**01/30/2006 – Week #13 – A Great Week For Michigan Basketball**

**The Week In Review**

This past week was a great week for the University of Michigan men's basketball team. They played two games, and they won them both. Both games were at home, against Top-25 teams, and both games were sold out and rocking. On Wednesday (01/25/2006), they beat (#12) Michigan State in Crisler Arena 72-67, then on Saturday (01/28/2006), they beat (#21) Wisconsin 85-76, also in Crisler Arena. These were both huge wins for Michigan, especially since UM had lost all 3 of their previous games to Top-25 teams this season. These were the games that Michigan has lost in the last few seasons, so it was very encouraging to see them win them for a change. Besides the significance of the wins, it was also impressive how well the team played in both games. Once again, they played with poise and focus. As I described in my special mid-week column after the MSU game, against MSU, they trailed for most of the 1st half, but they got the lead with about 11 minutes left, and kept it for the rest of the game. Against Wisconsin, they did even better: they never trailed, and they managed to keep the lead around 9 or 11 points for most of the 2nd half.

The two wins raise UM's season record to 15-3, 5-2 in the Big Ten. Even more importantly, since Indiana lost at Iowa earlier in the week, and Michigan beat Wisconsin, all the league leaders now have 2 losses, and Michigan is tied for 1st place in the Big Ten, along with Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa. As an extra bonus, when the polls come out today, it is expected that Michigan will be in the Top 25 again for the first time since 1998.

**Game Statistics**

Let's look at the shooting statistics from the Michigan State game:

| Team | Field goals | 3-Pointers | Free throws |
|---|---|---|---|
| Michigan | 20-48 (41.7%) | 5-16 (31.3%) | 27-34 (79.4%) |
| Michigan State | 26-52 (50.0%) | 9-21 (42.9%) | 6-10 (60.0%) |
| Advantage | MSU | MSU | Michigan |

There's your whole game story right there: Michigan got 21 more points at the free-throw line than State did. Sure, Izzo complained about the unfair officiating, but when you play streetball, you're going to get called for some fouls. Those 21 points were more than enough to make up for the extra 6 field goals State got, 4 of which were 3-pointers.

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

| Team | Rebounds | Assists | Turnovers | Blocks | Steals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Michigan | 34 | 11 | 16 | 2 | 7 |
| Michigan State | 29 | 17 | 17 | 1 | 7 |
| Advantage | Michigan | MSU | Michigan | Michigan | Even |

Other than Rebounds, these stats are very close, which isn't too surprising since the game was close. However, those 5 extra possessions for Michigan made all the difference.

Moving on to the Wisconsin game, let's look at the shooting statistics:

| Team | Field goals | 3-Pointers | Free throws |
|---|---|---|---|
| Michigan | 28-51 (54.9%) | 7-21 (33.3%) | 22-27 (81.5%) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Wisconsin | 27-60 (45.0%) | 9-17 (52.9%) | 13-16 (81.3%) |
| Advantage | Michigan | Wisconsin | Michigan |

Once again, it was free throws that won the game for Michigan. For the 2nd game in a row, Michigan made more free throws than the other team attempted. Those 9 extra points were the exact margin of victory in the game.

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

| Team | Rebounds | Assists | Turnovers | Blocks | Steals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Michigan | 36 | 15 | 18 | 4 | 5 |
| Wisconsin | 27 | 14 | 10 | 2 | 4 |
| Advantage | Michigan | Michigan | Wisconsin | Michigan | Michigan |

Once again, Michigan won the rebounding battle, which resulted in 9 extra possessions. Of course, they did have 8 more turnovers, so they kind of balance out. The key stat was Free Throws.

**Individual Statistics**

Lester Abram injured his ankle in the Minnesota game last Saturday (01/21/2006), so Coach Amaker couldn't use his regular starting lineup in either game. Instead, he started Ron Coleman in place of Abram. The rest of the regular starting lineup (Graham Brown, Dion Harris, Daniel Horton, and Courtney Sims) was intact. Here's how they did:

| | Field Goals | | 3-Pointers | | Free Throws | | Points | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Player | MSU | Wisc | MSU | Wisc | MSU | Wisc | MSU | Wisc |
| Graham Brown | 3-6 | 3-3 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 4-6 | 1-3 | 10 | 7 |
| Ron Coleman | 4-5 | 1-2 | 1-2 | 1-2 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 9 | 3 |
| Dion Harris | 1-12 | 8-12 | 0-5 | 5-9 | 7-8 | 2-2 | 9 | 23 |
| Daniel Horton | 6-12 | 2-10 | 3-5 | 0-4 | 8-8 | 10-10 | 23 | 14 |
| Courtney Sims | 1-3 | 8-10 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 2-4 | 2-2 | 4 | 18 |
| Totals | 15-38 39.8% | 22-37 59.5% | 4-12 33.3% | 6-15 40.0% | 21-26 80.8% | 15-17 88.2% | 55 | 65 |

As a group, the starters did a great job in both games. They shot very well across the board, except for their overall shooting against MSU, which was just OK.

Individually, all of the starters played well in both games, even though Horton was the only starter to hit double figures in both games. Harris and Brown both got close to hitting double figures in both games, and Coleman and Sims both did well in one game, and OK in the other.

Horton carried the team on his back in the MSU game, and Harris led the way in the Wisconsin game, but they each contributed in both games. Harris had a miserable time shooting in the MSU game, but he hit some key free throws down the stretch to preserve the victory. Horton had an "off" game against Wisconsin from the field, but he hit 10 key free throws to help win that game. As long as at least one of the two DHs is scoring, Michigan stands a good chance of winning.

By the way, with his 8-for-8 and 10-for-10 free-throw shooting this past week, Horton is now a perfect 38-for-38 in Big Ten play. That is truly amazing.

Even though he didn't hit double figures in either game, Coleman did a good job filling in for Abram. He isn't as quick or as agile as Abram, and he can't put up quite the numbers that Lester can, but he did a good job of playing the game to the best of his abilities, especially against MSU. He shot 4-for-5, which is very efficient, and hit a big 3-pointer.

Sims wasn't much of a factor in the MSU game, but he came up big against Wisconsin. He was a step quicker, and a lot more agile than the plodding big men that Wisconsin put on him, and he took full advantage of it. His 8-for-10 shooting against Wisconsin was one of the big reasons UM won the game.

Then there's Graham Brown: he was awesome this week. Besides scoring 10 points against MSU, he also had 7 rebounds, 4 of them offensive. While he only scored 7 points against Wisconsin, he had 12 rebounds, 6 of them offensive. He was everywhere out there, hustling for loose balls, and setting picks that knocked out two of the Badgers. He was a real warrior out there, and the team and the crowd recognized it and applauded it.

Here's how the bench players did this week:

| | Field Goals | | 3-Pointers | | Free Throws | | Points | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Player | MSU | Wisc | MSU | Wisc | MSU | Wisc | MSU | Wisc |
| Chris Hunter | 4-9 | 4-10 | 1-4 | 1-5 | 4-6 | 6-7 | 13 | 15 |
| Brent Petway | 1-1 | 2-2 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 2-2 | 0-1 | 4 | 4 |
| Jevohn Shepherd | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 0 |
| Jerret Smith | 0-0 | 0-2 | 0-0 | 0-1 | 0-0 | 1-2 | 0 | 1 |
| Totals | 5-10<br>50.0% | 6-14<br>42.9% | 1-4<br>25.0% | 1-6<br>16.7% | 6-8<br>75.0% | 7-10<br>70.0% | 17 | 20 |

The bench contributed nicely in both games this week. Once again, it was mostly Hunter, although Petway chipped in some points. As usual, all of Petway's shots were highlight-film alley-oop dunks. He is just so much fun to watch. Once again, he picked the whole team up when he came in.

**The Big Picture**

Michigan won two big games that they had to win, in order to stay in the Big Ten race. As a result, they're now tied for 1st place in the Big Ten. They're playing some of the best basketball they've played in a while, and they're starting to believe that they can beat anybody, if they stay focused and give it their best effort.

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 | W | 68-51 | 12-3 (2-2) |
| 01/21/2006 (Sat) | Minnesota | Minneapolis, MN | W | 71-55 | 13-3 (3-2) |
| 01/25/2006 (Wed) | Michigan State | Ann Arbor | W | 72-67 | 14-3 (4-2) |
| 01/28/2006 (Sat) | Wisconsin | Ann Arbor | W | 85-76 | 15-3 (5-2) |
| 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 Week #4 of league play:

| | Big Ten | | | Overall | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Team | Wins | Losses | Percent | Wins | Losses | Percent |
| Illinois | 5 | 2 | 0.714 | 19 | 2 | 0.905 |
| Michigan | 5 | 2 | 0.714 | 15 | 3 | 0.833 |
| Iowa | 5 | 2 | 0.714 | 16 | 5 | 0.762 |
| Wisconsin | 5 | 2 | 0.714 | 15 | 5 | 0.750 |
| Ohio State | 4 | 3 | 0.571 | 14 | 3 | 0.824 |
| Michigan State | 4 | 3 | 0.571 | 16 | 5 | 0.762 |
| Indiana | 4 | 3 | 0.571 | 12 | 5 | 0.706 |
| Northwestern | 3 | 4 | 0.429 | 10 | 8 | 0.556 |
| Penn State | 2 | 5 | 0.286 | 10 | 8 | 0.556 |
| Minnesota | 1 | 6 | 0.143 | 10 | 8 | 0.556 |
| Purdue | 1 | 7 | 0.125 | 7 | 12 | 0.368 |

Here are the results from last week's games:

Tuesday (01/24/2006)
Indiana lost at Iowa, 70-63

Wednesday (01/25/2006)
Michigan State lost at Michigan, 72-67
Penn State lost at Wisconsin, 72-43
Northwestern won at Purdue, 78-76
Minnesota lost at Illinois, 77-53

Saturday (01/28/2006)
Wisconsin lost at Michigan, 85-76
Penn State lost at Michigan State, 69-60

Purdue lost at Illinois, 76-58
Ohio State lost at Iowa, 67-62

Sunday (01/29/2006)
Indiana lost at Minnesota, 61-42

There were a few surprises this week:
- Indiana lost at Iowa. Iowa is good at home, but this was still a surprise.
- Michigan upset Michigan State. Finally.
- Michigan upset Wisconsin. Michigan is proving that they're for real.
- Ohio State lost at Iowa. Is Iowa that good, or is OSU overrated?
- The Upset Of The Week: Indiana lost at Minnesota. This is a shocking upset, especially the score. Minnesota was 0-6 in the Big Ten coming into the game, and Indiana was in 1st place in the Big Ten a week ago.

Here are the games scheduled for the upcoming week:

Monday (01/30/2006)
Florida A&M at Ohio State (non-conference)

Tuesday (01/31/2006)
Illinois at Wisconsin

Wednesday (02/01/2006)
Michigan at Penn State
Iowa at Purdue
Northwestern at Indiana

Saturday (02/04/2006)
Michigan at Iowa
Minnesota at Ohio State
Wisconsin at Purdue
Michigan State at Northwestern
Penn State at Illinois
Connecticut at Indiana

There are a couple of big games this week:
- Illinois at Wisconsin on Tuesday. Somebody is going to drop out of 1st place.
- Michigan at Iowa on Saturday. This will be Michigan's first tough road test since they started playing Top-25 ball.
- Connecticut at Indiana on Saturday. UConn is currently ranked #1 in the nation, and they are one of the few teams that could beat IU in Bloomington.

Last week, Michigan and Iowa each upset two Top-25 teams at home, and Indiana lost twice. It just goes to show how hard it is to win on the road in the Big Ten. So far, the Big Ten has settled into 3 divisions: the "Big 5" (Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan State, Ohio State, and Indiana), the "Middle 2" (Michigan and Iowa), and the "Little 4" (Northwestern, Penn State, Purdue, and Minnesota). Other than the "Little 4", the other 7 teams are all in contention for the Big Ten title.

As much as I dislike Tom ("Darth") Izzo, he did have a good point in one of the interviews after the UM-MSU game when he pointed out that so far, MSU has the only road victory against one of the contenders, when they beat Ohio State in double overtime. Every other

contender has won all their home Big Ten games, and most of their road games against the "Little 4" teams. So, it will come down to which team can steal a win or two on the road against the other contenders, and still win all their home games and all the games against the "Little 4" teams.

Here are all the Big Ten results, in one place:

| Team | Record | Wins | Losses | Remaining Games |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Illinois | 5-2 | Michigan State (H)<br>Michigan (H)<br>Northwestern (A)<br>Minnesota (H)<br>Purdue (H) | Iowa (A)<br>Indiana (A) | Wisconsin (A)<br>Penn State (H)<br>Ohio State (A)<br>Northwestern (H)<br>Indiana (H)<br>Michigan (A)<br>Iowa (H)<br>Minnesota (A)<br>Michigan State (A) |
| Indiana | 4-3 | Michigan (H)<br>Ohio State (H)<br>Illinois (H)<br>Purdue (H) | Michigan State (A)<br>Iowa (A)<br>Minnesota (A) | Northwestern (H)<br>Wisconsin (A)<br>Iowa (H)<br>Penn State (A)<br>Illinois (A)<br>Penn State (H)<br>Michigan State (H)<br>Purdue (A)<br>Michigan (A) |
| Iowa | 5-2 | Illinois (H)<br>Penn State (A)<br>Minnesota (H)<br>Indiana (H)<br>Ohio State (H) | Wisconsin (N)<br>Michigan State (A) | Purdue (A)<br>Michigan (H)<br>Northwestern (A)<br>Indiana (A)<br>Michigan State (H)<br>Minnesota (A)<br>Illinois (A)<br>Penn State (H)<br>Wisconsin (H) |
| Michigan | 5-2 | Purdue (H)<br>Northwestern (H)<br>Minnesota (A)<br>Michigan State (H)<br>Wisconsin (H) | Indiana (A)<br>Illinois (A) | Penn State (A)<br>Iowa (A)<br>Ohio State (H)<br>Purdue (A)<br>Minnesota (H)<br>Michigan State (A)<br>Illinois (H)<br>Ohio State (A)<br>Indiana (H) |
| Michigan State | 4-3 | Indiana (H)<br>Ohio State (A)<br>Iowa (H)<br>Penn State (H) | Illinois (A)<br>Wisconsin (A)<br>Michigan (A) | Northwestern (A)<br>Purdue (H)<br>Minnesota (A)<br>Iowa (A)<br>Michigan (H)<br>Ohio State (H)<br>Indiana (A)<br>Wisconsin (H)<br>Illinois (H) |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Minnesota | 1-6 | Indiana (H) | Northwestern (H)<br>Wisconsin (H)<br>Purdue (A)<br>Iowa (A)<br>Michigan (H)<br>Illinois (A) | Ohio State (A)<br>Penn State (A)<br>Michigan State (H)<br>Michigan (A)<br>Iowa (H)<br>Purdue (H)<br>Wisconsin (A)<br>Illinois (H)<br>Northwestern (A) |
| Northwestern | 3-4 | Purdue (H)<br>Minnesota (A)<br>Purdue (A) | Penn State (H)<br>Wisconsin (A)<br>Michigan (A)<br>Illinois (H) | Indiana (A)<br>Michigan State (H)<br>Iowa (H)<br>Illinois (A)<br>Ohio State (A)<br>Wisconsin (H)<br>Penn State (A)<br>Ohio State (H)<br>Minnesota (H) |
| Ohio State | 4-3 | Penn State (H)<br>Purdue (A)<br>Wisconsin (H)<br>Penn State (A) | Indiana (A)<br>Michigan State (H)<br>Iowa (A) | Minnesota (H)<br>Michigan (A)<br>Illinois (H)<br>Wisconsin (A)<br>Northwestern (H)<br>Michigan State (A)<br>Michigan (H)<br>Northwestern (A)<br>Purdue (H) |
| Penn State | 2-5 | Northwestern (A)<br>Purdue (H) | Ohio State (A)<br>Iowa (H)<br>Ohio State (H)<br>Wisconsin (A)<br>Michigan State (A) | Michigan (H)<br>Illinois (A)<br>Minnesota (H)<br>Wisconsin (H)<br>Indiana (H)<br>Purdue (A)<br>Indiana (A)<br>Northwestern (H)<br>Iowa (A) |
| Purdue | 1-7 | Minnesota (H) | Northwestern (A)<br>Michigan (A)<br>Ohio State (H)<br>Penn State (A)<br>Indiana (A)<br>Northwestern (H)<br>Illinois (A) | Iowa (H)<br>Wisconsin (H)<br>Michigan State (A)<br>Michigan (H)<br>Penn State (H)<br>Minnesota (A)<br>Indiana (H)<br>Ohio State (A) |
| Wisconsin | 5-2 | Iowa (N)<br>Michigan State (H)<br>Minnesota (A)<br>Northwestern (H)<br>Penn State (H) | Ohio State (A)<br>Michigan (A) | Illinois (H)<br>Purdue (A)<br>Indiana (H)<br>Penn State (A)<br>Ohio State (H)<br>Northwestern (A)<br>Minnesota (H)<br>Michigan State (A)<br>Iowa (A) |

Looking at the remaining schedule for each of the contenders, here's how it lays out:

| Team | Tough Games (H) | Tough Games (A) |
|---|---|---|
| Illinois | Indiana<br>Iowa | Wisconsin<br>Ohio State<br>Michigan<br>Michigan State |
| Indiana | Iowa<br>Michigan State | Wisconsin<br>Illinois<br>Michigan |
| Iowa | Michigan<br>Michigan State<br>Wisconsin | Indiana<br>Illinois |
| Michigan | Ohio State<br>Illinois<br>Indiana | Iowa<br>Michigan State<br>Ohio State |
| Michigan State | Michigan<br>Ohio State<br>Wisconsin<br>Illinois | Iowa<br>Indiana |
| Ohio State | Illinois<br>Michigan | Michigan<br>Wisconsin<br>Michigan State |
| Wisconsin | Illinois<br>Indiana<br>Ohio State | Michigan State<br>Iowa |

As you can see, Illinois has got the most difficult remaining schedule, with 6 tough games, 4 of them on the road. Iowa and Wisconsin have the easiest remaining schedules, with only 5 tough games, and 3 of them at home. Michigan has 6 tough games left, with 3 of them on the road. Michigan State also has 6 tough games left, but only 2 of them are on the road. In fact, they're the only team with 4 tough games left at home. Indiana and Ohio State both only have 5 tough games left, but 3 of them are on the road.

**The Upcoming Week**

Looking ahead to the upcoming week, Michigan has two games this week, both on the road: on Wednesday (02/01/2006) at Penn State, and on Saturday (02/04/2006) at Iowa. The Wolverines should be able to beat Penn State, even on the road, but the game at Iowa is going to be tough. As you can see in the tables above, Iowa has won all 5 of their home Big Ten games, including 3 against the contenders (Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio State). It would be a huge win if Michigan could steal that one. I think that the key element will be the availability of Lester Abram. If he can play 20 minutes against Iowa, UM will stand a good chance. Without him, they’re going to have a tough time.

Check back again next week to see how things went, and why.

Go Blue!