03/06/2006 – Week #18 – A Disappointing End To The Regular Season

The Week In Review

This past week, the University of Michigan men's basketball team played their final regular season game of the year, and they lost. On Saturday (03/04/2006), they lost to Indiana in Crisler Arena, 69-67. It was a weird game. UM jumped out to a 10-0 lead, and seemed poised to blow out IU, then the game slowed way down. Indiana made it close near the end of the 1st half, and Michigan only led by 3 at halftime, 30-27. After halftime, Michigan pushed the lead back up to 10 points (39-29), then the roof fell in. Once Indiana got the momentum, Michigan couldn't get it back. Still the Wolverines only trailed by one point, with the ball, and the shot clock turned off. They worked for the last shot, took it, and missed it. It was a really disappointing way to end the regular season.

It was Senior Day, and this year's class of 8 seniors deserved a lot better. This has been a very talented and dedicated senior class, and they've stuck it out through thick and thin. They are:

Lester Abram – Since he missed most of last season due to shoulder surgery, he is technically a redshirt junior this year. While he had been ambiguous earlier this season about returning next season for his 5th year, he recently announced that he will be back. Still, he wanted to go through the Senior Day ceremony with the rest of the class he started with, even though he'll do it again next season. Unfortunately, due to an ankle injury, he didn't get to play in his final home game.
Amadou Ba – He's also a redshirt junior, since he sat out his freshman season to learn more basketball. He has elected not to return for his 5th year, so he participated in the Senior Day ceremony.
Graham Brown – He has been a warrior for all 4 years he's played at Michigan. He always gave 100% out there, and he has been a very valuable contributor countless times.
Hayes Grooms – He's a 5th year senior this year, after playing for 3 years at Lamar University, then sitting out last season after transferring to Michigan to play his final year close to Detroit, his hometown. He has contributed nicely this season.
Sherrod Harrell – He has been a good, solid player for 4 years at Michigan, including several starts last year when the team was ravaged by injuries and a suspension.
Daniel Horton – What can I say about him that hasn't already been said? He has been awesome this season, and his whole career. It was a real shame that he lost so many games last season, but he made up for it this season.
Chris Hunter – He didn't get to play in his final game at home, due to a minor knee injury. Still, he has been a wonderful 6th man this season, with several starts mixed in.
Troy Sanchez – He's a first-year walk-on, and he didn't get to play in any games this season, but he was still a valuable practice player.

I don't like to blame close losses on the officials, but the officiating in this game was really suspect. It certainly didn't appear that this crew knew what an offensive foul looks like. They called it wrong, or didn't call it, always to Michigan's detriment, 5 or 6 times in the game. If any of those calls had been made correctly, we'd be talking about Michigan's glorious victory instead of their stinging defeat. They were incompetent officials, and they should be ashamed of the job they did. When I stomped out of Crisler after the game, I was thinking that it might have been the worst-officiated basketball game that I've seen in my 35 years of watching games, but after I had some time to cool down, I remembered other games that were worse, but not many.

The loss leaves Michigan with a final regular season record of 18-9, 8-8 in Big Ten play. Michigan ended up tied for 6th place in the Big Ten, with Michigan State.

Game Statistics

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	21-46 (45.7%)	5-16 (31.3%)	20-27 (74.1%)
Indiana	25-55 (45.5%)	7-22 (31.8%)	12-16 (75.0%)
Advantage	Indiana	Indiana	Michigan

The game was very close, decided in the last seconds, and the shooting stats are very close. It's even hard to decide who had the advantage in each category: Michigan shot a slightly higher percentage overall, but Indiana made 4 more baskets. I'd say that's IU's advantage. Similarly for free-throw shooting: Indiana shot a little better, but Michigan made more free throws than Indiana attempted. Advantage Michigan. Still the story of the game has to be 3-point shooting. Those two extra 3-pointers made all the difference.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	31	7	24	5	7
Indiana	31	14	20	1	10
Advantage	Even	Indiana	Indiana	Michigan	Indiana

These stats are also very close, which makes sense, since the game was very close. The Turnovers and Steals pretty much balance each other out. It was the 3-point shooting that did it.

Individual Statistics

It was Senior Day, so Coach Amaker started all seniors: 3 bench players (Ba, Grooms, and Harrell), and 2 regular starters (Brown and Horton). He only left the 3 bench players in for 2 minutes, but they did fine: UM led 10-0 before IU got going. Here are their numbers:

Player	Field Goals	3-Pointers	Free Throws	Points
Amadou Ba	0-0	0-0	0-0	0
Graham Brown	5-7	0-0	0-1	10
Hayes Grooms	0-0	0-0	0-0	0
Sherrod Harrell	0-0	0-0	0-0	0
Daniel Horton	9-17	3-6	13-13	34
Totals	14-24 58.3%	3-6 50.0%	13-14 92.9%	44

As a group, the starters did well, although only two of them played for more than a couple minutes.

As far as individual performances, the two regular starters had good games. In fact, Horton had a great game against Indiana. His 34 points is the second highest of his career, and his perfect 13-for-13 free-throw shooting helped him set a new Big Ten single-season percentage record. He ended the regular season shooting 89-for-91 (97.8%) in the Big Ten season, which shattered the old record held by Steve Alford since 1985 (58-for-62 = 93.5%). Here's how Horton did it:

Date	Opponent	Free Throw Shooting	
		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
02/21/2006	Illinois	8-8	74-76
02/25/2006	Ohio State	2-2	76-78
03/04/2006	Indiana	13-13	89-91

It's an impressive record, and Horton should be very proud of himself.

Since Lester Abram is still out with his ankle injury, Ron Coleman would have started in his place, if it hadn't been Senior Day. He, and the other two regular starters (Dion Harris and Courtney Sims) all played most of the game, once the three "honorary" senior starters came out. Here's how all the bench players did:

Player	Field Goals	3-Pointers	Free Throws	Points
Ron Coleman	3-6	1-3	2-5	9
Dion Harris	2-10	1-6	2-2	7
Brent Petway	2-4	0-0	1-2	5
Courtney Sims	0-0	0-0	1-2	1
Jerret Smith	0-2	0-1	1-2	1
Totals	7-22 31.8%	2-10 20.0%	7-13 53.8%	23

As a group, the bench players made a big contribution in the Indiana game. Of course, 3 of the bench players were normally starters. However, even though they scored a lot of points, as a group they didn't shoot very well.

Individually, Coleman had a good game, and Harris and Petway did what they could, but it just wasn't enough. Once again, Harris hurt the team more than he helped it. He still hasn't found his shot, and he's still a step slower than usual. He ended up taking, and missing, the final shot that could have won the game. I feel that Horton should have taken that shot, but he didn't, and it's all ancient history now.

The other two bench players, Sims and Smith, were very ineffective out there. Smith did a decent job running the point, but he still needs to present some sort of offensive threat, to keep the opposing defenses from sagging off him to double someone else. Sims had another of his "invisible" games, with no shots in 22 minutes of "action". This was another

game where Chris Hunter would have really helped, but he's still out with a knee injury. It's possible that he'll be back for the Big Ten Tournament, but he certainly won't be 100%.

The Big Picture

The regular season is over, and it didn't end well. At the halfway point in the Big Ten season, after the Penn State game on 02/01/2006, Michigan was 6-2 in the Big Ten, and tied for 1st place. From that point on they went 2-6, and stumbled to an 8-8 record and a tie for 6th place. Some of those games were predictable losses (at Iowa, at MSU, and at Ohio State), but some of them should have been wins (home vs. Ohio State, at Purdue, and home vs. Indiana). Realistically, Michigan should have gone 5-3 in the 2nd half of the Big Ten season, and finished 11-5. They didn't, and because of that, they're "on the bubble" for making it to the NCAA Tournament, and they missed out on the 1st round bye in the Big Ten Tournament.

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	61-68	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	63-70	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	74-79	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	66-94	16-4 (6-3)
02/09/2006 (Thu)	Ohio State	Ann Arbor	L	85-94	16-5 (6-4)
02/11/2006 (Sat)	Purdue	West Lafayette, IN	L	70-84	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	71-90	17-7 (7-6)
02/21/2006 (Tue)	Illinois	Ann Arbor	W	72-64	18-7 (8-6)
02/25/2006 (Sat)	Ohio State	Columbus, OH	L	54-64	18-8 (8-7)
03/04/2006 (Sat)	Indiana	Ann Arbor	L	67-69	18-9 (8-8)
Big Ten Tournament					
03/09/2006 (Thu)	Round 1: Minnesota	Indianapolis, IN			
03/10/2006 (Fri)	Round 2: Iowa	Indianapolis, IN			
03/11/2006 (Sat)	Semifinals	Indianapolis, IN			
03/12/2006 (Sun)	Finals	Indianapolis, IN			

Big Ten Results

Here are the final Big Ten standings, after Week #9 of league play:

Team	Big Ten			Overall		
	Wins	Losses	Percent	Wins	Losses	Percent
Ohio State	12	4	0.750	23	4	0.852
Illinois	11	5	0.688	25	5	0.833
Iowa	11	5	0.688	22	8	0.733
Wisconsin	9	7	0.562	19	10	0.655
Indiana	9	7	0.562	17	10	0.630
Michigan	8	8	0.500	18	9	0.667
Michigan State	8	8	0.500	20	10	0.667
Penn State	6	10	0.375	14	13	0.519
Northwestern	6	10	0.375	14	14	0.500
Minnesota	5	11	0.312	14	13	0.519
Purdue	3	13	0.188	9	18	0.333

Here are the results from last week's games:

Tuesday (02/28/2006)
Illinois won at Minnesota, 71-65

Wednesday (03/01/2006)
Indiana won at Purdue, 70-59
Penn State lost at Iowa, 65-38
Ohio State won at Northwestern, 56-53

Thursday (03/02/2006)
Wisconsin lost at Michigan State, 74-65

Saturday (03/04/2006)
Indiana won at Michigan, 69-67
Illinois won at Michigan State, 75-68
Minnesota lost at Northwestern, 57-53
Wisconsin lost at Iowa, 59-44

Sunday (03/05/2006)
Purdue lost at Ohio State, 76-57

There were no surprises this week. Looking back on the whole season, the Upset Of The Season (Conference Games) had to be Penn State's victory at Illinois on 02/04/2006. The Upset Of The Season (All Games) was definitely when Wisconsin lost at home to North Dakota State on 01/21/2006. There were a few other big surprises, but those 2 games stand out.

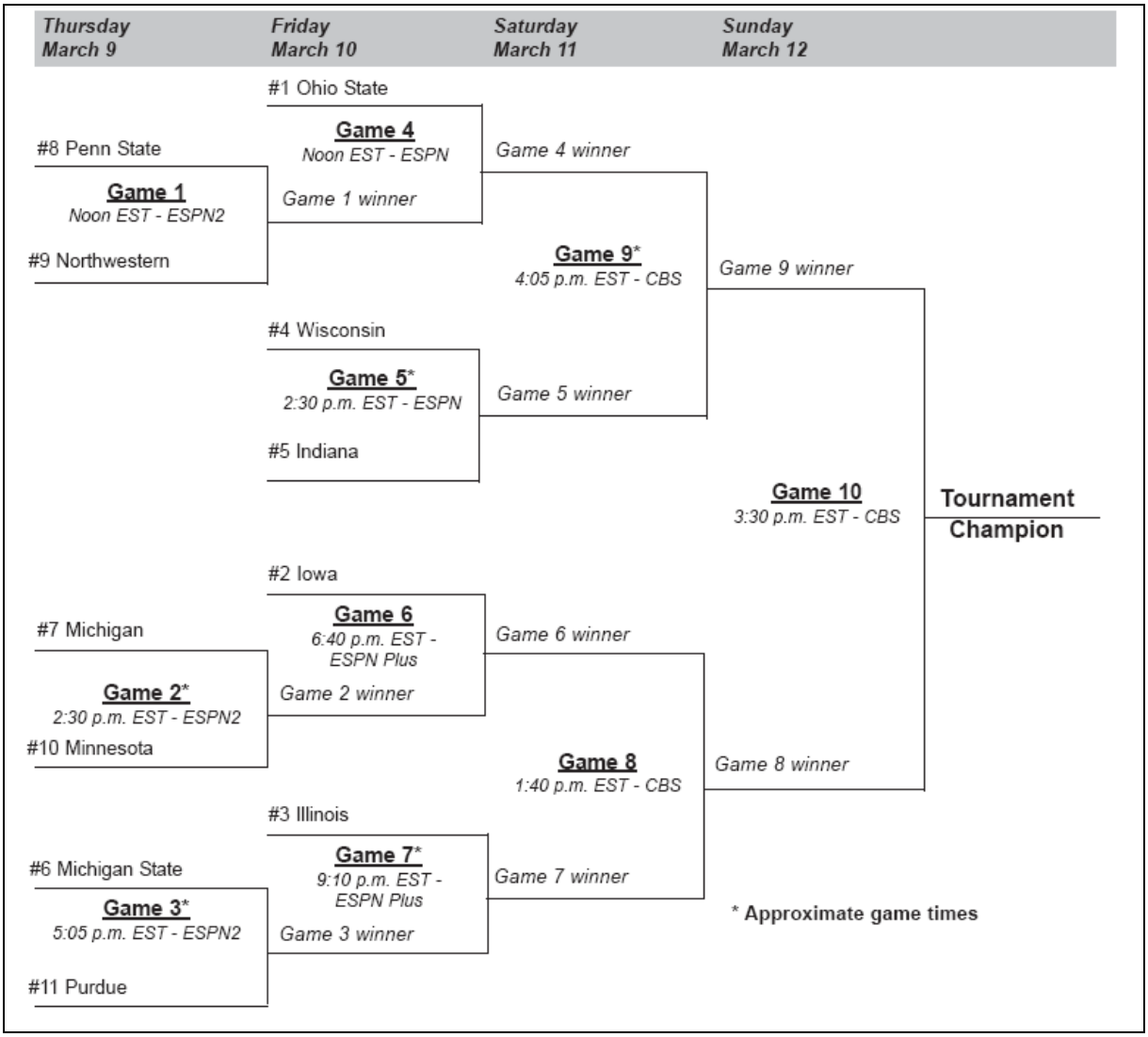
Here are all the Big Ten results for the whole season, in alphabetical order:

Team	Record	Wins	Losses
Illinois	11-5	Michigan State (H) Michigan (H) Northwestern (A) Minnesota (H) Purdue (H) Wisconsin (A) Northwestern (H)	Iowa (A) Indiana (A) Penn State (H) Ohio State (A) Michigan (A)

		Indiana (H) Iowa (H) Minnesota (A) Michigan State (A)	
Indiana	9-7	Michigan (H) Ohio State (H) Illinois (H) Purdue (H) Northwestern (H) Penn State (H) Michigan State (H) Purdue (A) Michigan (A)	Michigan State (A) Iowa (A) Minnesota (A) Wisconsin (A) Iowa (H) Penn State (A) Illinois (A)
Iowa	11-5	Illinois (H) Penn State (A) Minnesota (H) Indiana (H) Ohio State (H) Purdue (A) Michigan (H) Indiana (A) Michigan State (H) Penn State (H) Wisconsin (H)	Wisconsin (N) Michigan State (A) Northwestern (A) Minnesota (A) Illinois (A)
Michigan	8-8	Purdue (H) Northwestern (H) Minnesota (A) Michigan State (H) Wisconsin (H) Penn State (A) Minnesota (H) Illinois (H)	Indiana (A) Illinois (A) Iowa (A) Ohio State (H) Purdue (A) Michigan State (A) Ohio State (A) Indiana (H)
Michigan State	8-8	Indiana (H) Ohio State (A) Iowa (H) Penn State (H) Northwestern (A) Purdue (H) Michigan (H) Wisconsin (H)	Illinois (A) Wisconsin (A) Michigan (A) Minnesota (A) Iowa (A) Ohio State (H) Indiana (A) Illinois (H)
Minnesota	5-11	Indiana (H) Penn State (A) Michigan State (H) Iowa (H) Purdue (H)	Northwestern (H) Wisconsin (H) Purdue (A) Iowa (A) Michigan (H) Illinois (A) Ohio State (A) Michigan (A) Wisconsin (A) Illinois (H) Northwestern (A)
Northwestern	6-10	Purdue (H)	Penn State (H)

		Minnesota (A) Purdue (A) Iowa (H) Wisconsin (H) Minnesota (H)	Wisconsin (A) Michigan (A) Illinois (H) Indiana (A) Michigan State (H) Illinois (A) Ohio State (A) Penn State (A) Ohio State (H)
Ohio State	12-4	Penn State (H) Purdue (A) Wisconsin (H) Penn State (A) Minnesota (H) Michigan (A) Illinois (H) Northwestern (H) Michigan State (A) Michigan (H) Northwestern (A) Purdue (H)	Indiana (A) Michigan State (H) Iowa (A) Wisconsin (A)
Penn State	6-10	Northwestern (A) Purdue (H) Illinois (A) Indiana (H) Purdue (A) Northwestern (H)	Ohio State (A) Iowa (H) Ohio State (H) Wisconsin (A) Michigan State (A) Michigan (H) Minnesota (H) Wisconsin (H) Indiana (A) Iowa (A)
Purdue	3-13	Minnesota (H) Wisconsin (H) Michigan (H)	Northwestern (A) Michigan (A) Ohio State (H) Penn State (A) Indiana (A) Northwestern (H) Illinois (A) Iowa (H) Michigan State (A) Penn State (H) Minnesota (A) Indiana (H) Ohio State (A)
Wisconsin	9-7	Iowa (N) Michigan State (H) Minnesota (A) Northwestern (H) Penn State (H) Indiana (H) Penn State (A) Ohio State (H) Minnesota (H)	Ohio State (A) Michigan (A) Illinois (H) Purdue (A) Northwestern (A) Michigan State (A) Iowa (A)

Speaking of the Big Ten Tournament, it starts on Thursday (03/09/2006) in Indianapolis. The first round just involves the bottom 6 teams (Michigan, Michigan State, Penn State, Northwestern, Minnesota, and Purdue), playing to eliminate 3 teams, and get the field down to a nice even 8 teams. Here's the full bracket:



Michigan played Minnesota twice this season, and beat them both times, so I expect Michigan to be able to beat Minnesota on Thursday. This will get them into the Friday game against Iowa. Michigan only played Iowa once this season, in Iowa City, and they got blown out. However, they were hanging with Iowa quite well before the roof fell in. They can beat Iowa, but that doesn't mean that they will. On the positive side, it's entirely possible that both Lester Abram and Chris Hunter will be available (though not at 100%) for the tournament games.

Looking at the whole bracket, I don't expect Ohio State to have much trouble making it to the championship game on the top of the bracket. MSU should crush Purdue, but they'll have a tough time against Illinois. If Michigan can somehow get past Minnesota and Iowa, they'll have their hands full with either MSU or Illinois. They've beaten both of them already

this season, but it wasn't easy. I expect Illinois to emerge from the bottom of the bracket, and to beat OSU for the championship.

Assuming Michigan beats Minnesota, they stand a decent chance of getting an at-large bid to the Big Dance. If they beat Iowa as well, they're in, no question. If they lose to Minnesota in the 1st round, they're definitely in the NIT.

The Upcoming Week

Michigan has at least one, and as many as four games this week, depending on how they do. The first game is on Thursday (03/09/2006, 2:30 p.m.) vs. Minnesota. Stop by next week to see how it went, and why.

Go Blue!