02/27/2001 – Week #16 - Another Disappointing Loss

The Wolverines only played one game this week, on Saturday (02/24/2001) vs. Purdue, in Crisler Arena. They lost, 78-59, and looked bad doing it. It was another meaningless loss in a lost season. The loss leaves UM at 10-15 overall, 4-10 in the Big Ten. Thank goodness for Northwestern, or UM would be in last place.

The team showed very little heart, and appeared to be just going through the motions. It was a game that they could have won, but they would have had to play hard for 40 minutes. Instead, they let several good opportunities slip away in the first 5:00. When Purdue broke a 2-2 tie at the 5:00 mark, I said that it was over. I was only half joking, but as it turned out, I was right. Both teams played lousy basketball for the first 5:00, and if UM could have capitalized on Purdue's mistakes while they were cold, they could have beaten them. Instead, they made a long string of stupid mental errors, and fell behind when they could have gotten a lead. As I've said many times this season, UM is not a come-from-behind team, so once Purdue got up by double digits, the game was essentially over.

LaVell Blanchard had another sub-par game, and that hurt the whole team. The offense is really built around him, and when he's off, things just go down the tubes. He only hit 1 of his first 10 shots, and that was the difference. He ended up with 11 points, but they were all after the outcome had been decided. Bernard Robinson Jr. ("B-Rob") played pretty well, and did what he could to pick up the slack for Blanchard. Josh Asselin was just OK. Chris Young gave it his all, which is all we can ask of him. Avery Queen had a mediocre game. So did Leon Jones. So did Gavin Groninger. So did Josh Moore. It was not a good team effort.

Coach Brian Ellerbe is gone once the season in over, and I won't miss him. Of course, it's not official yet, but AD Bill Martin won't put up with this kind of lethargic effort any more. The team reflects the coach, and the team is playing like they don't care any more. That's not Michigan athletics.

There's one more home game, vs. Northwestern on Wednesday (02/28/2001). UM should win that one. The last game of the regular season is at MSU on Saturday (03/03/2001). That should be a bloodbath. After that, they'll probably lose in the first round of the Big Ten Tournament, and that will be that. At this point, there is no possible way they can get into the NIT, since the only way they can get up to a winning record is to win the last two regular season games (including at MSU), and all 4 games in the Big Ten Tournament. That would make them 16-15 overall, but they wouldn't go to the NIT, since they'd be Big Ten Tournament Champions, which gets them the automatic berth in the NCAA Tournament. Can they win the Big Ten Tournament? No, but it was fun to write about it, and about the NCAA Tournament. Maybe next year?

Check back next week to see how the last week of the regular season went.