Nothing But 'Net – Week #15 (02/09/2009) – A Nice Win, And An Encouraging Loss

The Week In Review

We've been over this before: I know that University of Michigan sports fans don't want to hear about "moral victories" and "encouraging losses", but they're a fact of life, especially for a team that's rebuilding. The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this week, and they won one and lost one. On Thursday (02/05/2009), they beat Penn State 71-51 in Crisler Arena, then on Saturday (02/07/2009), they lost at (#1) Connecticut 69-61. The win and the loss leave Michigan with a record of 15-9 (5-6 in Big Ten play).

The win over Penn State was very satisfying, especially since Penn State just beat Michigan State in East Lansing (72-68) on Sunday (02/01/2009). That's the second time this season that Michigan has beaten a team that had just upset MSU in Breslin; two weeks ago (Saturday 01/24/2009), Michigan beat Northwestern in Crisler (68-59) right after Northwestern had upset Michigan State in Breslin, 70-63, on Wednesday (01/21/2009).

The Penn State game was close for the whole 1st half, and much of the 2nd half, but once Michigan took the lead (38-36) with 13:44 left in the game, they quickly expanded it to double figures, and never looked back.

The loss to UConn was actually fairly encouraging. UConn has a much taller, more physical team than Michigan, but the Wolverines played with nice poise and control, and managed to stay in the game until the last few minutes. UM actually led by 4 (43-39) with 14:05 left in the game, then UConn went on a 9-0 scoring run, and that was the game. Once UConn got the lead, they never gave it back. Still, Michigan wasn't flustered by UConn, and they played them tough.

Game Statistics

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	24-51 (47.1%)	10-26 (38.5%)	13-18 (72.2%)
Penn State	19-58 (32.8%)	7-25 (28.0%)	6-11 (54.5%)
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan

That's how you win a game by 20 points: dominate all 3 shooting stats.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	34	20	9	6	7
Penn State	37	9	13	2	5
Advantage	PSU	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan

These stats are too close to matter much. The shooting stats are the important ones.

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	22-57 (38.6%)	9-29 (31.0%)	8-12 (66.7%)

Connecticut	22-52 (42.3%)	6-14 (42.9%)	19-25 (76.0%)
Advantage	Connecticut	Connecticut	Connecticut

UConn won all 3 of these stats, and that's why they won the game. The biggest stat was free-throw shooting. UConn made many more free throws than Michigan attempted.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	24	15	10	4	9
Connecticut	47	17	17	7	2
Advantage	UConn	UConn	Michigan	UConn	Michigan

I can't remember the last time Michigan was out-rebounded so thoroughly. It's amazing that the Wolverines were in the game until the end with that kind of rebounding deficit.

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. In the past, I counted a win where UM didn't hit 20/40 as "fits the theory", but no more. To fit my theory, they either have to hit 20/40 and win, or hit less than 20/40 and lose. If they win, but fail to hit 20/40, that doesn't fit my theory.

Here's how things have gone so far:

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	N
11/12/2008	Northeastern	5-14 (35.7%)	W	N
11/20/2008	UCLA	5-20 (25.0%)	W	N
11/21/2008	Duke	6-22 (27.3%)	L	Y
11/25/2008	Norfolk State	9-27 (33.3%)	W	N
11/29/2008	Savannah State	4-22 (18.2%)	W	N
12/03/2008	Maryland	12-29 (41.4%)	L	N
12/06/2008	Duke	7-16 (43.8%)	W	N
12/13/2008	Eastern Michigan	16-33 (48.5%)	W	Y
12/20/2008	Oakland	13-29 (44.8%)	W	Y
12/22/2008	Florida Gulf Coast	12-42 (28.6%)	W	N
12/29/2008	North Carolina Central	9-30 (30.0%)	W	N
12/31/2008	Wisconsin	8-24 (33.3%)	L	Y
01/04/2009	Illinois	11-27 (40.7%)	W	Y
01/07/2009	Indiana	12-40 (30.0%)	W	N
01/11/2009	Iowa	7-22 (31.8%)	W	N
01/14/2009	Illinois	7-26 (26.9%)	L	Y
01/17/2009	Ohio State	10-29 (34.5%)	L	Y
01/20/2009	Penn State	5-30 (16.7%)	L	Y
01/24/2009	Northwestern	9-27 (33.3%)	W	N
01/28/2009	Ohio State	7-26 (26.9%)	L	Y
01/31/2009	Purdue	6-23 (26.1%)	L	Y
02/05/2009	Penn State	10-26 (38.5%)	W	N
02/07/2009	Connecticut	9-29 (31.0%)	L	Y
Totals		218-661 (33.0%)		12-13

Michigan beat PSU despite shooting slightly less than 40%, but they couldn't overcome their poor 3-point shooting vs. UConn.

Individual Statistics

Coach Beilein went with yet another starting lineup in both games this week, starting Zack Gibson instead of DeShawn Sims. Here's how the starters did:

Player	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
	PSU	Conn	PSU	Conn	PSU	Conn	PSU	Conn
Zack Gibson	2-5	3-6	0-0	1-3	0-0	0-0	4	7
Manny Harris	7-13	5-16	3-5	1-5	11-14	4-5	28	15
C.J. Lee	2-4	0-2	1-2	0-2	0-0	0-0	5	0
Laval Lucas-Perry	0-4	0-3	0-3	0-2	0-0	1-2	0	1
Zack Novak	1-6	2-7	1-6	0-4	1-2	3-3	4	7
Totals	12-32 37.5%	10-34 29.4%	5-16 31.3%	2-16 12.5%	12-16 75.0%	8-10 80.0%	41	30

As a group, the starters had a mediocre week. Their percentages were decent in the PSU game, but lousy in the UConn game. They also didn't score enough points in either game.

Individually, only Harris hit double figures in either game, and he did it in both games. He played well in both games, especially in the PSU game. It was great to see him snap out of his recent scoring slump.

Gibson and Lee both contributed what was expected of them. Novak has been struggling lately, and Lucas-Perry had another terrible week. The team really needs Novak and Lucas-Perry to regain the form they showed earlier in the season.

Here's how the bench players did this week:

Player	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
	PSU	Conn	PSU	Conn	PSU	Conn	PSU	Conn
Stu Douglass	5-9	7-10	3-7	6-8	0-0	0-0	13	20
Kelvin Grady	0-0	DNP	0-0	DNP	0-0	DNP	0	DNP
David Merritt	1-1	0-0	1-1	0-0	0-0	0-0	3	0
Eric Puls	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0
Jevohn Shepherd	1-2	0-1	0-1	0-0	0-0	0-0	2	0
DeShawn Sims	4-6	4-11	0-0	0-4	1-2	0-2	9	8
Anthony Wright	1-1	1-1	1-1	1-1	0-0	0-0	3	3
Totals	12-19 63.2%	12-23 52.2%	5-10 50.0%	7-13 53.9%	1-2 50.0%	0-2 0.0%	30	31

Wow! This is the best week the bench has had this season, except for free-throw shooting. Their shooting percentages were fabulous, and they scored a reasonable number of points.

Individually, the reason the bench did so well as a group was Douglass. He was the only bench player to hit double figures in either game, and he did it in both games. In fact, he was the high scorer for both teams in the UConn game.

Sims almost hit double figures in both games, and he played pretty well, but not as well as he's capable of.

The rest of the bench players didn't contribute much.

Big Ten Report

My weekly Big Ten Report is now a separate article, here.

The Big Picture

Michigan's season is still "on the brink". The win over Penn State sure helped, and the loss at UConn was certainly forgivable, but they're still looking at 5 tough games down the stretch, with only 2 slightly easier games mixed in. If they go 2-5 in the last 7 games, that will give them a final record of 17-14 (7-11 in the Big Ten) heading into the Big Ten Tournament. That would mean that they'd have to win 3 games in the Big Ten Tournament to get into The Big Dance, because I don't think 19 wins is going to make it.

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
ACC/Big Ten Challenge					
12/03/2008 (Wed)	at Maryland	College Park, MD	L	75-70	5-2
12/06/2008 (Sat)	Duke	Ann Arbor	W	81-73	6-2
12/13/2008 (Sat)	Eastern Michigan	Ann Arbor	W	91-60	7-2
12/20/2008 (Sat)	vs. Oakland	Auburn Hills, MI	W	89-76	8-2
12/22/2008 (Mon)	Florida Gulf Coast	Ann Arbor	W	76-59	9-2
12/29/2008 (Mon)	North Carolina Central	Ann Arbor	W	77-57	10-2
12/31/2009 (Wed)	Wisconsin	Ann Arbor	L	73-61	10-3 (0-1)
01/04/2009 (Sun)	Illinois	Ann Arbor	W	74-64	11-3 (1-1)
01/07/2009 (Wed)	at Indiana	Bloomington, IN	W	72-66 (ot)	12-3 (2-1)
01/11/2009 (Sun)	Iowa	Ann Arbor	W	64-49	13-3 (3-1)
01/14/2009 (Wed)	at Illinois	Champaign, IL	L	66-51	13-4 (3-2)
01/17/2009 (Sat)	Ohio State	Ann Arbor	L	65-58	13-5 (3-3)
01/20/2009 (Tue)	at Penn State	State College, PA	L	73-58	13-6 (3-4)
01/24/2009 (Sat)	Northwestern	Ann Arbor	W	68-59	14-6 (4-4)
01/28/2009 (Wed)	at Ohio State	Columbus, OH	L	72-54	14-7 (4-5)
01/31/2009 (Sat)	at Purdue	West Lafayette, IN	L	67-49	14-8 (4-6)
02/05/2009 (Thu)	Penn State	Ann Arbor	W	71-51	15-8 (5-6)
02/07/2009 (Sat)	at Connecticut	Storrs, CT	L	69-61	15-9 (5-6)
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			

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record
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 plays two games this week. On Tuesday (02/10/2009, 7:00 p.m., ESPN) they play (#13) Michigan State in Crisler Arena, and on Sunday (02/15/2009, 3:00 p.m. EST, Big Ten Network) they play at Northwestern. Both of these games are "toss up" games, although the MSU game is certainly going to be tougher than the Northwestern game.

Come on down to Crisler and cheer on the Wolverines.

Go Blue!