Nothing But 'Net – Week #17 (02/23/2009) – Goodbye NCAA, Hello NIT

The Week In Review

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this week, and they won one and lost one. On Thursday (02/19/2009), they beat Minnesota 74-62 in Crisler Arena, then on Sunday (02/22/2009), they lost to Iowa 70-60 (in overtime) in Iowa City. The win and the loss leave Michigan with a record of 17-11 (7-8 in Big Ten play).

The win over Minnesota kept Michigan "on the bubble" for the NCAA Tournament, and the loss at Iowa burst that bubble. Michigan has only three regular season games left, and two of them are on the road in arenas that are among the toughest in the Big Ten to win in, Wisconsin and Minnesota. Michigan has to win at least two of their remaining three regular season games, and at least one game in the Big Ten Tournament to stand a chance of getting invited to The Big Dance. The way they played at Iowa on Sunday, it's hard to imagine them winning either of their last two away games. So far, Michigan has only won two true away games (as opposed to the neutral site victory over UCLA), both in overtime, and both against the bottom-feeders in the Big Ten (Indiana and Northwestern). That's why it was so discouraging that they went into overtime against yet another Big Ten bottom-feeder team (Iowa), and even more discouraging that they lost the game. They didn't play very well all game against Iowa, but they were putrid in the overtime period. They only made one basket (out of 10 shots) and two free throws, while getting outscored 14-4.

The really sad part about the Iowa game is that Iowa was playing with virtually no bench. Four of their five starters played all 45 minutes, and the other starter played 38 minutes. They only played two bench players, and they played for 3 and 4 minutes each. Michigan played 9 players, 7 of them with double-digit minutes. But still Michigan couldn't take advantage of the situation.

As poorly as they played at Iowa, that's how well they played in the weekday game against Minnesota. Minnesota is a pretty good team; they just dropped out of the Top 25 last week. Michigan finally shot the ball well against Minnesota, and that's all it takes for the Michigan offense to click. When the shots (especially the 3-pointers) are falling, the offense is a thing of beauty, and fun to watch. When the shots are clanking, it's truly ugly. The shots were falling in the Minnesota game, and Michigan won easily.

Game Statistics

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	27-59 (45.8%)	13-28 (46.4%)	7-11 (63.6%)
Minnesota	24-54 (44.4%)	5-21 (23.8%)	9-10 (90.0%)
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	Minnesota

This is the best shooting Michigan has shown in a while, especially from 3-point range. The only game this season where Michigan has shot better was against Eastern Michigan.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	33	21	8	0	10
Minnesota	31	15	12	8	4

Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan	Minnesota	Michigan

These stats all balance each other out. The shooting stats are the important ones.

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

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	20-62 (32.3%)	12-34 (35.3%)	8-9 (88.9%)
Iowa	24-51 (47.1%)	9-23 (39.1%)	13-18 (72.2%)
Advantage	Iowa	Iowa	Michigan

These are confusing stats. Iowa shot a better percentage from 3-point range, but Michigan hit three more 3-pointers. Michigan shot a better percentage at the free-throw line, but Iowa hit 5 more free throws.

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

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	33	18	8	2	2
Iowa	40	14	10	3	3
Advantage	Iowa	Michigan	Michigan	Iowa	Iowa

Once again, Michigan got out-rebounded by a healthy margin. The rest of these stats are 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. 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

Date	Opponent	3-Point Shooting	Result	Fits Theory?
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
02/10/2009	Michigan State	4-24 (16.7%)	L	Y
02/15/2009	Northwestern	7-26 (26.9%)	W	N
02/19/2009	Minnesota	13-28 (46.4%)	W	Y
02/22/2009	Iowa	12-34 (35.3%)	L	Y
Totals		254-773 (32.9%)		15-14

The theory really held this week. When Michigan hit over 40% (Minnesota), they won. When they hit less than 40% (Iowa), they lost. It's as simple as that.

Individual Statistics

Coach Beilein used the same starting lineup in both games this week. Here's how the starters did:

	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
Player	Minn	Iowa	Minn	Iowa	Minn	Iowa	Minn	Iowa
Stu Douglass	5-10	4-9	2-6	4-9	0-2	2-2	12	14
Manny Harris	2-8	3-13	0-2	1-3	4-4	2-2	8	9
C.J. Lee	1-3	0-5	0-2	0-3	2-2	0-0	4	0
Zack Novak	6-10	4-11	6-10	3-8	0-0	0-0	18	11
DeShawn Sims	5-16	5-14	2-5	1-3	0-0	2-3	12	13
Totals	19-47 40.4%	16-53 30.2%	10-25 40.0%	9-26 34.6%	6-8 75.0%	6-7 85.7%	54	47

As a group, the starters had a decent week. Their percentages were reasonable, except for overall shooting in the Iowa game, and they scored a reasonable number of points.

Individually, Douglass, Novak, and Sims all hit double figures in both games, which is impressive scoring balance. Harris had another rough week, with very poor shooting percentages. He took way too many off-balance shots against Iowa. Lee did what was expected of him.

Here's how the bench players did this week:

	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
Player	Minn	Iowa	Minn	Iowa	Minn	Iowa	Minn	Iowa
Zack Gibson	3-3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	6	0
Kelvin Grady	4-4	DNP	3-3	DNP	1-3	DNP	12	DNP
Laval Lucas-Perry	0-2	2-7	0-0	1-5	0-0	2-2	0	7
David Merritt	0-0	2-3	0-0	2-3	0-0	0-0	0	6
Jevohn Shepherd	1-3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	2	0
Totals	8-12 75.0%	4-10 40.0%	3-3 100.0%	3-8 37.5%	1-3 33.3%	2-2 100.0%	20	13

As a group, the bench players did pretty well this week. Their shooting percentages were reasonable, and they scored a reasonable number of points.

Individually, Grady hit double figures, and he only did it in one game. The rest of the bench players didn't contribute much offensively.

Big Ten Report

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

The Big Picture

Michigan's chances for making the NCAA Tournament took a serious hit in the Iowa loss, but Michigan still has a remote chance of making it. If they can win two of their last three regular season games, and one more in the Big Ten Tournament, they should get an invitation. Unfortunately, all three of their remaining regular season games look pretty hopeless: home vs. (#19) Purdue, at Wisconsin, and at Minnesota.

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	L	54-42	15-10 (5-7)
02/15/2009 (Sun)	at Northwestern	Evanston, IL	W	70-67 (ot)	16-10 (6-7)
02/19/2009 (Thu)	Minnesota	Ann Arbor	W	74-62	17-10 (7-7)
02/22/2009 (Sun)	at Iowa	Iowa City, IA	L	70-60 (ot)	17-11 (7-8)
02/26/2009 (Thu)	Purdue	Ann Arbor			
03/01/2009 (Sun)	at Wisconsin	Madison, WI			
03/07/2009 (Sat) or	at Minnesota	Minneapolis, MN			

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record
03/08/2009 (Sun)					
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 Thursday (02/26/2009, 9:00 p.m., ESPN) they play Purdue in Crisler Arena, and on Sunday (03/01/2009, 2:00 p.m. EST, Big Ten Network) they play at Wisconsin. These are both tough games, and Michigan will be lucky to win either of them.

Come on down to Crisler and cheer on the Wolverines. This is the final home game of the season, and it's Senior Night.

Go Blue!