01/09/2001 – Week #09 – The Start of the Big Ten Season

Oh well, it was fun while it lasted. Back to reality. It's going to be a tough Big Ten season.

The University of Michigan Wolverines opened their Big Ten schedule on Wednesday (01/03/2001) at Purdue, where they lost, 80-60. This evens their season record at 6-6, and starts their Big Ten record at 0-1.

UM hung with the older, more experienced Boilermakers for most of the game, but they let it get away from them in the second half. The Wolverines are young and inexperienced, and it showed. They've got decent talent, but they haven't learned how to play together yet. It's kind of like the Fab Five at the beginning of their freshman year. Remember how much better they got as the year went on? That could happen to this team.

Avery Queen did a good job, with 17 points, 6 rebounds, and 5 assists, although he did have 4 turnovers. LaVell Blanchard and Bernard Robinsons Jr. both had poor shooting nights (5-14 and 3-12, respectively), which usually means trouble for UM. When they're hot, the team stands a chance. When they're not, the team is in trouble. Gavin Groninger was stone cold, and that hurt too. Josh Asselin played a decent game, with 11 points and 9 rebounds, but he was in foul trouble for a lot of the game. So was Josh Moore, Chris Young, and LaVell. The team has to get better at avoiding fouls, especially silly fouls.

Next up: Indiana, in Crisler, tonight (01/09/2001). Indiana is fresh off a big upset of #1 ranked MSU, so they'll be sky-high for the game against Michigan. On paper, it looks like a blowout, but you never know. Also this week, Michigan plays at Illinois on Saturday (01/13/2001). Illinois is ranked #7 in the nation, and they're very tough at home. The two games this week are just part of a brutal stretch for the Wolverines, mostly on the road. Next week they play at Ohio State and at Iowa, followed by Illinois in Ann Arbor the next week. They could easily be 0-6 in the Big Ten by the time they finally play a team they should beat: at Northwestern on January 27th. The games after that are MSU (#3) and Wisconsin (#12), both in Ann Arbor. It could get ugly.

Check back next week to see how things went this week.