## 02/28/2005 – Week #17 – Things Can't Get Much Worse

### The Week In Review

Just when it looked like the University of Michigan men's basketball team had finally gotten things worked out, and they finally ended their depressing 10-game losing streak by beating Penn State on Wednesday (02/23/2005) 63-48, they came out and played one of their worst games in several years on Saturday (02/26/2005), losing at Northwestern 69-53. The home win against PSU was nice, and UM played well, but the loss to Northwestern was very embarrassing. It's not just that they lost to a mediocre Northwestern team, it's how they played. They were helpless and hopeless in the first 15 minutes. They were down 5-2, then it was suddenly 28-4. Yeah, that was a 23-2 run by Northwestern. Michigan players missed 3-pointers, they missed medium-range jumpers, they missed short-range jumpers, and they missed layups, when they weren't turning the ball over. It was a disgrace. Of course, it didn't help that Northwestern was on fire, but UM made them look better than they were. I don't often mention opposing players, but I have to talk about the job that Vedran Vukusic did for Northwestern: he shot 11-for-13 from the floor, including 4-for-5 from 3-point range, and scored 26 points against Michigan. He was the difference in the game.

To their credit, Michigan never gave up, but once they got down by 10 points (12-2), they never got the deficit back down into single digits. They got the deficit down to 10 points on 3 or 4 occasions, and every single time, Northwestern came right down and hit a 3-pointer. Every single time. Right away. It was very depressing.

The Penn State game was a nice change of pace, after losing 10 games in a row, and it was great to see UM play a good, solid complete game. After that performance, I was hoping that they could beat Northwestern, and somehow sneak by Iowa next week in their regular season finale, to put together a nice 3-game winning streak going into the Big Ten Tournament. Forget that. Michigan just played their way out of any chance of even making the NIT this year.

There was more bad news this week: Chris Hunter missed both games last week, with an ankle injury. He re-injured his right ankle on 02/16/2005 in the Wisconsin game, and played sparingly (11 minutes) against Indiana on 02/20/2005. It isn't clear when he will return to the lineup. It's a shame, because he has played really well when his ankle has been healthy, and the team could really use him right now.

### The Big Picture

With the win and the loss, Michigan's record now stands at 13-16 overall, and 4-11 in the Big Ten. With only one regular season games left, it is almost impossible for Michigan to finish at or above 0.500 and be eligible for the NIT. They would have to beat Iowa, which won't be easy, then win 3 games in the Big Ten Tournament, which would put them in the finals. In order to get to the finals, they would presumably have to play at least one of the 3 Top-25 teams in the field: (#1) Illinois, (#9) Michigan State, or (#20) Wisconsin. Sure, they played Illinois tough in Ann Arbor on 02/08/2005, losing 57-51, but they haven't done very well against MSU and Wisconsin, in 4 games this season.

Here's Michigan's remaining schedule:

| Date | Opponent | Site |
|---|---|---|
| 03/05 (Sat) | Iowa | Ann Arbor |
| | | |

| *Big Ten Tournament* | | |
|---|---|---|
| 03/10 (Thu) | First Round | Chicago, Ill. |
| 03/11 (Fri) | Quarterfinals | Chicago, Ill. |
| 03/12 (Sat) | Semifinals | Chicago, Ill. |
| 03/13 (Sun) | Finals | Chicago, Ill. |

The Iowa game will be really tough to win, even though it's in Ann Arbor. So, Michigan will probably finish the regular season at 13-17 overall, 4-12 in the Big Ten. They might be able to win one, or maybe even two games in the Big Ten Tournament, but that will be about it. That would leave them with a final overall record of 15-18, which is very disappointing.

**Game Statistics**

First, let's look at the shooting statistics from the Penn State game:

| Team | Field goals | 3-Pointers | Free throws |
|---|---|---|---|
| Michigan | 22-47 (46.8%) | 6-19 (31.6%) | 13-19 (68.4%) |
| Penn State | 16-40 (40.0%) | 6-18 (33.3%) | 10-18 (55.6%) |
| Advantage | Michigan | Penn State | Michigan |

Right here, you can see why Michigan won this game: they not only shot a better percentage than Penn State, they took 7 more shots, and hit 6 of them. The other shooting stats are a wash.

Now, let's look at the non-shooting statistics from the Penn State game:

| Team | Rebounds | Assists | Turnovers | Blocks | Steals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Michigan | 28 | 14 | 11 | 1 | 9 |
| Penn State | 28 | 12 | 16 | 3 | 6 |
| Advantage | Even | Mich | Mich | PSU | Mich |

There's mixed news here, but nothing significant. It was nice to see UM keep their turnovers down, and it was encouraging that they finally had more assists and steals than their opponent, but these stats are too close to make a difference. It was all in the shooting stats.

On to the shooting statistics from the Northwestern game:

| Team | Field goals | 3-Pointers | Free throws |
|---|---|---|---|
| Michigan | 20-43 (46.5%) | 2-13 (15.4%) | 11-16 (68.8%) |
| Northwestern | 26-46 (56.5%) | 12-22 (54.4%) | 5-7 (71.4%) |
| Advantage | NU | NU | NU |

Michigan shot well from the field, but not as well as Northwestern did. UM was terrible shooting 3-pointers, and NU was on fire. Last week, Indiana shot 14-for-23, and this week Northwestern shoots 12-for-22. That's terrible 3-point defense. That won the game for Northwestern.

Finally, let's look at the non-shooting statistics from the Northwestern game:

| Team | Rebounds | Assists | Turnovers | Blocks | Steals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Michigan | 23 | 11 | 13 | 8 | 7 |
| Northwestern | 24 | 20 | 12 | 1 | 7 |

| Advantage | NU | NU | NU | Mich | Even |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Other than the 8 blocked shots, the rest of these stats are incredibly close. It was the e-point shooting that won the game for Northwestern.

**Individual Statistics**

Coach Amaker used the same starting lineup in both this week: Ron Coleman, Courtney Sims, Graham Brown, Dion Harris, and Sherrod Harrell. Here's how they did:

| | Field Goals | | 3-Pointers | | Free Throws | | Points | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Player | PSU | NU | PSU | NU | PSU | NU | PSU | NU |
| Ron Coleman | 5-13 | 4-9 | 4-9 | 1-4 | 2-2 | 2-2 | 16 | 11 |
| Courtney Sims | 0-2 | 2-3 | 0-1 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-2 | 0 | 4 |
| Graham Brown | 3-5 | 1-3 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 3-6 | 1-2 | 9 | 3 |
| Dion Harris | 10-15 | 4-11 | 2-5 | 1-7 | 2-3 | 2-3 | 24 | 12 |
| Sherrod Harrell | 1-5 | 1-2 | 0-2 | 0-1 | 0-0 | 2-3 | 2 | 4 |
| Totals | 19-40<br>47.5% | 12-28<br>42.9% | 6-17<br>35.3% | 2-12<br>16.7% | 7-11<br>63.6% | 7-12<br>58.3% | 51 | 34 |

As a group, the starters did OK this week. The 3-point shooting against Northwestern is pretty poor, but other than that, they did OK.

Individually, Coleman and Harris both had good weeks, and Harris had a great game against Penn State. 24 points ties his career high. Brown played hard in both games, as he always does, and he got 9 points to show for it against Penn State. Sims looked lost out there in both games, and he got the 0 and 4 points to show for it. Harrell did the best he could.

Here's how the bench players did this week:

| | Field Goals | | 3-Pointers | | Free Throws | | Points | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Player | PSU | NU | PSU | NU | PSU | NU | PSU | NU |
| Dani Wohl | 0-0 | 1-3 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 2-2 | 0-0 | 2 | 2 |
| John Andrews | 0-2 | 0-1 | 0-2 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ashtyn Bell | 0-0 | 2-3 | 0-0 | 0-1 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 4 |
| Brent Petway | 2-4 | 4-6 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 4-4 | 3-3 | 8 | 11 |
| J.C. Mathis | 0-0 | 1-2 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 2 |
| Amadou Ba | 1-1 | DNP | 0-0 | DNP | 0-2 | DNP | 2 | DNP |
| Totals | 3-7<br>42.9% | 8-15<br>53.3% | 0-2<br>0% | 0-1<br>0% | 6-8<br>75.0% | 3-3<br>100% | 12 | 19 |

Other than Petway, it wasn't a very big week for the bench players. It was nice to see Ba get the 2nd basket of his career against Penn State, and it was nice to see Bell play well against Northwestern, but that was about it.

**The Upcoming Week**

Michigan only has one game left in the regular season, and it's at home on Saturday (03/05/2005) against Iowa, at 12:17 p.m. Come on down to Crisler, and cheer on the Wolverines. Every voice helps. It's Senior Day, and J.C. Mathis (the only senior on the team), will be honored.

Go Blue!