11/17/2008 – Week #03 – The 2K Sports Classic, Regional Action

The Week In Review

After all the depressing news from the football team, you've come to the right place: the University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this week, both in the 2K Sports Classic, and they won both of them. On Tuesday (11/11/2008), they beat Michigan Tech (MTU) 77-55, then on Wednesday (11/12/2008), they beat Northeastern (NE) 76-56. Both games were in Crisler Arena. These 2 wins start Michigan off with a 2-0 record.

Michigan was obviously better than both MTU and Northeastern, and they played pretty well in both games. They still had a few stretches where they didn't play as well, but those periods seem to be getting shorter, and farther between. Coach Beilein played almost everyone in both games, and he tried some more unusual lineups. As a result, there were some rough spots, but Michigan got the early lead in both games, and held it comfortably for most of each game.

Game Statistics

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	28-54 (51.9%)	8-24 (33.3%)	13-17 (76.5%)
Michigan Tech	22-61 (36.1%)	6-26 (23.1%)	5-7 (71.4%)
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan

Michigan dominated these stats, and that's why they won the game. All the UM percentages are pretty good, especially the overall shooting percentage.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	37	16	13	5	7
Michigan Tech	32	11	15	1	1
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan

Once again, Michigan dominated all the stats, which is why they won by 22 points.

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	23-43 (53.5%)	5-14 (35.7%)	25-26 (96.2%)
Northeastern	17-58 (29.3%)	4-24 (16.7%)	18-21 (85.7%)
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan

It was all Michigan again, especially from the free-throw line. Michigan hit their first 24 free throws before missing #25 and making #26. It was awesome to watch.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	33	15	14	3	7
Northeastern	31	11	11	1	9
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	NE	Michigan	NE

These stats are a lot closer than the shooting stats, but they don't tell the story like the shooting stats do.

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 the big games. 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
11/11/2008	Michigan Tech	8-24 (33.3%)	W	Y
11/12/2008	Northeastern	5-14 (35.7%)	W	Y
Totals		24-62 (38.7%)		3-0

The theory continues to hold.

Individual Statistics

Coach Beilein used the same unusual starting lineup in both games that he used in last week's exhibition game vs. Saginaw Valley State: Stu Douglass, Zack Gibson, Manny Harris, David Merritt, and Anthony Wright. Here's how the starters did:

Player	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
	MTU	NE	MTU	NE	MTU	NE	MTU	NE
Stu Douglass	0-4	2-3	0-3	2-3	0-0	0-0	0	6
Zack Gibson	4-9	2-2	1-3	0-0	2-3	0-0	11	4
Manny Harris	10-15	6-9	3-5	1-2	7-9	13-14	30	26
David Merritt	1-2	2-5	1-2	1-3	0-0	2-2	3	7
Anthony Wright	2-5	0-2	2-5	0-1	0-0	2-2	6	2
Totals	17-35 48.6%	12-21 57.1%	7-18 38.9%	4-9 44.4%	9-12 75.0%	17-18 94.4%	50	45

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

Individually, only Harris hit double figures in both games, and Gibson was the only other starter to hit double figures in either game. Douglass had a decent game against Northeastern, but he didn't do much again MTU. Wright was just the opposite: decent against MTU, mediocre against NE. Merritt did fine in both games. We're not expecting much offense from Merritt; he's in there for speed, ball handling, and defense. Any points he chips in are a bonus.

When the MTU game was comfortably in hand, Coach Beilein emptied the bench (except for freshman walk-on Corey Person), so almost everyone got to play, including 7" 1' freshman center Ben Cronin. I was wondering if Cronin might get redshirted this season, but apparently not. Only 5 bench players got into the NE game. Here's how the bench players did:

Player	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
	MTU	NE	MTU	NE	MTU	NE	MTU	NE
Ben Cronin	0-0	DNP	0-0	DNP	2-2	DNP	2	DNP

Kelvin Grady	1-2	1-2	0-0	0-1	2-2	0-0	4	2
C.J. Lee	2-3	1-1	1-2	0-0	0-1	0-0	5	2
Zack Novak	1-2	1-3	0-1	1-2	0-0	3-3	2	6
Eric Puls	1-1	DNP	0-0	DNP	0-0	DNP	2	DNP
Jevohn Shepherd	1-2	0-0	0-1	0-0	0-0	2-2	2	2
DeShawn Sims	5-9	8-16	0-2	0-2	0-0	3-3	10	19
Totals	11-19 57.9%	11-22 50.0%	1-6 16.7%	1-5 20.0%	4-5 80.0%	8-8 100.0%	27	31

As a group, the bench players did fairly well. Their shooting percentages are good, except for 3-point shooting, and they scored a reasonable number of points.

Individually, Sims was the only bench player to hit double figures in either game, and he did it in both games. Even though he didn't start, he was one of the better players out there. I don't understand why Coach Beilein isn't starting him, but Sims is playing well coming off the bench.

None of the other bench players did very much.

The Big Picture

As expected, Michigan won their regional of the 2K Sports Classic benefiting Coaches vs. Cancer. However, when Michigan goes to Madison Square Garden for the "final four", they'll play much tougher teams (Duke, UCLA, and Southern Illinois). I don't expect Michigan to be able to beat UCLA, but they might be able to win the consolation game, presumably against Southern Illinois.

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	W	77-55	1-0
11/12/2008 (Wed)	Northeastern	Ann Arbor	W	76-56	2-0
11/20/2008 (Thu)	UCLA	New York, NY			
11/21/2008 (Fri)	Final/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			
01/31/2009 (Sat)	at Purdue	West Lafayette, IN			

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record
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: the "final four" of the 2K Sports Classic, in Madison Square Garden in New York City. On Thursday (11/20/2008, 7:00 p.m.), they play (#4) UCLA, then on Friday (11/21/2008), they play in either the championship game (not likely) or the consolation game of the tournament. All the games are on TV (ESPN2), so tune by and see how the Wolverines do.

Go Blue!