

Nothing But 'Net – Week #01 – 11/01/2010 – Season Preview

Hey, welcome back for another season of Nothing But 'Net. Things are going to be a little (OK, a lot) different this season. Over the past few seasons, things had gotten a little too structured, a little too predictable, a little too formal. College basketball is fast, it's fun, it's unpredictable, and that's how it's going to be with Nothing But 'Net, starting now.

You want unpredictable? You've come to the right place. Michigan's 2010-2011 team is going to be VERY unpredictable, and that's not necessarily a bad thing. Yeah, they're way short on experience and returning scoring, but they've got a boatload of young talent. Tired of rebuilding? Yeah, me too, but it's like the old joke about too many birthdays: consider the alternative. It's better that they're rebuilding (again/still) than just giving up. If you're going to be in near-constant rebuilding mode, with young talent that needs a lot of quality coaching, you could do a lot worse than having [John Beilein](#) as your head coach. He's been there and done that many times, and he knows what he's doing. Will it be easy? Ah, no, let's be real. Young players, even talented young players, are going to make dumb mistakes every so often. How often? Who knows? That's why they'll be unpredictable.

Who's New?

So, who are these new guys? Well, there are 4 true freshmen, 2 redshirt freshmen, and a transfer student with sophomore eligibility:

True Freshmen

[Colton Christian](#) (6'6", 215 pounds, forward) – Colton is from Bellevue, WA, by way of Hargrave Military Academy in Virginia. He's kind of short for a forward; think of him more as a wing.

[Tim Hardaway, Jr.](#) (6'5", 185 pounds, guard) – Yeah, that Hardaway. Tim is the son of (surprise) Tim Hardaway, the former NBA legend, famous for his killer crossover dribble. Tim Jr. can do the crossover, and a lot more. He could take over a good portion of the scoring load that Manny Harris and DeShawn Sims contributed the last 3-4 seasons.

[Jon Horford](#) (6'9", 220 pounds, forward) – Yeah, that Horford. Jon is the son of former NBA player Tito Horford, and the younger brother of current NBA player (and former University of Florida player) Al Horford. I'll tell you more about him once I've seen him play.

[Evan Smotrycz](#) (6'9", 225 pounds, forward) – Evan is from Reading, MA, and is another "young big". He's another player I don't know much about, yet. Check back next week.

Redshirt Freshmen

[Blake McLimans](#) (6'10", 240 pounds, forward) – Blake voluntarily redshirted last season, so he has 4 years of eligibility remaining. He is the tallest player on the team, and is an excellent shooter.

[Jordan Morgan](#) (6'8", 240 pounds, forward) – Jordan had a rough time last season. First, he tore the cartilage in his left knee, last June. He had 2 surgeries, recuperated, and was actually healthy for a couple months, until he hurt the same knee again. It didn't need surgery, but it took a while to rehabilitate again. Just when he was getting better again, [he dislocated his shoulder, in February](#). That meant another surgery, and more recuperation. Needless to say, he redshirted last season, so he'll also have 4 years of eligibility remaining. He's a little short to play center, but he's solid and tough, and he might just surprise us all.

Transfer Player (Sophomore)

[Jordan Dumars](#) (6'5", 220 pounds, guard) – Yeah, that Dumars. Jordan is the son of former Detroit Pistons "Bad Boy" Joe Dumars, who is now the President of Basketball Operations for the Pistons. Jordan played his high school ball at Detroit Country Day, then at the University of South Florida. [He transferred to Michigan after the fall semester last year](#), so he'll be eligible for the winter semester this season.

Who's Back?

While we're at it, who are the "old guys" on the team this season? They're not very old. There are NO seniors on this team, only 2 juniors, and 6 sophomores, including Jordan Dumars (above):

Sophomores

[Eso Akunne](#) (6'3", 220 pounds, guard) – Eso is a former walk-on, but he got some significant playing time early last season, getting in 7 games. Then, [he was declared academically ineligible for the winter semester](#). He's back, and he can really help out this season.

[Josh Bartelstein](#) (6'2", 205 pounds, guard) – Josh is a walk-on, and he played very sparingly last season (4 games, 13 minutes). He should get more PT this season. Check out his excellent [blog on MgoBlue.com](#).

[Darius Morris](#) (6'4", 190 pounds, guard) – Darius is a key member of this season's team. He is the only true point guard on the team, and Michigan needs him to provide the guidance and leadership that the new players will undoubtedly require.

[Corey Person](#) (6'3", 200 pounds, guard) – Corey was redshirted his freshman year, so he's a redshirt sophomore. He is another walk-on, and he also played sparingly last season (7 games, 13 minutes). He should get more PT this season.

[Matt Vogrich](#) (6'4", 190 pounds, guard) – Matt is another key player on this season's team. He's an excellent 3-point shooter, and he started out strong (5-for-5) in his first game last season, then he went cold. He had his groove back in Europe, and also hauled down a lot of rebounds.

Juniors

[Stu Douglass](#) (6'3", 190 pounds, guard) – With no seniors on the team, Stu and Zack Novak (below) are the team leaders. Stu is a shooting guard who can occasionally fill in at point guard. He's a great shooter, but streaky. He's another good candidate to pick up some of the scoring load from last season.

[Zack Novak](#) (6'4", 210 pounds, guard) – Inch-for-inch and pound-for-pound, the toughest player in the Big Ten. Despite giving up 4-5 inches, Zack often guards the opposing team's power forward, and often shuts him down. Zack is not afraid to mix it up underneath with the big boys, and he holds his own. He's also an excellent 3-point shooter, and he's also streaky. He's a team leader, and another good candidate to pick up some of the scoring.

What do you notice when you look at the list of players above, besides the lack of experience? Hint, "lack of height". In fact, no one on the roster is listed as a "center" or even a "forward/center". Yeah, I've seen the movie "Hoosiers", and I've seen Michigan teams in the past manage to do OK with no true "big man", but as the old saying goes, "you can't coach height". The tallest players on the team are either 6'9" or 6'10", and they're all young and untested. They may have great heart, they may get excellent coaching, they may play really

smart and with lots of hustle, but they'll still be giving up 3 to 5 inches against most of the centers they'll play against. That's going to hurt.

Who's Gone?

There are 5 players missing from last season's team. Three of them graduated (Zack Gibson, DeShawn Sims, and Anthony Wright), one of them transferred (Laval Lucas-Perry), and one of them left school early for the NBA (Manny Harris). More details? Sure:

- [Gibson got married, and is going to try to play professional basketball overseas.](#)
- Sims tried to make an NBA team, but it didn't work out, so he's playing in Greece this season. [It sounds like fun over there.](#)
- [Lucas-Perry \(LLP\) was dismissed from the team for violating team standards,](#) and has transferred to Oakland University. What did he do wrong? No one is saying.
- Even though Wright graduated, he was redshirted his freshman season, so he could have come back for as a 5th-year senior. However, he wasn't invited back, so [he enrolled at Toledo in a graduate program not offered at Michigan](#), which made him immediately eligible to play his senior season. Confusing? That's the NCAA for you.
- For a while, it looked like Harris had made a mistake by giving up his senior season to enter the NBA draft. He didn't get drafted, but he did get invited to try out with the Cleveland Cavaliers, and [he made the team!](#)

Of the 3 players (Harris, LLP, and Wright) who could have been on the team this season, Michigan will certainly miss Harris the most. He was a great player, and a great scorer. The team is kind of short on point guards this season, so LLP could have really helped. Wright never really found his groove, so he won't be missed as much.

Europe Trip

So, what happened over [in Europe this summer when the team went over there](#)? Was it a successful trip, or what? Well, if you just look at their record (1-3) and the scores (below), a pessimist would say that it was a disaster. However, if you dig a little deeper, you'll see that it was a big success. While it would have been nice to win more of the games, that wasn't the main objective. The main objective was to get the team some extra practices and some "free" (doesn't count) game experience. They certainly did that. They also got a valuable headstart on some team chemistry, which will help a lot in the long run.

So, what were the scores?

[08/22/2010 – Gent 69, Michigan 63](#)

[08/23/2010 – Charleroi 90, Michigan 60](#)

[08/25/2010 – Oostende 70, Michigan 55](#)

[08/26/2010 – Michigan 80, Mons 74](#)

The pessimists/boo-birds point to the 90-60 loss vs. Charleroi and declare that the European trip was a big mistake, and that a 30-point loss will destroy the team's fragile self-esteem. I look at the win and the close loss (69-63) and see lots of reasons to be encouraged. The 70-55 loss isn't that big a deal either.

Looking at the [combined stats for the 4 games](#), a few things pop out:

- Tim Hardaway, Jr. was the leading scorer (11.8 points/game), and one of the leading rebounders (15).
- Matt Vogrich was the leading rebounder (18), the second best overall shooter (13-for-23), and the best 3-point shooter (7-for-14).
- Jordan Morgan was the most accurate shooter (6-for-8), and the second leading rebounder (16).
- The other "young bigs" (Blake McLimans and Evan Smotrycz) hit the boards pretty hard (13 and 15, respectively).

Schedule?

Schedule:

Date/Time	Opponent	Location
Fri 11/05/2010 7:00 EDT	Saginaw Valley State (exh)	Ann Arbor, MI
Sat 11/13/2010 7:00 EST	South Carolina Upstate	Ann Arbor, MI
2010 Legends Classic		
Thu 11/18/2010 7:00 EST	Bowling Green	Ann Arbor, MI
Sun 11/21/2010 2:00 EST	Gardner-Webb	Ann Arbor, MI
Fri 11/26/2010 8:00 EST	vs. Syracuse	Atlantic City, NJ
Sat 11/27/2010 5:30/8:00 EST	vs. Georgia Tech/UTEP	Atlantic City, NJ
ACC/Big Ten Challenge		
Tue 11/30/2010 9:00 EST	at Clemson	Clemson, SC
Sat 12/04/2010 1:00 EST	Harvard	Ann Arbor, MI
Mon 12/06/2010 7:30 EST	Concordia (MI)	Ann Arbor, MI
Fri 12/10/2010 6:30 EST	Utah	Ann Arbor, MI
Tue 12/14/2010 7:00 EST	North Carolina Central	Ann Arbor, MI
Sat 12/18/2010 12:00 EST	Oakland	Ann Arbor, MI
Thu 12/23/2010 6:00 EST	Bryant University	Ann Arbor, MI
Tue 12/28/2010 2:00 EST	Purdue	Ann Arbor, MI
Sun 01/02/2011 4:00 EST	Penn State	Ann Arbor, MI
Wed 01/05/2011 8:30 EST	at Wisconsin	Madison, WI
Sun 01/09/2011 1:30/4:30 EST	Kansas	Ann Arbor, MI
Wed 01/12/2011 6:30 EST	Ohio State	Ann Arbor, MI
Sat 01/15/2011 8:00 EST	at Indiana	Bloomington, IN
Tue 01/18/2011 9:00 EST	at Northwestern	Evanston, IL
Sat 01/22/2011 7:00 EST	Minnesota	Ann Arbor, MI
Thu 01/27/2011 7:00 EST	at Michigan State	East Lansing, MI
Sun 01/30/2011 4:00 EST	Iowa	Ann Arbor, MI
Thu 02/03/2011 7:00 EST	at Ohio State	Columbus, OH
Sun 02/06/2011 12:00/3:00 EST	at Penn State	State College, PA
Wed 02/09/2011 6:30 EST	Northwestern	Ann Arbor, MI
Sat 02/12/2011 4:00 EST	Indiana	Ann Arbor, MI
Wed 02/16/2011 8:30 EST	at Illinois	Champaign, IL
Sat 02/19/2011 4:30 EST OR Sun 02/20/2011 1:00 EST	at Iowa	Iowa City, IA
Wed 02/23/2011 6:30 EST	Wisconsin	Ann Arbor, MI
Sat 02/26/2011 4:30 EST	at Minnesota	Minneapolis, MN
Sat 03/05/2011 2:00 EST	Michigan State	Ann Arbor, MI
Big Ten Tournament		
Thu 03/10/2011	First Round	Indianapolis, IN
Fri 03/11/2011	Quarterfinals	Indianapolis, IN
Sat 03/12/2011	Semifinals	Indianapolis, IN
Sun 03/13/2011	Championship	Indianapolis, IN

Some quick thoughts about the schedule:

- The Legends Classic is an odd tournament. There 2 games scheduled at each of the 4 "Regional Round" host sites, but only the host teams move on to Atlantic City for the "championship" round. What if Bowling Green or Gardner-Webb beats Michigan in Ann Arbor? Why wouldn't they go to Atlantic City? What is the purpose of the "Regional Round" games? Odd.
- Michigan plays all home games (7 of them) in December.
- The toughest part of the schedule is the 3 games starting on 01/05/2010: at Wisconsin, home vs. Kansas, and home vs. Ohio State, all in 7 days.

- Michigan only plays Purdue once (home) and Illinois once (away).
- Once again, the home Michigan State game is during Spring Break. I can't remember the last time the home MSU game was on a weekend and NOT during Spring Break. For years now, it's either been on a weeknight or during Spring Break or both. Sigh.

The Small Picture

This is a team that is going to have to take each game one at a time. No looking ahead, no looking back, just keep plugging away. So, their only goal this week is to play well in the exhibition game against Saginaw Valley State on Friday (11/05/2010) at 7:00 p.m. Sure, they should win, but they should also get everyone some solid minutes, and try a bunch of player combinations. For this one game, winning isn't as important as learning.

The Big Picture

Most seasons, I divide the games up into 3 categories ("Should Win", "Should Lose", and "Toss Up"), and I could do that for this season, but it hardly makes sense. For one thing, no one really knows which Michigan players are going to play a lot this season, or how good (or bad) they'll be. For another thing, Michigan plays too many games against teams I've never heard of before, like South Carolina Upstate and Bryant. Instead, let's just hope for a few "fuzzy happy feelings":

- They beat all the teams you would expect them to beat.
- They play a good competitive game against the teams you would consider "toss ups", and win a few.
- They don't get hammered too badly by the truly dominant teams on their schedule.
- They spring one or two upsets along the way.
- The young players all get a lot of quality playing time.
- The young players all develop and improve as the season progresses.
- No one gets seriously hurt or leaves the team.

Coach Beilein has the nucleus of a really good "Beilein System" team here, and if he can keep them all together and healthy, they might surprise a few of the big boys this season, and be a force to contend with next season and beyond.

The Really Big Picture

Just a little perspective:

- The Earth has been around for 4.54 billion years.
- Man has walked the Earth for less than 200,000 years.
- Recorded history goes back about 5000 years.
- Basketball was invented 119 years ago (1891).
- Michigan basketball won a National Championship 21 years ago (1989).
- Five hundred years from now, no one will know or care about college basketball for the 2010-2011 season.
- There are 1.3 billion people living in China right now who don't know or care about American college basketball.

So, does it really matter how many games Michigan wins this season? Not really. Basketball is a fun game to watch. Michigan has a young, exciting team. They'll make mistakes, maybe at crucial times in big games. They'll get thumped a few times. They'll grow. They'll learn. They'll improve. It may take a few years, but they'll be back. In the meantime, enjoy watching them play. Don't worry about who else in the state (Stifler State University, for example) is doing well. It's all cyclical. And, it's all unimportant, in the long run. Just enjoy the games this season.

Go Blue!

P.S. If you go to any of the games in Crisler Arena, stop by Section 8/11 and say hi. Those are the sections I'm ushering again this season.