12/24/2007 – Week #09 – An Encouraging Loss

The Week In Review

I know, the University of Michigan sports teams don't believe in moral victories, but the men's basketball team had the closest thing to a moral victory: an encouraging loss. They only played one game last week, and it was a real tough one. On Saturday (12/22/2007), they lost to (#8) UCLA, 69-54, in Crisler Arena. The loss lowered Michigan's record to 4-8, which is certainly disappointing.

The reason I said that it was an encouraging loss is because UM hung in with UCLA for most of the game. Michigan led by 3 (27-24) at halftime, and pushed the lead up to 8 (36-28) with about 14 minutes left in the game. UCLA came back, and tied it up at 41-41 with about 10 minutes to go. Michigan took their last lead, 43-41, then UCLA went on a 12-0 run, and that was the ballgame. In the 1st half, UCLA missed all 4 of their 3-point attempts, but in the 2nd half, they were deadly: 4-for-6. That's what fueled their 12-0 run.

Still, after UM got blown out in their other games against Top-25 opponents (a 22-point loss at Georgetown, a 14-point loss to Butler, and a 28-point loss at Duke), it was encouraging to see them hang in there with UCLA. Sure, the final margin (15 points) looks similar to the Butler game, but UM was never really in that game, unlike the UCLA game. Maybe things aren't as gloomy as they looked after the miserable loss to Central Michigan on 12/15/2007.

Game Statistics

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	21-67 (31.3%)	6-31 (19.4%)	6-8 (75.0%)
UCLA	24-49 (49.0%)	4-10 (40.0%)	17-22 (77.3%)
Advantage	UCLA	UCLA	UCLA

UCLA dominated these stats, and that's why they won the game. Once again, UM didn't even attempt as many free throws as their opponent made.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	29	10	8	6	8
UCLA	47	15	18	4	6
Advantage	UCLA	UCLA	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan

The big stat here is Rebounds. UCLA owned the boards. The only thing that kept the game as close as it was was all the UCLA turnovers.

Season 3-Point Shooting

The way UM's offense is set up, they need to get off at least 20 3-pointers, and hit at least 40% of them to win. Here's how it's gone so far this season:

Date	Opponent	3-Point Shooting	Result	Fits Theory?
11/09/2007	Radford	7-23 (30.4%)	W	N/A
11/11/2007	Brown	12-24 (50.0%)	W	Yes
11/15/2007	At Georgetown	5-18 (27.8%)	L	Yes

Date	Opponent	3-Point Shooting	Result	Fits Theory?
11/21/2007	Butler (neutral site)	8-20 (40.0%)	L	No
11/23/2007	Eastern Washington (neutral site)	10-27 (37.0%)	W	N/A
11/24/2007	Western Kentucky (neutral site)	5-17 (29.4%)	L	Yes
11/28/2007	Boston College	9-25 (36.0%)	L	Yes
12/01/2007	At Harvard	5-20 (25.0%)	L	Yes
12/08/2007	At Duke	6-19 (31.6%)	L	Yes
12/12/2007	Oakland	7-17 (41.2%)	W	N/A
12/15/2007	Central Michigan	4-8 (50.0%)	L	Yes
12/22/2007	UCLA	6-31 (19.4%)	L	Yes
Totals		84-249 (33.7%)		8-1

The UCLA game was another good example of how important 3-point shooting is to Michigan this season. UM did get off at least 20 shots, but they only hit 19.4% of them, even though many of the shots were wide open. When they shoot that poorly, they're going to lose, most of the time.

Individual Statistics

Coach Beilein went with his regular starting lineup in the UCLA game. Here's how the starters did:

Player	Field Goals	3-Pointers	Free Throws	Points
Ron Coleman	3-7	1-5	0-0	7
Kelvin Grady	1-4	0-1	0-0	2
Manny Harris	3-12	0-5	5-5	11
DeShawn Sims	5-9	2-5	0-0	12
Ekpe Udoh	2-8	0-2	0-1	4
Totals	14-40 35.0%	3-18 16.7%	5-5 100.0%	36

As a group, the starters didn't do very well. Their percentages are lousy, except for free throw shooting (all due to Harris), and they didn't score many points.

Individually, both Harris and Sims scored in double figures in both games, but only Sims shot a decent percentage. Harris missed way too many open jumpers.

The other 3 starters didn't do much offensively, although Udoh did have 4 blocked shots and 4 rebounds.

As far as the bench players go, things are getting a little slim. Jerret Smith is still out with some academic issues, and K'Len Morris left the team (permanently) this week for personal reasons. That leaves C.J. Lee and David Merritt as the only guards on the bench.

Here's how the bench players did:

Player	Field Goals	3-Pointers	Free Throws	Points
Zack Gibson	1-7	1-3	0-0	3
C.J. Lee	2-8	1-5	0-0	5
David Merritt	0-0	0-0	0-0	0
Jevohn Shepherd	3-8	0-1	1-2	7
Anthony Wright	1-4	1-4	0-0	3

Totals	7-27 25.9%	3-13 23.1%	1-2 50.0%	18

As a group, the bench players also didn't do very well. Their shooting percentages are terrible, and they didn't contribute many points.

Individually, no one stood out. Lee and Shepherd tried to spark the team when they were out there, but they couldn't get their shots to fall.

The Big Picture

The non-conference portion of the schedule is over, and it didn't work out very well. I was hoping that Michigan would go 6-6, but they lost 2 games that they should have won (Harvard and Central Michigan), and lost all the games that I expected them to lose.

So, are they as bad as they looked in the loss to CMU, or as good as they looked in the first 28 minutes of the UCLA game, or all of the Oakland game? I think the answer is: "yes". Since they are a young team, still learning a new offense and defense, they can be as good or as bad as we've already seen. That should make the Big Ten portion of the schedule very interesting, but not necessarily satisfying. There are several good teams in the Big Ten again this year, and even the lower division teams look pretty tough. Michigan will be hard pressed to hit 0.500, and could end up at or near the bottom of the standings.

Here's the 2007-2008 schedule/results:

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record
11/01/2007 (Thu)	Ferris State (exhibition)	Ann Arbor	W	78-40	0-0
11/09/2007 (Fri)	Radford	Ann Arbor	W	82-55	1-0
11/11/2007 (Sun)	Brown	Ann Arbor	W	72-57	2-0
11/15/2007 (Thu)	Georgetown	Washington, D.C.	L	74-52	2-1
Carrs/Safeway Great Alaska Shootout					
11/21/2007 (Wed)	Butler	Anchorage, Alaska	L	79-65	2-2
11/23/2007 (Fri)	Eastern Washington	Anchorage, Alaska	W	61-53	3-2
11/24/2007 (Sat)	Western Kentucky	Anchorage, Alaska	L	73-69	3-3
ACC/Big Ten Challenge					
11/28/2007 (Wed)	Boston College	Ann Arbor	L	77-64	3-4
12/01/2007 (Sat)	Harvard	Boston, Mass.	L	62-51	3-5
12/08/2007 (Sat)	Duke	Durham, N.C.	L	95-67	3-6
12/12/2007 (Wed)	Oakland	Ann Arbor	W	103-87	4-6
12/15/2007 (Sat)	Central Michigan	Ann Arbor	L	78-67	4-7
12/22/2007 (Sat)	UCLA	Ann Arbor	L	69-54	4-8
01/02/2008 (Wed)	Wisconsin	Ann Arbor			
01/05/2008 (Sat)	Purdue	West Lafayette, Ind.			
01/08/2008 (Tue)	Indiana	Ann Arbor			
01/12/2008 (Sat)	Northwestern	Evanston, Ill.			
01/16/2008 (Wed)	Illinois	Champaign, Ill.			
01/19/2008 (Sat)	Iowa	Ann Arbor			
01/22/2008 (Tue)	Wisconsin	Madison, Wis.			
01/27/2008 (Sun)	Michigan State	East Lansing, Mich.			
01/31/2008 (Thu)	Minnesota	Ann Arbor			
02/05/2008 (Tue)	Ohio State	Columbus, Ohio			
02/09/2008 (Sat)	Penn State	Ann Arbor			
02/14/2008 (Thu)	Iowa	Iowa City, Iowa			
02/17/2008 (Sun)	Ohio State	Ann Arbor			
02/21/2008 (Thu)	Minnesota	Minneapolis, Minn.			

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record
02/23/2008 (Sat) or 02/24/2008 (Sun)	Illinois	Ann Arbor			
02/26/2008 (Tue)	Northwestern	Ann Arbor			
03/01/2008 (Sat)	Penn State	State College, Pa.			
03/08/2008 (Sat) or 03/09/2008 (Sun)	Purdue	Ann Arbor			
Big Ten Tournament					
03/13/2008 (Thu)	First Round	Indianapolis, Ind.			
03/14/2008 (Fri)	Quarterfinal	Indianapolis, Ind.			
03/15/2008 (Sat)	Semifinal	Indianapolis, Ind.			
03/16/2008 (Sun)	Championship	Indianapolis, Ind.			

The Upcoming Week

As you can see in the schedule above, Michigan doesn't play again until 01/02/2008, so they don't have any games this week. However, I'll be back next week with (early) mid-term grades, and a look ahead at the Big Ten. See you then.

Go Blue!