12/24/2001 – Week #8 - Win Some, Lose Some...

The University of Michigan men's basketball team returned to action on Saturday (12/22/2001) against Eastern Michigan University, after two weeks off. They showed some signs of rust, but got the job done, and beat EMU 88-58. They had a slow start, and were down 9-0 before they got going, but from that point on, they played a workmanlike game against Eastern. LaVell Blanchard was the high scorer, with a season-high 20 points, and Dommanic Ingerson had another big game, with 17 points. Bernard Robinson, Jr. had 15 points, mostly in a two-minute spurt in the second half. Even though Blanchard was the leading scorer, once again, he didn't have the crucial points, when the game was being decided. He got a lot of his points once the game was firmly in hand. The real star was Dommanic Ingerson, who popped in several key 3-pointers that turned the tide in Michigan's favor. Blanchard had a decent game, but not anywhere near what he's capable of, especially against an opponent like EMU. The fact that his season high is 20 points is embarrassing. He should be averaging 20-25 points a game. Besides those three players, only a couple others had good games. Mike Gotfredson started at point guard, and did a good job running the team. He also chipped in a couple nice 3-pointers, which is a real bonus. Chris Young battled hard, but had a tough time against EMU's double- and triple-teaming defense. After the three monster games he had in a row before this one, it was a little disappointing, but not worrisome. Chuck Bailey played hard, and so did Leon Jones. Gavin Groninger continued to have problems out there, and had another mediocre game. Avery Queen didn't play, but it was jsut a one-game suspension, for an undisclosed "violation of team rules".

But, the real story isn't how they did in the last of their four "obvious" games. They were expected to win, and they won, just as they were expected to beat IUPU-Fort Wayne a few weeks ago, and lose to Boston College and Duke in early December. This win raises their season record back to 0.500 (4-4), which is a positive thing.

No, the real story isn't the win, it's the loss. What loss? The loss of two players from the team. One of them (Marcus Bennett) is gone for good, and the other one (Josh Moore) might well be. We never got to see much of Marcus Bennett, so we're not sure what, if anything, we're losing, but the loss of Josh Moore is a big one. Even though he hasn't played much this season, because of his back problems, when he has played, he's shown flashes of the potential he has.

So, why are Bennett and Moore gone? Coach Amaker can't and won't say much about Bennett, other than that he had some sort of academic problems, and that he has left the team for good. Josh Moore's case is a lot more straightforward: he's academically ineligible. He's still a part of the team, and he can get his grades back up and play again next year, but he's done for this season. Apparently, since he's academically ineligible, he can't be red shirted for his year, so he's wasted one of his four years of eligibility. It's a real shame. All of this got me thinking about all the UM players who haven't played for their four full seasons since I started following Michigan basketball, in Fall 1974. There are the high-profile cases, like Chris Webber, Jalen Rose, and Juwan Howard of the Fab Five, and lower-profile cases, like Olivier Saint-Jean and Leland Anderson.

Some players have left early for the NBA, although not all of them made it, and some players have transferred to other schools, with mixed success. Some have had their playing careers cut short by injury, and some have just quit playing basketball completely. In just about every case, I was sad to see the player in question leave early, for whatever reason. There have been very few who have been ready for the

NBA before they used up their eligibility, though many have tried. Chris Webber, Juwan Howard, and Jalen Rose were ready, and they've proven it. Eric Turner (1982-1984) wasn't ready, and didn't make it. There have been plenty of others.

One of the biggest reasons it makes me sad to see a player fall short of their four full seasons of eligibility is that it hurts the team, every time. When I think of the teams we could have had, if everyone had stayed eligible and stayed on the team, we would have had even more success in the past than we have already had. Imagine if the Fab Five had all stayed around for all four years! We would have won at least a couple National Championships. Imagine if the current junior class (LaVell Blanchard and Gavin Groninger) still had Jamal Crawford and Kevin Gaines (we don't miss Leland Anderson that much). All of this inspired me to make up a list of all the players who didn't get their full four seasons, and the reason why. The list is sobering. The really successful basketball programs around the country just don't have this kind of turnover, and it really helps their continuity. Michigan needs to get that kind of continuity, and it should be a priority for Amaker and his staff when it comes to recruiting and disciplining.

Here we go:

Name	Seasons Played	Seasons Lost	Reason
Phil Hubbard	1976-1979	1.0	Knee injury during junior year
Michael Robinson	1977-1978	3.0	Left the team after freshman year
John Garris	1979-1980	3.0	Left the team after freshman year
Dean Hopson	1981-1982	3.0	Left the team after freshman year
Eric Turner	1982-1984	1.0	Left for NBA after junior year
Paul Jokisch	1983-1984	3.0	Left to play UM football
Rumeal Robinson	1988-1990	1.0	Proposition 48, lost freshman year
Terry Mills	1988-1990	1.0	Proposition 48, lost freshman year
Sean Higgins	1988-1990	1.0	Left for NBA after junior year
Tony Tolbert	1990-1991	3.0	Left the team after freshman year
Chris Webber	1991-1993	2.0	Left for NBA after sophomore year
Jalen Rose	1991-1994	1.0	Left for NBA after junior year
Juwan Howard	1991-1994	1.0	Left for NBA after junior year
Olivier Saint-Jean	1993-1994	3.0	Transferred after freshman year
Leon Derricks	1993-1994	3.0	Transferred after freshman year
Bobby Crawford	1994-1995	3.0	Transferred after freshman year
Willie Mitchell	1995-1996	3.0	Transferred after freshman year
Maurice Taylor	1995-1997	1.0	Left for NBA after junior year
Jerod Ward	1995-1998	1.0	Knee injury during junior year
Albert White	1996-1997	3.0	Transferred after freshman year
Robert Traylor	1996-1998	1.0	Left for NBA after junior year
Tai Streets	1997	3.5	Went back to the football team
Jamal Crawford	1999-2000	3.5	Left for NBA after freshman year
Kevin Gaines	1999-2000	3.0	Left the team after freshman year
Leland Anderson	1999-2000	3.0	Transferred after freshman year
Maurice Searight	2000-2001	3.0	Left the team after freshman year
Jermaine Gonzales	2001	3.5	Went back to the football team
Josh Moore	2000-2001	0.9	Academically ineligible, sophomore
Marcus Bennett	None	4.0	Left the team without playing

That's quite a list, and it isn't even complete. I know I'm missing several players who lost at least half a season to academic ineligibility in the 1980's. You may not recognize some of those older names, but many of them were big-time recruits, and some of them made a real splash in the year or two that they were on the team. Way too many transfers. Way too many "left early for NBA".

If you can provide more names for this list, or correct some of the information on it, please contact me. I'll be happy to update it.

Back to the future: the Wolverines have one game this week, and it's out in San Francisco for the Pete Newell Classic, against UC-San Francisco, next Saturday (12/29/2001). I have no idea how good UCSF is, but I do know that Michigan is 0-2 away from home this season, so this is an important game. Be sure to check back next week to see how it went, and how the team is doing in general, at the end of 2001.

Go Blue!