03/21/2005 – Week #20 – Season Wrap-Up, Final Grades, Looking Ahead

Season Wrap-Up

The University of Michigan men's basketball team had a very interesting, and disappointing, season. They started with high expectations, including hopes for a trip to the NCAA Tournament, and ended with a losing record (13-18), and a 1st round exit from the Big Ten Tournament. In between, they had some big wins, some crushing losses, a long losing streak, an incredible number of injuries, and a key suspension. It all added up to one big disappointment, but one that leaves hope for the future.

Here are the final season results:

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Record
Preseason NIT				
11/15 (Mon)	Binghamton	Ann Arbor	W	1-0
11/17 (Wed)	Second Round	Ann Arbor	W	2-0
11/19 (Fri)	Sacramento State	Ann Arbor	W	3-0
Preseason NIT				
11/24 (Wed)	Arizona	New York, N.Y.	L	3-1
11/26 (Fri)	Providence	New York, N.Y.	L	3-2
11/30 (Tue)	Georgia Tech	Atlanta, Ga.	L	3-3
12/04 (Sat)	Notre Dame	Ann Arbor	W	4-3
12/07 (Tue)	High Point	Ann Arbor	W	5-3
12/11 (Sat)	South Florida	Ann Arbor	W	6-3
12/14 (Tue)	Boston University	Ann Arbor	L	6-4
12/18 (Sat)	UCLA	Los Angeles, Calif.	L	6-5
12/29 (Wed)	Delaware State	Ann Arbor	W	7-5
12/31 (Fri)	North Carolina-Asheville	Ann Arbor	W	8-5
01/05 (Wed)	Iowa	Iowa City, Iowa	W	9-5 (1-0)
01/08 (Sat)	Fairfield	Ann Arbor	W	10-5
01/12 (Wed)	Northwestern	Ann Arbor	W	11-5 (2-0)
01/15 (Sat)	Penn State	State College, Pa.	W	12-5 (3-0)
01/19 (Wed)	Indiana	Bloomington, Ind.	L	12-6 (3-1)
01/22 (Sat)	Wisconsin	Ann Arbor	L	12-7 (3-2)
01/27 (Thu)	Michigan State	East Lansing, Mich.	L	12-8 (3-3)
01/30 (Sun)	Purdue	West Lafayette, Ind.	L	12-9 (3-4)
02/02 (Wed)	Minnesota	Ann Arbor	L	12-10 (3-5)
02/05 (Sat)	Ohio State	Columbus, Ohio	L	12-11 (3-6)
02/08 (Tue)	Illinois	Ann Arbor	L	12-12 (3-7)
02/12 (Sat)	Michigan State	Ann Arbor	L	12-13 (3-8)
02/16 (Wed)	Wisconsin	Madison, Wis.	L	12-14 (3-9)
02/20 (Sun)	Indiana	Ann Arbor	L	12-15 (3-10)
02/23 (Wed)	Penn State	Ann Arbor	W	13-15 (4-10)
02/26 (Sat)	Northwestern	Evanston, Ill.	L	13-16 (4-11)
03/05 or 03/06	Iowa	Ann Arbor	L	13-17 (4-12)
Big Ten Tournament				
03/10 (Thu)	Northwestern	Chicago, Ill.	L	13-18

At the beginning of the season, there was a lot of hope in the air. Michigan had won 23 games (against 11 losses) in the 2003-2004 season, they had won the 2003-2004 NIT Tournament, and they had just about every player from that team coming back for the 2004-2005 season.

They started the season in promising fashion, winning their first 3 games (Binghamton on 11/15/2004, Colorado on 11/17/2004, and Sacramento State on 11/19/2004). The first 2 games were part of the Preseason NIT Tournament, so Michigan advanced to the Final Four in Madison Square Garden, where they played a great game, but lost a heartbreaker by one point in overtime to (#18) Arizona, 61-60, on 11/24/2004. They came back 2 days later, and they played their first bad game of the season, when they lost to Providence, 72-63, on 11/26/2004, in the consolation game. The Wolverines stayed on the road, and they got walloped by (#3) Georgia Tech, 99-68, on 11/30/2004, as part of the Big Ten-ACC Challenge. They didn't play very well in that game, but they were just stampeded by GT, so it was hard to tell what was up.

On 12/04/2004, Michigan returned home with a 3-3 record, and another game against a Top-25 team on the schedule. Things were looking pretty gloomy, but UM pulled out one of their few big wins of the season, beating (#19) Notre Dame, 61-60. It was a great game, and a very exciting win. It was also a key moment in the course of the season, although no one realized it at the time. The very next day (Sunday, 12/05/2004) was "Black Sunday", a turning point in the season. It was the start of an amazing rash of injuries that sent the team into a tailspin that it never recovered from.

First, there was Lester Abram, who re-injured his shoulder in the Colorado game. He missed 4 games, then he played 9 minutes in the Notre Dame game. Then, on "Black Sunday", it was announced that he would have surgery on his shoulder, and that he was out for the rest of the season. That was the biggest, and the worst, of the injury news. Abram was the leading scorer on the team last season, and he was a key member of the team this season. He provided scoring, rebounding, ball-handling, assists, blocks, steals, and good defense. Losing him for the rest of the season was a big loss.

Next, there was the case of Graham Brown: he also got knocked out of the Colorado game, and he missed the Sacramento State game. He came back and played in the next four games, including the two Preseason National Invitation Tournament (NIT) games, the debacle at Georgia Tech, and the Notre Dame game. Once again, on Black Sunday, it was announced that he was going to have hernia surgery, and that he would miss the next 4-6 weeks. Brown doesn't do much of the scoring, but he is a very valuable member of the team. He grabs lots of rebounds, provides lots of muscle under the boards, and is one of the best defenders on the team. He was also sorely missed for the time he was out.

Finally, also on "Black Sunday", Daniel Horton, sprained his knee in practice, and missed 4 weeks. He didn't require surgery, just intensive rehabilitation. With Horton out, UM didn't have anyone with significant game experience to play the point guard position. The only starter who could play some point guard was Dion Harris, and he did a reasonable job, but it really seemed to affect his shooting performance. He's really a shooting guard. The other pure guards on the team (Sherrod Harrell, Dani Wohl, and Ashtyn Bell) all had very little game experience, and they were all pretty unconfident in their abilities.

This brings us to another key moment in the season: 12/10/2004. We didn't realize it at the time, but this was the day that the season completely went south, just 5 days after "Black Sunday". It was on this date that Daniel Horton got into an argument with his

girlfriend, and assaulted her. He was arraigned on Domestic Violence charges on 01/24/2005, he was suspended from the team indefinitely on 01/25/2005, he pleaded guilty to the charges on 02/14/2005, and he was suspended for the remainder of the season on 02/20/2005. Horton ended up missing 6 games due to his knee injury, and 12 games due to the suspension. During those 18 games, Michigan's record was 5-13, and 4 of those 5 wins were against easy non-conference opponents in December. The team really missed Horton, and the end result was a disappointing season.

So, starting with the High Point game on 12/07/2004, Michigan was without 3 starters, one of them for the rest of the season, and another for most of the rest of the season. But, that wasn't the end of the injury list. At this point, there were two more injuries, but they were less severe, both in terms of the actual injuries, and in terms of their impact on the team. John Andrews suffered a deep muscle contusion in his thigh during the Arizona game, and it bothered him for the next 5-6 games. He started several games, due to the other injuries, but his thigh bothered him enough that he didn't play much, if at all, in the 2nd half of the many of those games. Finally, Ashtyn Bell had a broken nose, and it kept him out of a couple games that he might have seen action in.

Michigan won the High Point game, and the next game, against South Florida on 12/11/2004, which raised their record to 6-3. It looked like they might be able to "hold the fort" until the beginning of 2005, when Brown and Horton were potentially able to start playing again, then they suffered through their 2nd bad game. This time it was at home, against Boston University on 12/14/2004, and UM looked pathetic. Michigan went back on the road, and lost a close game at UCLA on 12/18/2004. They looked pretty good in that game, and they could have won it, but they didn't, and their record fell to 6-5. Even worse, there were more injuries: Dani Wohl injured his left elbow in practice on 12/09/2004, and was out for 6 weeks. Sherrod Harrell broke his nose in the Boston University game, and he had to wear a mask in the next few games.

Michigan won their next 2 games (Delaware State on 12/29/2004 and UNC-Asheville on 12/31/2004), to raise their record to 8-5, which was pretty good, then they started Big Ten play. On 01/05/2005, they opened on the road, against (#14) Iowa, and things looked pretty grim again. But, once again, UM came up with the big upset, and beat Iowa. This was probably the best game they played all season. On 01/08/2005, they returned home, and finished their non-conference schedule by beating Fairfield.

The news got even better, as several players got healthier. Daniel Horton returned to action in the Iowa game, and he played very well. Dani Wohl returned to action in the Fairfield game, after missing 6 games (since 12/09/2004) with a sprained elbow. John Andrews, Ashtyn Bell, and Sherrod Harrell were all available to play, although they still had lingering after-effects from their injuries.

On the negative side, there were a couple more injuries during this period. Just when Michigan got all those players back from injuries, they lost 2 more: in the Iowa game, Chris Hunter sprained his ankle, and he missed 5 games. In the Fairfield game, Brent Petway injured his shoulder, and he missed 2 games. Finally, Graham Brown was still out, recovering from his hernia surgery.

That brings us to the peak of the UM season. On 01/12/2005, they beat Northwestern in Crisler Arena, 71-61. Then, on 01/15/2005, they beat Penn State on the road, 66-62. Savor this moment: at this point in the season, Michigan was 3-0 in the Big Ten, and 12-5 overall. They were tied for 1st place in the Big Ten with Illinois, and they had just won 2

road games in a row. The rest of the season is all downhill from here, as UM lost 13 of the last 14 games, to finish at 13-18. Ugh.

The Northwestern and Penn State games were important for other reasons. In the Northwestern game, Daniel Horton scored a season-high 24 points, and Graham Brown made his first appearance since the Notre Dame game, after missing 8 games with hernia surgery. He only took one shot that game, and he missed it, but he came back strong against Penn State, with his first career double-double (13 points and 10 rebounds).

On 01/19/2005, the losing streak started, and it didn't stop until 02/23/2005, a span of 10 games. The game on 01/19/2005 was at Indiana, and it was a game that UM should have won, but didn't. They followed it up with a home loss to (#24) Wisconsin on 01/22/2005, a loss at (#13) Michigan State on 01/27/2005, and another loss on the road, at Purdue on 01/30/2005. The two losses to Top-25 teams were understandable, and forgivable, but the loss at Purdue was a huge embarrassment. At the time, Purdue was 0-6 in the Big Ten, 4-13 overall, but they beat Michigan by 29 points, 84-55. The Michigan State game was also significant: it was the first game of what turned out to be a season-ending suspension for Daniel Horton.

Once the freefall started, it just snowballed. On 02/02/2005, they lost at home to Minnesota, then on 02/05/2005, they lost at Ohio State. These were both games they should have won, but they played very poorly, and got beaten. On 02/08/2005, they lost to (#1) Illinois, 57-51, which was actually encouraging. They played Illinois tough, and they were in the game right up until the end. However, it was still a loss. On 02/12/2005, they lost to (#12) Michigan State, and they looked bad doing it, then on 02/16/2005, they lost at (#20) Wisconsin. That was 3 games in a row against Top-25 teams, and it resulted in 3 more losses. There was more bad news: Chris Hunter re-injured his right ankle in the Wisconsin game, and ended up missing 3 more games. There was some grumbling in the press about his pain threshold, but I know from my experience as an athletic trainer (3 years of football and basketball in high school, and part of one season with the UM football team) that sprained ankles can be very painful, and they can take a while to heal.

The losing streak wasn't quite over yet. On 02/20/2005, Michigan lost at home to Indiana, before they finally ended the losing streak at 10 games by beating Penn State on 02/23/2005. This losing streak was only one game short of the all-time longest losing streak in school history. Unfortunately, Michigan couldn't generate any momentum from the Penn State win, and they came out and played one of their worst games in several years on 02/26/2005, losing at Northwestern. This was a very embarrassing loss. 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.

The team finished up the regular season with another heartbreaking loss, this time at home to Iowa on 03/05/2005, in overtime. They went into the Big Ten Tournament as the #9 seed, and they lost in the 1st round to the #8 seed, Northwestern, on 03/10/2005 to end their season with a very disappointing 13-18 record.

To help put the injury/suspension problem into perspective, here's a graphical look at the games each player missed:

Game	Abram	Bell	Brown	Horton	Hunter	Petway	Wohl
Binghamton							
Colorado							

Sacramento State	Injury		Injury				
Arizona	Injury	Injury					
Providence	Injury	Injury					
Georgia Tech	Injury	Injury					
Notre Dame		Injury					
High Point	Injury	Injury	Injury	Injury			
South Florida	Injury		Injury	Injury			Injury
Boston University	Injury		Injury	Injury			Injury
UCLA	Injury		Injury	Injury			Injury
Delaware State	Injury		Injury	Injury			Injury
UNC-Asheville	Injury		Injury	Injury			Injury
Iowa	Injury		Injury				
Fairfield	Injury		Injury		Injury		
Northwestern	Injury				Injury	Injury	
Penn State	Injury				Injury	Injury	
Indiana	Injury				Injury		
Wisconsin	Injury				Injury		
Michigan State	Injury			Suspend			
Purdue	Injury			Suspend			
Minnesota	Injury			Suspend			
Ohio State	Injury			Suspend			
Illinois	Injury			Suspend			
Michigan State	Injury			Suspend			
Wisconsin	Injury			Suspend			
Indiana	Injury			Suspend			
Penn State	Injury			Suspend	Injury		
Northwestern	Injury			Suspend	Injury		
Iowa	Injury			Suspend	Injury		
Northwestern	Injury			Suspend			
Total	**28**	**5**	**9**	**18**	**8**	**2**	**6**

That's a grand total of 76 games missed, which really hurt.

Analysis

To sum it all up, this was a team that massively underachieved. While the injuries and the suspension all played a big role in the poor season, they still don't explain all of it. The rest of it is mental. The biggest problem is that Michigan is full of "good losers". The Michigan players, and the coaching staff, have gotten too good at losing gracefully, and keeping their cool. Very few of them really have that inner fire that a true champion has. As Jim Carty said in "The Ann Arbor News" a few days ago, in his season analysis, none of them seem to really have a burning desire to beat Michigan State. As sad as that is, beating MSU has become the standard by which all Michigan basketball teams will be judged for the indefinite future. Once UM starts beating MSU 3 out of 4 games consistently, there will be other standards to judge them by, but until they can start beating State, they can't consider themselves as having "arrived".

Don't get me wrong; there are some players on the team who play their guts out, every game, and who really do have that inner fire, but there aren't enough of them. Brent Petway always plays flat-out, and he really cares. So does Graham Brown, and Daniel Horton. But, there are other players who occasionally just go through the motions out there, especially Courtney Sims. When Sims is into the game, and when he gets fired up, he can be a force on the court. Too often, he just glides up and down the court, his face a

blank, and doesn't show any emotion, positive or negative. While it's great that he has such good control of his emotions, it doesn't do much to fire up the crowd, or the rest of the team.

I don't mean to pick on any particular players too much, because most of them are guilty of being too nonchalant out there at one time or another. I'm not saying that all the players should play kamikaze basketball all the time, but there are certain key moments in every close game where a small action can have a big effect. That's where the teams with heart pull out the victories. Michigan has the talent to beat just about any team in the country, but only if they can combine the talent with the mental toughness and the desire to win. MSU has won 12 of the last 13 games against Michigan, and in every one of those victories, they just wanted it more, and they played harder and tougher. It's a hard thing for me to admit, but they've outplayed Michigan, and they've deserved to win. There's nothing stopping Coach Tommy Amaker from getting his team even more fired up than State. It can be done. It just remains to be seen if Amaker can do it. Even if he can't, I'd still rather lose with dignity than win with a whiner.

Good/Bad Wins/Losses

Not all wins are good wins, and not all losses are bad losses. Sure, a win is a win, and a loss is a loss, but some wins can be discouraging, and some losses can be encouraging. I know, Michigan doesn't believe in "moral victories" in any of their sports, but I do. Therefore, I've gone back over the season, and found the good and bad wins, and the good and bad losses:

Good wins

Date	Opponent	Location	Score	Comments
12/02/2004	(#19) Notre Dame	Ann Arbor, MI	61-60	Beat a ranked team
01/05/2005	(#14) Iowa	Iowa City, IA	65-63	Beat a ranked Big 10 team on the road
01/15/2005	Penn State	State College, PA	66-62	A Big Ten road win
02/23/2005	Penn State	Ann Arbor, MI	63-48	Ended the 10-game losing streak

Good losses

Date	Opponent	Location	Score	Comments
11/24/2004	(#18) Arizona	New York, NY	60-61 (ot)	Almost beat a ranked team on the road
12/18/2004	UCLA	Los Angeles, CA	79-81	Almost won on the road, in Pauley
02/08/2005	(#1) Illinois	Ann Arbor, MI	51-57	Almost beat the #1 team in the nation
03/05/2005	Iowa	Ann Arbor, MI	72-74 (ot)	Almost beat a good team, in overtime

Bad wins

Date	Opponent	Location	Score	Comments
11/17/2004	Colorado	Ann Arbor, MI	69-60	Should have beaten them handily
12/11/2004	South Florida	Ann Arbor, MI	71-62	Should have beaten them handily

Bad losses

Date	Opponent	Location	Score	Comments
11/26/2004	Providence	New York, NY	63-72	Played a terrible game, should have beaten them
11/30/2004	Georgia Tech	Atlanta, GA	68-99	Got beaten badly
12/14/2004	Boston University	Ann Arbor, MI	52-63	Should have beaten them handily
01/19/2005	Indiana	Bloomington, IN	53-62	Should have beaten them
01/30/2005	Purdue	West Lafayette, IN	55-84	Got beaten badly, should have beaten them
02/02/2005	Minnesota	Ann Arbor, MI	54-71	Got beaten badly, should have beaten them
02/05/2005	Ohio State	Columbus, OH	46-72	Got beaten badly, should have beaten them
02/20/2005	Indiana	Ann Arbor, MI	63-70	Should have beaten them
02/26/2005	Northwestern	Evanston, IL	53-69	Should have beaten them
03/10/2005	Northwestern	Chicago, IL	56-58	Should have beaten them

As you can see, there are a lot more "Bad Losses" than anything else, although the 4 "Good Wins" and the 4 "Good Losses" are encouraging.

Season Statistics

The Athletic Department publishes complete statistics after every game, and they're very thorough and complete. They're also a bit much to digest. Here are the "stats lite" for this season.

First, let's look at the team shooting statistics:

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	690-1558 (44.3%)	155-501 (30.9%)	376-521 (72.2%)
Opponents	710-1654 (42.9%)	189-550 (34.4%)	374-536 (69.8%)
Advantage	**Michigan**	**Opponents**	**Michigan**

These stats aren't bad at all. Looking at them, you'd never guess Michigan finished with a 13-18 record. Shooting 44.3% from the floor is very respectable, and holding your opponents to a lower shooting percentage is a good thing. The free throw shooting percentage is also acceptable, but the 3-point shooting obviously needs a little work.

Next, let's check out the team non-shooting statistics:

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	966	378	484	134	173
Opponents	1000	448	425	84	220
Advantage	**Opp**	**Opp**	**Opp**	**Mich**	**Opp**

Now we're starting to see why Michigan finished below 0.500: rebounds, turnovers, and steals. Michigan was outrebounded badly in several games, and they had some games with way too many turnovers. All those extra possessions explain why their opponents shot 20 more shots during the season, and 34 more 3-pointers.

The assists don't matter that much, and the 134 blocked shots are very impressive, but they don't make up for the other non-shooting stats.

Now, let's look at the individual shooting stats:

Player	Field Goals	3-Pointers	Free Throws	Points	
				Total	Per Game
Lester Abram	5-22 (0.227)	0-8 (0.000)	10-11 (0.909)	20	6.7
John Andrews	29-74 (0.392)	6-29 (0.207)	29-43 (0.674)	93	3.3
Amadou Ba	2-2 (1.000)	0-0 (0.000)	0-2 (0.000)	4	1.0
Ashtyn Bell	4-9 (0.444)	0-1 (0.000)	1-4 (0.250)	9	0.5
Graham Brown	48-87 (0.552)	0-0 (0.000)	24-36 (0.667)	120	5.5
Alex Brzozowicz	0-0 (0.000)	0-0 (0.000)	0-0 (0.000)	0	0.0
Ron Coleman	84-215 (0.391)	39-129 (0.302)	26-31 (0.839)	233	7.5
Sherrod Harrell	17-49 (0.347)	8-26 (0.308)	12-16 (0.750)	54	1.9
Dion Harris	152-416 (0.365)	69-207 (0.333)	71-94 (0.755)	444	14.3
Daniel Horton	53-137 (0.387)	20-56 (0.357)	35-47 (0.745)	161	12.4
Chris Hunter	73-149 (0.490)	11-31 (0.355)	58-74 (0.784)	215	9.3
J.C. Mathis	14-34 (0.412)	0-3 (0.000)	7-12 (0.583)	35	1.8
Brent Petway	87-152 (0.572)	1-5 (0.200)	31-47 (0.660)	206	7.1
Courtney Sims	118-200 (0.590)	1-5 (0.200)	68-97 (0.701)	305	9.8
Dani Wohl	4-12 (0.333)	0-1 (0.000)	4-7 (0.571)	12	0.7

Forget about the subs and scrubs, and the players who only played part of the year, like Abram and Horton, and look at the "regular" players. Graham Brown shot 55.2%, which is very good. Chris Hunter shot 49.0%. Brent Petway shot 57.2%. Those are good numbers, but look at the points per game: only 2 players averaged double figures, and one of them (Horton) played in less than half of the games. Dion Harris scored 444 out of the 1911 points that the whole team scored, which is over 23%. Michigan needed better scoring balance to keep opposing defenses from ganging up on Harris, and they couldn't find a consistent "2nd option". Some games, Ron Coleman would be hot, and they could go to him, then he'd disappear for a couple games. Same with Chris Hunter and Courtney Sims and Brent Petway. Hunter probably came the closest to being a consistent threat, until he started having injury problems.

Finally, let's check out the individual non-shooting stats:

Player	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Lester Abram	14	4	4	0	1
John Andrews	50	39	46	1	16
Amadou Ba	2	1	0	0	0
Ashtyn Bell	7	10	19	0	3
Graham Brown	115	16	29	3	19
Alex Brzozowicz	0	1	0	0	0
Ron Coleman	79	33	43	3	11
Sherrod Harrell	36	20	19	2	8

Dion Harris	86	109	90	5	34
Daniel Horton	37	54	43	2	22
Chris Hunter	79	18	51	11	8
J.C. Mathis	41	6	12	7	1
Brent Petway	158	26	35	47	26
Courtney Sims	160	16	57	52	10
Dani Wohl	19	25	19	1	14

Once again, look at the "main" players. Only 3 players pulled down more than 100 rebounds. With all the height and athletic ability on this team, there should have been at least five 100-rebound players. It's great that Dion Harris had 109 assists, but look at his turnovers (90). That's just barely an acceptable ratio. Of course, he was asked to play a lot of point guard, which is not his natural position, but still.

On the positive side, it was great to have two good shot-blockers out there in Petway and Sims.

Team Honors

Regardless of the awards announced at the Basketball Bust, here are my awards for this year's team:

Most Valuable Player: Dion Harris

Best Defensive Player: Sherrod Harrell

Most Hustle: Graham Brown

Most Improved: Brent Petway

Best Dunker (ever): Brent Petway

Final Grades

It's time for final grades for the team, and Coach Amaker:

Name	Midterm Grade	Final Grade	Comments
Freshmen			
Alex Brzozowicz	Inc	Inc	Didn't play much.
Ron Coleman	B	B	He started out slow, but once he found his shot, he became an important contributor. He played better than most incoming freshmen.
Sophomores			
John Andrews	C+	C+	He played an increased role, due to the injury situation. He did the best he could out there.
Amadou Ba	Inc	Inc	Didn't play much.
Dion Harris	B+	B	When he was good, he was very good, but when he was "off", he really hurt the team. Poor shooting percentage, too many turnovers.

Brent Petway	B+	B+	He improved as the season went on. He shot well, played good defense, and showed good hustle.
Courtney Sims	B	B-	He was the biggest disappointment on this team. He has tons of talent, but he failed to live up to his potential most of the time. Needs to be tougher underneath.
Juniors			
Lester Abram	B+/Inc	B+/Inc	He played well before he got injured, missed most of the season. Will be back as a redshirt junior next year.
Ashtyn Bell	C	C	He played an increased role, due to the injury situation. He did the best he could out there.
Graham Brown	B+	B+	Does well for his size, hustles, a winner. Inconsistent scoring, good defense.
Sherrod Harrell	B-	C+	OK running the point, not much of a shooter. Pretty good for a walk-on.
Daniel Horton	B+	B+/Inc	Was the team leader before he was suspended.
Chris Hunter	B+	B+	Nice improvement over last year, until an ankle injury slowed him down. Nice shooting touch, great agility, needs to be tougher underneath.
Seniors			
J.C. Mathis	C	C	He didn't play much this year, and when he did, he didn't do anything noteworthy.
Dani Wohl	C	C+	He played an increased role, due to the injury situation. He did the best he could out there.
Coach			
Tommy Amaker	B+	B	Good recruiter, good practice coach, decent bench coach. He needs to figure out a way to inspire and "fire up" a team full of talent.

As you can see, almost all the grades went down, even though the disappointing finish to the season wasn't any one player's fault. It was a team effort.

Looking Ahead

The future looks bright for next season. Michigan only loses 2 players off this year's roster (J.C. Mathis and Dani Wohl), and they get at least 3 promising new freshmen. If everyone can return healthy (Lester Abram, Chris Hunter, and Brent Petway), and out of legal trouble (Daniel Horton), Michigan will have a very deep and talented lineup next season. The big trick will be fixing the mental problems that popped up this season.

Let's take a quick look at the 3 incoming freshmen for next season:

Jevohn Shepherd
6'5", 208 pounds, W
Toronto, Canada

He's listed as a wing in some publications, and a shooting guard in others. He's generally acknowledged to be the best high school basketball player in Canada this year.

Jerret Smith
6'1", 180 pounds, G
Romulus, MI

He's the point guard that Michigan needs. This will free Daniel Horton to play his natural position, shooting guard.

Kendric Price
6'9", 195 pounds, F
Boston, MA

He's a shooter, and a scorer, and he can rebound and pass. All good things to have in a big man.

Michigan is also in the running for one other player, 6-8, 220-pound forward Uche Echefu from Rockville, Md.

As you can see, there is reason to be optimistic. Be sure to check back in November, when I start writing columns for next season. Until then…

Go Blue!