02/28/2000 – Michigan Beats Northwestern On The Road

The University of Michigan Wolverines beat Northwestern 61-55 in overtime on Saturday (02/26/2000) in Evanston, Illinois. It marked the 4th overtime win for UM this season, which is pretty impressive.

A win is a win, but it's pretty embarrassing to blow a 16 point lead to Northwestern, and have to go to overtime to beat them. The Wolverines were obviously the better team, but they just went stone cold down the stretch, and let Northwestern back in the game. UM only scored one basket in the last 11:30 of regulation.

Fortunately, the Wolverines are the undisputed kings of overtime this year. I can't remember a season when UM has played in 4 overtime games, so to be 4-0 in overtime is amazing. UM has won 5 Big Ten games this season, and 4 of them have been overtime games. The only non-overtime win was vs. Northwestern, at home.

It was nice to see Gavin Groninger playing up to his potential again. It would have been nice if he'd scored more than 1 point in the second half. It also would have been nice if he had shot better than 2 for 8 from 3-point range, and if he had made both his free throws with the game on the line. Kevin Gaines looked pretty good, but 2 for 10 shooting and 6 turnovers aren't typical of him. Once again, Chris Young played hard, and pulled down a career-best 9 rebounds.

The good news is that LaVell Blanchard should be back for Wednesday's home game vs. Iowa. The bad news is that Jamal Crawford still has to sit out 6 more games. UM could use him.

At this point, UM's hopes for getting into the NCAA Tournament are pretty slim. They certainly need to beat Iowa on Wednesday, and an upset win at Michigan State on Saturday would help a lot. Given how soundly they've been beaten by the top teams in the Big Ten this year, it doesn't look very likely that they'll be able to win the Big Ten Tournament (and the automatic NCAA berth), but if they can win 2 games, that might be enough to get an invitation to The Big Dance. If not, it's seem pretty likely that they'll get invited to the NIT, which might be the best place for them this year. They stand a much better chance of going deep into the tournament in the NIT than in the NCAA, and tournament experience is very valuable for a young team like Michigan.