02/05/2007 – Week #15 – Hello NIT, Goodbye Tommy Amaker?

The Week In Review

The University of Michigan men's basketball team only played one game this week, and they lost it. On Wednesday (01/31/2007), they lost to Iowa (69-62), in Crisler Arena. The loss was the 3rd in a row, and it drops Michigan's record to 16-7 (4-4). They are currently tied for 5th place in the Big Ten.

This was a game that Michigan should have won, and needed to win to keep their dream alive of going to the NCAA Tournament next month. Now, they need to spring an upset or two in order to get an at-large bid to the Big Dance.

The game itself was one of those "tale of two halves" kind of games. Michigan looked pretty good in the 1st half, and led by as many as 14 points. They led by 11 at halftime, and still had a comfortable 12-point lead with about 14 minutes left. Then the roof fell in. Iowa went on a 20-1 run, and Michigan never caught up from it. The Wolverines did get within one point (63-62) with about a minute left, but Iowa played much better in the last minute, and earned the road win.

It was really sad and frustrating to watch Michigan come down the floor time after time during that miserable 20-1 Iowa run and either throw the ball away or get off a poor shot. They had very few good shots during that stretch, and the few they had were just enough off to miss. There was a lot of grumbling and muttering and even yelling in the crowd at the end, most of it calling for Coach Tommy Amaker to be fired. I'm afraid that he may have worn out his welcome in Ann Arbor, and this upset loss may have been the straw that broke the camel's back.

Game Statistics

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	21-55 (38.2%)	1-8 (12.5%)	19-24 (79.2%)
Iowa	24-56 (42.9%)	7-17 (41.2%)	14-18 (77.8%)
Advantage	Iowa	Iowa	Michigan

It kind of jumps out at you, doesn't it? The overall shooting percentages are pretty close, and Michigan actually won the free-throw battle, but the 3-point shooting was the difference. 1-for-8 is embarrassing.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	31	15	11	5	6
Iowa	40	17	15	4	4
Advantage	Iowa	Iowa	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan

As if the 3-point shooting wasn't bad enough, losing the rebounding battle by 9 boards just adds to the pain. About the only thing UM did well was protect the basketball. 11 turnovers is pretty good.

Individual Statistics

Coach Amaker went with his main starting lineup again. Here's how they did:

Player	Field Goals	3-Pointers	Free Throws	Points
Lester Abram	3-9	0-1	0-0	6
Ron Coleman	5-10	1-4	1-1	12
Dion Harris	0-11	0-3	1-2	1
Brent Petway	2-4	0-0	2-4	6
Courtney Sims	9-12	0-0	11-13	29
Totals	19-46 41.3%	1-8 12.5%	15-20 75.0%	54

As a group, the starters did OK. Their percentages are good, except for 3-point shooting. They just didn't score enough points.

Individually, Sims had a great game, and Coleman did well, but the other starters weren't very good, and Harris was terrible. 0-for-11 is ridiculous. He even missed layups. He cost UM the game.

Here's how the bench players did in the Iowa game:

Player	Field Goals	3-Pointers	Free Throws	Points
DeShawn Sims	0-0	0-0	0-0	0
Jerret Smith	0-2	0-0	2-2	2
Ekpe Udoh	2-7	0-0	2-2	6
Totals	2-9 22.2%	0-0 0.0%	4-4 100.0%	8

As a group, and individually, the bench players didn't contribute much. I was surprised that Amaker didn't give Reed Baker a few minutes to hoist up some 3-pointers. The other bench player who seems to have vanished is Jevohn Shepherd. For a while there, Amaker was playing 5 bench players; he only played 3 against Iowa.

The Big Picture

Michigan is in big trouble, if they want to go to the NCAA Tournament. They are now exactly halfway through the Big Ten season (8 games played, 8 left to go), and they are 4-4 in league play. While that doesn't sound too bad, the first half of the schedule was a lot easier than the second half is going to be. In the first half, they played Purdue (twice, even though they lost one of those games), Northwestern (once), and Penn State. In the second half, the only "easy" games are against Minnesota, with several very hard games: Ohio State (twice), Michigan State (twice), and another matchup with Indiana. They will be hard-pressed to go 4-4 in the second half; 2-6 or 3-5 is more like it.

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

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record
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	W	71-61	13-3 (1-0)
01/06/2007 (Sat)	Northwestern	Evanston, IL	W	58-46	14-3 (2-0)
01/13/2007 (Sat)	Purdue	West Lafayette, IN	L	53-67	14-4 (2-1)
01/17/2007 (Wed)	Penn State	Ann Arbor	W	77-57	15-4 (3-1)
01/20/2007 (Sat)	Purdue	Ann Arbor	W	71-55	16-4 (4-1)
01/24/2007 (Wed)	Wisconsin	Madison, WI	L	58-71	16-5 (4-2)
01/27/2007 (Sat)	Indiana	Bloomington, IN	L	61-76	16-6 (4-3)
01/31/2007 (Wed)	Iowa	Ann Arbor	L	62-69	16-7 (4-4)
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			

Big Ten Results

Here are the current Big Ten standings, after Week #5 of league play:

	Big Ten			Overall		
Team	Wins	Losses	Percent	Wins	Losses	Percent
Wisconsin	8	1	0.889	22	2	0.917
Ohio State	8	1	0.889	20	3	0.870
Indiana	6	3	0.667	16	6	0.727
Iowa	5	4	0.556	13	10	0.565
Michigan	4	4	0.500	16	7	0.696
Illinois	5	5	0.500	17	8	0.680
Michigan State	4	5	0.444	17	7	0.708
Purdue	4	5	0.444	15	8	0.652
Minnesota	3	6	0.333	9	14	0.391
Penn State	1	7	0.125	10	11	0.476
Northwestern	1	8	0.111	11	11	0.500

Here are the results from last week's games:

Tuesday (01/30/2007)
Michigan State lost at Illinois, 57-50

Wednesday (01/31/2007)
Iowa won at Michigan, 69-62
Ohio State won at Purdue, 78-60
Wisconsin lost at Indiana, 71-66
Minnesota won at Northwestern, 62-55

Saturday (02/03/2007)
Purdue won at Penn State, 69-59
Indiana lost at Iowa, 81-75
Northwestern lost at Wisconsin, 69-52
Ohio State won at Michigan State, 63-54
Minnesota lost at Illinois, 59-49

It was a bad week for the home teams. They had been winning at about a 90% clip, but this week they only went 5-5. The big upset, of course, was Wisconsin losing to Indiana, but it wasn't too much of a surprise, given how well IU plays at home. Iowa's road win at Michigan was also somewhat of an upset. I know that I'm upset.

Here are the games scheduled for the upcoming week:

Tuesday (02/06/2007)
Michigan at Ohio State

Wednesday (02/07/2007)
Illinois at Northwestern
Iowa at Minnesota
Michigan State at Purdue
Wisconsin at Penn State

Saturday (02/03/2007)
Minnesota at Michigan
Purdue at Ohio State
Illinois at Indiana
Iowa at Wisconsin
Penn State at Northwestern

There are a few big games this week:

- Michigan at Ohio State on Tuesday. Michigan needs an upset and a "signature win" to stand a chance of getting to the NCAA Tournament. This is one of their chances. It would be a major upset.
- Illinois at Indiana on Saturday. Illinois can't afford to lose many more if they want to make it to the Big Dance.
- Iowa at Wisconsin on Saturday. Iowa fought their way back into the Big Ten race, but they will be severely tested at Wisconsin.

Here are all the Big Ten results for the whole season, with the teams in alphabetical order, and the wins, losses, and remaining games in scheduled order:

Team	Record	Wins	Losses	Remaining Games

Illinois	5-5	Iowa (H) Minnesota (A) Indiana (H) Michigan State (H) Minnesota (H)	Michigan (A) Ohio State (H) Michigan State (A) Wisconsin (H) Purdue (A)	Northwestern (A) Indiana (A) Northwestern (H) Michigan (H) Penn State (A) Iowa (A)
Indiana	6-3	Michigan State (H) Purdue (H) Penn State (A) Iowa (H) Michigan (H)	Ohio State (A) Illinois (A) Iowa (A)	Illinois (H) Purdue (A) Michigan (A) Minnesota (H) Michigan State (A) Northwestern (A) Penn State (H)
Iowa	5-4	Michigan State (H) Minnesota (H) Penn State (H) Michigan (A) Indiana (H)	Illinois (A) Indiana (A) Ohio State (A) Wisconsin (H)	Minnesota (A) Wisconsin (A) Northwestern (H) Michigan State (A) Purdue (H) Penn State (A) Illinois (H)
Michigan	4-4	Illinois (H) Northwestern (A) Penn State (H) Purdue (H)	Purdue (A) Wisconsin (A) Indiana (A) Iowa (H)	Ohio State (A) Minnesota (H) Michigan State (A) Indiana (H) Illinois (A) Minnesota (A) Michigan State (H) Ohio State (H)
Michigan State	4-5	Northwestern (H) Illinois (H) Penn State (A) Minnesota (H)	Iowa (A) Indiana (A) Ohio State (A) Illinois (A) Ohio State (H)	Purdue (A) Michigan (H) Iowa (H) Wisconsin (H) Indiana (H) Michigan (A) Wisconsin (A)
Minnesota	3-6	Purdue (H) Penn State (H) Northwestern (A)	Wisconsin (A) Iowa (A) Illinois (H) Northwestern (H) Michigan State (A) Illinois (A)	Iowa (H) Michigan (A) Wisconsin (H) Ohio State (H) Indiana (A) Michigan (H) Purdue (A)
Northwestern	1-8	Minnesota (A)	Penn State (A) Michigan (H) Michigan State (A) Wisconsin (H) Ohio State (A) Ohio State (H) Minnesota (H) Wisconsin (A)	Illinois (H) Penn State (H) Iowa (A) Illinois (A) Purdue (H) Indiana (H) Purdue (A)
Ohio State	8-1	Indiana (H) Illinois (A)	Wisconsin (A)	Michigan (H) Purdue (H)

		Northwestern (H) Iowa (H) Northwestern (A) Michigan State (H) Purdue (A) Michigan State (A)		Penn State (A) Minnesota (A) Penn State (H) Wisconsin (H) Michigan (A)
Penn State	1-7	Northwestern (H)	Purdue (A) Indiana (H) Michigan (A) Michigan State (H) Iowa (A) Minnesota (A) Purdue (H)	Wisconsin (H) Northwestern (A) Ohio State (H) Wisconsin (A) Ohio State (A) Illinois (H) Iowa (H) Indiana (A)
Purdue	4-5	Penn State (H) Michigan (H) Illinois (H) Penn State (A)	Minnesota (A) Indiana (A) Wisconsin (A) Michigan (A) Ohio State (H)	Michigan State (H) Ohio State (A) Indiana (H) Iowa (A) Northwestern (A) Minnesota (H) Northwestern (H)
Wisconsin	8-1	Minnesota (H) Ohio State (H) Northwestern (A) Purdue (H) Illinois (A) Michigan (H) Iowa (A) Northwestern (H)	Indiana (A)	Penn State (A) Iowa (H) Minnesota (A) Penn State (H) Michigan State (A) Ohio State (A) Michigan State (H)

The race for 1st place is tightening up, and there have been some changes in the middle of the pack. I'm adding Iowa as a borderline contender, but one more loss and they're out of contention. I'm leaving Michigan as a contender, but they're also just one loss away from moving into the "pretender" category. Michigan State is out of the race. The Big Ten champs are not going to have 5 losses.

Here's a breakdown of the remaining games for the contenders, in alphabetical order:

	Tough Games		Easy Games	
Team	Home	Away	Home	Away
Indiana	Illinois	Michigan Michigan State	Minnesota Penn State	Purdue Northwestern
Iowa	Illinois	Wisconsin Michigan State	Northwestern Purdue	Minnesota Penn State
Michigan	Indiana Michigan State Ohio State	Ohio State Michigan State Illinois	Minnesota	Minnesota
Ohio State	Michigan Wisconsin	Michigan	Purdue Penn State	Penn State Minnesota
Wisconsin	Iowa Michigan State	Michigan State Ohio State	Penn State	Penn State Minnesota

Looking at this breakdown, it appears that Ohio State still has the easiest remaining schedule, with 3 "easy" games, and only 3 "tough" games. Indiana and Iowa are tied for the next easiest remaining schedules, with 4 easy games and 3 tough games. Wisconsin is next, with 3 easy games and 4 tough games. Michigan has by far the hardest remaining schedule, with 2 easy games and 6 tough ones.

The Upcoming Week

As you can see in the schedule above, Michigan has two games this week. On Tuesday (02/06/2007, 7:00 p.m.), they play at Ohio State, then on Saturday (02/10/2007, 8:00 p.m.), they play Minnesota in Crisler Arena. The Ohio State game is on ESPN, so tune in and come on down and cheer on the Wolverines.

Go Blue!