

Nothing But 'Net – Week #17 – 02/28/2011 – You Shoulda Seen The One That Got Away!

"Paw, Paw, look what Timmy and me caught!"

"Why, Darius, that's a fine Gopher-fish! Did you catch that right here in Crisler Cove?"

"No, Paw, we caught way out in Barn Bay, over yonder."

"Well, that's very impressive. Most folks come out of the Barn with nothing. But, say, why do you boys still look a little sad?"

"Well, Paw, you should have seen the one that got away! We had a 50-inch Badger-fish all hooked and landed and in the boat. I was about to use the club to smash his head in, when he suddenly leapt up and smacked us both in the face. That made us both jump back, and the boat tipped over and he plum got away."

"That's a darn shame. If you had brought that bad boy in, you would have gotten an invitation to the 'Now Callin' All Anglers' (NCAA) Fishing Tournament for sure. Now, you'll just have to wait and see if the selection committee is impressed with your fine Gopher-fish. Say, I've got an idea: why don't you boys check out Crisler Cove for one of them big ugly Spartan-fish. If you could catch one of them, you might impress the committee even more."

"OK, Paw, we're gonna go get him! We want to go to The Big Splash!"

It was a bittersweet week in Wolverine-land this week. On the one hand, [the Michigan men's basketball team got a big road win \(70-63\) on Saturday in Minnesota](#), but, oh, the one that got away: [on Wednesday, UM had Wisconsin all but beat](#), then watched an unheralded freshman Badger guard bank in a 3-pointer at the buzzer to steal the win (53-52). It was the definition of "heartbreak". The most frustrating part was that [Darius Morris](#) had a chance to turn a 2-point lead into a 4-point lead with a one-and-one free throw situation with 31 seconds left. He missed the front end, and that set up the final shot for Wisconsin.

So, now it all comes down to the final regular season game. If Michigan can beat Michigan State in Crisler Arena on Saturday (3/5), they still stand a (slim) chance of getting to the Big Dance. At this point, Michigan's record is 18-12 (8-9 in the Big Ten). A win in the final game will give them 19 wins, and bring them to 0.500 in league play, which looks like enough, but there are a few catches:

- One of UM's wins was against a lower-division team (Concordia), so Michigan would only have 18 wins against Division-1 teams.
- Michigan doesn't really have one of those "signature wins" that the NCAA Selection Committee looks for.
- There are lots of other worthy teams out there competing for the limited number of non-automatic-qualifier (at large) bids. At this point, it looks like the Big East might send 11 (yes, eleven!) teams to the tournament, which would use up a lot of at large bids.

Ironically, one of the teams that Michigan is competing against for a spot in the tournament is Michigan State. While a win by Michigan won't necessarily get UM into the tournament, a loss by Michigan State will almost certainly keep MSU out of the tournament, ending their 13-year streak of appearances. So, both teams will have a lot to play for.

Yay, it's stats time! I love stats, and you should too. They often tell the real story behind the games. First, let's talk about "the one that got away", [Wisconsin](#). It was

a 1-point game, so the stats should be really close, and they are. Michigan shot very well, and they actually shot better than Wisconsin. Michigan shot 48.8% (20-for-41) overall, and an awesome 53.8% (7-for-13) from 3-point range. Unfortunately, they shot very poorly (5-for-11 = 45.5%) from the free throw line, including the big miss by Morris at the end. That's what cost them the game. That, and the 11-5 turnover margin against them. It wasn't the slight (32-30) rebounding edge for Wisconsin, or any of the other stats. The stats from the [Minnesota](#) game are a bit more fun. Michigan shot well again (45.5% and 42.9%), and they shot better than Minnesota. They also made their free throws, finally: 8-for-9 = 88.9%. Sure, they got out-rebounded (36-28), as usual, but they cut the turnovers back down to 5.

Individually, [Tim Hardaway, Jr.](#) was the only player to hit double figures in both games (16 and 22). More importantly, he's been hitting his 3-pointers: 4-for-7 vs. Wisconsin, and 5-for-8 vs. Minnesota. Since 3-pointers are such a big part of the Michigan offense, those are crucial stats. The Wisconsin game was slow and low-scoring, and only one other Michigan player scored in double figures: [Jordan Morgan](#), with 12 points. The Minnesota game was a little faster and higher-scoring, and two other Wolverines hit double figures: Morris (17) and [Stu Douglass](#) (12). The 5th starter, [Zack Novak](#), followed up his 0-for-10 performance in the Iowa game on 2/19 with an 0-for-4 performance vs. Wisconsin. He finally broke his string of 14 straight misses with a 3-pointer early in the Minnesota game, and he even hit another one late in the game, for 6 points. It's good to get his 3-pointers back.

Bench scoring has been an issue lately, and it wasn't much better this week. Michigan got 8 points (3 from [Matt Vogrich](#) and 5 from [Evan Smotrycz](#)) in the Wisconsin game, and 7 points (3 from Vogrich and 4 from Smotrycz). This needs to improve.

The Nothing But 'Net Expectation-O-Meter (NBNEOM) continues to point to "Exceeds Expectations".

Last call for Michigan basketball! The last home game is this Saturday (3/5, 2:00 p.m.) vs. the evil Spartans of Michigan State. The students are on Spring Break, but the game is officially sold out, so it should be a rockin' good time. The game is on national TV (CBS), so if you can't be there, tune in.

Go Blue!