

Nothing But 'Net – Week #03 (11/02/2009) – Season Preview, Part 2: The Schedule

Season Preview

It's now less than a week until the first (exhibition) game of the season (Friday 11/06/2009) for the 2009-2010 University of Michigan men's basketball team. This season's preview is broken up into two parts: the players and the schedule. [Last week, we looked at the players](#). This week, we'll look at the schedule.

The Beilein Experiment, Year Three

Last season was the second for head coach [John Beilein](#), and it was huge improvement over the first. Beilein's first team (2007-2008) finished 10-22, 5-13 in the Big Ten, but last season's team was 21-14 (9-9 in Big Ten). This season's team looks even better than the last, so big things are expected.

Looking Back

Before we look ahead, let's look back one more time, to see how last season went:

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record
11/06/2008 (Thu)	Saginaw Valley State (exh)	Ann Arbor	W	81-55	0-0
<i>2K Sports Classic benefiting Coaches vs. Cancer</i>					
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
<i>ACC/Big Ten Challenge</i>					
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	W	87-78	18-11 (8-8)
03/01/2009 (Sun)	at Wisconsin	Madison, WI	L	60-55	18-12 (8-9)
03/07/2009 (Sat)	at Minnesota	Minneapolis, MN	W	67-64	19-12 (9-9)

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record
Big Ten Tournament					
03/12/2009 (Thu)	Iowa (1 st round)	Indianapolis, IN	W	73-45	20-12 (9-9)
03/13/2009 (Fri)	Illinois (Quarterfinal)	Indianapolis, IN	L	60-50	20-13 (9-9)
NCAA Tournament					
03/19/2009 (Thu)	Clemson (1 st round)	Kansas City, MO	W	62-59	21-13 (9-9)
03/21/2009 (Sat)	Oklahoma (2 nd round)	Kansas City, MO	L	73-63	21-14 (9-9)

From last season's "wrap up" article, here's a quick look back at the 2008-2009 season:

When I look at a season, I like to divide the games into 3 categories: games Michigan should win, games Michigan probably don't stand much chance of winning, and "toss up" games. In a successful season, Michigan would win all the "should win" games, some of the "toss up" games, and maybe one or two of the "should lose" games. Here's how this season's games were divided up in my mind:

"Should win" games (12): Michigan Tech, 2nd round 2K Classic opponent (Northeastern or IUPUI), Norfolk State, Savannah State, Eastern Michigan, Oakland, Florida Gulf Coast, North Carolina Central, Northwestern (home and away), Penn State (home), and Minnesota (home).

"Should lose" games (10): One of the 2K Classic games at MSG, Maryland, Duke, Illinois (away), Ohio State (away), Purdue (home and away), Connecticut, Michigan State, and Wisconsin (away).

"Toss up" games (9): One of the 2K Classic games at MSG, Wisconsin (home), Illinois (home), Indiana (away), Iowa (home and away), Ohio State (home), Penn State (away), and Minnesota (away).

So, if Michigan had won all 12 of their "should win" games, and more than half (5 out of 9) of their "toss up" games, that would have worked out to a record of 17-14. However, Michigan did better than that: 19-12. Here's how they did it:

- "Should Win" games (12-0). They won all the games that they should have.*
- "Should Lose" games (2-8). They actually won two games that they were expected to lose: Duke (home) and Purdue (home). They also hung in there in three of the "should lose" games that they did end up losing: Maryland, Connecticut, and Wisconsin (away).*
- "Toss Up" games (5-4). They beat UCLA (MSG), Illinois (home), Indiana (away), Iowa (home), and Minnesota (away), and lost the other four games.*

When you look at it this way, you can see that the key to their success this season was winning those two "should lose" games. That was the difference between finishing 17-14 (NIT) and 19-12 (NCAA).

Looking Forward

As I detailed in last week's article, Michigan did lose a couple "role players" from last season's team, but they're returning a solid core of players, and adding some exciting newcomers. Last season, UM played a very challenging schedule and still managed to win 20+ games. This season's schedule is just as challenging:

Date	Opponent	Site
------	----------	------

11/06/2009 (Fri)	Wayne State (exhibition)	Ann Arbor
11/14/2009 (Sat)	Northern Michigan (exhibition)	Ann Arbor
11/20/2009 (Fri)	Houston Baptist	Ann Arbor
Old Spice Classic		
11/26/2009 (Thu)	vs. Creighton	Orlando, FL
11/27/2009 (Fri)	vs. Marquette/Xavier	Orlando, FL
11/29/2009 (Sun)	Final/Consolation game	Orlando, FL
ACC/Big Ten Challenge		
12/02/2009 (Wed)	Boston College	Ann Arbor
12/05/2009 (Sat)	Arkansas – Pine Bluff	Ann Arbor
12/09/2009 (Wed)	at Utah	Salt Lake City, UT
12/13/2009 (Sun)	Detroit – Mercy	Ann Arbor
12/19/2009 (Sat)	at Kansas	Lawrence, KS
12/22/2009 (Tue)	Coppin State	Ann Arbor
12/31/2010 (Thu)	at Indiana	Bloomington, IN
01/03/2010 (Sun)	Ohio State	Ann Arbor
01/07/2010 (Thu)	at Penn State	State College, PA
01/10/2010 (Sun)	Northwestern	Ann Arbor
01/14/2010 (Thu)	Indiana	Ann Arbor
01/17/2010 (Sun)	Connecticut	Ann Arbor
01/20/2010 (Wed)	at Wisconsin	Madison, WI
01/23/2010 (Sat)	at Purdue	West Lafayette, IN
01/26/2010 (Tue)	Michigan State	Ann Arbor
01/30/2010 (Sat)	Iowa	Ann Arbor
02/02/2010 (Tue)	at Northwestern	Evanston, IL
02/06/2010 (Sat)	Wisconsin	Ann Arbor
02/11/2010 (Thu)	at Minnesota	Minneapolis, MN
02/16/2010 (Tue)	at Iowa	Iowa City, IA
02/20/2010 (Sat)	Penn State	Ann Arbor
02/23/2010 (Tue)	Illinois	Ann Arbor
02/27/2010 (Sat) or 02/28/2010 (Sun)	at Ohio State	Columbus, OH
03/02/2010 (Tue) or 03/03/2010 (Wed)	Minnesota	Ann Arbor
03/06/2010 (Sat) or 03/07/2010 (Sun)	at Michigan State	East Lansing, MI
Big Ten Tournament		
03/11/2010 (Thu)	First Round	Indianapolis, IN
03/12/2010 (Fri)	Quarterfinal	Indianapolis, IN
03/13/2010 (Sat)	Semifinal	Indianapolis, IN
03/14/2010 (Sun)	Championship	Indianapolis, IN

There's a particularly brutal stretch in there where Michigan plays Connecticut in Ann Arbor, then at Wisconsin and Purdue, then back in Ann Arbor vs. Michigan State. That could easily be a 4-game losing streak. Other than that, the tough games are pretty nicely spread out.

This season's non-conference schedule is almost as challenging as last season's, with (#1 pre-season) Kansas instead of Duke, and (#14) Connecticut. The Old Spice Classic

tournament ([bracket](#)) over Thanksgiving has some quality teams, and UM faces Boston College in the ACC/Big Ten Challenge. Of the other non-conference teams, Utah (on the road) could be a tough game, but the rest (Houston Baptist, Arkansas – Pine Bluff, Detroit – Mercy, and Coppin State) look pretty beatable. It would be a major upset if Michigan could beat Kansas in Rupp Arena, and it might be too much to expect them to win more than 2 of the 3 other tough non-conference games (Connecticut, Boston College, and Utah). If they can win 2 of the 3 games in the Old Spice Classic, that would work out to a non-conference record of 8-3.

Once they get to the Big Ten portion of their schedule, things will start to get interesting. Once again, the Big Ten schedule is 18 games, 9 at home and 9 on the road. Even with 18 games, the schedule is “unbalanced”, since not every team plays every other team twice, playing two teams only once each. This season, Michigan only plays Purdue (in West Lafayette) and Illinois (in Ann Arbor) once. This is a favorable schedule, since Purdue and Illinois figure to be in the top half of the Big Ten standings.

Of the 9 home Big Ten games, Michigan should be able to win 5 of them (Northwestern, Indiana, Iowa, Penn State, and Minnesota). I can also see 5 wins on the road (Indiana, Penn State, Northwestern, Minnesota, and Iowa). The other 4 home games (Ohio State, Michigan State, Wisconsin, and Illinois) are “toss-up” games, as is the road game at Ohio State. The other 3 road games (Wisconsin, Purdue, and Michigan State) look pretty hopeless. That all works out to a Big Ten record of anywhere from 10-8 to 15-3. Figure on 12-6. Add that to the 8-3 non-conference record, and we're looking at 20-9, which is right on the bubble to get into the NCAA Tournament. In this case, Michigan will need a win or two in the Big Ten Tournament to get into the Big Dance.

Breaking things down into my three favorite categories:

“Should win” games (16): Houston Baptist, Creighton, 2nd round Old Spice Classic opponent (Marquette or Xavier), Arkansas – Pine Bluff, Detroit-Mercy, Coppin State, Indiana (home and away), Iowa (home and away), Minnesota (home and away), Northwestern (home and away), and Penn State (home and away).

“Should lose” games (4): Kansas, Wisconsin (away), Purdue (away), and Michigan State (away).

“Toss up” games (9): Final round game in Old Spice Classic, Boston College, Utah, Ohio State (home), Connecticut, Michigan State (home), Wisconsin (home), Illinois, and Ohio State (away).

So, if Michigan can win all 16 of their “should win” games, and more than half (5 out of 9) of their “toss up” games, that works out to an even better record: 21-8.

The Upcoming Week

As you can see in the schedule above, Michigan has one game this week: on Friday (11/06/2009) at 7:00 p.m., they play their first exhibition game, against Wayne State, in Crisler Arena. Come on out and cheer on the Wolverines, and check out the newcomers.

Go Blue!