan men's basketball team extended their losing streak to seven games this past week, losing two on the road and one at home. They began with a dreary loss at Illinois last Wednesday (02/09/2000), 75-59, came home for a lackluster loss to Indiana on Sunday (02/13/2000), 86-65, and went back on the road for an uninspiring loss at Wisconsin on Wednesday (02/16/2000), 75-59. As usual, I didn't go to the away games, but I did listen to them on the radio. There isn't much to say about any of them, but that's never stopped me before.

The game at Illinois was ... typical of the games UM has lost this year. Once again, the first 4:00 of the second half killed them. That marked three games in a row where that's happened. You gotta love the 0 for 6 three-point shooting in the first half. Only Kevin Gaines and Leon Jones had good games. When LaVell Blanchard is held to single-digits (5 points), UM is in big trouble. It also hurts when Josh Asselin gets 0 points.

The home game vs. Indiana was entertaining ... if you're an IU fan. The Hoosiers were methodical, but not fabulous. UM just played another bad game. I've seen them play so much better, it's frustrating. LaVell Blanchard was good, as usual, Chris Young was very good, and Peter Vignier played one of his better games, but that was about it. Kevin Gaines did OK running the offense, but he really hurt the team with his shooting (0 for 15). Josh Asselin, Leon Jones and Brandon Smith didn't chip in.

The game at Wisconsin was ... yet another road loss in the Big Ten. It was supposed to be a defensive battle, but instead UM made Wisconsin look like the 1998 Chicago Bulls. The Badgers tied an NCAA record for made 3-pointers in a row, hitting 11, and ending up 12 for 17.

The current losing streak leaves UM with a 12-10 record overall (3-8 in the Big Ten). The good news is that Jamal Crawford will be eligible again for the home game vs. Purdue on Thursday (02/24/2000). The other good news is that the toughest part of the schedule is now (finally) over. The last five games of the regular season are considerably more winnable than the previous seven have been.

Here's how I see the rest of the season:

2/19 Penn State - Win (finally)
2/24 Purdue - Win (but it will be tough)
2/26 at Northwestern – Win
3/01 Iowa – Win
3/05 at MSU – Loss
3/09 Big Ten Tournament (1st round) – Win
3/10 Big Ten Tournament (2nd round) – Loss

That will make UM's final record 17-12 (7-9 in Big Ten). It probably won't get them in the Big Dance, but the NIT is probably the best place for this young team. Oh well, wait 'til next year.