

Nothing But 'Net – Week #11 – 01/10/2011 – Welcome To The Meat Grinder

Yeah, it was a meat grinder for the Michigan men's basketball team last week. They played two games against tough teams, and they lost them both. [On Wednesday \(01/09/2011\), they lost at Wisconsin, 66-50](#), then [on Sunday \(01/09/2011\), they lost in Crisler Arena to \(#3\) Kansas, 67-60, in overtime](#). As I said [last week](#), I don't know which was a tougher task: beating Wisconsin in Madison, or beating the undefeated #3 team in the nation at home. As it turned out, Michigan had a tougher time vs. Wisconsin, but they were both very difficult games. The two losses lower Michigan's record to 11-5, 1-2 in Big Ten play.

Michigan played two good halves last week; unfortunately, they were in two separate games. They played very well in the first half of the Wisconsin game, and led by 2 points (28-26) at halftime. They controlled the tempo, and made Wisconsin play their game. They managed to push the lead to 4 points (33-29) early in the 2nd half, but then Wisconsin went on a 13-0 run, and the game was over. Once Wisconsin gets a lead in the 2nd half at home, they are virtually unbeatable. The young Wolverines panicked, and the rout was on.

Against Kansas, Michigan played a dismal 1st half (down 25-18 at halftime), but they came back strong in the 2nd half, and managed to force overtime in the last minute of regulation (51-51). They took their first (and only) lead of the game early in overtime (54-51), then Kansas stormed back and dominated the rest of the game. Still, it was encouraging to see UM fight back in the last 11 minutes of regulation, and take Kansas to overtime.

Unfortunately, a loss (or two) is still a loss. It's nice that Michigan can play a good half against good teams, but they need to play two good halves to beat the big boys.

I'm trying to break my stats habit, but it's hard. The stats tell the story in both games. Against Wisconsin, the culprit was shooting: UM shot 39.5%, UW shot 47.7%. The rebounding numbers didn't help: UM was out-rebounded 29-21. In the Kansas game, it was 3-point shooting and fouls that cost UM the game. Michigan shot a miserable 3-point percentage (1-for-10 = 10%) in the 1st half, and it only got a little better in the 2nd half and overtime. They finished shooting 4-for-28 (14.3%). Ugh. The foul situation was the other big factor in the Kansas game: Kansas shot 31 free throws, compared to only 17 for Michigan. That was the difference in the game right there.

Individually, [Zack Novak](#) had a very good week. He was one of only two UM players to hit double figures in both games (15 and 12 points), and he was the leading rebounder for UM in both games (5 and 11 boards). That means he had a double-double in the Kansas game. He shot 3-pointers very well vs. Wisconsin (5-for-7), but not so much vs. Kansas (2-for-7).

The other Michigan player who had double figures in both games was [Tim Hardaway, Jr.](#), but he had to take a lot of shots to get those points. He had 10 points (on 3-for-10 shooting) vs. Wisconsin, and 19 points (on 5-for-19 shooting) vs. Kansas. He was 2-for-10 shooting 3-pointers vs. Kansas, which really hurt.

Then there was [Darius Morris](#). He had a weak game (8 points) vs. Wisconsin, but came back strong vs. Kansas (16 points). The big problem was that he led the team in turnovers both games, with 4 in each.

Here are complete stats for the [Wisconsin](#) and [Kansas](#) games.

"What about the all-important Nothing But 'Net Expectation-O-Meter (NBNEOM)?" you might ask. It stays right where it was last week: "Meets Expectations". The Wisconsin and Kansas games were games that Michigan was expected to lose, and they met those expectations.

Speaking of games that Michigan is expected to lose, there's another one coming right up: on Wednesday (01/12/2011, 6:30 p.m.), Michigan hosts (#2) [Ohio State](#) in Crisler Arena. OSU is undefeated (15-0), and they have a really good freshman center ([Jared Sullinger](#)), which could be a big problem for Michigan, since UM is a little short on height.

Michigan plays one other game this week: on Saturday (01/15/2011, 8:00 p.m.), they play at [Indiana](#). Now, Indiana isn't that good this season, but they're better than they were last season, and Michigan always has trouble playing in Assembly Hall. This is a "toss up" game, but it's a crucial toss up game, because Michigan will likely be coming in on a 3-game losing streak.

Go Blue!