**02/20/2006 – Week #16 – On The Bubble**

**The Week In Review**

This past week, the University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games, and they won one and lost one. Predictably, they won the easy one at home, and lost the tough one on the road. On Wednesday (02/15/2006), they beat Minnesota in Crisler Arena, 72-50, then on Saturday (02/18/2006), they lost at Michigan State, 90-71. They looked very good against Minnesota, but they fell apart again in the MSU game. In the Minnesota game, Michigan jumped out to a quick 35-6 lead, and never let Minnesota get close the rest of the way. In the MSU game, the Wolverines had an early 13-5 lead, but once MSU finally caught up and passed them, UM never got the lead again. The win and the loss leave Michigan with a record of 17-7, 7-6 in Big Ten play. With 17 wins, Michigan is now officially "on the bubble" for the NCAA Tournament. More about that later.

**Game Statistics**

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

| Team | Field goals | 3-Pointers | Free throws |
|---|---|---|---|
| Michigan | 25-49 (51.0%) | 7-14 (50.0%) | 15-19 (78.9%) |
| Minnesota | 20-56 (35.7%) | 2-15 (13.3%) | 8-14 (57.1%) |
| Advantage | Michigan | Michigan | Michigan |

The game was a blowout, right from the start, and you can see it in these stats. Michigan shot much better than Minnesota in every category, especially 3-point shooting.

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

| Team | Rebounds | Assists | Turnovers | Blocks | Steals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Michigan | 36 | 14 | 12 | 4 | 6 |
| Minnesota | 29 | 7 | 11 | 5 | 4 |
| Advantage | Michigan | Michigan | Minn | Minn | Michigan |

As if the shooting stats weren't lopsided enough, Minnesota didn't do much better in the non-shooting stats. They barely won the Turnovers and Blocks, and lost the rest.

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

| Team | Field goals | 3-Pointers | Free throws |
|---|---|---|---|
| Michigan | 28-54 (51.9%) | 3-13 (23.1%) | 12-16 (75.0%) |
| Michigan State | 35-64 (54.7%) | 10-17 (58.8%) | 10-12 (83.3%) |
| Advantage | Michigan State | Michigan State | Michigan State |

Michigan State was hot from 3-point range, and Michigan was not. Those 7 extra 3-pointers are just about the entire margin of victory for MSU.

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

| Team | Rebounds | Assists | Turnovers | Blocks | Steals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Michigan | 25 | 16 | 14 | 6 | 3 |
| Michigan State | 35 | 25 | 11 | 4 | 7 |
| Advantage | MSU | MSU | MSU | Michigan | MSU |

Ouch. It's not often that UM gets outrebounded, especially by 10 boards. The Turnovers and Steals hurt too.

**Individual Statistics**

The good news is that Michigan is starting to get some of their injured players back, but the bad news is that they suffered another significant injury in the MSU game. After missing 2 games due to a sprained ankle he suffered in the Ohio State game, Dion Harris played 18 minutes in the MSU game, but he was a step slower than usual. Jerret Smith missed 4 games, after suffering a mild concussion in the game at Penn State on 02/01/2006, and then coming down with mononucleosis. He also came back in the MSU game, but he only managed 9 minutes, and he looked pretty weak out there. The biggest loss continues to be Lester Abram who got injured in the game at Minnesota on 01/21/2006. He's only played for 2 minutes since then (8 games). Adding to the problems, Chris Hunter went down with a knee injury early in the 1st half of the MSU game, and didn't return. The latest word is that he'll be out for 3-6 weeks, which could mean that his career at Michigan is over.

With all the injuries, Coach Amaker had to use a different starting lineup again. He started Ron Coleman in place of Abram and Jevohn Shepherd in place of Harris. Even though he isn't injured, Amaker decided to not start Courtney Sims in either game this week. Instead, Hunter started in his place. So, only 2 of the regular starters (Graham Brown and Daniel Horton) started. Here's how they did:

| | Field Goals | | 3-Pointers | | Free Throws | | Points | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Player | Minn | MSU | Minn | MSU | Minn | MSU | Minn | MSU |
| Graham Brown | 2-3 | 7-7 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 1-3 | 4 | 15 |
| Ron Coleman | 4-10 | 3-7 | 3-5 | 0-3 | 2-2 | 0-0 | 13 | 6 |
| Daniel Horton | 6-13 | 6-17 | 1-4 | 3-7 | 8-8 | 4-4 | 21 | 19 |
| Chris Hunter | 5-9 | 0-0 | 1-2 | 0-0 | 2-2 | 0-0 | 13 | 0 |
| Jevohn Shepherd | 1-2 | 1-2 | 1-2 | 0-0 | 3-6 | 1-1 | 6 | 3 |
| Totals | 18-37<br>48.6% | 17-33<br>51.5% | 8-19<br>42.1% | 3-10<br>30.0% | 4-6<br>66.7% | 6-8<br>75.0% | 57 | 43 |

As a group, the starters had a decent week. There are no terrible percentages here, except maybe 3-point shooting against Michigan State.

As far as individual performances this week, only one starter hit double figures in both games: Horton. He shot a nice percentage against Minnesota, but not so good against MSU.

I need to say a few words about Horton's free throw shooting this season in Big Ten play. Check out his free throw shooting again this week: 12-for-12. That makes him 66-for-68 (97.1%) for the Big Ten season, which is truly amazing. Here's how he's done it:

| | | Free Throw Shooting | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Date | Opponent | Game | Overall |
| 01/03/2006 | Indiana | 2-2 | 2-2 |
| 01/07/2006 | Purdue | 5-5 | 7-7 |
| 01/14/2006 | Illinois | 3-3 | 10-10 |
| 01/18/2006 | Northwestern | 0-0 | 10-10 |
| 01/21/2006 | Minnesota | 10-10 | 20-20 |
| 01/25/2006 | Michigan State | 8-8 | 28-28 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 01/28/2006 | Wisconsin | 10-10 | 38-38 |
| 02/01/2006 | Penn State | 2-2 | 40-40 |
| 02/04/2006 | Iowa | 8-9 | 48-49 |
| 02/09/2006 | Ohio State | 2-3 | 50-52 |
| 02/11/2006 | Purdue | 4-4 | 54-56 |
| 02/15/2006 | Minnesota | 8-8 | 62-64 |
| 02/18/2006 | Michigan State | 4-4 | 66-68 |

He hit his first 42 in a row, just 5 short of beating the all-time Big Ten record, before he missed one. He's hit at least his last 16 in a row, but I can't remember which one he missed against Ohio State, so I'm not sure exactly what his current streak is. With only 3 regular season games left, plus at least one Big Ten Tournament game, he doesn't have enough attempts left to take another shot at 47 in a row again, but he probably can break the Big Ten free throw percentage record for a single season. I don't know what the current record is, or who holds it, but I'll try to find out for next week's column. I love a good research project every now and then.

The other starters didn't hit double figures in both games, but they played pretty well. Brown had a solid game against Minnesota, and he followed it up with a career-high 15 points against MSU, on 7-for-7 shooting. Coleman had a very good game against Minnesota, and a decent game at MSU. Shepherd did the best he could, but he's still a freshman, and he's still learning. Hunter had a nice game against Minnesota, but he only played 2 minutes against MSU before he left with his knee injury, so he didn't get a chance to do much.

Here's how the bench players did this week:

| | Field Goals | | 3-Pointers | | Free Throws | | Points | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Player | Minn | MSU | Minn | MSU | Minn | MSU | Minn | MSU |
| Alex Brzozowicz | 0-0 | DNP | 0-0 | DNP | 0-0 | DNP | 0 | DNP |
| Amadou Ba | 0-0 | DNP | 0-0 | DNP | 0-0 | DNP | 0 | DNP |
| Hayes Grooms | 0-2 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sherrod Harrell | 2-2 | DNP | 1-1 | DNP | 0-0 | DNP | 5 | DNP |
| Dion Harris | DNP | 1-4 | DNP | 0-2 | DNP | 0-0 | DNP | 2 |
| Brent Petway | 3-4 | 5-10 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-1 | 0-1 | 6 | 10 |
| Courtney Sims | 2-4 | 5-6 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 5-5 | 14 | 14 |
| Jerret Smith | DNP | 0-1 | DNP | 0-1 | DNP | 1-2 | DNP | 1 |
| Totals | 7-12<br>58.3% | 11-21<br>52.4% | 1-1<br>100.0% | 0-3<br>0.0% | 0-1<br>0.0% | 6-8<br>75.0% | 25 | 27 |

As a group, the bench players made a solid contribution in both games. They shot well, and chipped in valuable points in both games.

Individually, Sims played very well coming off the bench, hitting double figures in both games. Lately, he's played better coming off the bench than he has as a starter. Petway was the other bench player who had 2 solid games this week, even though he only hit double figures in one of them. Grooms and Harrell did what they could to spell Horton. Harris and Smith were both slowed by their injuries, and didn't do much in limited action. Ba only played a couple minutes in the Minnesota game, and Brzozowicz got into a game for the first time this season.

**The Big Picture**

After winning 5 games in a row in the Big Ten, Michigan has now lost 4 out of the last 5 games. Of those 4 losses, 3 of them were understandable, coming against ranked teams, but the loss at Purdue is the one that really hurt. It also would have been nice to win all 8 home Big Ten games, but the loss to Ohio State took care of that. Now, Michigan is sitting firmly on "the bubble" for the NCAA Tournament. They don't stand much chance of beating Ohio State in Columbus on Saturday (02/25/2006), but if they can win their last 2 home games, against Illinois (02/21/2006) and Indiana (03/04/2006), they should be off the bubble and in the tournament. If they only win one of them, they stay on the bubble. OF course, they will still get a chance to pick up another win or two in the Big Ten Tournament, which could also get them off the bubble.

Here's the updated 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 | W | 71-65 | 16-3 (6-2) |
| 02/04/2006 (Sat) | Iowa | Iowa City, IA | L | 94-66 | 16-4 (6-3) |
| 02/09/2006 (Thu) | Ohio State | Ann Arbor | L | 94-85 | 16-5 (6-4) |
| 02/11/2006 (Sat) | Purdue | West Lafayette, IN | L | 84-70 | 16-6 (6-5) |
| 02/15/2006 (Wed) | Minnesota | Ann Arbor | W | 72-50 | 17-6 (7-5) |
| 02/18/2006 (Sat) | Michigan State | East Lansing, MI | L | 90-71 | 17-7 (7-6) |
| 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 #7 of league play:

| | Big Ten | | | Overall | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Team | Wins | Losses | Percent | Wins | Losses | Percent |
| Iowa | 9 | 4 | 0.692 | 20 | 7 | 0.741 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Illinois | 8 | 4 | 0.667 | 22 | 4 | 0.846 |
| Ohio State | 8 | 4 | 0.667 | 19 | 4 | 0.826 |
| Wisconsin | 8 | 4 | 0.667 | 18 | 7 | 0.720 |
| Michigan State | 7 | 5 | 0.583 | 19 | 7 | 0.731 |
| Michigan | 7 | 6 | 0.538 | 17 | 7 | 0.708 |
| Indiana | 5 | 7 | 0.417 | 13 | 10 | 0.565 |
| Penn State | 5 | 8 | 0.385 | 13 | 11 | 0.542 |
| Minnesota | 4 | 8 | 0.333 | 13 | 10 | 0.565 |
| Northwestern | 4 | 8 | 0.333 | 12 | 12 | 0.500 |
| Purdue | 3 | 10 | 0.231 | 9 | 15 | 0.375 |

Here are the results from last week's games:

Tuesday (02/14/2006)
Michigan State lost at Iowa, 66-54

Wednesday (02/15/2006)
Minnesota lost at Michigan, 72-50
Indiana lost at Penn State, 71-68
Ohio State lost at Wisconsin, 78-73
Northwestern lost at Illinois, 63-47

Saturday (02/18/2006)
Michigan lost at Michigan State, 90-71
Penn State won at Purdue, 69-61
Northwestern lost at Ohio State, 61-52
Iowa lost at Minnesota, 74-61

Sunday (02/19/2006)
Indiana lost at Illinois, 70-58

There were a couple surprises this week:

- Indiana lost at Penn State on Wednesday. It just goes to show how hard it is to win on the road in the Big Ten.
- Iowa lost at Minnesota on Saturday. Iowa continues to win the big games, and lose the occasional "little" game. Last week, they lost at Northwestern. Did I mention that it's hard to win on the road in the Big Ten?

Here are the games scheduled for the upcoming week:

Tuesday (02/21/2006)
Illinois at Michigan

Wednesday (02/22/2006)
Penn State at Indiana
Ohio State at Michigan State
Purdue at Minnesota

Thursday (02/23/2006)
Wisconsin at Northwestern

Saturday (02/25/2006)

Michigan at Ohio State
Northwestern at Penn State
Iowa at Illinois

Sunday (02/26/2006)
Michigan State at Indiana
Minnesota at Wisconsin

There are a couple of big games this week:

- Illinois at Michigan on Tuesday. This is a "must win" game for both teams. Illinois needs to win to stay in the hunt for the Big Ten title. Michigan needs to win to get into the NCAA Tournament.
- Ohio State at Michigan State on Wednesday. Another "must win" game for both teams, if they want a shot at the Big Ten title.
- Michigan at Ohio State on Saturday. Another "must win" game for both teams. Hell, at this time of year, they're all "must win" games.
- Iowa at Illinois on Saturday. This is Illinois' last chance to catch Iowa.
- Michigan State at Indiana on Sunday. Indiana may have dropped out of the Big Ten race, but they're still very dangerous at home.

Here are all the Big Ten results for the whole season, in alphabetical order:

| Team | Record | Wins | Losses | Remaining Games |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Illinois | 8-4 | Michigan State (H)<br>Michigan (H)<br>Northwestern (A)<br>Minnesota (H)<br>Purdue (H)<br>Wisconsin (A)<br>Northwestern (H)<br>Indiana (H) | Iowa (A)<br>Indiana (A)<br>Penn State (H)<br>Ohio State (A) | Michigan (A)<br>Iowa (H)<br>Minnesota (A)<br>Michigan State (A) |
| Indiana | 5-7 | Michigan (H)<br>Ohio State (H)<br>Illinois (H)<br>Purdue (H)<br>Northwestern (H) | Michigan State (A)<br>Iowa (A)<br>Minnesota (A)<br>Wisconsin (A)<br>Iowa (H)<br>Penn State (A)<br>Illinois (A) | Penn State (H)<br>Michigan State (H)<br>Purdue (A)<br>Michigan (A) |
| Iowa | 9-4 | Illinois (H)<br>Penn State (A)<br>Minnesota (H)<br>Indiana (H)<br>Ohio State (H)<br>Purdue (A)<br>Michigan (H)<br>Indiana (A)<br>Michigan State (H) | Wisconsin (N)<br>Michigan State (A)<br>Northwestern (A)<br>Minnesota (A) | Illinois (A)<br>Penn State (H)<br>Wisconsin (H) |
| Michigan | 7-6 | Purdue (H)<br>Northwestern (H)<br>Minnesota (A)<br>Michigan State (H)<br>Wisconsin (H)<br>Penn State (A) | Indiana (A)<br>Illinois (A)<br>Iowa (A)<br>Ohio State (H)<br>Purdue (A)<br>Michigan State (A) | Illinois (H)<br>Ohio State (A)<br>Indiana (H) |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Minnesota (H) | | |
| Michigan State | 7-5 | Indiana (H)<br>Ohio State (A)<br>Iowa (H)<br>Penn State (H)<br>Northwestern (A)<br>Purdue (H)<br>Michigan (H) | Illinois (A)<br>Wisconsin (A)<br>Michigan (A)<br>Minnesota (A)<br>Iowa (A) | Ohio State (H)<br>Indiana (A)<br>Wisconsin (H)<br>Illinois (H) |
| Minnesota | 4-8 | Indiana (H)<br>Penn State (A)<br>Michigan State (H)<br>Iowa (H) | Northwestern (H)<br>Wisconsin (H)<br>Purdue (A)<br>Iowa (A)<br>Michigan (H)<br>Illinois (A)<br>Ohio State (A)<br>Michigan (A) | Purdue (H)<br>Wisconsin (A)<br>Illinois (H)<br>Northwestern (A) |
| Northwestern | 4-8 | Purdue (H)<br>Minnesota (A)<br>Purdue (A)<br>Iowa (H) | Penn State (H)<br>Wisconsin (A)<br>Michigan (A)<br>Illinois (H)<br>Indiana (A)<br>Michigan State (H)<br>Illinois (A)<br>Ohio State (A) | Wisconsin (H)<br>Penn State (A)<br>Ohio State (H)<br>Minnesota (H) |
| Ohio State | 8-4 | Penn State (H)<br>Purdue (A)<br>Wisconsin (H)<br>Penn State (A)<br>Minnesota (H)<br>Michigan (A)<br>Illinois (H)<br>Northwestern (H) | Indiana (A)<br>Michigan State (H)<br>Iowa (A)<br>Wisconsin (A) | Michigan State (A)<br>Michigan (H)<br>Northwestern (A)<br>Purdue (H) |
| Penn State | 5-8 | Northwestern (A)<br>Purdue (H)<br>Illinois (A)<br>Indiana (H)<br>Purdue (A) | Ohio State (A)<br>Iowa (H)<br>Ohio State (H)<br>Wisconsin (A)<br>Michigan State (A)<br>Michigan (H)<br>Minnesota (H)<br>Wisconsin (H) | Indiana (A)<br>Northwestern (H)<br>Iowa (A) |
| Purdue | 3-10 | Minnesota (H)<br>Wisconsin (H)<br>Michigan (H) | Northwestern (A)<br>Michigan (A)<br>Ohio State (H)<br>Penn State (A)<br>Indiana (A)<br>Northwestern (H)<br>Illinois (A)<br>Iowa (H)<br>Michigan State (A)<br>Penn State (H) | Minnesota (A)<br>Indiana (H)<br>Ohio State (A) |
| Wisconsin | 8-4 | Iowa (N)<br>Michigan State (H) | Ohio State (A)<br>Michigan (A) | Northwestern (A)<br>Minnesota (H) |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Minnesota (A)<br>Northwestern (H)<br>Penn State (H)<br>Indiana (H)<br>Penn State (A)<br>Ohio State (H) | Illinois (H)<br>Purdue (A) | Michigan State (A)<br>Iowa (A) |

With 2 losses last week, Indiana drops out of the ranks of the contenders for the Big Ten title, although I'm still counting them as a "tough" opponent below. One more loss, and Michigan is out of contention. Looking at the remaining schedule for each of the contenders, here's how it lays out:

| Team | Tough Games | | Easy Games | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Home | Away | Home | Away |
| Illinois | Iowa | Michigan<br>Michigan State | | Minnesota |
| Iowa | Wisconsin | Illinois | Penn State | |
| Michigan | Illinois<br>Indiana | Ohio State | | |
| Michigan State | Ohio State<br>Wisconsin<br>Illinois | Indiana | | |
| Ohio State | Michigan | Michigan State | Purdue | Northwestern |
| Wisconsin | | Michigan State<br>Iowa | Minnesota | Northwestern |

With 2 weeks left in the regular season, Iowa is still in 1st place, and they still have the easiest remaining schedule. They only have 3 games remaining, and 2 of them are against other contenders. One of those games is at home, and the other is on the road. Their other game is also at home. They should win at least 2 of those 3 games, which would give them at least a tie for the Big Ten title. Ohio State has almost as easy a remaining schedule. They also only have 2 games remaining against other contenders, with one at home and the other on the road. However, they have 4 games remaining total, and 2 of them are on the road. Wisconsin has the next easiest schedule, with only 2 games left against other contenders. Of course, both of them are on the road, and they have 2 other games remaining, one on the road and one at home. Michigan only has 3 games remaining, but they're all against tough teams. Two of them are at home. Illinois has 4 games remaining, 3 of them against contenders, and 3 of them on the road. Finally, Michigan State has 4 games left, all against contenders, although 3 of them are at home. It should be quite a finish.

**The Upcoming Week**

Looking ahead to the upcoming week, Michigan has two games this week. On Tuesday (02/21/2006, 7:00 p.m.), they play (#8) Illinois in Crisler Arena, then on Saturday (02/25/2006) they play at (#12) Ohio State. If Michigan wants to go to the NCAA Tournament, they need to beat Illinois on Tuesday. It would be a huge upset if they won in Columbus on Saturday, but stranger things have happened in the Big Ten this season. Come on down to Crisler Arena on Tuesday evening to cheer on the Wolverines, and check back again next week to see how things went, and why.

Go Blue!