11/10/2008 – Week #02 – It Was Only An Exhibition Game, But…

The Week In Review

The University of Michigan men's basketball team only played one (exhibition) game this week, and they won it. On Thursday (11/06/2008), they beat Saginaw Valley State (SVSU) in Crisler Arena, 81-55. This was Michigan's one and only exhibition game this season.

It's always hard to tell much about a team after watching an exhibition game. Coach Beilein played everyone, and he tried a lot of unusual lineups. As a result, the game was pretty choppy, with no real "flow". However, I was still able to get some initial reactions:

- The freshmen look good. Not "Greg Odom" good, but good. They'll all be able to play on a regular basis, and contribute.
- This is a fast team. They might make mistakes by playing too fast, but they can really dictate an up-tempo game.
- All the players look much more comfortable playing in the Beilein System than they did last year. They spend a lot less time worrying about the details, and more time on making plays. This is a good thing.

I don't know if any of that will translate into more wins, or closer scores in the games where UM is outmatched, but it should make for a lot less groaning in the stands during the games.

As far as the SVSU game went, the Wolverines played well for most of the game, with a bunch of little mistakes, but nothing that can't be corrected. They did lots of things right, and it was a promising start. It was a game that Michigan should have won, and they did.

Game Statistics

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	24-50 (48.0%)	11-24 (45.8%)	22-37 (59.5%)
SVSU	19-56 (33.9%)	6-21 (28.6%)	11-18 (61.1%)
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	SVSU

Michigan didn't just win these stats, they dominated. Even though SVSU shot a slightly higher percentage from the free-throw line, Michigan made more free throws than SVSU attempted.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	34	18	13	6	5
SVSU	39	7	22	0	9
Advantage	SVSU	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan	SVSU

These stats aren't as impressive as the shooting stats, but they're still pretty good. It's a little embarrassing to get out-rebounded by a Division II team, but other than that, Michigan played pretty well. Actually, with the lack of height that Michigan has this year, it won't be too surprising to see UM get out-rebounded most of the time. As we saw in this game, Michigan can still win the game, even if they lose the rebounding battle.

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. I'm not saying that they'll lose if they don't get 20/40, I'm just saying that if they do get 20/40, they'll win. Last season, this theory was 23-1 at predicting Michigan's record. I'll be testing this theory out again this season:

Date	Opponent	3-Point Shooting	Result	Fits Theory?
11/06/2008	Saginaw Valley State (exhibition)	11-24 (45.8%)	W	Y
Totals		11-24 (45.8%)		1-0

So far, so good. Michigan got off more than 20 3-pointers, and made more than 40% of them.

Individual Statistics

Coach Beilein went with a pretty unusual starting lineup in the SVSU game: Stu Douglass, Zack Gibson, Manny Harris, David Merritt, and Anthony Wright. Gibson and Harris will probably start most of the games this season, and Merritt and Wright might start some games, but starting Douglass was a real surprise. Actually, given how much Beilein substitutes, it really doesn't matter much who starts, since many players will get significant playing time.

Here's how the starters did:

Player	Field Goals	3-Pointers	Free Throws	Points
Stu Douglass	3-6	3-5	0-0	9
Zack Gibson	3-6	2-3	3-6	11
Manny Harris	6-13	0-2	4-9	16
David Merritt	2-2	2-2	0-0	6
Anthony Wright	2-7	1-4	1-2	6
Totals	16-34 47.0%	8-16 50.0%	8-17 47.0%	48

As a group, the starters did just fine. Their percentages are good, except for free throw shooting, and they scored a decent number of points.

Individually, both Gibson and Harris hit double figures, and Douglass came close. Merritt had a good game, and Wright was OK out there, but not great.

This was only an exhibition game, so Coach Beilein played everyone (except Laval Lucas-Perry, who isn't eligible until January). Here's how the bench players did:

Player	Field Goals	3-Pointers	Free Throws	Points
Ben Cronin	0-1	0-0	4-6	4
Kelvin Grady	0-1	0-1	2-2	2
C.J. Lee	0-1	0-1	1-2	1
Zack Novak	2-4	2-4	0-0	6
Corey Person	0-0	0-0	1-2	1
Eric Puls	0-1	0-0	0-0	0
Jevohn Shepherd	0-0	0-0	0-0	0
DeShawn Sims	6-8	1-2	6-8	19
Totals	8-16 50.0%	3-8 37.5%	14-20 70.0%	33

As a group, the bench players did better than the starters. Their shooting percentages are better, and they scored a nice number of points.

Individually, Sims was the star of the game. Even though he didn't start, he was the best player out there. I don't know why Coach Beilein didn't start him, but I'm sure Sims will start most, if not all, of the regular season games.

None of the other bench players did very much. Novak probably looked the best of them. He looked pretty comfortable out there, and he showed a nice touch from outside. I think a lot of fans were hoping to see more of the new 7' 1" freshman center, Ben Cronin, but he only got in for the last 4 minutes of "garbage time". Everything I've heard and read says that he's just not ready yet for college competition. He might be redshirted this season.

The Big Picture

The one-game exhibition portion of the schedule is over. Now we'll see how good Michigan is against real competition, eventually. The first two games, in the 2K Sports Classic benefiting Coaches vs. Cancer, won't be much of a test. However, if Michigan wins their local bracket of the tournament and goes to Madison Square Garden for the "final four", they'll undoubtedly play some tough teams, probably Duke, UCLA, and Southern Illinois. Other than Duke on 12/06/2008, the rest of the home non-conference games are pretty easy.

Here's the 2008-2009 schedule/results:

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record
11/06/2008 (Thu)	Saginaw Valley State (exh)	Ann Arbor	W	81-55	0-0
2K Sports Classic benefiting Coaches vs. Cancer					
11/11/2008 (Tue)	Michigan Tech	Ann Arbor			
11/12/2008 (Wed)	Northeastern or IUPUI	Ann Arbor			
11/20/2008 (Thu)	Semifinal	New York, NY			
11/21/2008 (Fri)	Final game or Consolation game	New York, NY			
11/25/2008 (Tue)	Norfolk State	Ann Arbor			
11/29/2008 (Sat)	Savannah State	Ann Arbor			
ACC/Big Ten Challenge					
12/03/2008 (Wed)	at Maryland	College Park, MD			
12/06/2008 (Sat)	Duke	Ann Arbor			
12/13/2008 (Sat)	Eastern Michigan	Ann Arbor			
12/20/2008 (Sat)	vs. Oakland	Auburn Hills, MI			
12/22/2008 (Mon)	Florida Gulf Coast	Ann Arbor			
12/29/2008 (Mon)	North Carolina Central	Ann Arbor			
12/31/2009 (Wed)	Wisconsin	Ann Arbor			
01/04/2009 (Sun)	Illinois	Ann Arbor			
01/07/2009 (Wed)	at Indiana	Bloomington, IN			
01/11/2009 (Sun)	Iowa	Ann Arbor			
01/14/2009 (Wed)	at Illinois	Champaign, IL			
01/17/2009 (Sat)	Ohio State	Ann Arbor			
01/20/2009 (Tue)	at Penn State	State College, PA			
01/24/2009 (Sat)	Northwestern	Ann Arbor			
01/28/2009 (Wed)	at Ohio State	Columbus, OH			

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record
01/31/2009 (Sat)	at Purdue	West Lafayette, IN			
02/05/2009 (Thu)	Penn State	Ann Arbor			
02/07/2009 (Sat)	at Connecticut	Storrs, CT			
02/10/2009 (Tue)	Michigan State	Ann Arbor			
02/15/2009 (Sun)	at Northwestern	Evanston, IL			
02/19/2009 (Thu)	Minnesota	Ann Arbor			
02/22/2009 (Sun)	at Iowa	Iowa City, IA			
02/26/2009 (Thu)	Purdue	Ann Arbor			
03/01/2009 (Sun)	at Wisconsin	Madison, WI			
03/07/2009 (Sat) or 03/08/2009 (Sun)	at Minnesota	Minneapolis, MN			
Big Ten Tournament					
03/12/2009 (Thu)	First Round	Indianapolis, IN			
03/13/2009 (Fri)	Quarterfinal	Indianapolis, IN			
03/14/2009 (Sat)	Semifinal	Indianapolis, IN			
03/15/2009 (Sun)	Championship	Indianapolis, IN			

The Upcoming Week

As you can see in the schedule above, Michigan has two games this week. On Tuesday (11/11/2008, 7:00 p.m.), they play Michigan Tech, then on Wednesday (11/12/2008), they play the 2nd round game of the tournament. If they beat Michigan Tech on Tuesday, they'll play the winner of the other Tuesday game (IUPUI or Northeastern) at 8:00. If they lose on Tuesday, they'll play the loser of the IUPUI/Northeastern game at 5:00. All the games are in Crisler Arena. Michigan should win both games. Come on down to Crisler Arena and cheer on the Wolverines.

Go Blue!