03/13/2006 – Week #19 – Goodbye NCAA, Hello NIT

The Week In Review

This past week, the University of Michigan men's basketball team played in the Big Ten Tournament in Indianapolis, and they lost on Thursday (03/09/2006) in the first round to Minnesota, 59-55. This is particularly depressing since Michigan was the #7 seed, and Minnesota was the #10 seed, and Michigan beat Minnesota twice in the regular season.

The Wolverines played well at the beginning of the game, but they started to slip just before halftime. Still, they led by 4 points (27-23) at halftime. Then, they had to play the 2nd half. They stunk up the joint, and lost to the #10 seed in the tournament. It was very discouraging. The loss leaves Michigan with a record of 18-10, 8-8 in Big Ten play. It also means that Michigan has lost 7 of their last 9 games.

As a result of this loss, Michigan missed out on a possible at-large bid to the NCAA Tournament, and will have to make due with an invitation to the National Invitation Tournament (NIT). The NIT, which used to be an independent operation, was acquired by the NCAA in August 2005, and there have been a few changes. The field has been expanded from 32 teams to 40, and the teams in the tournament are now seeded and distributed in much the same manner as the bigger NCAA Tournament. More on the NIT below.

Game Statistics

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	21-56 (37.5%)	4-22 (18.2%)	9-13 (69.2%)
Minnesota	21-51 (41.2%)	2-10 (20.0%)	15-28 (53.6%)
Advantage	Minnesota	Michigan	Minnesota

Once again, the shooting stats tell the story; this time it's Free Throw shooting. Sure, Michigan shot a better percentage, but Minnesota made more free throws than Michigan attempted. That more than balanced out the 2 extra points that Michigan got from the 2 extra 3-pointers.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	35	12	21	6	7
Minnesota	37	14	18	5	9
Advantage	Minnesota	Minnesota	Minnesota	Michigan	Minnesota

How does a #7 seed lose to a #10 seed? Easy: lose all but one of the non-shooting stats. They were all close, but they almost all went Minnesota's way. In a close game, that can be the difference between winning and losing.

Individual Statistics

Once again, Coach Amaker couldn't start his favorite lineup, since Lester Abram still wasn't 100%. Abram did play 13 minutes, but he didn't start. Instead, Ron Coleman started in his place. The other 4 regular starters (Graham Brown, Dion Harris, Daniel Horton, and Courtney Sims) all started. Here's how they did:

Player	Field Goals	3-Pointers	Free Throws	Points
Graham Brown	2-4	0-0	0-0	4
Ron Coleman	1-6	0-3	0-0	2
Dion Harris	6-15	4-11	0-0	16
Daniel Horton	6-13	0-3	2-2	14
Courtney Sims	2-4	0-0	0-2	4
Totals	17-42 40.5%	4-17 23.5%	2-4 50.0%	40

As a group, the starters didn't do very well. None of these shooting percentages is very good, and 40 points is a pretty pathetic total.

Individually, it was nice to see Harris finally get his form back, at least a little. His shooting percentages aren't very good, but that's the way he's shot his whole career. Horton was the only other starter to hit double figures, and he shot a little better than Harris overall, but he couldn't buy a 3-pointer. He did make both of his free throws, which may not seem like a very important stat, but it is: Horton leads the nation in free throw percentage for this season. With those 2 makes, he is now 121-for-129 (93.7%), which is awesome.

The other 3 starters were all pathetic. 10 points total, for 3 players? Ridiculous. The worst offender was Coleman, shooting 1-for-6, but Brown and Sims weren't much better. The guards did their part, but the other starters let the team down.

Here's how the bench players did:

Player	Field Goals	3-Pointers	Free Throws	Points
Lester Abram	0-2	0-1	2-2	2
Hayes Grooms	0-0	0-0	0-0	0
Sherrod Harrell	0-0	0-0	1-2	1
Chris Hunter	1-6	0-3	1-1	3
Brent Petway	3-5	0-0	3-4	9
Jerret Smith	0-1	0-1	0-0	0
Totals	4-14 28.6%	0-5 0.0%	7-9 77.8%	15

As a group, the bench players made a reasonable contribution in the Minnesota game. Other than free throws, they didn't shoot well, and other than Petway, they didn't score much.

The good news was that both Abram and Hunter were able to play for the first time in a while, although they both looked a lot less than 100%. Hopefully, they'll be even more recovered for the NIT games.

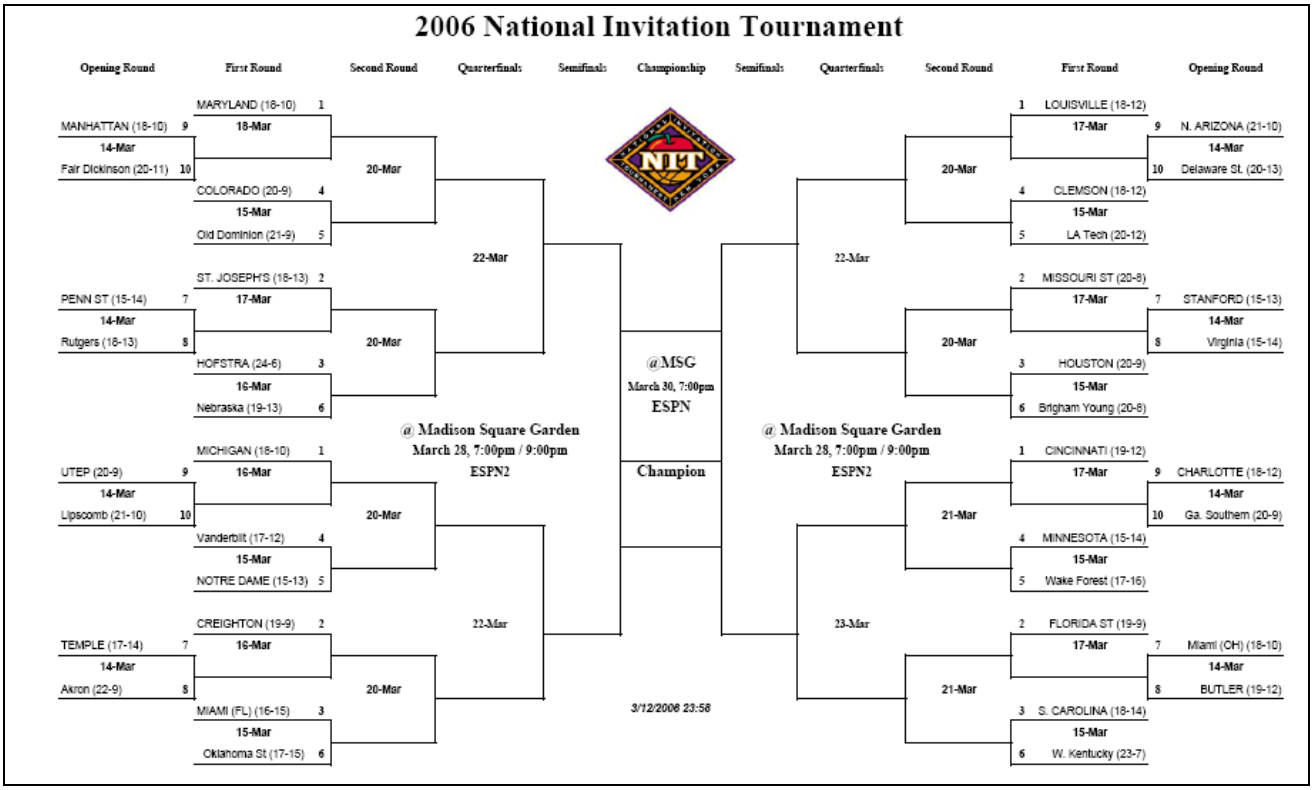
The Big Picture

Given how Michigan has played in their last 9 games, losing 7 of them, they didn't deserve to be in the NCAA Tournament. The NIT is the best place for them, and it's a tournament that they can and should win. There's no other team in the tournament that they can't beat. Of course, Michigan has proven that they can lose to anyone (Purdue and Minnesota), but they've also proven that they can play with the big boys (MSU, Illinois, and Wisconsin).

As a result of their not-quite-good-enough 18-10 record, Michigan is one of the four #1 seeds in the NIT. The other three #1 seeds are Maryland (18-10), Louisville (18-12), and Cincinatti (19-12). The #2 seed in Michigan's section of the bracket is Creighton (19-9), and the #3 seed is Miami (FL), who Michigan already throttled this season. The other significant teams in Michigan's quarter of the bracket are (#4) Vanderbilt (17-12), and (#5) Notre Dame (15-13), who Michigan beat this season.

As a result of being a #1 seed, Michigan will have "home court" for as long as they keep winning, until the final four (lowercase), which is held in Madison Square Garden.

Here's the complete bracket for the NIT:



Here's the updated schedule and results for Michigan's season:

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	L	55-59	18-10 (8-8)
National Invitation Tournament (NIT)					
03/16/2006 (Thu)	Round 1	Ann Arbor			

Big Ten Results

Here are the results from the Big Ten Tournament games:

Thursday (03/09/2006)
(#8) Penn State beat (#9) Northwestern, 60-42
(#10) Minnesota beat (#7) Michigan, 59-55
(#6) Michigan State beat (#11) Purdue, 70-58

Friday (03/10/2006)
(#1) Ohio State beat (#8) Penn State, 63-56
(#5) Indiana beat (#4) Wisconsin, 61-56
(#2) Iowa beat (#10) Minnesota, 67-57
(#6) Michigan State beat (#3) Illinois, 61-56

Saturday (03/11/2006)
(#2) Iowa beat (#6) Michigan State, 53-48
(#1) Ohio State beat (#5) Indiana, 52-51

Sunday (03/12/2006)
(#2) Iowa beat (#1) Ohio State, 67-60

The only real upset in the whole tournament was when Minnesota beat Michigan. It was slightly surprising that MSU beat Illinois, and when Iowa beat OSU, but they were hardly upsets.

The Upcoming Week

Michigan plays the winner of the big UTEP vs. Lipscomb game in the NIT on Thursday (03/16/2006, 7:00 p.m.) in Crisler Arena. Come on down to Crisler, and cheer on the Wolverines.

Go Blue!