**12/01/2008 – Week #05 – A Laugher And A Cliffhanger**

**The Week In Review**

After 2 weeks of games in the 2K Sports Classic, the University of Michigan men's basketball team finally began their "regular" non-conference season this week. They played two games this week, and they won both of them. On Tuesday (11/25/2008), they beat Norfolk State (NSU) 83-49, then on Saturday (11/29/2008), they beat Savannah State (SSU) 66-64, in overtime. Both games were in Crisler Arena. The two wins raise Michigan's record to 5-1.

The win over NSU was a real laugher. Michigan won easily, and most of the 2nd half was just "showtime". Just about everyone got to play, and most of the Michigan players scored some points. On the other hand, the SSU game was a real cliffhanger. SSU came out on fire, and they made their first 9 shots, including three 3-pointers, all in the first 7:00. At that point, they led 21-7. They missed their next two shots, but they then hit three more in a row, to make it 12-for-14, and a 28-13 lead. While all this was going on, UM was committing lots of silly turnovers, and shooting pretty poorly. Michigan went almost 7:00 without scoring a point, and more than 8:00 between field goals during the SSU run. But, the Wolverines kept battling back, and they were within 12 (31-19) with 2:20 to go in the 1st half. Then one of the SSU players hit an off-balance overhand-throw 3-pointer a good second after the shot clock horn sounded, and the one ref who seemed to be determined to make UM lose called it good! That broke Michigan's back, and SSU scored the last 8 points of the half to lead by 20 at halftime, 39-19.

In the last few seasons, when Michigan was down by 20 points at halftime, they would have just "phoned it in" in the 2nd half, but not this season. They came out after halftime and scored the first 15 points, to cut the SSU lead down to 5 (39-34), with less than 6:00 gone. SSU finally scored again with 13:04 left, and the lead stayed around 5-7 points for most of the next 7 minutes, then Michigan started chipping away at it some more. UM finally got the game tied up at 51-51 with 2:54 left, and they finally pulled ahead with 2:23 left. The lead see-sawed back and forth, but never got to be more than 2 points for either team. It was all tied up 56-56 with 0:04 left when Zack Novak stole an inbounds pass and went in for an uncontested dunk to win the game at the buzzer. He missed it. He got the ball in the cylinder, then pulled on the rim hard enough to rattle it out. Unbelievable!

So, we went to overtime, and it was just as close as the last 3:00 of regulation. Neither team got up by more than 2 points, and it was tied at 64-64 with 0:05 when Manny Harris got the inbounds pass and passed it ahead to DeShawn Sims, who hit a 19-footer with 0.8 seconds left to win the game. It was very exciting.

Now, if you're a "glass half empty" kind of person, you'll say "no way Michigan should get down by 20 points to a school like Savannah State", and you'll be right. Michigan played very poorly in the 1st half, and SSU was on fire. That happens occasionally in college basketball, but the important thing is how Michigan responded to the challenge. If you're a "glass half full" kind of person, you'll be pleased that Michigan didn't quit, and didn't panic, and played good solid basketball in the 2nd half and the overtime. Since they did win the game, I'll go with the "glass half full" view.

**Game Statistics**

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

| Team | Field goals | 3-Pointers | Free throws |
|---|---|---|---|

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Michigan | 32-71 (45.1%) | 9-27 (33.3%) | 10-16 (62.5%) |
| Norfolk State | 20-66 (30.3%) | 2-8 (25.0%) | 7-14 (50.0%) |
| Advantage | Michigan | Michigan | Michigan |

Michigan dominated these stats, which is why they won the game by 34 points. Even though UM's shooting percentage isn't very good for 3-pointers, the fact that they hit 7 more than Norfolk State made a huge difference in the game.

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

| Team | Rebounds | Assists | Turnovers | Blocks | Steals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Michigan | 53 | 21 | 14 | 5 | 7 |
| Norfolk State | 37 | 9 | 15 | 4 | 6 |
| Advantage | Michigan | Michigan | Michigan | Michigan | Michigan |

Hello? 53 rebounds? Michigan only had 53 rebounds total in the two games in New York (against UCLA and Duke). Besides the domination on the boards, UM also had more than twice as many assists as Norfolk State, and they (barely) won all the other statistical categories. So, chalk this win up to 3 things: overall shooting, 3-point shooting, and rebounding.

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

| Team | Field goals | 3-Pointers | Free throws |
|---|---|---|---|
| Michigan | 19-47 (40.4%) | 4-22 (18.2%) | 24-30 (80.0%) |
| Savannah State | 24-43 (55.8%) | 7-9 (77.8%) | 9-10 (90.0%) |
| Advantage | SSU | SSU | Michigan |

I don't think I've ever seen such a discrepancy in shooting percentage in a winning effort, especially in 3-point shooting. Michigan shot terribly, and SSU was awesome. So, how did UM win the game? At the free-throw line. Sure, SSU shot a better percentage, but Michigan shot 3 times as many free throws, and made 15 more than SSU. That (just barely) made up for the shooting from the floor.

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

| Team | Rebounds | Assists | Turnovers | Blocks | Steals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Michigan | 31 | 12 | 19 | 5 | 9 |
| Savannah State | 19 | 13 | 18 | 1 | 8 |
| Advantage | Michigan | SSU | SSU | Michigan | Michigan |

These stats tell a very interesting story: this is one of the biggest rebounding margins for Michigan this year, but it is offset by the highest number of turnovers this year (the previous high was 14, in the Northeastern and Norfolk State games). The other stats are all too close to matter.

**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. Here's how things have gone so far:

| Date | Opponent | 3-Point Shooting | Result | Fits Theory? |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| 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 |
| 11/20/2008 | UCLA | 5-20 (25.0%) | W | Y |
| 11/21/2008 | Duke | 6-22 (27.3%) | L | Y |
| 11/25/2008 | Norfolk State | 9-27 (33.3%) | W | Y |
| 11/29/2008 | Savannah State | 4-22 (18.2%) | W | Y |
| Totals | | 48-153 (31.4%) | | 7-0 |

At least Michigan managed to get at least 20 3-pointers off in both games. However, their shooting percentages were pretty bad in both games, and they were lucky it didn't cost them both games.

So, what's up with these lousy 3-point shooting percentages? A few players are really dragging down the averages:

| Player | SVSU | MTU | NE | UCLA | Duke | NSU | SSU | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Zack Gibson | 2-3 | 1-3 | 0-0 | 0-1 | 0-2 | 0-0 | 0-1 | 3-10 (30.0%) |
| Kelvin Grady | 0-1 | 0-0 | 0-1 | 1-2 | 1-3 | 1-4 | 0-2 | 3-13 (23.1%) |
| Jevohn Shepherd | 0-0 | 0-1 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 1-3 | 0-1 | 1-5 (20.0%) |
| DeShawn Sims | 1-2 | 0-2 | 0-2 | 0-3 | 0-1 | 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-13 (15.4%) |
| Totals | 3-6<br>50.0% | 1-6<br>16.7% | 0-3<br>0.0% | 1-6<br>16.7% | 1-6<br>16.7% | 2-8<br>25.0% | 1-5<br>20.0% | 9-41 (22.0%) |

If you take out the exhibition game vs. Saginaw Valley State, the total percentage for these 4 players drops to 17.1% (6-for-35). As you can see, Shepherd hasn't taken (and missed) that many, so it's really just Gibson, Grady, and Sims that are hurting the percentages the most. They're all relatively good 3-point shooters, so I'm not suggesting that they stop shooting 3-pointers, I'm just hoping they get their "touch" back, and soon.

**Individual Statistics**

Coach Beilein used his regular starting lineup in both games. Here's how the starters did:

| | Field Goals | | 3-Pointers | | Free Throws | | Points | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Player | NSU | SSU | NSU | SSU | NSU | SSU | NSU | SSU |
| Stu Douglass | 3-7 | 0-1 | 2-5 | 0-1 | 1-2 | 0-0 | 9 | 0 |
| Zack Gibson | 1-3 | 1-2 | 0-0 | 0-1 | 0-1 | 1-1 | 2 | 3 |
| Manny Harris | 7-13 | 4-10 | 0-2 | 0-3 | 2-4 | 14-14 | 16 | 22 |
| David Merritt | 0-1 | 1-1 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 1-2 | 0 | 3 |
| Anthony Wright | 4-10 | 0-6 | 2-6 | 0-5 | 2-2 | 2-4 | 12 | 2 |
| Totals | 15-34<br>44.1% | 6-20<br>30.0% | 4-13<br>30.8% | 0-10<br>0.0% | 5-9<br>55.6% | 18-21<br>85.7% | 39 | 30 |

As a group, the starters did OK this week. Their percentages are (barely) acceptable, except for 3-point shooting in the SSU game, but they didn't score enough points.

Individually, only Harris hit double figures in both games, and Wright was the only other starter to hit double figures in either game. Douglass almost hit double figures in the NSU game, but no one else had enough points to matter.

Here's how the bench players did this week:

| Player | Field Goals | | 3-Pointers | | Free Throws | | Points | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | NSU | SSU | NSU | SSU | NSU | SSU | NSU | SSU |
| Ben Cronin | 2-4 | DNP | 0-0 | DNP | 2-2 | DNP | 6 | DNP |
| Kelvin Grady | 1-6 | 0-3 | 1-4 | 0-2 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 5 | 0 |
| C.J. Lee | 1-2 | 0-0 | 1-2 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 3 | 0 |
| Zack Novak | 4-7 | 3-9 | 2-4 | 3-7 | 0-1 | 0-0 | 10 | 9 |
| Eric Puls | 0-0 | DNP | 0-0 | DNP | 0-0 | DNP | 0 | DNP |
| Jevohn Shepherd | 5-9 | 1-3 | 1-3 | 0-1 | 0-0 | 2-2 | 11 | 4 |
| DeShawn Sims | 4-9 | 9-12 | 0-1 | 1-2 | 3-4 | 4-7 | 11 | 23 |
| Totals | 17-37<br>45.9% | 13-27<br>48.1% | 5-14<br>35.7% | 4-12<br>33.3% | 5-7<br>71.4% | 6-9<br>66.7% | 46 | 36 |

As a group, the bench players did fairly well. Their shooting percentages are decent, and they scored a reasonable number of points.

Individually, Sims was the only bench player to hit double figures in both games, and he was the big star in the SSU game, with a career-high 23 points (and 12 rebounds). Novak and Shepherd both hit double figures in the NSU, and Novak almost did it again in the SSU game. If he had made his dunk at the end of regulation, he would have hit double figures and have been the hero. Maybe next time.

None of the other bench players did very much. It was nice to see Cronin get some more playing time in the NSU game, and score some more points. Of course, I don't get to see him in practice, but he looks pretty confident out there when he does get in, so I still don't understand why Coach Beilein isn't playing him more often, and for longer stretches.

**The Big Picture**

After playing two "cupcakes" at home (NSU and SSU), Michigan's schedule gets a lot tougher this week. Yes, I called Savannah State a "cupcake", even though Michigan had to go to overtime to beat them. SSU wasn't much better than NSU, they just had a hot game at the same time UM was struggling.

Anyway, this week Michigan plays two ACC teams: Maryland (in the ACC/Big Ten Challenge), and (#7) Duke (again). The Maryland game marks Michigan's first true "away" game, since the two games in Madison Square Garden for the 2K Sports Classic were "neutral site" games. The Duke game is a rematch of the final game in the 2K Sports Classic, which Duke won handily, 71-56. It wouldn't be too surprising if Duke won handily again, but this Michigan team has just enough weapons to beat Duke, in Ann Arbor, if they can control the tempo.

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 | W | 55-52 | 3-0 |
| 11/21/2008 (Fri) | Duke | New York, NY | L | 71-56 | 3-1 |
| 11/25/2008 (Tue) | Norfolk State | Ann Arbor | W | 83-49 | 4-1 |
| 11/29/2008 (Sat) | Savannah State | Ann Arbor | W | 66-64 (ot) | 5-1 |

| Date | Opponent | Site | Result | Score | Record |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *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 | | | |
| 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 Wednesday (12/03/2008, 7:30 p.m.) they play at Maryland, then on Saturday (12/06/2008, 3:30 p.m.) they play at home vs. Duke. The Duke game is sold out, but if you can get your hands on a ticket, come on down to Crisler and cheer on the Wolverines.

Go Blue!