02/18/2002 – Week #16 - A Disastrous Week

It was a disastrous week for the University of Michigan men's basketball team. They lost all three games they played, and looked bad in all of them.

As much as it looked like they were starting to improve over the previous couple of weeks, they now appear to be lost. Technically, there are still at least 4 games left in the season, but for all practical purposes, it's over.

Put a fork in them; they're done. The 3 losses lowered UM's overall record to 10-14, 5-8 in the Big Ten. The week started out badly, when the Wolverines flew all the way out to Fort Collins, Colorado for a Monday (02/11/2002) night game with Colorado State. They played pretty well for the first 30 minutes, then just let the game slowly but surely get away from them. They managed to scramble into a tie at the end of regulation, but they never got close in overtime, and lost 70-66.

Once again, they lost to a team they should have beaten. Sure, it's tough to win on the road, but Colorado State was very beatable. The week got at lot worse when UM went to West Lafayette, Indiana, and got slaughtered by Purdue on Wednesday (02/13/2002) night, 79-43. That's the lowest point total for Michigan so far this season, in a season with 2 games of 47 points, and another of 44 points. Again, Purdue is a team that they should be able to beat, even on the road. Finally, Michigan returned home and faced Indiana on Sunday (02/17/2002), and got pounded 75-55. Indiana's good, they're in the Top 25 (#22), and they're leading the Big Ten, so losing to them is no disgrace, but it's still a loss, the 3rd in a row.

In their defense, the Wolverines played 4 games in 6 days: Thursday (02/07), Saturday (02/09), Monday (02/11), and Wednesday (02/13). They managed to win the Saturday game against Penn State, but they lost the other 4.

I can't imagine why anyone would want the gory details, but here they are: In the Colorado State game, LaVell Blanchard was the leading scorer, with 19 points. He played pretty well. Bernard Robinson, Jr. had 11 points, but the real surprise was Gavin Groninger, who shook off his recent problems and scored 10 points, on 3-for-6 shooting, all 3-pointers. The story of this game was the play, or lack of play, from Chris Young. He got several quick "touch" fouls in both halves, and only managed to play 16 minutes before he fouled out. With him out, the game changed, and Colorado State pulled away.

Against Purdue, B-Rob was the leading scorer, with 13 points. LaVell Blanchard had 11, and that was about it. Avery Queen had 9 points, and the rest of the guards had 5 points, combined. Leon Jones scored 1 point, on 0-for-7 shooting, Mike Gotfredson had 0 points, on 0-for-1 shooting, Dommanic Ingerson had 0 points, on 0-for-9 shooting, and Gavin Groninger had 4 points, and 1-for-9 shooting. That's 1-for-26 shooting for those 4 players. Ugh. As a team, UM shot 24% for the game, 18% from behind the 3-point arc (6-for-32).

Finally, against Indiana, Chris Young was the leading scorer for Michigan, with 18 points on 5-for-6 shooting. B-Rob had 11 points, and worked very hard for every one of them. Leon Jones also had double figures, with 10 points, on three 3-pointers and a free throw. LaVell Blanchard had another miserable game, with 8 points on 3-for-13 shooting.

As I mentioned above, the season is basically over. At this point, Michigan only has 2 chances for getting into a post-season tournament: if they can win their last 3 regular season games, and at least 2 rounds in the Big Ten Tournament, they'll finish above 0.500, and probably get invited to the NIT. Even if they don't win any more regular season games, they could still go to the NCAA Tournament if they won the Big Ten Tournament. Neither of these scenarios seems likely. Here's the remaining schedule:

Sat., Feb. 23	at Iowa
Wed., Feb. 27	at Wisconsin
Sat., Mar. 2	Ohio State
Thu., Mar. 7	Big Ten Tournament, 1st round

Given UM's record on the road this year (1-9), it doesn't seem likely that they'll be able to win at either Iowa or Wisconsin. Maybe they'll get fired up for the final home game, and beat OSU, but it also seems unlikely.

Check back next week to see how things went, and why.

Go Blue!