03/03/2008 – Week #19 – Two More Discouraging Losses

The Week In Review

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, and they lost both of them. On Tuesday (02/26/2008), they lost to Northwestern in Crisler Arena, 62-60, then on Saturday (03/01/2008), they lost at Penn State, 69-61. The two losses lower Michigan's record to 9-20, 5-12 in the Big Ten. These were two games that UM could have won, so this was a very discouraging week. Since Northwestern had been 0-14 in the Big Ten before beating Michigan, I was tempted to label that loss as the most embarrassing loss since I've been watching Michigan basketball (starting in the 1974-5 season), but I still think that the loss earlier this season to Harvard was even more embarrassing. Still, it was a nightmare to watch.

Both games had the same storyline: both opponents got career efforts from a 3-point shooter (Craig Moore for Northwestern [8-for-12 from 3-point range] and Talor Battle for PSU [7-for-9]), and Michigan went cold for long stretches. In both games, Michigan led in the 2nd half, but in both games, Michigan finished poorly. After being down by as many as 19 points (36-17) in the 1st half, Michigan battled back in the 2nd half, and led by 1 point (60-59) with 1:15 left to play. Northwestern hit a 3-pointer shortly after that, and Michigan couldn't score another point in the last 59 seconds. It was really sad.

In the Penn State game, Michigan trailed by 8 points (37-29) at halftime, but they battled back in the 2nd half. They actually led by 2 points (49-47) with 9:49 left to play, then they went on another of their demoralizing "offensive vacations". Over the next 5 minutes, they got outscored 15-0, to make it 62-49, and they never got closer than 6 points the rest of the way.

Game Statistics

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	19-44 (43.2%)	7-21 (33.3%)	15-18 (83.3%)
Northwestern	23-53 (43.4%)	9-25 (36.0%)	7-9 (77.8%)
Advantage	Northwestern	Northwestern	Michigan

It was a very close game, and the stats show it. Northwestern did better from the field, and Michigan did better from the free-throw line, but Northwestern got 2 more points than UM. Both teams shot pretty well, but Northwestern just got more shots. To see why, we'll need to look at the non-shooting statistics from the Northwestern game:

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	30	13	14	5	6
Northwestern	27	13	10	0	7
Advantage	Michigan	Even	NW	Michigan	NW

Well, I'm baffled; where did the extra 9 shots for Northwestern come from? Michigan had 3 more rebounds, and Northwestern had 4 less turnovers and one more steal, but that doesn't add up to 9 extra possessions. It was a puzzling game.

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws

Michigan	20-58 (34.5%)	9-31 (29.0%)	12-20 (60.0%)
Penn State	23-47 (48.9%)	12-22 (54.5%)	11-22 (50.0%)
Advantage	Penn State	Penn State	Michigan

I can't remember the last time I saw a team make over 50% from 3-point range, but PSU did it. Those 3 extra 3-pointers were all the margin PSU needed to win.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	31	10	11	5	8
Penn State	37	15	20	2	4
Advantage	PSU	PSU	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan

Sure, PSU had 6 more rebounds than UM, but they had 9 more turnovers to balance things out. The key stat was 3-point shooting.

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
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
02/21/2008	At Minnesota	5-26 (19.2%)	L	Yes

Date	Opponent	3-Point Shooting	Result	Fits Theory?
02/23/2008	Illinois	5-21 (23.8%)	W	N/A
02/26/2008	Northwestern	7-21 (33.3%)	L	Yes
03/01/2008	At Penn State	9-31 (29.0%)	L	Yes
Totals		207-657 (31.5%)		21-1

The theory continues to hold. Both games this week were solid examples.

Individual Statistics

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

Here's how the starters did this week:

	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
Player	NW	PSU	NW	PSU	NW	PSU	NW	PSU
Kelvin Grady	0-2	4-7	0-2	3-5	0-0	0-0	0	11
Manny Harris	4-12	8-21	2-6	5-11	7-8	8-11	17	29
DeShawn Sims	1-9	1-10	0-2	0-6	2-2	0-0	4	2
Ekpe Udoh	3-4	1-2	0-0	0-0	4-4	3-4	10	5
Anthony Wright	5-8	0-5	1-4	0-4	2-4	1-2	13	1
Totals	13-35 37.1%	14-45 31.1%	3-14 21.4%	8-26 30.8%	15-18 83.3%	12-17 70.6%	44	48

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

Individually, only Harris hit double figures in both games, but he had to take a LOT of shots to do it. The 29 points he scored against Penn State are a new career high, eclipsing his old record of 27, set in the home win over Ohio State on 02/17/2008.

The big story this week, and it's not a happy story, is DeShawn Sims. He's in a miserable slump, and he's trying too hard to shoot his was out of it, especially from 3-point range. Michigan needs his offensive output, and they need his 3-pointers to drop, but he needs to start with some easy shots to get his confidence back, then move outside.

The other 3 starters each had one good game and one bad game. Unfortunately, they spread out their good games just enough to turn both games into losses. If Grady could have just scored one basket in the Northwestern game, it probably would have turned that loss into a win. If Wright had hit just one of his 3-point attempts against PSU, it might have stopped the 15-0 run earlier, and kept Michigan in the game. Michigan needs consistent production from their starters.

Once again, Coach Beilein only went 4-deep on the bench this week.

Here's how the bench players did:

	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
Player	NW	PSU	NW	PSU	NW	PSU	NW	PSU
Ron Coleman	2-3	2-6	2-3	1-2	0-0	0-1	6	5
Zack Gibson	1-2	4-5	0-1	0-1	0-0	0-0	2	8
C.J. Lee	3-4	0-1	2-3	0-1	0-0	0-0	8	0
Jevohn Shepherd	0-0	0-1	0-0	0-1	0-0	0-2	0	0

Totals	6-9 66.7%	6-13 46.2%	4-7 57.1%	1-5 20.0%	0-0 0.0%	0-3 0.0%	16	13

As a group, the bench players had a mediocre week. Their shooting percentages were everywhere from good (overall shooting vs. Northwestern) to awful (3-point shooting vs. Penn State, and free throw shooting in both games), and they didn't chip in many points.

Individually, none of the bench players had two good games. Lee helped spark the big comeback against Northwestern, but he was ineffective against Penn State. Gibson didn't do much against Northwestern, but he had a good solid game against Penn State. Coleman played fairly well in both games, but not great. Shepherd wasn't a factor at all in either game.

Big Ten This Week

Here are the current Big Ten standings, after Week #9 of league play:

Team	Big Ten			Overall		
	Wins	Losses	Percent	Wins	Losses	Percent
Wisconsin	14	2	0.875	24	4	0.857
Purdue	14	2	0.875	23	6	0.793
Indiana	13	3	0.813	24	5	0.828
Michigan State	11	5	0.688	23	6	0.793
Minnesota	8	8	0.500	18	10	0.643
Ohio State	8	8	0.500	17	12	0.586
Penn State	6	10	0.375	14	14	0.500
Iowa	5	12	0.294	12	18	0.400
Michigan	5	12	0.294	9	20	0.310
Illinois	4	12	0.250	12	17	0.414
Northwestern	1	15	0.063	8	19	0.296

Here are the results from last week's games:

Tuesday (02/26/2008)
Northwestern won at Michigan, 62-60
Ohio State lost at Indiana, 72-69

Wednesday (02/27/2008)
Iowa lost at Penn State, 65-64
Minnesota lost at Purdue, 65-53

Thursday (02/28/2008)
Michigan State lost at Wisconsin, 57-42

Saturday (03/01/2008)
Michigan lost at Penn State, 69-61
Illinois won at Iowa, 58-47
Northwestern lost at Purdue, 68-43
Ohio State lost at Minnesota, 71-57

Sunday (03/02/2008)
Indiana lost at Michigan State, 103-74

The home teams did very well this week, going 8-2. There were a couple surprises this week:

- Michigan losing to Northwestern on Tuesday. It wasn't clear that Northwestern was going to win any Big Ten games this season, but they did.
- Michigan State getting beaten by 15 points by Wisconsin on Thursday. It wasn't surprising that Wisconsin won, since they always win at home, but it was surprising that they won by 15 points, and held MSU to 42 points.
- Michigan losing to Penn State on Saturday.
- Michigan State beating Indiana by 29 points on Sunday. Once again, it wasn't too surprising that MSU won, since they win most of their home games, but beating IU by 29 points, and scoring 103 is very surprising.

Here are the games scheduled for the upcoming week (Week #10), which is the last week of the regular season:

Tuesday (03/04/2008)
Iowa at Northwestern
Purdue at Ohio State

Wednesday (03/05/2008)
Minnesota at Indiana
Penn State at Wisconsin

Thursday (03/06/2008)
Michigan State at Illinois

Saturday (03/01/2008)
Minnesota at Illinois
Wisconsin at Northwestern

Sunday (03/09/2008)
Purdue at Michigan
Michigan State at Ohio State
Indiana at Penn State

There are 3 big games this week, both involving Michigan State:

- Purdue at Ohio State on Tuesday. Ohio State is down this year, but they're tough at home. Purdue needs to win to stay in a tie for 1st place in the Big Ten race, and OSU is trying to turn into a "bubble team" for the NCAA Tournament.
- Purdue at Michigan on Sunday. Wisconsin is going to win both of their games this week, so Purdue has to do the same to finish tied for 1st place.
- Michigan State at Ohio State on Sunday. MSU is fighting for a decent seed in the NCAA Tournament, and OSU is fighting for an NCAA berth. 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	4-12	Michigan (H) Northwestern (H) Minnesota (A) Iowa (A)	Ohio State (H) Penn State (H) Wisconsin (A) Indiana (A)	Michigan State (H) Minnesota (H)

			Purdue (A) Ohio State (A) Michigan State (A) Purdue (H) Indiana (H) Penn State (A) Wisconsin (H) Michigan (A)	
Indiana	13-3	Iowa (A) Michigan (A) Illinois (H) Minnesota (A) Penn State (H) Iowa (H) Northwestern (H) Illinois (A) Ohio State (A) Michigan State (H) Purdue (H) Northwestern (A) Ohio State (H)	Wisconsin (A) Wisconsin (H) Michigan State (A)	Minnesota (H) Penn State (A)
Iowa	5-12	Michigan State (H) Michigan (A) Penn State (H) Ohio State (H) Northwestern (H)	Indiana (H) Wisconsin (A) Ohio State (A) Purdue (H) Indiana (A) Purdue (A) Wisconsin (H) Minnesota (A) Michigan (H) Michigan State (A) Penn State (A) Illinois (H)	Northwestern (A)
Michigan	5-12	Northwestern (A) Penn State (H) Iowa (A) Ohio State (H) Illinois (H)	Wisconsin (H) Purdue (A) Indiana (H) Illinois (A) Iowa (H) Wisconsin (A) Michigan State (A) Minnesota (H) Ohio State (A) Minnesota (A) Northwestern (H) Penn State (A)	Purdue (H)
Michigan State	11-5	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) Wisconsin (A)	Illinois (A) Ohio State (A)

		Penn State (H) Iowa (H) Indiana (H)		
Minnesota	8-8	Northwestern (H) Penn State (A) Michigan (A) Northwestern (A) Iowa (H) Michigan (H) Penn State (H) Ohio State (H)	Michigan State (A) Indiana (H) Michigan State (H) Ohio State (A) Wisconsin (H) Illinois (H) Wisconsin (A) Purdue (A)	Indiana (A) Illinois (A)
Northwestern	1-15	Michigan (A)	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) Purdue (H) Iowa (A) Indiana (H) Purdue (A)	Iowa (H) Wisconsin (H)
Ohio State	8-8	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	6-10	Northwestern (A) Illinois (A) Michigan State (H) Illinois (H) Iowa (H) Michigan (H)	Minnesota (H) Wisconsin (H) Indiana (A) Purdue (H) Iowa (A) Ohio State (H) Purdue (A) Michigan (A) Michigan State (A) Minnesota (A)	Wisconsin (A) Indiana (H)
Purdue	14-2	Michigan (H) Ohio State (H) Iowa (A) Illinois (H) Penn State (A) Wisconsin (H) Iowa (H) Illinois (A) Penn State (H)	Michigan State (A) Indiana (A)	Ohio State (A) Michigan (A)

		Wisconsin (A) Michigan State (H) Northwestern (A) Minnesota (H) Northwestern (H)		
Wisconsin	14-2	Michigan (A) Iowa (H) Illinois (H) Penn State (A) Northwestern (H) Michigan (H) Indiana (H) Minnesota (A) Iowa (A) Indiana (A) Minnesota (H) Illinois (A) Ohio State (A) Michigan State (H)	Purdue (A) Purdue (H)	Penn State (H) Northwestern (A)

With their loss to Michigan State, Indiana dropped out of the Big Ten race. It's now a 2-team race, and it will probably end in a tie.

Here's who the contenders have left to play:

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

I expect both Purdue and Wisconsin to win both of their remaining games, so it doesn't matter what Indiana does. Wisconsin certainly has the easier remaining schedule, but I don't expect Purdue to falter.

The Big Picture

This week was a big step backwards for Michigan. They looked so good for 5 games, starting with the home win over Penn State on 02/09/2008, and ending with the home win over Illinois on 02/23/2008, when they won 4 of those 5 games. Since then, they've lost to two teams that they should have beaten, especially Northwestern. They looked terrible in both games, and deserved to lose them both.

Michigan has just one regular season game left, and it's a tough one: Purdue, in Crisler Arena. On the one hand, Michigan has played several of the tough teams on their schedule right down to the wire, even though they've lost all those games, but Purdue will probably be playing for a share of the Big Ten title, and a top seed in the NCAA Tournament. They'll be playing as hard as they can, and Michigan will have their hands full.

Here's the 2007-2008 schedule/results:

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record

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.	L	69-60	8-18 (4-10)
02/23/2008 (Sat)	Illinois	Ann Arbor	W	49-43	9-18 (5-10)
02/26/2008 (Tue)	Northwestern	Ann Arbor	L	62-60	9-19 (5-11)
03/01/2008 (Sat)	Penn State	State College, Pa.	L	69-61	9-20 (5-12)
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 only plays one game this week. On Sunday (03/09/2008, 4:00 p.m. EDT), they play Purdue in Crisler Arena. Note the time: we switch to Daylight Saving Time at 2:00 a.m. that morning, so be sure to set your clock ahead an hour ("Spring Ahead") before you go to bed Saturday night. You don't want to miss Michigan's last home game of the season. It's Senior Day, and we'll be honoring Ron Coleman and the injured David Merritt. Come on down to Crisler for the game, and check back here next week to see what happened, and why.

Go Blue!