12/19/2000 – Week #06 - The Late Non-Conference Games

It was a quiet, easy week for the University of Michigan basketball team. They only had one game last week, on Wednesday (12/13/2000) at home vs. Bowling Green, and they won 89-71. The win improves their record for the year to 3-5. Bowling Green was a team that they should have beaten, and they did. Bowling Green was a lot scrappier than I expected. They made the game close at the end, before UM regrouped and pulled away. Bowling Green got within 3 points (68-65) with 4:38 to go. It would have been a real shame to lose to them at home.

LaVell Blanchard looked good, and so did Bernard Robinson Jr. and Avery Queen. Josh Asselin finally played a good game, which was nice to see. All 3 of the big guys had foul trouble for most of the game, and I was afraid that they'd be playing Queen at center by the end.

The refs called way too many fouls, and it kept the game from getting any rhythm. Some of the fouls were obvious and deserved, but some of them were lousy calls. UM still fouls too much.

Asselin had lots of nice dunks, and Queen had a great 3-pointer late in the game as the shot clock buzzed. Josh Moore played a decent game, but that was about it. Leon Jones and Maurice Searight both had a tough time out there, and Chris Young had limited success, mostly due to foul trouble. This kind of performance by the whole team should get them past teams like Morris Brown, Towson, and Eastern Michigan, but they'll need to play much better when the Big Ten season starts.

It's time for Drew's Wish List to Santa for the UM basketball team:

- Some team defense. Giving up points like the Wolverines do puts a lot of pressure on the offense to score almost every time down the floor. The offense is playing pretty well, but the defense needs some work.
- Better free-throw shooting. Those are "free" points. Practice can help. That's all I'm going to say.
- Less fouls. See the previous item. You don't want to give the other team "free" points. Sure, UM has a pretty deep bench this year, including 3 pretty good big men, but they end up in foul trouble way too often. Also, it's a rare game when all 3 of the big guys are hot at the same time, so the fouls on the "hot guy" are an even bigger problem.
- More consistency. UM has the talent to be a good team. If everyone played up to his potential, UM could hang with any team in the nation, and even beat some of them. When everyone's having an off night, you get a game like the Duke Debacle.
- A few breaks every now and then. A few of those heartbreaking shots that won't quite roll in to drop, for a change. You'd be surprised what one key basket can do for a team's morale.

The last 3 non-conference games are against teams that UM should beat, and all 3 games are at home:

Sat	12/23	Morris Brown	Noon
Wed	12/27	Towson	7:00 PM
Sat	12/30	Eastern Michigan	7:00 PM

I'll be back next week, to comment on the Morris Brown and Towson games, and the season in general.