12/15/2003 – Week #06 – Back on the Winning Track

The University of Michigan men's basketball team only played one non-conference game last week, beating Bowling Green on Saturday (12/13/2003) in Crisler Arena, 74-57. Their season record improves to 5-1, which is a whole lot better than it was a year ago at this point (0-6). It was a game that Michigan was expected to win, and they did, but not without some difficulty.

The Wolverines never trailed in the game, and once they got the lead up to double digits, they never let it slip below 10. They led by as much as 20 in the first half, and they led by 15 (39-24) at halftime. They had a couple of opportunities to really put the game away in the 2nd half, but they didn't take advantage of them, which could come back to haunt them later in the season. They played a relatively mistake-free game (only 15 turnovers), but they got out-rebounded (42-33), which is hard to imagine. The bottom line is that they still managed to do what it takes to win the game. Bowling Green was in foul trouble almost the whole game, and in fact, 3 BGSU players fouled out, and 4 more had 4 fouls at the end. Michigan got to shoot lots of free throws, but they didn't make as many as they should have (29-for-41, 70%). None of those numbers look that bad, but trust me, it was not a work of art.

For the first time this year, Coach Amaker changed the starting lineup, to make a point to Daniel Horton and Lester Abram. Instead of Horton and Abram, he started Dion Harris and Sherrod Harrell. Apparently, he made his point, because Horton (11 points) and Abram (12 points) both played good games coming off the bench. He also started Graham Brown instead of Chris Hunter, but that was because Hunter had a sore knee.

Of the starters, Bernard Robinson, Jr. was the high scorer for Michigan, with 15 points, including 9-for-10 shooting from the free throw line. The other starters did OK, but not great. Harris had 8 points (on 2-for-9 shooting), Brown had 7 points, Courtney Sims had 6 points, and Harrell didn't score.

Since 2 of the regular starters were on the bench, the bench players contributed more than usual. As I already mentioned, Abram had 12 points, and Horton had 11. J.C. Mathis had another solid game, scoring 11 points and grabbing 6 rebounds. The good news was that he took the ball to the basket with authority, and drew several fouls. The bad news was that he had a rough time at the free throw line, going 3-for-10, including some real bricks. He can do better than that. The final bench player was Brent Petway, who scored 4 points, including another monster dunk on an offensive rebound.

The Bowling Green game is the first of 5 in a row at home for Michigan. Of the 4 remaining home games, 3 of them look very winnable: Central Michigan, Delaware State, and Boston University. The other game is against UCLA, and that could be a tough one. Their last non-conference game is away, against Fairfield at a neutral site (New York City).

This is final exam week at UM, and I just finished my last one (a take-home essay exam) an hour ago, thank you very much. After only having one game last week, Michigan only has one game this week, to give the players a chance to keep up on their schoolwork. The game is on Saturday (12/20/2003), against Central Michigan, at 2:00 p.m. It's another game that UM should win handily. Come on out and cheer on the Wolverines.

Go Blue!