01/01/2007 – Week #10 – Happy (?) New Year

Happy New Year! I hope you all have had a great holiday season, and that 2007 is another year when it's great to be a Michigan Wolverine, regardless of how the basketball team does.

This is a big article this week. We've got a lot to cover:

- Last week's two games.
- Mid-term grades for the team.
- A preview of the Big Ten season.
- A look at the two games next week.

Let's get at it.

The Week In Review

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this week, and they split them. On Thursday (12/28/2006), they beat Army, 62-50, then on Saturday (12/30/2006), they lost to Georgetown, 67-51. Both games were in Crisler Arena. The win and the loss leave Michigan with an overall record of 12-3.

Michigan played a solid game against Army, and led almost the entire game. Army was a worthy opponent, and a good warmup for the Georgetown game and the upcoming Big Ten season.

Unfortunately, Michigan shot terribly in the Georgetown game, and they were never really in it. They fell behind early, made a nice comeback just before halftime, then let the game get completely out of control in the first few minutes of the 2nd half, when Georgetown went on an 11-0 run. After that, Michigan never got the deficit back into single-digits. It was a very disappointing performance, and it shows that Michigan still has a lot of work to do before they can beat the big boys.

Game Statistics

First, let's look at the shooting statistics from the Army game:

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	17-46 (37.0%)	7-16 (43.8%)	21-25 (84.0%)
Army	19-54 (35.2%)	4-11 (36.4%)	8-9 (88.9%)
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	Army

The overall shooting and 3-point shooting are both pretty close, but Michigan won he game at the free-throw line. Sure, Army shot a slightly better percentage from the free-throw line, but Michigan scored 13 more points there than they did. In a 12-point win, that's the difference.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	42	10	22	13	8
Army	27	11	16	3	7
Advantage	Michigan	Army	Army	Michigan	Michigan

Look at that rebounding edge; that's 15 extra possesions. Look at all those Blocks; that was good interior defense. Don't look at all those Turnovers; that's only one less than they had in their last game against UCLA.

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	16-44 (36.4%)	2-16 (12.5%)	17-22 (77.3%)
Georgetown	23-44 (52.3%)	7-15 (46.7%)	14-18 (77.8%)
Advantage	Georgetown	Georgetown	Georgetown

The game was a blowout, and these stats show it. Georgetown dominated, and Michigan had a lousy day shooting.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	26	8	13	4	8
Georgetown	29	18	13	1	6
Advantage	GU	GU	Even	Michigan	Michigan

These stats don't tell the story. The shooting stats do.

Individual Statistics

The big story in the Army game was the starting lineup that Coach Amaker went with. Apprently, he was dissatisfied with his regular starters (Lester Abram, Ron Coleman, Dion Harris, Brent Petway, and Courtney Sims), so he went with his "young 5" lineup: Reed Baker, Jevohn Shepherd, DeShawn Sims, Jerret Smith, and Ekpe Udoh. The "old 5" is made up of four seniors (Abram, Harris, Petway, and Sims) and one junior (Coleman), while the "young 5" is made up of 3 freshmen (Baker, Sims, and Udoh) and 2 sophomores (Shepherd and Smith). As you'll recall, Amaker subbed in the "young 5" group just 2 minutes into the Northern Illinois game. They played very well in that game, and they played even better in the Army game. Amaker left them in for the first 7 minutes of the game, and they built up a nice little lead. The "old 5" came in, and promptly fell behind. As the game progressed, the "young 5" consistently did better than the "old 5". This is encouraging for the future, but quite puzzling. The upperclassmen should be able to play better than that.

Amaker went with almost the same starting lineup for the Georgetown game, with Abram in for Shepherd, who didn't play. I don't know what was up with Shepherd. Unfortunately, this starting lineup didn't really deliver.

Here's how the starters did this week:

	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
Player	Army	GU	Army	GU	Army	GU	Army	GU
Lester Abram	Bench	2-5	Bench	0-1	Bench	2-2	Bench	6
Reed Baker	5-8	0-1	5-7	0-1	4-4	0-0	19	0
Jevohn Shepherd	0-1	DNP	0-1	DNP	0-0	DNP	0	DNP
DeShawn Sims	4-9	3-7	0-0	0-0	5-5	4-6	13	10
Jerret Smith	1-6	2-8	1-3	1-5	4-6	0-0	7	5
Ekpe Udoh	4-9	3-3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	8	6

Totals	14-33 42.4%	10-24 41.7%	6-11 54.5%	1-7 14.3%	13-15 86.7%	6-8 75.0%	47	27

As a group, the starters did pretty well. Their percentages are good, and they scored a lot of points against Army, but not against Georgetown.

Individually, only Sims hit double figures in both games, along with 8 rebounds against Army. He played very well, and was one of the few bright spots in the Georgetown fiasco. Baker had an amazing game against Army, but he was very ineffective against Georgetown. Udoh continues to play well, and he had 9 blocked shots against Army. Smith had a beautiful half-court buzzer-beater to end the 1st half against Army, and he played pretty well against Georgetown. Shepherd looked pretty good against Army, but he didn't play at all against Georgetown.

Coach Amaker brought in the "old 5" as a group against Army, and 4 of the 5 against Georgetown, and they just did OK:

	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
Player	Army	GU	Army	GU	Army	GU	Army	GU
Lester Abram	1-1	Starter	0-0	Starter	4-5	Starter	6	Starter
Ron Coleman	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-0	0	0
Dion Harris	1-8	3-11	1-4	1-8	0-0	9-10	3	16
Brent Petway	1-2	2-4	0-0	0-0	2-2	0-0	4	4
Courtney Sims	0-1	1-4	0-0	0-0	2-2	2-4	2	4
Totals	3-13 23.1%	6-20 30.0%	1-5 20.0%	1-9 11.1%	8-10 80.0%	11-14 78.6%	15	24

As a group, the bench players did OK. Their shooting percentages aren't very good, but they did chip in a few points. However, given that they're the regular starters, this is not a very good performance.

Individually, only Harris had one good game, against Georgetown. Still he had to take 11 shots to get 16 points, 9 of them at the free-throw line. This is not good. Coleman and Sims were both very ineffective in both games, and so was Abram in the one game he came off the bench. Petway tried his best to carry the team on his back, but he couldn't do it.

Mid-Term Grades

We're almost exactly halfway through the season (15 games down, 17 left to go), so it's time for mid-term grades. For a team with a 12-3 record, these grades are not very good. Michigan has beaten the teams that they should, but they've lost their two "toss up" games (NC State and Georgetown), and lost the one they were expected to lose (UCLA).

Here are the grades:

Player	Grade	Comments
Freshmen		
Reed Baker	B-	Reed is wildly inconsistent, which isn't unusual for a true freshman. When he's "on", he has a great 3-point shot. When he's "off", forget it. He's a little slow on defense, and he is still hesitant when he runs the point.
K'Len Morris	Inc.	K'Len looked pretty good in the 7 games he played in, before he re-injured his problem shoulder. He's having surgery on it, and he's out for the rest of the season. He's

		hoping to get a medical redshirt year. If he is redshirted, he will still have 4 years of eligibility left next season.
Kendric Price	Inc.	Kendric has only played in 4 games, for a total of 16 minutes. He has scored a total of 9 points. He has great athletic ability, but still needs some work on his overall game.
DeShawn Sims	B	DeShawn had a slow start, but he's gotten better every game as the season has gone on. He's turning into a force underneath, which is something Michigan desperately needs.
Ekpe Udoh	B+	Ekpe has been a nice surprise. He has been the most consistent of the freshmen, and he continues to improve. He has great shot-blocking instincts, and a nice little jumper.
Anthony Wright	Inc.	Anthony is going to be redshirted this season, and will still have 4 years of eligibilty left next season.
Sophomores		
Phillip DeVries	Inc.	Phil has only played in 1 game, for a total of 3 minutes. He hasn't scored any points yet. He is on the team as a practice player, so he doesn't get into the games much.
Jevohn Shepherd	B-	Jevohn has shown flashes of his athletic ability, but he still hasn't displayed much of a complete game.
Jerret Smith	B-	Jerret has had plenty of chances to run the point, and he has done OK, but not great. He's a little slow, and he doesn't look very confident out there yet.
Juniors		
Ron Coleman	B-	Ron was having a pretty good season until the UCLA game, and he's been a mess ever since. He needs to get his game back.
David Merritt	Inc.	David has only played in 2 games, for a total of 4 minutes. He hasn't scored any points yet. He is on the team as a practice player, so he doesn't get into the games much.
Seniors		
Lester Abram	B-	Les hasn't been able to really get on track at all so far this season. He should be averaging double figures, and leading by example out there, and he hasn't been delivering.
Dion Harris	B-	Dion has always had a low shooting percentage, but he's having any even tougher time than usual this season. He is running the point very well, but he needs to be able to hit the open jumpers, and he's not doing that.
Brent Petway	B+	Brent was more effective coming off the bench as a "sparkplug" the last 3 seasons. This season, he's starting, and he's playing well enough, but he isn't firing the team up as much.
Courtney Sims	C+	Inch for inch, Courtney is the softest big man in the country. When he plays tough, which he rarely does, he does very well, but he has a bad tendency to disappear out there.
Coach		
Tommy Amaker	B-	Tommy hasn't managed to inspire the team in either of the "toss up" games, and he certainly didn't get them fired up

		for the blowout loss to UCLA.

Besides the players listed above, Michigan has 2 more players on the roster: Zack Gibson and C.J. Lee. They both transferred to Michigan this season (Gibson from Rutgers and Lee from Manhattan College), so they have to sit out this season. Next year, Gibson will have 3 years of eligibility left, and Lee will have 2 years left. Since they can't play this season, they don't get grades.

Big Ten Preview

The Big Ten is really the "Big Two/Little Nine" this season. (#6) Ohio State and (#4) Wisconsin are head-and-shoulders above the rest of the pack.

For the most part, the Big Ten teams have finished playing all their non-conference games, although there are still a few left to be played (Tennessee at Ohio State on 01/13/2007, Indiana at Connecticut on 01/20/2007, and Texas-Pan American at Northwestern on 02/21/2007). Here's how the Big Ten teams have done so far this season:

	Big Ten			Overall		
Team	Wins	Losses	Percent	Wins	Losses	Percent
Wisconsin	0	0	0.000	14	1	0.933
Michigan State	0	0	0.000	13	2	0.867
Ohio State	0	0	0.000	11	2	0.846
Illinois	0	0	0.000	12	3	0.800
Michigan	0	0	0.000	12	3	0.800
Purdue	0	0	0.000	11	3	0.786
Northwestern	0	0	0.000	10	3	0.769
Indiana	0	0	0.000	9	3	0.750
Penn State	0	0	0.000	9	4	0.692
Iowa	0	0	0.000	8	6	0.571
Minnesota	0	0	0.000	6	8	0.429

Don't be fooled by Ohio State's 2 losses: they were at (#6) North Carolina, and at (#4) Florida. They haven't really beaten anyone notable so far, but they have the team to do it. Wisconsin's lone loss is a little harder to explain: they lost at unranked Missouri State. Still, they have beaten a couple ranked teams: at (#20) Marquette, and home vs. (#2) Pittsburgh.

Here's my prediction of what the Big Ten standings will look like at the end of the season:

	Big Ten			Overall		
Team	Wins	Losses	Percent	Wins	Losses	Percent
Ohio State	14	2	0.875	26	4	0.867
Wisconsin	13	3	0.813	27	4	0.871
Illinois	11	5	0.688	23	8	0.742
Michigan State	10	6	0.625	23	8	0.742
Indiana	9	7	0.563	19	10	0.655
Michigan	8	8	0.500	20	11	0.645
Iowa	7	9	0.438	15	15	0.500
Northwestern	6	10	0.375	17	13	0.567
Penn State	5	11	0.313	14	15	0.483
Purdue	3	13	0.188	14	16	0.467

Minnesota	2	14	0.125	8	22	0.267

Here are the games scheduled for the upcoming week:

Tuesday (01/02/2007)
Indiana at Ohio State

Wednesday (01/03/2007)
Illinois at Michigan
Northwestern at Penn State
Purdue at Minnesota

Thursday (01/04/2007)
Michigan State at Iowa

Saturday (01/06/2007)
Michigan at Northwestern
Penn State at Purdue
Ohio State at Illinois
Minnesota at Wisconsin

Sunday (01/07/2007)
Michigan State at Indiana

There are a couple of big games this week:

- Illinois at Michigan on Wednesday. Michigan gets yet another chance to show that they can beat a decent team.
- Michigan State at Iowa on Thursday. MSU has a better team, but Iowa is tough at home.
- Michigan at Northwestern on Saturday. Michigan is 1-2 on the road, and needs to prove that they can beat the lower-division Big Ten teams.
- Michigan State at Indiana on Thursday. Once again, MSU has a better team, but Indiana is even tougher at home than Iowa.

The Big Picture

The non-conference schedule is over for Michigan, and they underachieved. They beat the 12 "creampuffs" that they were expected to beat, lost to the very good team that they were expected to lose to (#1 UCLA), and lost the two "toss up" games (NC State and Georgetown). They looked terrible in all 3 losses. This does not bode well for the Big Ten portion of the schedule. Still, I believe that Michigan can win 8 games in the Big Ten:

- 5 home games: Penn State, Purdue, Iowa, Minnesota, and Michigan State.
- 3 away games: Northwestern, Purdue, and Minnesota.

Notice that UM can win 8 games (and 20 overall) with but a single "quality win", over Michigan State. That's pretty sad, and shows what you can do with creative scheduling.

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

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record
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
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	L	92-55	11-2
12/28/2006 (Thu)	Army	Ann Arbor	W	62-50	12-2
12/30/2006 (Sat)	Georgetown	Ann Arbor	L	51-67	12-3
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 has two games this week. On Wednesday (01/03/2007, 8:00 p.m.), they play Illinois in Crisler Arena, then on Saturday (01/06/2007, 2:30 p.m. EST) they play at Northwestern. Come on out on Wednesday and cheer the Wolverines on.

Go Blue!