12/12/2005 – Week #06 – Off To A Flying Start

The Week In Review

It was another very good week for the University of Michigan men's basketball team last week. They won both games that they played, including their 3rd road game of the season, and they looked good doing it. On Wednesday (12/07/2005), they beat Delaware State in Crisler Arena, 69-49. Then on Saturday (12/10/2005), they went on the road and beat South Florida in Tampa, 68-47. These were less-exciting wins than the last few, but they were still very important. When NCAA Tournament time comes, every win matters, and these were games that Michigan should have won, and did. These two wins raise Michigan's record to 7-0, which is the best start they've had since the 1996-1997 (vacated) season.

The win against Delaware State (DSU) wasn't too surprising, and it was very encouraging how well Michigan played, and how handily they won. They played hard, and they were rewarded for their efforts. The win at South Florida (USF) was a little more surprising. USF is now a member of the Big East, so they're not your typical "cupcake". If UM had been playing them in Crisler Arena, I would have considered the game an "easy win", but when you play on the road, strange things can happen. Just ask Michigan State about their trip to Hawaii back in November. They got off the plane into the heat and humidity, and their legs started cramping up. Four of their starters had to sit out part of the game with cramps, and they lost to the University of Hawaii, 84-62. The same thing could have happened to Michigan in Tampa. Fortunately it didn't, and the Wolverines played well and won big. They are now 3-0 on the road this season, which is a great improvement over their 0-5 non-conference road record last year.

Game Statistics

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	27-45 (60.0%)	6-12 (50.0%)	9-16 (56.3%)
Delaware State	14-52 (26.9%)	7-24 (29.2%)	14-17 (82.4%)
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	DSU

The game was a blowout, and it's easy to see why. Michigan shot 60%, and DSU couldn't buy a basket for long stretches in both halves. The only disappointing stat here is free throw shooting, where UM usually does very well. It didn't matter in this game.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	43	19	17	4	1
Delaware State	18	9	5	1	6
Advantage	Mich	Mich	DSU	Mich	DSU

When one team out-rebounds the other 43-18, and has 10 less turnovers, they are probably going to win the game, and that's exactly what happened. The rest of the stats are deceiving. It's hard to believe that DSU only had 5 turnovers, and that UM only got 1 steal, but I guess it's possible.

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws

Michigan	25-60 (41.7%)	7-20 (35.0%)	11-13 (84.6%)
South Florida	18-48 (37.5%)	3-14 (21.4%)	8-12 (66.7%)
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan

This game was also a blowout, and these stats show it. Even though USF managed to get their overall shooting percentage up to 37.5% by the end of the game, they only shot 28.0% (7-for-25) in the 1st half, when Michigan went on a 19-0 run over an 8:30 period. That put the game out of reach, before halftime.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	40	13	15	2	10
South Florida	28	12	20	8	6
Advantage	Mich	Mich	Mich	USF	Mich

There you go again: a huge rebounding margin, and a decent advantage in turnovers. It all helped make the game a blowout. Going back to the Miami (FL) game, that makes 3 out of the last 4 games that Michigan has won the rebounding battle decisively (42-27 against Miami, 43-18 against DSU, and 40-28 against USF).

Individual Statistics

Coach Amaker used his regular starting lineup again for both games: Lester Abram, Graham Brown, Dion Harris, Daniel Horton, and Courtney Sims. He has used this lineup for all 7 games this season, which is the kind of stability that the team needs. Just as a reminder of how bad things got last season, by Game 7 last year, Amaker had used 5 different lineups, in a season that saw 16 different lineups overall (in 31 games).

Here's how the starters did:

	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
Player	DSU	USF	DSU	USF	DSU	USF	DSU	USF
Lester Abram	4-6	5-10	2-3	1-3	0-2	7-7	10	18
Graham Brown	1-1	1-3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	2	2
Dion Harris	3-5	3-12	3-4	1-6	0-0	0-0	9	7
Daniel Horton	2-8	6-12	1-5	3-8	1-2	1-1	6	16
Courtney Sims	13-17	6-8	0-0	0-0	7-10	1-3	33	13
Totals	23-37 62.2%	21-45 46.7%	6-12 50.0%	5-17 29.4%	8-14 57.1%	9-11 81.8%	60	56

As a group, the starters did pretty well in both games. They shot nice percentages, although their 3-point percentage against USF was a little weak, as was their free-throw percentage against DSU.

Individually, only 2 of the 5 starters (Abram and Sims) hit double figures in both games, and Horton had the only other double-figure game this week. However, the big story was Sims: he had a monster game against DSU, with a career-high 33 points on fabulous shooting (13-for-17), and 13 rebounds, 5 of them offensive. He was awesome, with great moves underneath, and at least 4 powerful dunks. It was great to see him play with fire in his eyes. He followed it up with a respectable game at USF, but nothing like the game he had against DSU. By comparison, Abram's points were pretty quiet in both games, except for a couple nice slams in the DSU game. Horton played OK in the DSU game, but he

looked better against USF. Harris shot a nice percentage against DSU, but he was back to his old low-percentage shooting against USF. He did have the shot of the week, and the shot of the season so far, when he hit a 3-pointer just a step inside the half-court line to beat the 1st half buzzer against Delaware State. It swished, and it was a beauty.

Finally, there was Graham Brown. Once again, his contributions don't necessarily show up in the scoring stats, but he had two great games in other areas. He had a career-high 12 rebounds against DSU, and 10 more in the USF game, and he continued to do all the things that make the rest of the team look better, like diving for loose balls and taking charges. He is just a warrior out there.

Here's how the bench players did this week:

	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
Player	DSU	USF	DSU	USF	DSU	USF	DSU	USF
Amadou Ba	0-1	DNP	0-0	DNP	0-0	DNP	0	DNP
Ron Coleman	0-1	0-4	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0
Hayes Grooms	DNP	0-0	DNP	0-0	DNP	0-0	DNP	0
Sherrod Harrell	0-0	DNP	0-0	DNP	0-0	DNP	0	DNP
Chris Hunter	2-4	1-6	0-0	0-1	1-2	0-0	5	2
Jevohn Shepherd	1-1	2-3	0-0	1-1	0-0	0-0	2	5
Jerret Smith	1-1	1-2	0-0	1-1	0-0	2-2	2	5
Totals	4-8 50.0%	4-15 26.7%	0-0 0.0%	2-3 66.7%	1-2 50.0%	2-2 100.0%	9	12

The bench contributed very little this week, which is a little discouraging. Both games were blowouts, and many of the bench players got to play, but they couldn't do much with their opportunities. Particularly worrisome is the scoring of Coleman, who showed so much potential last season as a freshman, and has had some decent games this season. He needs to get back on track, and soon. He did have some nice rebounds in both games, but he needs to get his scoring going. The Wolverines are going to need some solid production from the bench once the Big Ten season starts. Ba, Grooms, and Harrell won't be expected to score many points, but Coleman and Hunter should be able to chip in 5-10 points each per game, and Shepherd and Smith should have 4-6 points each per game.

The Big Picture

For the first time since the 1996-1997 (vacated) season, Michigan is off to a 7-0 start. They now have 4 more games left in their non-conference schedule, and only one of them should be difficult: at home against UCLA. All 4 of their remaining non-conference games are at home. Here's Michigan's entire remaining schedule:

Date	Opponent	Site
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 gets most of the week off, after 6 games in the last 3 weeks, 2 of them on the road. On Saturday (12/17/2005), Michigan plays UCLA, at noon in Crisler Arena. UCLA is currently ranked #16 in the AP Poll, and they're a very good team, with a 7-1 record. Their only loss was in the Pre-Season NIT, to then #11 Memphis. They just beat #17 Nevada on Saturday, so they've played a tough schedule. They have even more height than Michigan (two 7-footers), and three good scorers, each averaging 12 points/game or more. This will be the toughest test yet for Michigan. Come on down to Crisler Arena on Saturday and cheer on the Wolverines.

Go Blue