01/16/2006 – Week #11 –Close, But No Cigar

The Week In Review

This past week, the University of Michigan men's basketball team only played one game, and they lost it. On Saturday (01/14/2006), they lost at (#7) Illinois 79-74. It's not surprising that they lost, since Illinois has a 30-game home winning streak, but it was surprising how close they came to beating the Illini. After trailing by nine points (69-60) late in the game, the Wolverines came all the way back, and went ahead by one point (70-69) with 4:01 to go. They were only down one point (75-74) with 0:18, but they couldn't seal the deal. Daniel Horton had an open 3-pointer in the last seconds that could have tied the game, but it bounced off, and that was the game. It's a shame, because Michigan played well enough to win, but they just couldn't get one more break.

The loss lowers UM's season record to 11-2, 1-2 in the Big Ten. Considering who they've had to play, and where they've had to play (at Indiana and at Illinois), 1-2 isn't bad.

Game Statistics

Let's look at the shooting statistics from the Illinois game:

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	25-54 (46.3%)	5-11 (45.4%)	19-22 (86.4%)
Illinois	25-60 (41.7%)	9-23 (39.1%)	20-24 (83.3%)
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan

Everything you need to know about the game is right here: it was the 3-point shooting. Even though UM shot a better percentage across the board, Illinois attempted twice as many 3-pointers (mostly by Dee Brown, who was fabulous again), and hit 4 more of them than Michigan did.

This game was a lot like last year's game in Ann Arbor, in that Michigan had a great chance to win it, but Dee Brown single-handedly won the game for Illinois. He's a great player.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	31	10	11	3	3
Illinois	35	13	9	4	3
Advantage	Illinois	Illinois	Illinois	Illinois	Even

These stats are really close, which makes sense, since the game was really close. The important stat here is Rebounds. Those 4 extra possessions really hurt. It's impressive that Michigan only had 11 turnovers against an aggressive Illinois defense.

Individual Statistics

Once again, Lester Abram didn't start, due to a sprained toe. He did play 22 minutes coming off the bench, and he did OK, but he was obviously not 100% out there. Instead of Abram, Coach Amaker started Jerret Smith again. The rest of the regular starting lineup (Graham Brown, Dion Harris, Daniel Horton, and Courtney Sims) was intact. Here's how they did:

Player	Field Goals	3-Pointers	Free Throws	Points

Graham Brown	3-3	0-0	0-0	6
Dion Harris	3-9	0-2	4-4	10
Daniel Horton	7-16	2-5	3-3	19
Courtney Sims	5-10	0-0	6-6	16
Jerret Smith	3-4	2-2	3-3	8
Totals	21-42 50.0%	4-9 44.4%	16-16 100.0%	59

As a group, the starters did an excellent job in this game. They shot very well across the board, especially at the free-throw line.

Individually, all the starters did well, except for Harris, who continues to shoot a really low percentage in big games. Horton had a great game, and Smith played his best game so far. Brown and Sims were solid underneath, and it was great to see Sims get the ball down low again, and do something good with it. Brown only played 21 minutes, due to foul trouble, but he played well when he was in there.

Here's how the bench players did this week:

Player	Field Goals	3-Pointers	Free Throws	Points
Lester Abram	1-2	1-1	2-2	5
Ron Coleman	0-2	0-0	0-0	0
Hayes Grooms	0-0	0-0	0-0	0
Chris Hunter	1-4	0-1	0-0	2
Brent Petway	2-4	0-0	4-6	8
Totals	4-12 33.3%	1-2 50.0%	6-8 75.0%	15

The bench contributed nicely in the game, but more than half of the points came from Petway. He also had 6 rebounds, to go with a couple of big dunks. Once again, he picked the whole team up when he came in. Abram did the best he could with a sore toe, and after missing practice for a week. Grooms was only in for less than a minute, so he hardly counts. The other 2 key bench players, Coleman and Hunter, really let the team down, although Hunter did chip in with 5 rebounds. These two guys need to contribute more coming in off the bench, and they need to be more consistent.

It was a little surprising that Amaker didn't give Jevohn Shepherd a couple minutes, but that's the way it goes some times.

The Big Picture

Even though I'm not very big on "moral victories", Michigan's effort against Illinois was very encouraging. If they can continue to play that well, they'll do fine in the rest of their Big Ten games this season. Sure, they're 1-2 in the league, but they've gotten a couple of their tough games out of the way early. Sure, they're 0-3 against Top 25 teams, but they've hung in close against all 3 of them, and they could have won all 3 of them. The wins in the Big Ten, and against Top 25 teams, will come, if UM keeps playing the way they've been playing.

Here's Michigan's schedule and results:

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record
11/18/2005 (Fri)	Central Michigan	Ann Arbor	W	87-60	1-0 (0-0)
11/22/2005 (Tue)	Boston University	Boston, MA	W	51-46	2-0 (0-0)

11/26/2005 (Sat)	Butler	Ann Arbor	W	78-74	3-0 (0-0)
11/29/2005 (Tue)	Miami (FL)	Ann Arbor	W	74-53	4-0 (0-0)
12/03/2005 (Sat)	Notre Dame	South Bend, IN	W	71-67	5-0 (0-0)
12/07/2005 (Wed)	Delaware State	Ann Arbor	W	69-49	6-0 (0-0)
12/10/2005 (Sat)	South Florida	Tampa, FL	W	68-47	7-0 (0-0)
12/17/2005 (Sat)	UCLA	Ann Arbor	L	68-61	7-1 (0-0)
12/22/2005 (Thu)	Miami (OH)	Ann Arbor	W	87-80	8-1 (0-0)
12/28/2005 (Wed)	Coppin State	Ann Arbor	W	81-53	9-1 (0-0)
12/31/2005 (Sat)	Chicago State	Ann Arbor	W	86-69	10-1 (0-0)
01/03/2006 (Tue)	Indiana	Bloomington, IN	L	70-63	10-2 (0-1)
01/07/2006 (Sat)	Purdue	Ann Arbor	W	68-65	11-2 (1-1)
01/14/2006 (Sat)	Illinois	Champaign, IL	L	79-74	11-3 (1-2)
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			

Big Ten Results

Here are the current Big Ten standings, after the 2nd week of league play:

	Big Ten			Overall		
Team	Wins	Losses	Percent	Wins	Losses	Percent
Wisconsin	4	0	1.000	14	2	0.875
Iowa	3	1	0.750	14	4	0.778
Illinois	2	1	0.667	16	1	0.941
Indiana	2	1	0.667	10	3	0.769
Michigan State	2	2	0.500	14	4	0.778
Ohio State	2	2	0.500	12	2	0.857
Northwestern	2	2	0.500	9	6	0.600
Michigan	1	2	0.333	11	3	0.786
Penn State	1	2	0.333	9	5	0.643
Purdue	1	3	0.250	7	8	0.467
Minnesota	0	3	0.000	9	5	0.643

Here are the results from last week's games:

Tuesday (01/10/2006)
Wisconsin won at Minnesota, 64-62

Wednesday (01/11/2006)
Indiana lost at Michigan State, 87-73
Penn State won at Northwestern, 65-61
Ohio State won at Purdue, 80-64

Saturday (01/14/2006)
Michigan lost at Illinois, 79-74
Iowa won at Penn State, 80-76
Northwestern lost at Wisconsin, 68-52
Minnesota lost at Purdue, 72-55

Sunday (01/15/2006)
Michigan State won at Ohio State, 62-59 (2 OT)

There were a few surprises this week:
- MSU beat a good Indiana team in East Lansing, then they beat a good OSU team on the road.
- Penn State managed to win a road game, even if it was at Northwestern.

Here are the games scheduled for the upcoming week:

Tuesday (01/17/2006)
Illinois at Indiana

Wednesday (01/18/2006)
Northwestern at Michigan
Purdue at Penn State
Wisconsin at Ohio State
Minnesota at Iowa

Saturday (01/21/2006)
Michigan at Minnesota
Iowa at Michigan State
Ohio State at Penn State
Purdue at Indiana
Illinois at Northwestern

There are a couple of big games this week:
- Illinois at Indiana on Tuesday. Someone's going to get a 2nd loss.
- Wisconsin at Ohio State on Wednesday. Once again, this will tell us whether OSU is for real.
- Iowa at Michigan State. This is will tell us if Iowa is for real.

If Wisconsin can beat OSU, they'll stay alone in 1st place. Illinois has to beat Indiana to stay in the race. MSU can't afford a 3rd loss this early in the season, so their backs are to the wall.

The Upcoming Week

Looking ahead to the upcoming week, Michigan has two games this week: home against Northwestern on Wednesday (01/18/2006, 8:00 p.m.), and at Minnesota on Saturday (01/21/2006, 8:00 p.m.). These are both games that Michigan can and should win. If they lose either one, they will drop out of the Big Ten race, and their hopes for an NCAA

tournament bid will suffer. Come on down to Crisler Arena on Wednesday evening and cheer on the Wolverines.

Go Blue!