02/26/2007 – Week #18 – "And The Oscar® Goes To…"

I was watching the Oscars® last night, and they got me thinking about awards for the Michigan men's basketball team so far:

- Most Predictable Team in the Big Ten – Michigan. The Wolverines have basically won all the games that they were expected to win, and lost all the games that they were expected to lose.
- Most Unpredictable Guard in the Big Ten – Dion Harris of Michigan. Will he get 1 point (Iowa) or 2 points (UCLA), or will he get 24 points (NC State) or 27 points (Minnesota)? Who knows?
- Best Disappearing Act in the Big Ten – Courtney Sims of Michigan. From senior starter to the Big Ten's biggest benchwarmer in 3 weeks.
- Best Comeback in the Big Ten – Jerret Smith of Michigan. Before coach Tommy Amaker figured out how well he can run the point with Dion Harris at shooting guard, he appeared worthless. Now that they've got things worked out, Smith is looking priceless.

The Week In Review

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games on the road this week, and they won one and lost one. On Wednesday (02/21/2007), they lost at Illinois (54-42), then on Saturday (02/24/2007), they beat Minnesota (62-51). The loss and the win brought Michigan's record to 19-10 (7-7). They are currently tied for 7th place in the Big Ten. They're hanging in there in the competition for good seedings in the Big Ten Tournament, and they're staying "on the bubble" for a spot in the NCAA Tournament.

The Illinois game was frustrating. Michigan hung with the Illini for most of the 1st half, and had the game tied at 19-19 just before halftime. Illinois scored the last 4 points of the half, to lead 23-19, which isn't bad. However, Michigan turned the ball over their first 4 possessions of the 2nd half, and Illinois stretched the lead to 10 points. From that point, Michigan never got any closer than 7 points. The last 2 minutes of the 1st half and the first 3 minutes of the 2nd half doomed Michigan to another road loss.

The Minnesota game was much better. The Wolverines led for most of the game, and once they started pulling away in the 2nd half, they never looked back. It's tough to win on the road in the Big Ten, even against an anemic team like Minnesota, so this is a big win.

Game Statistics

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	16-43 (37.2%)	2-9 (22.2%)	8-10 (80.0%)
Illinois	19-54 (35.2%)	6-15 (40.0%)	10-16 62.5%)
Advantage	Michigan	Illinois	Michigan

Here's where Illinois won the game: 3-point shooting. The 12 extra points were exactly the margin of victory for Illinois.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	33	8	20	3	4
Illinois	34	11	15	2	8

Advantage	Illinois	Illinois	Illinois	Michigan	Illinois

These stats are all pretty close, except for Turnovers and Steals. The 3-point shooting may have won the game for Illinois, but the Turnovers really hurt Michigan.

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	22-53 (41.5%)	4-13 (30.8%)	14-17 (82.4%)
Minnesota	15-47 (31.9%)	5-14 (35.7%)	16-20 (80.0%)
Advantage	Michigan	Minnesota	Michigan

Minnesota had more 3-pointers and more free throws, but Michigan shot much better overall, and that was enough to win the game handily.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	35	13	11	10	3
Minnesota	30	11	11	5	4
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	Even	Michigan	Minnesota

These stats are all pretty close, except for Rebounds and Blocks, which Michigan won. The 5 extra rebounds and blocks really helped Michigan.

Individual Statistics

Coach Amaker went with his new regular starting lineup for both games, 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	Illinois	Minn	Illinois	Minn	Illinois	Minn	Illinois	Minn
Lester Abram	0-1	6-9	0-0	1-3	3-4	1-1	3	14
Dion Harris	1-10	4-12	1-5	3-7	0-0	4-4	3	15
Brent Petway	3-3	1-4	0-0	0-0	0-0	1-1	6	3
Jerret Smith	4-9	3-4	1-2	0-0	0-0	2-3	9	8
Ekpe Udoh	3-8	6-9	0-0	0-0	2-2	2-2	8	14
Totals	11-31 35.9%	20-38 52.6%	2-7 28.6%	4-10 40.0%	5-6 83.3%	10-11 90.9%	29	54

As a group, the starters had a pretty good week. Their percentages are reasonable, although they did better against Minnesota than they did against Illinois. They just didn't score enough points in the Illinois game.

Individually, no one hit double figures in both games this week. In fact, none of the Michigan players hit double figures at all in the Illinois game. Smith was the high scorer for Michigan, with 9 points. He only had 8 points against Minnesota, but he played well in both games. Amazingly, he was the leading rebounder for Michigan in the Minnesota game, with 9 rebounds! Udoh came the closest to hitting double figures in both games, with 8 against Illinois and 14 against Minnesota. Abram and Harris also had good games against Minnesota, but they were lousy in the Illinois game. Harris in particular cost Michigan the Illinois game with his poor shooting.

Here's how the bench players did this week:

Player	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
	Illinois	Minn	Illinois	Minn	Illinois	Minn	Illinois	Minn
Reed Baker	0-1	0-2	0-1	0-2	0-0	0-0	0	0
Ron Coleman	1-2	0-1	0-1	0-0	0-0	0-0	2	0
Kendric Price	DNP	0-1	DNP	0-0	DNP	0-0	DNP	0
Jevohn Shepherd	1-2	0-2	0-0	0-1	0-0	0-0	2	0
Courtney Sims	2-5	2-5	0-0	0-0	3-4	3-4	7	7
DeShawn Sims	1-2	0-4	0-0	0-0	0-0	1-2	2	1
Totals	5-12 41.7%	2-15 13.3%	0-2 0.0%	0-3 0.0%	3-4 75.0%	4-6 66.7%	13	8

As a group, the bench players didn't contribute much this week. Their percentages are low, and they only chipped in a few points.

Individually, no one stood out. Courtney Sims was the only bench player to score more than 2 points in a game this week.

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)

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record
02/17/2007 (Sat)	Indiana	Ann Arbor	W	58-55	18-9 (6-6)
02/21/2007 (Wed)	Illinois	Champaign, IL	L	42-54	18-10 (6-7)
02/24/2007 (Sat)	Minnesota	Minneapolis, MN	W	62-51	19-10 (7-7)
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 1 week left in the regular season, Michigan is just barely on the bubble for an NCAA bid. They have 2 games left, both at home. They stand a chance against MSU, but probably not against OSU. If they split those last 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 #8 of league play:

Team	Big Ten			Overall		
	Wins	Losses	Percent	Wins	Losses	Percent
Ohio State	14	1	0.933	26	3	0.897
Wisconsin	12	3	0.800	26	34	0.867
Illinois	9	6	0.600	21	9	0.700
Michigan State	8	6	0.571	21	8	0.724
Indiana	8	6	0.571	18	9	0.667
Iowa	8	6	0.571	16	12	0.571
Michigan	7	7	0.500	19	10	0.655
Purdue	7	7	0.500	18	10	0.643
Minnesota	3	12	0.200	9	20	0.310
Northwestern	2	12	0.143	13	15	0.464
Penn State	1	13	0.071	10	17	0.370

Here are the results from last week's games:

Tuesday (02/20/2007)
Wisconsin lost at Michigan State, 64-55

Wednesday (02/21/2007)
Michigan lost at Illinois, 54-42
Minnesota lost at Indiana, 71-59
Penn State lost at Ohio State, 68-60
Purdue lost at Iowa, 78-59
Texas-Pan American lost at Northwestern, 67-56 (non-conference)

Saturday (02/24/2007)
Michigan won at Minnesota, 62-51
Purdue won at Northwestern, 75-68
Illinois won at Penn State, 68-50

Indiana lost at Michigan State, 66-58

Sunday (02/25/2007)
Wisconsin lost at Ohio State, 49-48

The home teams didn't do quite as well as usual, going 7-3. Of course, those 3 home losses were courtesy of the Bottom 3 (Minnesota, Northwestern, and Penn State).

The big surprise this week was Michigan State's upset of (#1) Wisconsin on Tuesday. MSU is tough to beat in Breslin, but I was still surprised that Wisconsin couldn't do it.

Here are the games scheduled for the upcoming week, which is the last week of the regular season:

Tuesday (02/27/2007)
Michigan State at Michigan

Wednesday (02/28/2007)
Indiana at Northwestern
Iowa at Penn State
Minnesota at Purdue

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

There are a few big games this week:

- Michigan State at Michigan on Tuesday. Both teams are fighting for a spot in the NCAA Tournament, and Michigan needs it more. MSU won the first meeting in East Lansing, but they'll have a tougher time in Ann Arbor.
- Ohio State at Michigan on Saturday. If Michigan can pull off this upset, it would really help their chances of getting a big to the Big Dance.
- Illinois at Iowa on Saturday. Two teams battling for seedings in the Big Ten Tournament.
- Michigan State at Wisconsin on Saturday. Both teams want to finish strong before post-season play starts.

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	9-6	Iowa (H) Minnesota (A) Indiana (H) Michigan State (H) Minnesota (H) Northwestern (A) Northwestern (H) Michigan (H) Penn State (A)	Michigan (A) Ohio State (H) Michigan State (A) Wisconsin (H) Purdue (A) Indiana (A)	Iowa (A)

Indiana	8-6	Michigan State (H) Purdue (H) Penn State (A) Iowa (H) Michigan (H) Wisconsin (H) Illinois (H) Minnesota (H)	Ohio State (A) Illinois (A) Iowa (A) Purdue (A) Michigan (A) Michigan State (A)	Northwestern (A) Penn State (H)
Iowa	8-6	Michigan State (H) Minnesota (H) Penn State (H) Michigan (A) Indiana (H) Minnesota (A) Northwestern (H) Purdue (H)	Illinois (A) Indiana (A) Ohio State (A) Wisconsin (H) Wisconsin (A) Michigan State (A)	Penn State (A) Illinois (H)
Michigan	7-7	Illinois (H) Northwestern (A) Penn State (H) Purdue (H) Minnesota (H) Indiana (H) Minnesota (A)	Purdue (A) Wisconsin (A) Indiana (A) Iowa (H) Ohio State (A) Michigan State (A) Illinois (A)	Michigan State (H) Ohio State (H)
Michigan State	8-6	Northwestern (H) Illinois (H) Penn State (A) Minnesota (H) Michigan (H) Iowa (H) Wisconsin (H) Indiana (H)	Iowa (A) Indiana (A) Ohio State (A) Illinois (A) Ohio State (H) Purdue (A)	Michigan (A) Wisconsin (A)
Minnesota	3-12	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	2-12	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) Iowa (A)	Indiana (H) Purdue (A)

			Illinois (A) Purdue (H)	
Ohio State	14-1	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) Penn State (H) Wisconsin (H)	Wisconsin (A)	Michigan (A)
Penn State	1-13	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	7-7	Penn State (H) Michigan (H) Illinois (H) Penn State (A) Michigan State (H) Indiana (H) Northwestern (A)	Minnesota (A) Indiana (A) Wisconsin (A) Michigan (A) Ohio State (H) Ohio State (A) Iowa (A)	Minnesota (H) Northwestern (H)
Wisconsin	12-3	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)

As I predicted at the beginning of the season, Ohio State clinched the Big Ten title with their win over Wisconsin this week.

The Upcoming Week

As you can see in the schedule above, Michigan has two games this week, both at home. On Tuesday (02/27/2007, 7:00 p.m.), they play Michigan State, then on Saturday (03/03/2007, 4:00 p.m.), they play Ohio State. Come on down to Crisler Arena and cheer on the Wolverines.

Go Blue!