01/03/2001 – Weeks #07 & #08 - The Late Non-Conference Games (Continued)

Yeah, I'm back, with a special Holiday Double Report!

Actually, I just took last week off, so this report covers the last three non-conference games that UM played. All three were at home, against teams they should have beaten, and they won all three. On the Saturday before Christmas (12/23/2000), they beat Morris Brown 95-81. On the Wednesday after Christmas (12/27/2000), then beat Towson 73-71. Finally, on Saturday 12/30/2000, they beat Eastern Michigan 90-73. These three wins finally put UM above 0.500 for the year, with a record of 6-5. Everyone played pretty well during this three game stretch, although some of the players were more consistent than others. On the whole, the team is starting to round out into mid-season form. I'm just afraid that the overall talent and depth isn't going to be quite enough to carry them through a successful Big Ten season.

The Morris Brown game was a pretty good game, and it was a lot closer than the final score would indicate. Anthony Adams for Morris Brown was sensational, until UM put Leon Jones on him. That shut him down for most of the second half. The key moment in the game was when Morris Brown closed to within 3 points in the second half, when UM woke up and smoked them the rest of the way.

Both Josh Asselin and Josh Moore played well, and so did Bernard Robinson Jr. LaVell Blanchard was good, as usual. Check out Chris Young: 4-4 shooting. Gavin Groninger also contributed in this game.

The game against Towson was pretty exciting, although it shouldn't have been. UM was clearly better than Towson, but they lost their focus for the last 5 minutes of the first half, and the first 5 minutes of the second half, and Towson took full advantage of it, building an 8 point lead in the second half. From that point on, UM regained its focus, managed to get the lead back, then hung on for the win. It was great to see the team not panic, and come from behind in the second half. It was very encouraging.

Josh Asselin is starting to get his game together, after a slow start this year. He had 15 points and 4 rebounds. LaVell Blanchard was awesome, between his scoring (23 points) and his rebounding (13). Gavin Groninger and Bernard Robinson Jr. both chipped in 12 points. It was a good team effort.

The EMU game was fun. UM handled EMU pretty easily, and did it the way I like to see it done: inside. It was awesome the way Josh Asselin and Chris Young got open underneath and got the ball, then finished strong. The fouls to make 3-point plays out of the shots were nice bonuses.

LaVell Blanchard had one of the worst games of his career, and it didn't even matter. UM didn't need him, for a change. He even got his first technical foul, for reasons that I can't understand. He got tangled up with an EMU player under the UM basket after a made basket, and he swung his arm to get untangled. The ref thought he was swinging at the EMU player, and gave him a tech. LaVell is the last one to deserve a tech. He's a true gentleman. Oh well.

Check out those shooting percentages from the EMU game:

Asselin	.917	11/12
Young	.800	8/10
Moore	.750	3/4
Robinson Jr.	.714	5/7

On to the Big Ten. Here's how I think it will go:

Wed	1/3/01	@Purdue	Loss	85-70	0-1
Tue	1/9/01	Indiana	Loss	78-68	0-2
Sat	1/13/01	@Illinois	Loss	95-79	0-3
Thu	1/18/01	@OSU	Loss	81-72	0-4
Sat	1/20/01	@Iowa	Loss	76-70	0-5
Thu	1/25/01	Illinois	Loss	82-79	0-6
Sat	1/27/01	@Northwestern	Win	75-72	1-6
Tue	1/30/01	MSU	Loss	91-67	1-7
Sat	2/3/01	Wisconsin	Win	67-62	2-7
Wed	2/7/01	@PSU	Loss	84-80	2-8
Sun	2/11/01	@Indiana	Loss	83-71	2-9
Wed	2/14/01	Iowa	Win	77-76	3-9
Sat	2/17/01	Minnesota	Win	81-75	4-9
Sat	2/24/01	Purdue	Loss	83-79	4-10
Wed	2/28/01	@Northwestern	Win	80-72	5-10
Sat	3/3/01	@MSU	Loss	97-72	5-11
Thu	3/3/01	Big Ten Tournament	Loss	88-80	5-12

Combined with their 6-5 non-conference record, that'll give them an overall record of 11-17, which means no NIT. Bummer.

I'll be back next week to comment on the first Big Ten game, at Purdue.