02/25/2002 – Week #17 - Mathematically Eliminated

Well, it's all over for the University of Michigan men's basketball team. They lost their only game this week, at Iowa on Saturday (02/23/2002) by the score of 76-56. With that loss, their record drops to 10-15 (5-9 in the Big Ten), and they are mathematically eliminated from the NIT tournament. Even if they won the last two regular season games (which isn't likely), they would still have to win all four games in the Big Ten Tournament to finish at or above 0.500, and if they won all four games in the Big Ten Tournament, they'd get the automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament. The odds of UM winning the Big Ten Tournament are not very good. Wait 'til next year. Coach Amaker's got a very good recruiting class coming in, and it should be exciting. More about them in a later article.

The Iowa game was pretty disappointing. Iowa is not having a very good year, and they were one of the few teams that Michigan stood a chance of beating on the road. Carver-Hawkeye Arena is another tough place to play and win, but a win wasn't out of the question. The Wolverines fell behind early, then caught up just before halftime. The first few minutes of the second half took away any chance for a win, as Iowa put the game out of reach.

The only good news to come out of the Iowa game was the play of Gavin Groninger. He played his best game of the season, and was the leading scorer with 17 points, on five 3-pointers and a couple free throws. He shot 5-for-8 from 3-point range, and kept Michigan in the game in the first half. He didn't get a lot of help. LaVell Blanchard and Bernard Robinson, Jr. both scored 11 points each, but it took Blanchard 10 shots (4-for-10) to do it. B-Rob was a little better, shooting 4-for-7. Chris Young battled hard, and scored 8 points, and that was about it. The big stories in this game were the lopsided rebounding edge (Iowa won that, 38-25), and the shooting percentages (Iowa won that, 52% to 37%).

Michigan still has two more regular season games left: on Wednesday (02/27/2002) at Wisconsin, and the final home game on Saturday (03/02/2002) against Ohio State. It's hard to see how they could win either of them, but it's not out of the question. They could well be fired up for "Senior Night" on Saturday, and sneak past OSU. The game is at 8:00 pm. Come on out and say goodbye to the six seniors on the team. They've played hard, and deserve a nice sendoff.

They are:

Leon Jones - Leon's had an up-and-down career at Michigan. He's shown the ability to be a scorer, but he's also disappeared for long periods. He's a good defender, and can sink the 3-pointer fairly consistently. He's tried to provide some leadership, and he'll be missed.

Herb Gibson - Herb finally got his chance to show what he could do this season, and he's done pretty well. He's scored some points, and had some awesome blocked shots. He's a good solid player, and it's been fun to watch him play this year.

Mike Gotfredson - He's another former walk-on who had benefited from Coach Amaker's new policy of rewarding performance and hustle in practice with playing time. He's started many games this season, and done quite well, except in the scoring department. He has a very good 3-point shot, but is too reluctant to take it. He certainly knows his role (play-making), and he does it pretty well.

Ron Garber - We didn't see much of Ron during his time at Michigan. He only got to play in "garbage time", and he never really got much of a chance to show us what he could do.

Chris Young - Chris is one of my all-time favorite Wolverines. He plays hard all game, every game. He's a tough kid, and he makes the most of his abilities. He's a born leader, and a very nice guy. If Michigan had two more of him, they would be in the NCAA this season. His contributions are very much appreciated, and he'll be very sorely missed when he graduates.

Rotolu Adebiyi - Roto is another player who got his chance this season, and made the most of it. When UM needed another big (but not tall) body in there, he went in and gave it to them. He played hard, the played tough, and he did what he could to help out. He should be proud of his efforts.

Win or lose, it should be an emotional night in Crisler on Saturday, so please try to show up and lend your support.

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

Go Blue!