02/18/2008 – Week #17 – A Three-Game Winning Streak!

The Week In Review

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, and they won both of them. On Thursday (02/14/2008), they won at Iowa, 60-52, then on Sunday (02/17/2008), they beat Ohio State in Crisler Arena, 80-70. The two wins raise Michigan's record to 8-17, 4-9 in the Big Ten, and give Michigan a 3-game winning streak for the first time this season.

The Iowa win was very impressive, especially since Iowa beat Michigan in Crisler Arena (68-60) back on 01/19/2008, and Iowa recently (01/12/2008) beat Michigan State in Iowa City, and held MSU to 36 points in the process (43-36). It was nice to get some revenge for that miserable loss last month. The game looked pretty bleak at halftime, with Michigan held to 16 points (27-16), but the Wolverines played a strong 2nd half, especially in "crunch time", when they hit their last 4 free throws to ice the win. They had yet another of their "offensive vacations" in the 1st half, when they went more than 8 minutes without a point, while Iowa scored 13 straight points. Still, they hung in there, and kept battling, and managed to come back and win the game in the 2nd half. This is very good practice for the future.

As impressive as the Iowa win was, the Ohio State win was even more impressive. True, OSU isn't the same top-ranked team they were last season, but they're still pretty good, and Michigan handled them nicely. The Wolverines still had a couple painful "offensive vacations", but they didn't let the game get too far out of hand during their scoring droughts, and they always answered each OSU run with a run of their own. UM was particularly impressive down the stretch (again), when they made one big basket or free throw after another to seal the win. The crowd was big (officially a sellout) and loud, and the Maize Rage did a great job. It was very exciting, and lots of fun. Once again, this was another "revenge game", since Ohio State barely snuck out a win against Michigan in Columbus back on 02/05/2008, 65-55.

Game Statistics

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	19-42 (45.2%)	7-19 (36.8%)	15-19 (78.9%)
Iowa	19-52 (36.5%)	7-28 (25.0%)	7-9 (77.8%)
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan

Look at that: Michigan and Iowa had exactly the same number of field goals and 3-pointers. Where did UM win the game? At the free throw line. Of course Michigan shot a better percentage across the board, but the only thing that counts in the end is points.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	30	15	11	1	4
Iowa	29	13	12	3	5
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan	Iowa	Iowa

All of these stats are too close to make much difference. The only significant stat was free throw shooting.

Next, let's look at the shooting statistics from the Ohio State game:

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	25-57 (43.9%)	10-24 (41.7%)	20-24 (83.3%)
Ohio State	31-67 (46.3%)	6-21 (28.6%)	2-3 (66.7%)
Advantage	Ohio State	Michigan	Michigan

These are some of the most interesting stats I've seen in years. Looking at overall shooting, you would think that OSU won the game, but looking at 3-point shooting and free throws, you can see where Michigan won it. The disparity in free throws is one of the most amazing stats I've seen since I've been writing these articles. Michigan made 17 more free throws than OSU attempted. That's stunning.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	30	16	9	6	7
Ohio State	39	17	14	4	5
Advantage	OSU	OSU	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan

It isn't too surprising that OSU out-rebounded Michigan, given their huge height advantage, but it is surprising that UM won the battles for turnovers and steals, given OSU's strong guard play.

Season 3-Point Shooting

Here's my theory: Michigan should win a game if they can shoot at least 20 3-pointers, and hit at least 40% of them. Of course, they can still win the game when they shoot less than 20 3-pointers, or when they hit less than 40% of them. I'm just saying that they should win the game if they do shoot 20 and make 40%. Let's see how they that works 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
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
01/02/2008	Wisconsin	5-18 (27.8%)	L	Yes
01/05/2008	At Purdue	4-18 (22.2%)	L	Yes
01/08/2008	Indiana	8-28 (28.6%)	L	Yes
01/12/2008	At Northwestern	8-26 (30.8%)	W	N/A
01/16/2008	At Illinois	8-27 (29.6%)	L	Yes
01/19/2008	Iowa	11-28 (39.3%)	L	Yes
01/22/2008	At Wisconsin	7-21 (33.3%)	L	Yes

Date	Opponent	3-Point Shooting	Result	Fits Theory?
01/27/2008	At Michigan State	8-31 (25.8%)	L	Yes
01/31/2008	Minnesota	6-25 (24.0%)	L	Yes
02/05/2008	At Ohio State	9-26 (34.6%)	L	Yes
02/09/2008	Penn State	6-18 (33.3%)	W	N/A
02/14/2008	At Iowa	7-19 (36.8%)	W	N/A
02/17/2008	Ohio State	10-24 (41.7%)	W	Yes
Totals		181-558 (32.4%)		18-1

The theory continues to hold. The OSU game is a textbook example.

Individual Statistics

Coach Beilein went with his latest starting lineup in both games.

Here's how the starters did this week:

Player	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
	Iowa	OSU	Iowa	OSU	Iowa	OSU	Iowa	OSU
Ron Coleman	2-3	0-2	1-2	0-2	1-2	0-0	6	0
Kelvin Grady	2-4	1-6	1-3	1-4	2-2	5-6	7	8
Manny Harris	3-9	7-19	1-2	3-5	8-8	10-11	15	27
DeShawn Sims	4-12	8-14	2-5	4-8	0-1	2-2	10	22
Ekpe Udoh	3-4	2-4	0-0	0-0	0-0	1-2	6	5
Totals	14-32 43.8%	18-45 40.0%	5-12 41.7%	8-19 42.1%	11-13 84.6%	18-21 85.7%	44	62

As a group, the starters had a great week. Their percentages are all very good, and they scored a solid number of points in both games.

Individually, Harris and Sims continue to be the offensive stars of the team. They were the only starters to hit double figures in either game, and they both did it in both games. In fact, Harris broke his old career scoring record of 26 (at Wisconsin on 01/22/2008) in the OSU game.

Grady had a good week, and he was especially valuable in the OSU game, where he used his blazing speed to break the OSU full-court press all game. Udoh also had a good week, especially when it came to blocking shots. He had UM's only blocked shot in the Iowa game, and he had all 6 of UM's blocks in the OSU game. Coleman didn't contribute much this week.

As far as the bench players go, Coach Beilein went 5-deep again. Here's how the bench players did:

Player	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
	Iowa	OSU	Iowa	OSU	Iowa	OSU	Iowa	OSU
Zack Gibson	1-3	2-3	0-2	0-0	4-4	0-1	6	4
C.J. Lee	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0
David Merritt	1-1	3-5	0-0	1-2	0-0	0-0	2	7
Jevohn Shepherd	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0
Anthony Wright	3-6	2-4	2-5	1-3	0-2	2-2	8	7
Totals	5-10 50.0%	7-12 58.3%	2-7 28.6%	2-5 40.0%	4-6 66.7%	2-3 66.7%	16	18

As a group, the bench players did very well this week. Their shooting percentages were very good, except for 3-point shooting in the Iowa game, and they chipped in a decent number of points.

Individually, none of the bench players hit double figures, but 3 of them still chipped in. Lee and Shepherd didn't contribute much, but Gibson and Wright did, and Merritt was a real sparkplug in the OSU game. He hit a clutch 3-pointer as the shot clock wound down to 1 second in the 1st half that really helped UM get the momentum.

Big Ten This Week

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

Team	Big Ten			Overall		
	Wins	Losses	Percent	Wins	Losses	Percent
Purdue	12	1	0.923	21	5	0.808
Wisconsin	11	2	0.846	21	4	0.840
Indiana	10	2	0.833	21	4	0.840
Michigan State	8	4	0.667	20	5	0.800
Ohio State	8	5	0.615	17	9	0.654
Minnesota	5	7	0.417	15	9	0.625
Penn State	4	8	0.333	12	12	0.500
Iowa	4	9	0.308	11	15	0.423
Michigan	4	9	0.308	8	17	0.320
Illinois	3	10	0.231	11	15	0.423
Northwestern	0	12	0.000	7	16	0.304

Here are the results from last week's games:

Tuesday (02/12/2008)
Michigan State lost at Purdue, 60-54
Illinois won at Minnesota, 84-60

Wednesday (02/13/2008)
Wisconsin won at Indiana, 68-66
Ohio State won at Northwestern, 65-47

Thursday (02/14/2008)
Michigan won at Iowa, 60-52

Saturday (02/16/2008)
Minnesota lost at Wisconsin, 65-56
Purdue won at Northwestern, 71-56
Illinois lost at Penn State, 52-51
Michigan State lost at Indiana, 80-61

Sunday (02/17/2008)
Ohio State lost at Michigan, 80-70

The home teams didn't do well at all this week, going 5-5. The biggest surprises were:

- Michigan State losing both games this week, especially the way they got schooled at Indiana on Saturday. Bye bye, Big Ten title hopes.
- Michigan beating Iowa in Iowa City on Thursday. Ask Michigan State how tough it can be to win at Iowa (01/12/2008: Iowa 43 – MSU 36).
- Michigan beating Ohio State on Sunday. This is exactly the kind of game that UM had been losing earlier in the season.

Here are the games scheduled for the upcoming week (Week #8):

Tuesday (02/19/2008)
Purdue at Indiana
Northwestern at Iowa

Wednesday (02/20/2008)
Penn State at Michigan State
Wisconsin at Illinois

Thursday (02/21/2008)
Michigan at Minnesota

Saturday (02/23/2008)
Illinois at Michigan
Iowa at Michigan State
Indiana at Northwestern

Sunday (02/24/2008)
Penn State at Minnesota
Wisconsin at Ohio State

There are 4 big games this week:

- Purdue at Indiana on Tuesday. If Purdue wins this one, they will pretty much lock up the Big Ten title. If they lose, it becomes a 3-way tie for 1st place.
- Michigan at Minnesota on Thursday. Can Michigan keep the momentum going? It's tough winning in The Barn, with that funky raised floor.
- Illinois at Michigan on Saturday. The Illini are beatable this season.
- Wisconsin at Ohio State on Sunday. Wisconsin needs to win this one if they're going to stay in the Big Ten race. OSU is tough at home.

Here's the entire Big Ten schedule and results, with the teams in alphabetical order:

Team	Record	Wins	Losses	Remaining Games
Illinois	3-10	Michigan (H) Northwestern (H) Minnesota (A)	Ohio State (H) Penn State (H) Wisconsin (A) Indiana (A) Purdue (A) Ohio State (A) Michigan State (A) Purdue (H) Indiana (H) Penn State (A)	Wisconsin (H) Michigan (A) Iowa (A) Michigan State (H) Minnesota (H)
Indiana	10-2	Iowa (A)	Wisconsin (A)	Purdue (H)

		Michigan (A) Illinois (H) Minnesota (A) Penn State (H) Iowa (H) Northwestern (H) Illinois (A) Ohio State (A) Michigan State (H)	Wisconsin (H)	Northwestern (A) Ohio State (H) Michigan State (A) Minnesota (H) Penn State (A)
Iowa	4-9	Michigan State (H) Michigan (A) Penn State (H) Ohio State (H)	Indiana (H) Wisconsin (A) Ohio State (A) Purdue (H) Indiana (A) Purdue (A) Wisconsin (H) Minnesota (A) Michigan (H)	Northwestern (H) Michigan State (A) Penn State (A) Illinois (H) Northwestern (A)
Michigan	4-9	Northwestern (A) Penn State (H) Iowa (A) Ohio State (H)	Wisconsin (H) Purdue (A) Indiana (H) Illinois (A) Iowa (H) Wisconsin (A) Michigan State (A) Minnesota (H) Ohio State (A)	Minnesota (A) Illinois (H) Northwestern (H) Penn State (A) Purdue (H)
Michigan State	8-4	Minnesota (H) Purdue (H) Ohio State (H) Minnesota (A) Northwestern (A) Michigan (H) Illinois (H) Northwestern (H)	Iowa (A) Penn State (A) Purdue (A) Indiana (A)	Penn State (H) Iowa (H) Wisconsin (A) Indiana (H) Illinois (A) Ohio State (A)
Minnesota	5-7	Northwestern (H) Penn State (A) Michigan (A) Northwestern (A) Iowa (H)	Michigan State (A) Indiana (H) Michigan State (H) Ohio State (A) Wisconsin (H) Illinois (H) Wisconsin (A)	Michigan (H) Penn State (H) Purdue (A) Ohio State (H) Indiana (A) Illinois (A)
Northwestern	0-12		Penn State (H) Ohio State (A) Minnesota (A) Michigan (H) Wisconsin (A) Michigan State (H) Illinois (A) Indiana (A) Minnesota (H) Michigan State (A) Ohio State (H)	Iowa (A) Indiana (H) Michigan (A) Purdue (A) Iowa (H) Wisconsin (H)

			Purdue (H)	
Ohio State	8-5	Illinois (A) Northwestern (H) Iowa (H) Illinois (H) Minnesota (H) Penn State (A) Michigan (H) Northwestern (A)	Purdue (A) Michigan State (A) Iowa (A) Indiana (H) Michigan (A)	Wisconsin (H) Indiana (A) Minnesota (A) Purdue (H) Michigan State (H)
Penn State	4-8	Northwestern (A) Illinois (A) Michigan State (H) Illinois (H)	Minnesota (H) Wisconsin (H) Indiana (A) Purdue (H) Iowa (A) Ohio State (H) Purdue (A) Michigan (A)	Michigan State (A) Minnesota (A) Iowa (H) Michigan (H) Wisconsin (A) Indiana (H)
Purdue	12-1	Michigan (H) Ohio State (H) Iowa (A) Illinois (H) Penn State (A) Wisconsin (H) Iowa (H) Illinois (A) Penn State (H) Wisconsin (A) Michigan State (H) Northwestern (A)	Michigan State (A)	Indiana (A) Minnesota (H) Northwestern (H) Ohio State (A) Michigan (A)
Wisconsin	11-2	Michigan (A) Iowa (H) Illinois (H) Penn State (A) Northwestern (H) Michigan (H) Indiana (H) Minnesota (A) Iowa (A) Indiana (A) Minnesota (H)	Purdue (A) Purdue (H)	Illinois (A) Ohio State (A) Michigan State (H) Penn State (H) Northwestern (A)

The list of contenders in the Big Ten race got a little shorter this week, with MSU dropping out with their 2 losses. Purdue is still the team to beat, although Indiana and Wisconsin still stand a chance of catching them. Here's who the contenders have left to play:

Team	Games vs. Contenders		Games vs. Non-contenders	
	Home	Away	Home	Away
Indiana	Purdue		Ohio State Minnesota	Northwestern Michigan State Penn State
Purdue		Indiana	Minnesota Northwestern	Ohio State Michigan

Wisconsin			Michigan State Penn State	Illinois Ohio State Northwestern

It looks like Wisconsin has the easiest remaining schedule, although they still have to play "almost contender" MSU. So does Indiana, so Purdue may have the easiest remaining schedule.

The Big Picture

So, what are we to think about this Michigan team, now that they've actually won 3 Big Ten games in a row? Have they turned the corner/gotten over the hump, or is this just a result of the easier schedule that they have in the 2nd half of the Big Ten season? I think it's a little of both. They have certainly improved in the last 4 games, since they played such a lackluster game against Minnesota on 01/31/2008, and they have gotten some confidence back. We'll know a lot more about them after the two games this week. They only have 5 games left in the regular season, and 3 of them are at home. They should be able to beat Illinois and Northwestern at home, and maybe Minnesota and Penn State on the road, but the season finale against Purdue will be a tough one.

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	L	70-54	4-9 (0-1)
01/05/2008 (Sat)	Purdue	West Lafayette, Ind.	L	65-58	4-10 (0-2)
01/08/2008 (Tue)	Indiana	Ann Arbor	L	78-64	4-11 (0-3)
01/12/2008 (Sat)	Northwestern	Evanston, Ill.	W	78-68	5-11 (1-3)
01/16/2008 (Wed)	Illinois	Champaign, Ill.	L	75-57	5-12 (1-4)
01/19/2008 (Sat)	Iowa	Ann Arbor	L	68-60	5-13 (1-5)
01/22/2008 (Tue)	Wisconsin	Madison, Wis.	L	64-61	5-14 (1-6)
01/27/2008 (Sun)	Michigan State	East Lansing, Mich.	L	77-62	5-15 (1-7)
01/31/2008 (Thu)	Minnesota	Ann Arbor	L	77-65	5-16 (1-8)
02/05/2008 (Tue)	Ohio State	Columbus, Ohio	L	65-55	5-17 (1-9)
02/09/2008 (Sat)	Penn State	Ann Arbor	W	68-63	6-17 (2-9)
02/14/2008 (Thu)	Iowa	Iowa City, Iowa	W	60-52	7-17 (3-9)
02/17/2008 (Sun)	Ohio State	Ann Arbor	W	80-70	8-17 (4-9)
02/21/2008 (Thu)	Minnesota	Minneapolis, Minn.			
02/23/2008 (Sat)	Illinois	Ann Arbor			
02/26/2008 (Tue)	Northwestern	Ann Arbor			

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record
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 plays two games this week. On Thursday (02/21/2008, 9:00 p.m. EST), they play at Minnesota, then on Saturday (02/23/2008, 4:00 p.m.), they play Illinois, in Crisler Arena. The Minnesota game is on ESPN2, so tune in and come on down to Crisler, and check back here next week to see what happened, and why.

Go Blue!