02/19/2007 – Week #17 – Staying On The Bubble

The Week In Review

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this week, and they lost on the road, and won at home. On Tuesday (02/13/2007), they lost at Michigan State (59-44), then on Saturday (02/17/2007), they beat (#24) Indiana (58-55) in Crisler Arena. The win and the loss brought Michigan's record to 18-9 (6-6). They are currently tied for 6th place in the Big Ten. They're hanging in there in the competition for good seedings in the Big Ten Tournament, even though they're out of the race for the Big Ten regular season title. More importantly, they're staying "on the bubble" for a spot in the NCAA Tournament.

The Michigan State game was frustrating. The 15-point margin of victory for MSU was not indicative of the game. With about 6 minutes left, MSU was only up by 2 points. They got hot down the stretch, and UM went cold, and the final margin was a lot wider than it should have been. The frustrating part was that it was a game that Michigan could have won. It's hard to beat MSU in Breslin, and this was a good year to do it, since MSU is down. Oh well…

The Indiana game was very exciting, and it was great to see Michigan play tough in the last 2 minutes of a close game. The Wolverines led for almost the entire game, except for two 1-point leads that IU managed to eke out near the end of the game. Every time IU went ahead, Michigan answered, and re-took the lead. They built up a 5-point lead in the last minute, and hit their free throws to seal the win. It was a big win, on national TV, in front of only the 2nd sellout of the season (Georgetown was the other). It was the first time that Coach Tommy Amaker has beaten Indiana, and it is Michigan's first win over a ranked team this season.

I've been working as an usher in Crisler Arena this season, and they sent several ushers down to stand between the Maize Rage and the benches and the scorers table. I stood at mid-court for the last 2 minutes of the game, right in front of the Maize Rage, and it was awesome. They did a great job of supporting the team in a positive manner, and they kept the energy level way up.

Game Statistics

Let's look at the shooting statistics from the Michigan State game:

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	18-51 (35.3%)	4-13 (30.8%)	4-4 (100.0%)
Michigan State	21-47 (44.7%)	5-11 (45.5%)	12-16 (75.0%)
Advantage	Michigan State	Michigan State	Michigan

Here's where MSU won the game: overall shooting. The 8 extra points from the free-throw line didn't hurt either.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	32	8	20	5	4
Michigan State	30	15	14	4	10
Advantage	Michigan	MSU	MSU	Michigan	MSU

These stats are all pretty close, except for Turnovers and Steals. The overall shooting percentage may have won the game for MSU, but the Turnovers really hurt Michigan.

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	18-42 (42.9%)	8-14 (57.1%)	14-22 (57.1%)
Indiana	19-53 (35.8%)	6-21 (28.6%)	11-18 (61.1%)
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	Indiana

This was a close game, and the stats show it. Even though Michigan shot much better than IU did from the field, Indiana had one more basket overall. The difference was the extra 3 points from the free throw line.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	35	14	14	6	2
Indiana	32	11	8	3	3
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	Indiana	Michigan	Indiana

These stats are all pretty close, except for Turnovers, which Indiana won. The 3 extra Blocks really helped Michigan.

Individual Statistics

Coach Amaker went with his regular starting lineup for the MSU game, but he mixed things up for the Indiana game, replacing Courtney Sims with Ekpe Udoh, and Ron Coleman with Jerret Smith. Here's how the starters did this week:

	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
Player	MSU	IU	MSU	IU	MSU	IU	MSU	IU
Lester Abram	3-7	2-6	0-1	1-1	0-0	2-4	6	7
Ron Coleman	1-4	Bench	0-3	Bench	0-0	Bench	2	Bench
Dion Harris	4-13	5-11	3-6	4-8	2-2	2-2	13	16
Brent Petway	3-6	1-6	0-0	0-0	0-0	2-3	6	4
Courtney Sims	2-6	Bench	0-0	Bench	0-0	Bench	4	Bench
Jerret Smith	Bench	4-5	Bench	2-3	Bench	2-3	Bench	12
Ekpe Udoh	Bench	1-4	Bench	0-0	Bench	0-0	Bench	2
Totals	13-36 36.1%	13-32 40.6%	3-10 30.0%	7-12 58.3%	2-2 100.0%	8-12 66.7%	31	41

As a group, the starters had a decent week. Their percentages are reasonable, they just didn't score enough points in the MSU game.

Individually, Harris had another good week. Since he was lousy in the Iowa game, he has had 4 consecutive good or great games. He was the only starter to hit double figures in both games. Abram did OK, but not great, in both games. Same with Petway. Smith was the only other starter to hit double figures, but he only started one game. The other players who only started one game didn't do much as starters.

Here's how the bench players did this week:

Player	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
	MSU	IU	MSU	IU	MSU	IU	MSU	IU
Reed Baker	0-0	1-2	0-0	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	3
Ron Coleman	Starter	0-1	Starter	0-1	Starter	0-0	Starter	0
Jevohn Shepherd	0-0	0-1	0-0	0-0	2-2	0-0	2	0
Courtney Sims	Starter	4-6	Starter	0-0	Starter	5-8	Starter	13
DeShawn Sims	0-4	0-0	0-2	0-0	0-0	1-2	0	1
Jerret Smith	3-5	Starter	1-1	Starter	0-0	Starter	7	Starter
Ekpe Udoh	2-6	Starter	0-0	Starter	0-0	Starter	4	Starter
Totals	5-15 33.3%	5-10 50.0%	1-3 33.3%	1-2 50.0%	2-2 100.0%	6-10 60.0%	13	17

As a group, the bench players played pretty well. Their percentages are acceptable, and they chipped in a few points.

Individually, only Courtney Sims hit double figures coming off the bench. Smith played pretty well against MSU, and Baker hit a big 3-pointer against Indiana, but other than that, no one stood out.

The Big Picture

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
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	L	63-76	16-8 (4-5)
02/10/2007 (Sat)	Minnesota	Ann Arbor	W	82-80	17-8 (5-5)
02/13/2007 (Tue)	Michigan State	East Lansing, MI	L	44-59	17-9 (5-6)
02/17/2007 (Sat)	Indiana	Ann Arbor	W	58-55	18-9 (6-6)

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record
02/21/2007 (Wed)	Illinois	Champaign, IL			
02/24/2007 (Sat)	Minnesota	Minneapolis, MN			
02/27/2007 (Tue)	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			

With just 2 weeks left in the regular season, Michigan is still on the bubble for an NCAA bid. They have 4 games left, 2 on the road, and 2 at home. They need to beat Minnesota on the road and Michigan State in Crisler to stay on the bubble. They'll have a much harder time in their other 2 games: at Illinois (on the day they retire their mascot, Chief Illiniwek, after 81 years) and at home vs. (#1) Ohio State. If they can win the other 2 games, they'll finish the regular season with a record of 20-11. That will probably leave them 1-2 wins short of a ticket to The Big Dance, so they'll have to do well in the Big Ten Tournament. It's still possible, but Michigan has very little margin for error left.

Big Ten Results

Here are the current Big Ten standings, after Week #7 of league play:

Team	Big Ten			Overall		
	Wins	Losses	Percent	Wins	Losses	Percent
Wisconsin	12	1	0.923	26	2	0.929
Ohio State	12	1	0.923	24	3	0.889
Indiana	7	5	0.583	17	8	0.680
Iowa	7	6	0.538	15	12	0.556
Illinois	7	6	0.538	19	9	0.679
Michigan State	6	6	0.500	19	8	0.704
Michigan	6	6	0.500	18	9	0.667
Purdue	6	6	0.500	17	9	0.654
Minnesota	3	10	0.231	9	18	0.333
Northwestern	2	11	0.154	12	14	0.462
Penn State	1	11	0.083	10	15	0.400

Here are the results from last week's games:

Tuesday (02/13/2007)
Michigan lost at Michigan State, 59-44

Wednesday (02/14/2007)
Ohio State won at Penn State, 64-62
Wisconsin won at Minnesota, 75-62

Thursday (02/15/2007) (Rescheduled from Tuesday, due to weather)
Indiana lost at Purdue, 81-68
Northwestern lost at Iowa, 66-58

Saturday (02/17/2007)
Indiana lost at Michigan, 58-55

Penn State lost at Wisconsin, 75-49
Iowa lost at Michigan State, 81-49

Sunday (02/18/2007)
Ohio State won at Minnesota, 85-67
Northwestern lost at Illinois, 48-37

The home teams didn't do quite as well as usual, going 7-3. Of course, 2 of those 3 home losses were courtesy of Minnesota, who got to play Wisconsin and Ohio State. The other was also a road win for Ohio State, at Penn State.

There were a few surprising results this week, starting with Ohio State's narrow escape at Penn State on Wednesday, continuing with Purdue's upset of Indiana on Thursday, and finishing with the pounding that Michigan State put on Iowa on Saturday.

Here are the games scheduled for the upcoming week:

Tuesday (02/20/2007)
Wisconsin at Michigan State

Wednesday (02/21/2007)
Michigan at Illinois
Minnesota at Indiana
Penn State at Ohio State
Purdue at Iowa
Texas-Pan American at Northwestern (non-conference)

Saturday (02/24/2007)
Michigan at Minnesota
Purdue at Northwestern
Illinois at Penn State
Indiana at Michigan State

Sunday (02/25/2007)
Wisconsin at Ohio State

There are a few big games this week:

- Wisconsin at Michigan State on Tuesday. Wisconsin is fighting to stay in first place, and Michigan State is fighting to get to the NCAA Tournament. MSU is tough in Breslin, so it should be quite a battle.
- Michigan at Illinois on Wednesday. Both teams are fighting for a spot in the NCAA Tournament. As I mentioned above, Illinois will have additional motivation since they're being forced to retire their mascot.
- Indiana at Michigan State on Saturday. More battling for seeding in the Big Ten Tournament, and for spots in the Big Dance.
- Wisconsin at Ohio State on Sunday. This is THE game of the year in the Big Ten race. Wisconsin won the first round, in Madison. I expect Ohio State to return the favor in Columbus.

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	7-6	Iowa (H) Minnesota (A) Indiana (H) Michigan State (H) Minnesota (H) Northwestern (A) Northwestern (H)	Michigan (A) Ohio State (H) Michigan State (A) Wisconsin (H) Purdue (A) Indiana (A)	Michigan (H) Penn State (A) Iowa (A)
Indiana	7-5	Michigan State (H) Purdue (H) Penn State (A) Iowa (H) Michigan (H) Wisconsin (H) Illinois (H)	Ohio State (A) Illinois (A) Iowa (A) Purdue (A) Michigan (A)	Minnesota (H) Michigan State (A) Northwestern (A) Penn State (H)
Iowa	7-6	Michigan State (H) Minnesota (H) Penn State (H) Michigan (A) Indiana (H) Minnesota (A) Northwestern (H)	Illinois (A) Indiana (A) Ohio State (A) Wisconsin (H) Wisconsin (A) Michigan State (A)	Purdue (H) Penn State (A) Illinois (H)
Michigan	6-6	Illinois (H) Northwestern (A) Penn State (H) Purdue (H) Minnesota (H) Indiana (H)	Purdue (A) Wisconsin (A) Indiana (A) Iowa (H) Ohio State (A) Michigan State (A)	Illinois (A) Minnesota (A) Michigan State (H) Ohio State (H)
Michigan State	6-6	Northwestern (H) Illinois (H) Penn State (A) Minnesota (H) Michigan (H) Iowa (H)	Iowa (A) Indiana (A) Ohio State (A) Illinois (A) Ohio State (H) Purdue (A)	Wisconsin (H) Indiana (H) Michigan (A) Wisconsin (A)
Minnesota	3-10	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	2-11	Minnesota (A) Penn State (H)	Penn State (A) Michigan (H) Michigan State (A) Wisconsin (H) Ohio State (A) Ohio State (H) Minnesota (H) Wisconsin (A) Illinois (H)	Purdue (H) Indiana (H) Purdue (A)

			Iowa (A) Illinois (A)	
Ohio State	12-1	Indiana (H) Illinois (A) Northwestern (H) Iowa (H) Northwestern (A) Michigan State (H) Purdue (A) Michigan State (A) Michigan (H) Purdue (H) Penn State (A) Minnesota (A)	Wisconsin (A)	Penn State (H) Wisconsin (H) Michigan (A)
Penn State	1-11	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	6-6	Penn State (H) Michigan (H) Illinois (H) Penn State (A) Michigan State (H) Indiana (H)	Minnesota (A) Indiana (A) Wisconsin (A) Michigan (A) Ohio State (H) Ohio State (A)	Iowa (A) Northwestern (A) Minnesota (H) Northwestern (H)
Wisconsin	12-1	Minnesota (H) Ohio State (H) Northwestern (A) Purdue (H) Illinois (A) Michigan (H) Iowa (A) Northwestern (H) Penn State (A) Iowa (H) Minnesota (A) Penn State (H)	Indiana (A)	Michigan State (A) Ohio State (A) Michigan State (H)

Now that Indiana lost twice last week, there are definitely only 2 contenders left for the Big Ten championship: Ohio State and Wisconsin. Here's a breakdown of their remaining games:

	Tough Games		Easy Games	
Team	Home	Away	Home	Away
Ohio State	Wisconsin	Michigan	Penn State	
Wisconsin	Michigan State	Michigan State		

		Ohio State		

It looks like Ohio State has the easier remaining schedule. They have 2 of their 3 remaining games at home, and one of them is very easy (Penn State). On the other hand, Wisconsin has to play 2 of their 3 remaining games on the road, and they're all toughies.

The Upcoming Week

As you can see in the schedule above, Michigan has two games this week, both on the road. On Wednesday (02/21/2007, 9:00 p.m. EST), they play at Illinois, then on Saturday (02/24/2007, 2:30 p.m. EST), they play at Minnesota. Both games are on TV, so tune in and check out the Wolverines.

Go Blue!