04/10/2006 – Week #23 – Season Wrap-Up, Final Grades, Looking Ahead

Season Wrap-Up

In general, it was a disappointing season for the University of Michigan men's basketball team. On the one hand, they ended up with a very respectable record (22-11 overall, 8-8 in the Big Ten), and they won 4 games in the National Invitation Tournament (NIT), but on the other hand, they did lose to Minnesota in the 1st round of the Big Ten Tournament, which kept them out of the NCAA Tournament again.

As I said in last week's column, I suppose that there's something to be said for playing in 5 postseason games in the NIT, instead of losing in the 1st or 2nd round of the, like all the Big Ten teams did, but if you can't get into the Big Dance, the only real consolation is winning the Little Dance, and Michigan came up short.

The saddest part about the way the season ended is that this year's senior class, especially Graham Brown, Daniel Horton, and Chris Hunter, deserved a lot better. This was a very good senior class, and they had the misfortune to be on a hard-luck team that just barely missed making the Big Dance. If Michigan had suffered one less key injury, not had an academic ineligibility, or had gotten one less bad break somewhere along the line, this season could have ended very differently. I understand that injuries, academic ineligibilities, and bad breaks are part of the game, but UM seemed snakebit this season (and last) by extra injuries and extra bad breaks, all at the worst possible time. I guess what I'm trying to say is that the team was better than their record and results show.

Speaking of their results, here are the final results for this season:

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record
11/18/2005 (Fri)	Central Michigan	Ann Arbor	W	87-60	1-0
11/22/2005 (Tue)	Boston University	Boston, MA	W	51-46	2-0
11/26/2005 (Sat)	Butler	Ann Arbor	W	78-74	3-0
11/29/2005 (Tue)	Miami (FL)	Ann Arbor	W	74-53	4-0
12/03/2005 (Sat)	Notre Dame	South Bend, IN	W	71-67	5-0
12/07/2005 (Wed)	Delaware State	Ann Arbor	W	69-49	6-0
12/10/2005 (Sat)	South Florida	Tampa, FL	W	68-47	7-0
12/17/2005 (Sat)	UCLA	Ann Arbor	L	61-68	7-1
12/22/2005 (Thu)	Miami (OH)	Ann Arbor	W	87-80	8-1
12/28/2005 (Wed)	Coppin State	Ann Arbor	W	81-53	9-1
12/31/2005 (Sat)	Chicago State	Ann Arbor	W	86-69	10-1
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
National Invitation Tournament (NIT)					
03/16/2006 (Thu)	Round 1: UTEP	Ann Arbor	W	82-67	19-10
03/20/2006 (Mon)	Round 2: Notre Dame	Ann Arbor	W	87-84	20-10
03/22/2006 (Wed)	Round 3: Miami (FL)	Ann Arbor	W	71-65	21-10
03/28/2006 (Tue)	Round 4: Old Dominion	New York, NY	W	66-43	22-10
03/30/2006 (Thu)	Round 5: South Carolina	New York, NY	L	64-76	22-11

As you can see, UM peaked in early February, when they were 16-3 (6-2 in the Big Ten). From that point on, they lost 7 out of their next 9 games, before winning 4 in a row in the NIT, and losing in the championship game. Three of those seven losses were predictable and forgivable (at Iowa, at Michigan State, at Ohio State), and two of them were toss-up games (home vs. Ohio State, home vs. Indiana), but the other two should have been wins (at Purdue, and vs. Minnesota). Those 2 wins would have put Michigan in the Big Dance, and made it a lot easier to consider the season a success.

So, what happened? How did Michigan go from a ranked (#20) 16-3 team to a "bubble team" to an NIT team? As I mentioned above, it was a wicked combination of injuries, academic ineligibility, and bad luck. Here are the messy details:

Lester Abram – Last season, he missed 28 games with injuries, and he had injury problems again this season, missing 12 more games. He missed 2 games due to a toe injury he suffered in the Chicago State game on 12/31/2005, then he missed 10 games after he suffered a high ankle sprain in the Minnesota game on 01/21/2006. Even when he returned, he wasn't quite the same player.

Dion Harris – He suffered a severe ankle sprain in the Ohio State game on 02/09/2006, and he missed 2 games. Once again, even though he returned after missing those 2 games, he wasn't the same player for several more games.

Chris Hunter – He suffered a minor knee injury just 2 minutes into the Michigan State game on 02/18/2006, and he missed 3 games because of it.

Brent Petway – He was academically ineligible for the fall semester, which cost him 11 games.

Jerret Smith – He injured his ankle in the Miami (OH) game on 12/22/2005, and he missed 2 games. He came back from that injury, then he suffered a concussion in the Penn State game on 02/01/2006, then he came down with mononucleosis, and he ended up missing 4 more games.

Here's the complete list:

Date	Opponent	Abram	Harris	Hunter	Petway	Smith
11/18/2005	Central Michigan				Ineligible	
11/22/2005	Boston University				Ineligible	
11/26/2005	Butler				Ineligible	
11/29/2005	Miami (FL)				Ineligible	
12/03/2005	Notre Dame				Ineligible	
12/07/2005	Delaware State				Ineligible	

12/10/2005	South Florida				Ineligible	
12/17/2005	UCLA				Ineligible	
12/22/2005	Miami (OH)				Ineligible	
12/28/2005	Coppin State				Ineligible	Injury
12/31/2005	Chicago State				Ineligible	Injury
01/03/2006	Indiana	Injury				
01/07/2006	Purdue	Injury				
01/14/2006	Illinois					
01/18/2006	Northwestern					
01/21/2006	Minnesota					
01/25/2006	Michigan State	Injury				
01/28/2006	Wisconsin	Injury				
02/01/2006	Penn State					
02/04/2006	Iowa	Injury				Injury
02/09/2006	Ohio State	Injury				Injury
02/11/2006	Purdue	Injury	Injury			Illness
02/15/2006	Minnesota	Injury	Injury			Illness
02/18/2006	Michigan State	Injury				
02/21/2006	Illinois	Injury		Injury		
02/25/2006	Ohio State	Injury		Injury		
03/04/2006	Indiana	Injury		Injury		
03/09/2006	Minnesota					
03/16/2006	UTEP					
03/20/2006	Notre Dame					
03/22/2006	Miami (FL)					
03/28/2006	Old Dominion					
03/30/2006	South Carolina					
Totals		**12**	**2**	**3**	**11**	**6**

That's a (not so) grand total of 34 games, which isn't as bad as last season's total (76 games), but it's still bad. As you can see, Coach Tommy Amaker had his full squad to work with for only 9 of the 33 games.

Good/Bad Wins/Losses

Not all wins are good wins, and not all losses are bad losses. Sure, a win is a win, and a loss is a loss, but some wins can be discouraging, and some losses can be encouraging. I know, Michigan doesn't believe in "moral victories" in any of their sports, but I do. Therefore, I've gone back over the season, and found the good and bad wins, and the good and bad losses:

Good wins

Date	Opponent	Location	Score	Comments
11/22/2005	Boston University	Boston, MA	51-46	Won the 1st road game of the season, against a pretty good team.
11/29/2005	Miami (FL)	Ann Arbor	74-53	Won a Big 10/ACC Challenge game.
12/03/2005	Notre Dame	South Bend, IN	71-67	Won on the road, against a good team.
01/21/2006	Minnesota	Minneapolis, MN	71-55	It's tough to win on the road in the Big Ten, especially at Minnesota.

				Just ask Indiana, Michigan State, and Iowa.
01/25/2006	(#12) Michigan State	Ann Arbor	72-67	The biggest win of the season.
01/28/2006	(#21) Wisconsin	Ann Arbor	85-76	Beat 2 ranked teams in 3 days.
02/01/2006	Penn State	State College, PA	71-65	Any win on the road in the Big Ten is a big win.
02/21/2006	(#8) Illinois	Ann Arbor	72-64	The highest-ranked team that Michigan has beaten in years.
03/20/2006	Notre Dame	Ann Arbor	87-84 (2 ot)	2nd round of the NIT.
03/22/2006	Miami (FL)	Ann Arbor	71-65	3rd round of the NIT.

Good losses

Date	Opponent	Location	Score	Comments
12/17/2005	(#14) UCLA	Ann Arbor	61-68	A close game against the eventual National Semifinalists.
01/14/2006	(#7) Illinois	Champaign, IL	74-79	Michigan took (and missed) the last shot to send it to overtime.
02/09/2006	Ohio State	Ann Arbor	85-94	Michigan hung in there with the eventual Big Ten champions.

Bad wins

Date	Opponent	Location	Score	Comments
01/07/2006	Purdue	Ann Arbor	68-65	Michigan should have beaten them handily.

Bad losses

Date	Opponent	Location	Score	Comments
02/11/2006	Purdue	West Lafayette, IN	70-84	Quite possibly the worst loss in a few years. UM should have won easily.
03/04/2006	Indiana	Ann Arbor	67-69	Michigan blew a big lead, should have won.
03/09/2006	Minnesota	Indianapolis, IN	55-59	Michigan should have beaten them handily.
03/30/2006	South Carolina	New York, NY	64-76	Michigan played a listless, lethargic game, could have beaten them.

As you can see, there are a lot more "Good Wins" than anything else, and only 4 "Bad Losses".

Season Statistics

The Athletic Department publishes complete statistics after every game, and they're very thorough and complete. They're also a bit much to digest. Here are the "stats lite" for this season.

First, let's look at the team shooting statistics for the season:

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	842-1753 (48.0%)	218-582 (37.5%)	465-617 (75.4%)
Opponents	804-1814 (44.3%)	222-611 (36.3%)	367-523 (70.2%)
Advantage	**Michigan**	**Michigan**	**Michigan**

These stats are very positive. Sure, the other guys made more 3-pointers, but they didn't shoot them as well, so it's a minor advantage for Michigan. It's impressive that UM made almost 100 more free throws than their opponents.

Next, let's check out the team non-shooting statistics for the season:

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	1115	488	495	132	215
Opponents	974	457	460	110	203
Advantage	**Mich**	**Mich**	**Opp**	**Mich**	**Mich**

Last season, Michigan lost 4 of these 5 categories, but this season, they turned that around. It's a little disappointing that UM had more turnovers than assists.

Now, let's look at the individual shooting stats for the season:

Player	Field Goals	3-Pointers	Free Throws	Points	
				Total	Per Game
Lester Abram	71-134 (0.530)	17-40 (0.425)	52-63 (0.825)	211	10.0
Amadou Ba	2-4 (0.500)	0-0 (0.000)	1-2 (0.500)	5	0.4
Graham Brown	72-113 (0.637)	0-0 (0.000)	25-50 (0.500)	169	5.1
Alex Brzozowicz	0-0 (0.000)	0-0 (0.000)	0-0 (0.000)	0	0.0
Ron Coleman	70-171 (0.409)	27-75 (0.360)	25-35 (0.714)	192	5.8
Hayes Grooms	1-12 (0.083)	1-7 (0.143)	9-11 (0.818)	12	0.6
Sherrod Harrell	4-7 (0.571)	1-1 (1.000)	5-6 (0.833)	14	0.8
Dion Harris	121-300 (0.403)	69-177 (0.390)	32-39 (0.821)	343	11.1
Daniel Horton	187-418 (0.447)	71-180 (0.394)	136-151 (0.901)	581	17.6
Chris Hunter	84-190 (0.442)	19-63 (0.302)	57-71 (0.803)	244	8.1
Brent Petway	51-86 (0.593)	0-1 (0.000)	20-35 (0.571)	122	5.5
Troy Sanchez	0-0 (0.000)	0-0 (0.000)	0-0 (0.000)	0	0.0
Jevohn Shepherd	16-45 (0.356)	4-15 (0.267)	12-24 (0.500)	48	1.8
Courtney Sims	143-226 (0.633)	0-0 (0.000)	74-104 (0.712)	360	10.9
Jerret Smith	20-47 (0.426)	9-23 (0.391)	17-26 (0.654)	66	2.4

Forget about the subs and scrubs, and look at the "regular" players. Graham Brown shot 63.7%, which is very good. Courtney Sims shot 63.3%, Brent Petway shot 59.3%, and Lester Abram shot 53.0%. Even the players who shot below 50% did OK: Daniel Horton with 44.7%, Chris Hunter with 44.2%, Jerret Smith with 42.6%, Ron Coleman with 40.9%, and Dion Harris with 40.3%. Only Jevohn Shepherd failed to crack 40%.

It was also encouraging that Michigan had more scoring balance this season. Last season, only 2 players averaged in double figures, but this season there were 4 of them.

Finally, let's check out the individual non-shooting stats for the season:

Player	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Lester Abram	70	22	29	5	21

Amadou Ba	3	0	1	0	1
Graham Brown	240	38	55	9	26
Alex Brzozowicz	0	0	1	0	0
Ron Coleman	89	27	32	3	17
Hayes Grooms	4	15	11	0	7
Sherrod Harrell	10	7	6	1	3
Dion Harris	90	86	49	3	29
Daniel Horton	84	174	115	11	64
Chris Hunter	115	11	45	30	18
Brent Petway	80	9	8	19	8
Troy Sanchez	0	0	0	0	0
Jevohn Shepherd	29	15	18	4	2
Courtney Sims	189	25	78	47	9
Jerret Smith	34	59	41	0	10

These stats are fine. The point guards (Horton and Smith) had more assists than turnovers, and the big guys (except Petway, who missed a third of the season) had more than 100 rebounds each.

Team Honors

Regardless of the awards announced at the Basketball Bust, here are my awards for this year's team:

Most Valuable Player: Daniel Horton

Best Defensive Player: Graham Brown

Most Hustle: Graham Brown

Most Improved: Chris Hunter

Best Dunker (ever): Brent Petway

Final Grades

It's time for final grades for the team, and Coach Amaker:

Name	Midterm Grade	Final Grade	Comments
Freshmen			
Phillip DeVries	Inc.	Inc.	He hasn't played at all.
Kendric Price	Inc.	Inc.	He hasn't played at all, due to being red-shirted.
Jevohn Shepherd	B-	B-	He's a smaller, lighter version of Brent Petway. He's a leaper, and he's very fast and athletic. He can hit 3-pointers, but he's not a very good shooter.
Jerret Smith	B	B	He's a natural point guard, and he's done pretty well out there. He seems fairly poised, but he's not a very good shooter.
Sophomores			

Ron Coleman	B-	B	After a slow start this season, he improved as the season went on.
Alex Brzozowicz	Inc.	Inc.	He didn't play much at all.
Juniors			
Lester Abram	B+	B	He started off strong this season, but had a rough 2nd half, due to injuries.
Amadou Ba	C	C	He didn't play much at all, but when he did, he did OK out there. He's not very quick, and he isn't a natural basketball player, but he tries hard.
Dion Harris	B+	B	He was just turning into a weapon, when he hurt his ankle. It took several games back for him to start to regain his form.
Brent Petway	Inc.	B	He didn't play at all in the non-conference portion of the season, due to academic ineligibility. He did OK during the Big Ten season.
Courtney Sims	B+	B-	He still needs to play stronger and meaner inside, but has a nice touch, and great hands and agility. He "disappears" out there too often.
Seniors			
Graham Brown	B+	B+	He did all the little things to help Michigan win. He's not a big scorer, but he's a strong presence inside, and a fierce competitor.
Hayes Grooms	B-	B-	He didn't play much, but he played fairly well when he was in there. He has decent ball-handling skills, and decent speed.
Sherrod Harrell	B-	B-	He didn't play much, but he played fairly well when he was in there. He has decent ball-handling skills, and good speed.
Daniel Horton	A-	A-	He was a true leader out there, and he occasionally picked the team up and carried them on his back. He had a great senior season, both as a scorer, and as a ball-handler.
Chris Hunter	B+	B+	He was Michigan's star 6th man. He had a very nice jumper, including good 3-point shooting. He had good ball-handling, especially for his size.
Troy Sanchez	Inc.	Inc.	He didn't play much at all.
Coach			
Tommy Amaker	B+	B	He's a decent recruiter, a good practice coach, and a decent bench coach. He needs to recruit another good, solid class, and soon.

As you can see, almost all the grades went down, even though the disappointing finish to the season wasn't any one player's fault. It was a team effort.

Looking Ahead

The future looks reasonably bright for next season. The bad news is that Michigan loses 5 "regular" players off this year's roster (Brown, Grooms, Harrell, Horton, and Hunter). The good news is that there are several good returning players (Abram, Coleman, Harris,

Petway, Shepherd, Sims, and Smith), along with Kendric Price, who will play as a redshirt freshman. The Wolverines have also signed 2 promising new freshmen (K'len Morris and DeShawn Sims), they have a verbal commitment from a third player (Anthony Wright), and they're in the running for a fourth player (Patrick Beverley). This is a good nucleus, but there won't be as much depth as this season, and it's hard to replace players like Brown and Horton. The big thing that Michigan will be missing is height. There will be lots of 6'6" – 6'8" players, but not enough 6'11" players.

Let's take a quick look at the 2 incoming freshmen who have already committed and signed for next season:

K'len Morris
6'4", 185 pounds, W
Grand Blanc, MI

He's listed as a wing in some publications, and a shooting guard in others. He's a great shooter, and a very versatile player.

DeShawn Sims
6'8", 220 pounds, F
Detroit, MI

He's a good shooter, and a slasher heading to the hoop.

Here's the player who has given Michigan a verbal commitment:

Anthony Wright
6'6", 240 pounds, F
Sterling, VA

He's a good passer, a good shooter, and a good ball-handler.

Finally, here's the player that Michigan is still in the running for:

Patrick Beverley
6'2", 175 pounds, G
Chicago, IL

He's a great scorer, not afraid to drive the lane.

As you can see, there is reason to be optimistic. Be sure to check back in November, when I start writing columns for next season. Until then…

Go Blue!