12/18/2006 – Week #08 – The End Of The "Cupcakes"

The Week In Review

The University of Michigan men's basketball team only played one game this week, and they won it. On Saturday (12/16/2006), they beat Northern Illinois (NIU) in Crisler Arena, 67-52. This win raises Michigan's overall record to 11-1, which is coincidentally the same record as the football team has.

The Wolverines played well for most of the game, with a few slumps that let NIU get close. However, they managed to hold off NIU each time they made a run, and they held the lead for almost the entire game. It was a game that Michigan should have won, and they did.

Game Statistics

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	27-65 (41.5%)	2-11 (18.2%)	11-17 (64.7%)
NIU	21-48 (43.8%)	3-8 (37.5%)	7-9 (77.8%)
Advantage	NIU	NIU	NIU

These stats are deceptive. NIU shot better across the board, but Michigan made up for that by hitting more overall field goals and free throws. The answer must lie in the non-shooting stats.

While neither team shot very well from 3-point range, the 18.2% that Michigan shot is really sad.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	39	19	13	8	9
NIU	30	13	23	6	6
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan

Here's where Michigan won the game: 9 extra rebounds, 10 less turnovers, 2 more blocks, and 3 more steals. All those extra possessions made up for Michigan's mediocre shooting performance.

Individual Statistics

Coach Amaker went with his regular starting lineup in the NIU game, and here's how they did:

Player	Field Goals	3-Pointers	Free Throws	Points
Lester Abram	5-11	0-1	4-4	14
Ron Coleman	0-2	0-1	0-0	0
Dion Harris	1-7	0-5	2-2	4
Brent Petway	3-6	0-0	2-3	8
Courtney Sims	9-17	0-0	3-5	21
Totals	18-43 41.9%	0-7 0.0%	11-14 78.6%	47

As a group, the starters did OK. Their percentages are acceptable, except for 3-point shooting, and they scored a decent number of points.

Individually, Sims obviously had a good game, but it could have been much better. Once again, he played too "soft", and tried to lay the ball in when a good stiff slam-dunk was called for.

Abram had a good game as well, which is encouraging. He started the season off slowly, but he's improved steadily during the last few weeks.

Petway played hard, and did what was asked of him. Harris and Coleman were just "off".

For the first time this season, Coach Amaker substituted 5 bench players at once as a unit for the starters. In this case, he did it with just a couple minutes gone in the game, and the "2nd unit" did a great job. They played for several minutes, and turned a small deficit into a nice lead. They played together well as a unit, and they looked sharp out there.

Here's how they did:

Player	Field Goals	3-Pointers	Free Throws	Points
Reed Baker	2-5	2-3	0-0	6
Jevohn Shepherd	3-5	0-0	0-0	6
DeShawn Sims	1-4	0-0	0-2	2
Jerret Smith	1-4	0-1	0-0	2
Ekpe Udoh	2-4	0-0	0-1	4
Totals	9-22 40.9%	2-4 50.0%	0-3 0.0%	20

As a group, the bench players did pretty well. Their shooting percentages are decent, except for free-throw shooting, and they did chip in quite a few points.

The Big Picture

The "cupcake" portion of the schedule is over. Now we'll see how good Michigan really is. They were almost perfect during the "cupcake" portion, with just one loss, and no really close calls. They did lose on the road to NC State, which was a toss-up game, but they also won their other away game, at Miami (OH). Overall, it's hard to know how good UM is.

Now the tough games begin. First, they play on the road at (#1) UCLA, then they play Army and formerly-ranked Georgetown. Army isn't in the same league with UCLA or Georgetown, but they're not as much of a "creampuff" as Maryland-Baltimore County.

Here's the 2006-2007 schedule/results:

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record
11/02/2006 (Thu)	Wayne State (exh)	Ann Arbor	W	85-51	0-0
11/05/2006 (Sun)	Michigan Tech (exh)	Ann Arbor	W	85-50	0-0
John Thompson Challenge					
11/10/2006 (Fri)	Central Connecticut State	Ann Arbor	W	60-40	1-0
11/11/2006 (Sat)	Davidson	Ann Arbor	W	78-68	2-0
11/12/2006 (Sun)	Eastern Michigan	Ann Arbor	W	80-51	3-0
11/15/2006 (Wed)	Wisconsin-Milwaukee	Ann Arbor	W	66-59	4-0
11/17/2006 (Fri)	Harvard	Ann Arbor	W	82-50	5-0
11/22/2006 (Wed)	Youngstown State	Ann Arbor	W	65-56	6-0

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record
11/25/2006 (Sat)	Maryland-Baltimore County	Ann Arbor	W	66-54	7-0
ACC/Big Ten Challenge					
11/27/2006 (Mon)	North Carolina State	Raleigh, NC	L	67-74	7-1
12/02/2006 (Sat)	Wofford	Ann Arbor	W	83-49	8-1
12/07/2006 (Thu)	Miami (OH)	Oxford, OH	W	62-56	9-1
12/09/2006 (Sat)	Delaware State	Ann Arbor	W	70-43	10-1
12/16/2006 (Sat)	Northern Illinois	Ann Arbor	W	67-52	11-1
12/23/2006 (Sat)	UCLA	Los Angeles, CA			
12/28/2006 (Thu)	Army	Ann Arbor			
12/30/2006 (Sat)	Georgetown	Ann Arbor			
01/03/2007 (Wed)	Illinois	Ann Arbor			
01/06/2007 (Sat)	Northwestern	Evanston, IL			
01/13/2007 (Sat)	Purdue	West Lafayette, IN			
01/17/2007 (Wed)	Penn State	Ann Arbor			
01/20/2007 (Sat)	Purdue	Ann Arbor			
01/24/2007 (Wed)	Wisconsin	Madison, WI			
01/27/2007 (Sat)	Indiana	Bloomington, IN			
01/31/2007 (Wed)	Iowa	Ann Arbor			
02/06/2007 (Tue)	Ohio State	Columbus, OH			
02/10/2007 (Sat)	Minnesota	Ann Arbor			
02/13/2007 (Tue)	Michigan State	East Lansing, MI			
02/17/2007 (Sat)	Indiana	Ann Arbor			
02/21/2007 (Wed)	Illinois	Champaign, IL			
02/24/2007 (Sat)	Minnesota	Minneapolis, MN			
02/27/2007 (Tue) or 02/28/2007 (Wed)	Michigan State	Ann Arbor			
03/03/2007 (Sat)	Ohio State	Ann Arbor			
Big Ten Tournament					
03/08/2007 (Thu)	First Round	Chicago, IL			
03/09/2007 (Fri)	Quarterfinals	Chicago, IL			
03/10/2007 (Sat)	Semifinals	Chicago, IL			
03/11/2007 (Sun)	Finals	Chicago, IL			

The Upcoming Week

As you can see in the schedule above, Michigan only has one game this week. On Saturday (12/23/2006, 2:00 p.m. EST), they play (#1) UCLA in Los Angeles. It would be a major upset if Michigan beat UCLA, but it could happen. It is much more likely that UM will hang around with UCLA, and fold down the stretch. Despite a starting lineup of 4 seniors and a junior, Michigan is really a young team again this season, with very little experience on the bench. I'm afraid that this inexperience will cost UM their shot at the upset. However, we'll be able to tell a lot more about the team by how well they hang in there with UCLA. The game is going to be nationally telecast on CBS, so tune by to see how the Wolverines do.

Go Blue!