11/28/2005 – Week #04 – Two Big Wins

The Week In Review

The University of Michigan men's basketball team had a great week last week, winning two big games. On Tuesday (11/22/2005), they played their first road game, and they beat Boston University, 51-46. Then, on Saturday (11/26/2005), they returned home and beat a dangerous Butler team, 78-74. These were two important wins, and they raise UM's record to 3-0.

The win over Boston University was important because BU had won the last 2 games against UM, both in Ann Arbor. It was also important because UM only won 2 road games all of last year, so winning the first one this year was a big step. The win over Butler was important because Butler is exactly the kind of mid-major team that has caused UM problems in the past. By beating Butler, the Wolverines are showing themselves and others that this season is going to be different. Finally, both games were close the whole way, and UM had to play well down the stretch to win both of them. Winning close games is good practice for winning more close games.

Game Statistics

First, let's look at the shooting statistics from the Boston University game:

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	16-39 (41.0%)	4-10 (40.0%)	15-25 (60.0%)
Boston University	18-52 (34.6%)	6-17 (35.3%)	4-7 (57.1%)
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan

Right here, you can see why Michigan won this game: UM made more than twice as many free throws (15) as BU attempted (7). They got 11 more points from the free throw line than BU did, which is huge in a 5-point win. Overall, UM shot marginally better than BU, but they made less field goals and 3-pointers, so they had to make up the points at the free throw line. After shooting over 60% in the opener against Central Michigan, being held to just 41% shooting is a little discouraging, but that's the way BU plays the game.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	33	7	19	3	12
Boston University	32	11	18	6	10
Advantage	Mich	BU	BU	BU	Mich

All of these stats are really close, which isn't surprising, since the game was close. They essentially balance each other out. The key stat was the free throw shooting.

Moving on to the Butler game, let's look at the shooting stats:

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	31-57 (54.4%)	5-12 (41.7%)	11-13 (84.6%)
Butler	28-55 (50.9%)	7-18 (38.9%)	11-12 (91.7%)
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	Butler

These stats are incredibly close, which reflects how close the game was. Michigan's shooting percentage is back up near where it should be, and they made 3 more field goals, but 2 less 3-pointers, than Butler did.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	28	16	9	6	6
Butler	26	14	10	1	5
Advantage	Mich	Mich	Mich	Mich	Mich

Once again, these stats are all very close, but UM won all of them, which is why they won the game. Those 3 extra possessions (2 extra rebounds and 1 less turnover) made all the difference.

Individual Statistics

Coach Amaker used his "regular" starting lineup again for both games: Lester Abram, Graham Brown, Dion Harris, Daniel Horton, and Courtney Sims. Here's how they did:

	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
Player	BU	Butler	BU	Butler	BU	Butler	BU	Butler
Lester Abram	4-7	6-9	1-3	2-3	1-2	1-1	10	15
Graham Brown	1-3	0-2	0-0	0-0	3-4	0-0	5	0
Dion Harris	0-0	3-9	0-0	1-4	0-0	0-0	0	7
Daniel Horton	6-10	9-13	2-3	1-2	7-8	9-9	21	28
Courtney Sims	1-2	10-14	0-0	0-0	3-6	1-3	5	21
Totals	12-22 54.5%	28-47 59.6%	3-6 50.0%	4-9 44.4%	14-20 70.0%	11-13 84.6%	41	71

As a group, the starters did OK in both games. They shot nice percentages, and they scored most of the points (41 out of 51, and 71 out of 78).

Individually, Horton had a monster week. He was the spark that won both games, and he made clutch baskets and free throws down the stretch in both games. Check out his free throw shooting for the week: 16-for-17. Wow!

Abram was the only other starter to hit double figures in both games, and he did it with efficient shooting, including 50% on his 3-pointers. Harris had a disappointing game against Boston University, but he came back strong against Butler. Sims, who is from the Boston area, had a disappointing game offensively against BU, but he did have 8 rebounds. He also came back strong against Butler with an amazing first half, scoring 18 points. He did most of the scoring in the 1st half of that game, and Horton did most of the scoring in the 2nd half. Finally, Brown had a sub-par week, with only 5 points against BU, and 0 points against Butler. UM needs him to chip in a few more points than that each game.

Here's how the bench players did this week:

	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
Player	BU	Butler	BU	Butler	BU	Butler	BU	Butler
Amadou Ba	0-0	DNP	0-0	DNP	0-0	DNP	0	DNP
Ron Coleman	1-3	3-5	0-1	1-1	0-0	0-0	2	7
Chris Hunter	1-5	0-3	1-2	0-1	0-4	0-0	3	0

Jevohn Shepherd	2-7	0-1	0-0	0-1	1-1	0-0	5	0
Jerret Smith	0-2	0-1	0-1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0
Totals	4-17 23.5%	3-10 30.0%	1-4 25.0%	1-3 33.3%	1-5 20.0%	0-0 0.0%	10	7

The bench didn't contribute much this week, and that could be a problem later in the season. Michigan has a strong starting five, but they need to consistently get some scoring support from the bench. It wasn't all gloomy, as Coleman had a good game against Butler, including a very timely 3-pointer when the game was hanging in the balance. Shepherd made some shots and some athletic plays against BU, but that was about it for the bench players, except for Amadou ("Do The 'Dou") Ba: for the first time in his career, he played in the 1st half of a game, and he hung in there pretty well. UM's 3 main big men (Sims, Brown, and Hunter) all had early foul problems against BU, so Ba was called upon to play the last 7 minutes of the 1st half, and he did a fine job holding the fort. He didn't score any points, but he did grab a rebound, and he didn't make any mistakes out there.

The Big Picture

For the 3rd season in a row, Michigan is off to a 3-0 start. Two seasons ago, they had a very good season (23-11), and they won the NIT. Last season however, they dropped to 13-18, and had a really rough time, mostly due to injuries and Horton's suspension. So, a 3-0 start can go in either direction. So far, the way they've looked, and the way they've played tough in the clutch, gives me hope that this will be another season where a 3-0 start turns into a good winning season.

Here's Michigan's entire remaining schedule:

Date	Opponent	Site
11/29/2005 (Tue)	Miami (FL)	Ann Arbor
12/03/2005 (Sat)	Notre Dame	South Bend, IN
12/07/2005 (Wed)	Delaware State	Ann Arbor
12/10/2005 (Sat)	South Florida	Tampa, FL
12/17/2005 (Sat)	UCLA	Ann Arbor
12/22/2005 (Thu)	Miami (OH)	Ann Arbor
12/28/2005 (Wed)	Coppin State	Ann Arbor
12/31/2005 (Sat)	Chicago State	Ann Arbor
01/03/2006 (Tue)	Indiana	Bloomington, IN
01/07/2006 (Sat)	Purdue	Ann Arbor
01/14/2006 (Sat)	Illinois	Champaign, IL
01/18/2006 (Wed)	Northwestern	Ann Arbor
01/21/2006 (Sat)	Minnesota	Minneapolis, MN
01/25/2006 (Wed)	Michigan State	Ann Arbor
01/28/2006 (Sat)	Wisconsin	Ann Arbor
02/01/2006 (Wed)	Penn State	State College, PA
02/04/2006 (Sat)	Iowa	Iowa City, IA
02/09/2006 (Thu)	Ohio State	Ann Arbor
02/11/2006 (Sat)	Purdue	West Lafayette, IN
02/15/2006 (Wed)	Minnesota	Ann Arbor
02/18/2006 (Sat)	Michigan State	East Lansing, MI
02/21/2006 (Tue)	Illinois	Ann Arbor
02/25/2006 (Sat)	Ohio State	Columbus, OH
03/04/2006 (Sat)	Indiana	Ann Arbor

Big Ten Tournament		
03/09/2006 (Thu)	First Round	Indianapolis, IN
03/10/2006 (Fri)	Quarterfinals	Indianapolis, IN
03/11/2006 (Sat)	Semifinals	Indianapolis, IN
03/12/2006 (Sun)	Finals	Indianapolis, IN

The Upcoming Week



Looking ahead to the upcoming week, Michigan has an even more difficult pair of games than they had last week: on Tuesday (11/29/2005), they play Miami (FL) in Crisler Arena. This game is part of the ACC- Big Ten Challenge. Michigan is 2-2 all-time in Challenge games, including a big win over North Carolina State in Crisler 2 years ago (12/02/2003), and a crushing loss last year at Georgia Tech (11/30/2004). This year, since the ACC has expanded to 12 teams, all 11 Big Ten teams will play, and only Boston College will sit out the Challenge. The ACC has won all 6 of the past Challenges, and I expect the same again this year. I'm cautiously optimistic that Michigan will be able to beat Miami (FL), but it certainly won't be an easy game. Miami is 4-2 on the season, and they've got some height and some shooters.

The other game this week is on Saturday (12/03/2005), when Michigan returns to the road, and plays at Notre Dame. Michigan's big win over then #19 Notre Dame last season (12/04/2004) in Crisler was one of the bigger wins for UM in a while, and you just know that ND is going to be looking for revenge. ND is 2-1 on the season so far, and they also have some height and good shooting.

The game on Tuesday evening against Miami (FL) is at 9:30 p.m. Come on down to Crisler and cheer on the Wolverines. The game is going to be broadcast on ESPN2, so if you can't make it in person, you can watch it on TV. Saturday's game at Notre Dame is also going to be on ESPN2, at 2:00 p.m. (EST).

Go Blue!