12/27/2004 – Week #08 – No News Is Good News

The Week In Review

The good news is that the University of Michigan men's basketball team didn't lose any games this last week. Of course, they didn't play any games either, so that's not too surprising.

The other good news in the last week was that there were no new injuries. After the rash of minor-to-major injuries that have hit the team recently, this is indeed good news. Even better, all the injured players (except Lester Abram, who's out for the season) got another week closer to returning to the lineup.

Just because there weren't any games doesn't mean that there isn't anything to talk about. Now is a good time to look back at the first 11 games, and look ahead at the rest of the season. It's also a good time to give out "early midterm" grades.

Looking Back

At this point, Michigan has an overall record of 6-5, including a 6-1 record at home, and an 0-4 record on the road:

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record
Preseason NIT					
11/15 (Mon)	Binghamton	Ann Arbor	W	59-46	1-0
11/17 (Wed)	Colorado	Ann Arbor	W	69-60	2-0
11/19 (Fri)	Sacramento State	Ann Arbor	W	70-49	3-0
Preseason NIT					
11/24 (Wed)	Arizona	New York, N.Y.	L	61-60 (ot)	3-1
11/26 (Fri)	Providence	New York, N.Y.	L	72-63	3-2
11/30 (Tue)	Georgia Tech	Atlanta, Ga.	L	99-68	3-3
12/04 (Sat)	Notre Dame	Ann Arbor	W	61-60	4-3
12/07 (Tue)	High Point	Ann Arbor	W	67-53	5-3
12/11 (Sat)	South Florida	Ann Arbor	W	71-62	6-3
12/14 (Tue)	Boston University	Ann Arbor	L	63-52	6-4
12/18 (Sat)	UCLA	Los Angeles, Calif.	L	81-79	6-5

Looking back at these results, they've had a couple good wins (Colorado and Notre Dame), a couple "good losses" where they played well but lost (Arizona and UCLA), a few "ugly wins" where they played poorly but won (Binghamton, High Point, and South Florida), and a few "ugly losses" (Providence, Georgia Tech, Boston University). Two of the "ugly wins" (High Point and South Florida) were probably a result of the decimated lineup, due to injuries, as was one of the "ugly losses" (Boston University), and the "ugly loss" to Georgia Tech was probably going to be a loss (but a "good loss") regardless of how well UM played. That leaves the Providence game as the most disappointing game so far.

The big story so far this season has been the wave of injuries. Just to summarize:

- Lester Abram – Shoulder surgery. He's lost for the rest of the season.
- Graham Brown – Hernia surgery. He's lost until around the beginning of the new year.
- Daniel Horton – Sprained knee. He's lost until around the beginning of the new year.
- John Andrews – Deep contusion of his thigh, and a sore knee. He's available, but hobbled.

- Ashtyn Bell – Broken nose. He's available, but wearing a mask until around the beginning of the new year.
- Dani Wohl – Injured elbow. He's lost until around the middle of January.
- Sherrod Harrell – Broken nose. He's available, but wearing a mask until around the middle of January.

Assuming there are no more injuries for a while, things should start to get better around the beginning of the new year. Abram is gone for the season, but Brown and Horton are the key players that the team needs back, and the only other injury that's keeping a player off the court is Wohl's elbow. Andrews, Bell, and Harrell are all able to play, although not at 100%.

Looking Ahead

Once again, assuming that there are no more injuries, and that the currently injured players return to action about when they're expected to, here are my updated predictions for the rest of the season:

Date	Opponent	Site	Prediction	Out of 10	Record
12/29 (Wed)	Delaware State	Ann Arbor	W	8	7-5
12/31 (Fri)	North Carolina-Asheville	Ann Arbor	W	6	8-5
01/05 (Wed)	Iowa	Iowa City, Iowa	L	3	8-6 (0-1)
01/08 (Sat)	Fairfield	Ann Arbor	W	8	9-6
01/12 (Wed)	Northwestern	Ann Arbor	W	7	10-6 (1-1)
01/15 (Sat)	Penn State	State College, Pa.	W	7	11-6 (2-1)
01/19 (Wed)	Indiana	Bloomington, Ind.	W	4	12-6 (3-1)
01/22 (Sat)	Wisconsin	Ann Arbor	L	4	12-7 (3-2)
01/27 (Thu)	Michigan State	East Lansing, Mich.	L	2	12-8 (3-3)
01/30 (Sun)	Purdue	West Lafayette, Ind.	L	3	12-9 (3-4)
02/02 (Wed)	Minnesota	Ann Arbor	W	7	13-9 (4-4)
02/05 (Sat)	Ohio State	Columbus, Ohio	W	7	14-9 (5-4)
02/08 (Tue)	Illinois	Ann Arbor	L	3	14-10 (5-5)
02/12 (Sat)	Michigan State	Ann Arbor	W	4	15-10 (6-5)
02/16 (Wed)	Wisconsin	Madison, Wis.	L	2	15-11 (6-6)
02/20 (Sun)	Indiana	Ann Arbor	W	6	16-11 (7-6)
02/23 (Wed)	Penn State	Ann Arbor	W	8	17-11 (8-6)
02/26 (Sat)	Northwestern	Evanston, Ill.	W	6	18-11 (9-6)
03/05 or 03/06	Iowa	Ann Arbor	W	6	19-11 (10-6)
Big Ten Tournament					
03/10 (Thu)	First Round	Chicago, Ill.			
03/11 (Fri)	Quarterfinals	Chicago, Ill.	W	7	20-11
03/12 (Sat)	Semifinals	Chicago, Ill.	L	4	20-12

If they can pull off a 20-12 record, they should still be able to get into the NCAA Tournament, probably with a respectable seed. Anything less than 18 wins, and they're probably back in the NIT.

Early Midterm Grades

This year, Michigan plays 30 regular season games. At this point, they've played 11 games, so they're about a third of the way through the season. Even though it would seem that the logical time to give midterm grades would be after game #15 (Fairfield, on 01/08/2005), I'm going to do it now, while we have a break in the schedule.

Typically, when I hand out midterm grades there are 4 or 5 players who haven't played much, but not this season. Due to all the injuries, just about everyone has gotten to play quite a bit. Also, I typically give out 2 or 3 "A"s or "A-"s, but not this season:

Name	Grade	Comments
Freshmen		
Ron Coleman	B	Had a very slow start, has come on strong lately. Nice shot, good speed and agility.
Alex Brzozowicz	Inc	Hasn't played much at all.
Sophomores		
John Andrews	C+	Slowed by two different nagging injuries. Has played well at times, disappeared at others.
Amadou Ba	Inc	Hasn't played much at all.
Dion Harris	B+	When he's good, he's very good, but when he's bad, he really hurts the whole team. Does much better at shooting guard than point guard.
Brent Petway	B+	Easily the most exciting player on the team, possibly in the whole country. If he could hit his 10-foot jumpers and handle the ball a little better, he'd be an All-American.
Courtney Sims	B	Needs to play stronger and meaner inside, but has a nice touch, and great hands and agility.
Juniors		
Lester Abram	B+/Inc	Played well before he got injured, is now lost for the rest of the season. Will be back as a redshirt junior next year.
Ashtyn Bell	C	Another player slowed by injury, he does his best when he's in there. Not much of a shooter, but a decent point guard.
Graham Brown	B+	Out from hernia surgery until early- to mid-January. A strong presence inside, and a fierce competitor.
Sherrod Harrell	B-	Has played fairly well when he's been in there, but is a little too hesitant to shoot. Decent ball-handling, good speed.
Daniel Horton	B+	Out with a sprained knee until early- to mid-January. He's not a natural point guard, but he's the best that Michigan's got. A good scorer, and a decent ball-handler.
Chris Hunter	B+	Has come on very strong since he's been starting. Very nice jumpers, including good 3-point shooting. Good ball-handling, especially for his size. Needs to play tougher inside.
Dani Wohl	C	Out with a sprained elbow until mid-January. Played fairly well when he's been in there. Great speed, good ball skills, too hesitant to shoot.
Seniors		
J.C. Mathis	C	After playing a key role last year, and even starting, he slid down the bench towards the end of the year. He stayed there at the start of this season, but now he's been drummed into service, due to injuries. Has done OK, but hasn't impressed.
Coach		

Tommy Amaker	B+	Great recruiter, good practice coach, decent bench coach. Has done a great job patching together a decent team in the face of all the injuries.

The Upcoming Week

After having 11 days off between the UCLA game and their next game, Michigan has two games coming up this week. On Wednesday (12/29/2004, 7:00 p.m.), they play Delaware State in Crisler Arena. Then, on Friday (12/31/2004, 1:00 p.m.), they play North Carolina-Asheville, also in Crisler Arena. Come on down for one or both of the games, and cheer on the Wolverines.

Go Blue!