

Nothing But 'Net – Week #14 – 02/07/2011 – Teetering On The Brink

The Michigan men's basketball team is teetering on the brink of a postseason berth. In theory, they still have an outside shot at the NCAA Tournament, but the NIT is much more likely. They lost a game and won a game this week, to take their record to 14-10 (4-7 in the Big Ten). They need 17 wins to get to the NIT, and probably 19 or 20 wins to get to the NCAA Tournament. Since they only have 7 games left, plus at least one in the Big Ten Tournament, 19 wins is a little unlikely, but 17 is still possible.

This week, Michigan played both games on the road, so they should be happy with a split. [On Thursday, Michigan lost at \(#1\) Ohio State, 62-53](#), then [on Sunday, Michigan won at Penn State, 65-62](#). They played OSU even for the 1st half, and led by 3 (26-23). They fell behind early in the 2nd half, but pulled within 2 points (44-42) with 8:35 left in the game. OSU took control at that point, and won the game comfortably. Still, to play the #1 (and only undefeated) team in the nation essentially dead even in their home arena for almost 32 minutes was quite an achievement. Michigan just didn't have enough firepower to pull out the win.

The win at Penn State was a different matter. Sure, it's tough to win on the road in the Big Ten, and yeah, PSU has beaten 3 ranked teams [(#18) Michigan State, (#16) Illinois, and (#15) Wisconsin] at home recently, but still – they're Penn State. Michigan played terribly at the start of both halves, and had to come back at the end of each half to stay in the game, then win it. UM fell behind by 11 (24-13) in the 1st half, but they used a 14-0 run to lead at halftime, 27-24. Once again, they fell behind by 10 in the 2nd half, and were down by 9 (48-39) with 7:40 to play. That's when [Tim Hardaway, Jr.](#) woke up and scored all 13 of his points, including two 3-pointers, two baskets, and a free throw. He carried UM on his back down the stretch.

Stats? Why not. Michigan shot pretty well (41.8% and 31.6%) vs. [OSU](#), but they had trouble rebounding (OSU 36, UM 28). The big problem was free throws: UM was 1-for-4 (ugh), while OSU was 15-for-25. There's the difference in the game right there. Things were a little better vs. [PSU](#): Michigan shot better (49.0% and 47.4%), and they were closer on rebounds (PSU 31, UM 27). Once again, UM shot less free throws than their opponents made (UM 6-for-9, PSU 14-for-17), but the blazing 3-point shooting more than made up for it.

Individually, [Darius Morris](#) and Hardaway both hit double figures in both games. Morris had 12 against OSU and 23 vs. PSU, while Hardaway had 15 vs. OSU to go with his 13 against PSU. Other players to hit double figures this week were [Jordan Morgan](#) (10 points vs. OSU) and [Stu Douglass](#) (14 vs. PSU). Morgan did pretty well vs. PSU (6 points), but the other 2 starters had an "off" week: [Evan Smotrycz](#) (5 and 0 points) and [Zack Novak](#) (3 and 3).

What about the famous Nothing But 'Net Expectation-O-Meter (NBNEOM)? It stays right where it is, pointing firmly at "Meeting Expectations".

The Big Ten is really tough this season, from top to bottom, so there really aren't any "breathers", but at least Michigan gets to play their next 2 games at home, against teams in the bottom half of the standings. Unfortunately, they're against teams that Michigan lost to on the road earlier this season. On Wednesday (2/9,

6:30), they play Northwestern, then on Saturday (2/12, 4:00), they play Indiana. These are games that Michigan can and should win.

Go Blue!