01/15/2001 – Week #10 - The Early Part of the Big Ten Season

Repeat after me: "A loss is just a loss." It doesn't matter if UM loses by 1 point or 52 points, it's still just one loss.

Repeat after me: "It's hard to win on the road in the Big Ten." Look at MSU at Indiana. Look at Indiana at UM.

Repeat after me: "It's going to be a long season." It's hard to tell if UM is getting any better. They certainly aren't getting any better on the road. So far, they're 0-6 on the road, and 7-1 at home. In those 6 road losses, the average score has been 76-102, for an average margin of defeat of 26 points. The closest loss on the road has been 90-97 at Oakland:

Date	Opponent	W/L	Score	Record
11/17	at Oakland	L	90-97	0-1
11/21	Western Michigan	W	92-78	1-1
11/25	Wagner	W	98-83	2-1
11/28	Wake Forest	L	60-71	2-2
12/02	vs. Maryland	L	51-82	2-3
12/03	vs. St. John's	L	83-97	2-4
12/09	at Duke	L	61-104	2-5
12/13	Bowling Green	W	89-71	3-5
12/23	Morris Brown	W	95-81	4-5
12/27	Towson	W	73-71	5-5
12/30	Eastern Michigan	W	90-73	6-5
01/03	at Purdue	L	60-80	6-6
01/09	Indiana	W	70-64	7-6
01/13	at Illinois	L	51-80	7-7

As you can see from the schedule above, UM played two games in the last 7 days. They beat Indiana 70-64 in Crisler Arena on Tuesday (01/09/2001), then got thumped at Illinois 80-51 on Saturday (01/13/2001).

The Indiana game was a big win for this struggling program. It's just too bad that Bobby Knight wasn't there to appreciate it. ;-) It was an exciting game, and a close game. I'm impressed with the poise UM displayed in the clutch. There were some nice shooting numbers, especially Josh Asselin (6 for 10) and Josh Moore (4 for 4). The free throw shooting was also stellar: 20-26. The other big stat was IU's 3-point shooting: 3 for 18. That's the way to win a basketball game.

Then there was the Illinois game on Saturday. When UM starts the game out shooting 1 for 10, they don't stand much chance. The only games they're going to win in the Big Ten this year (or most any year) are the games where they start out strong, and hang in there when they hit some cold spells. If they get behind by more than 20 points, they're done. It didn't help at all that they started the 2nd half cold as well, but the game was pretty much out of reach by then.

LaVell Blanchard did OK, and so did Josh Asselin. That's about it. Josh Moore managed to foul out in 4 minutes. He needs to last a lot longer than that if he's going to help the team win some games.

Look at some of the shooting stats from the Illinois game:

Chris Young	0-2
Avery Queen	1-6
Bernard Robinson, Jr.	0-4
Maurice Searight	1-5
Gavin Groninger	0-5

They're not going to win many games with shooting like that. They need at least 3 players shooting 5-8 or 6-10, not 1 player going 4-11 (Blanchard) and another (Asselin) going 3-9. Those were the two players with the best shooting nights. Check out the 3-point shooting percentage: 19% (4-21). Ugh. They're also going to lose most of the games where they get outrebounded, like they did vs. Illinos, 44-37. LaVell Blanchard (7), Josh Asselin (10), and Bernard Robinson Jr. (6) did their parts, but the rest of the team needs to chip in.

Oh well. On to Ohio State, on Thursday (01/18/2001). As I mentioned above, it's hard to win on the road in the Big Ten, and Columbus is not a very likely place for Michigan to pick up its first road win of the season, but it's not out of the question. After that, it's on to beautiful Iowa City on Saturday (01/20/2001), to play the Iowa Hawkeyes. Another tough place to play. I'm sure the Wolverines would be happy to split these two games.

I'll be back next week to tell you how it went.