

Nothing But 'Net – Week #18 – 03/07/2011 – How Sweep It Is!

Some weeks, I have to think long and hard about a good title for my weekly article. Not this week. This week, I've got too many titles:

- Everybody Loves Draymond (Fouling Out)
- Dream On, Draymond
- Happy Days Are Here Again
- Taking "Little Brother" To The Woodshed

The Michigan men's basketball team only played one game this week, but it was a big one, and they won it. [On Saturday \(3/5\), they beat their archrival, Michigan State, in Crisler Arena, 70-63.](#) This is a Big Deal™ for several reasons:

- Michigan swept MSU in the regular season, for the first time since the 1996-97 season.
- This was Michigan's final regular season game, and the win gives them a final regular season record of 19-12 (9-9 in the Big Ten).
- Michigan finished tied for 4th place in the Big Ten, which is a big improvement over their predicted finish: 10th place.
- Michigan locked up the #4 seed in the Big Ten Tournament. Even though they ended up in a 4-way tie for 4th place, they had the best head-to-head record against the other 3 teams.
- Michigan finished the regular season with the same record in the Big Ten as Michigan State, and a better overall record (MSU is 17-13).
- MSU is almost certainly knocked out of contention for a bid to the NCAA Tournament, after 13 years in a row of making the Big Dance. Of course, they can still win the Big Ten Tournament, which would give them an automatic berth, but MSU does not look like a team poised for greatness.
- It puts Michigan solidly "on the bubble" for an NCAA Tournament bid. You've got to assume that the selection committee will take more than 3 teams from the Big Ten, and Michigan is the #4 team.

It was a wonderful game. Michigan led the whole game, and controlled the tempo. They built up a couple nice leads (14 points in the 1st half: 33-19 with 2:25 left, and 13 points in the 2nd half: 48-35 with 13:41 left), and they never let it get closer than 2 points (56-54 with 5:48 left). They answered every MSU run, and played with poise. They still had some trouble hitting clutch free throws, but they made enough to preserve the win. It was great to see Michigan close out an important game with confidence.

It was a large (sell-out), loud crowd, and everyone had great fun when the #1 MSU ~~thug~~ player (Draymond Green) fouled out with 1:17 left in the game. He also fouled out of the earlier game this season in East Lansing, and he made the same "who me?" face after all 10 of his fouls. Just 20 seconds later, another MSU player (Delvon Roe) fouled out, and the MSU ringleader (Kalin Lucas) had to play soft defense for the last 5:05, since he had 4 fouls. Lucas also had an intentional foul in the 1st half, when he decked [Tim Hardaway, Jr.](#) with his elbow, and he threw the ball at [Darius Morris](#) in the last seconds of the game. Classy.

Before anyone gets too excited, I need to say the same things to the Michigan fans that I said to the MSU fans the last few years: all sports are cyclical. Don't get too excited. It used to be that Michigan owned Michigan State in basketball, then things

swung the other way. They appear to be swinging back, but that can change very quickly. Savor the wins, but don't assume that just because Michigan swept MSU this season, the tide has turned. Even if it has turned, it can turn back. Maintain some perspective.

The [stats](#) tell the story: Michigan shot almost 10% better than State (42.0% vs, 32.8%). Once again, UM lost the rebounding battle (badly), 46-30, but Michigan has won many games under Coach Beilein while getting out-rebounded by double digits. The other big stat was free throws: Michigan made more free throws (23) than MSU attempted (20). The teams shot about the same percentage from the free-throw line (UM = 74.2%, MSU = 75.0%), but UM got 8 more points there. That's about the difference in the game.

Individually, it was a tale of two halves. In the 1st half, [Evan Smotrycz](#) led the way, and almost hit double figures by halftime (9 points). He ended up with 14 for the game. In the 2nd half, it was Hardaway: he had 0 points in the 1st half, and 20 points in the 2nd half. Two other starters hit double figures: Morris had 13 points, and [Jordan Morgan](#) had 10. [Zack Novak](#) almost hit double figures (8 points), but the 5th starter, [Stu Douglass](#), had 0 points. Still, that's nice scoring balance, and it was great to get some bench points. Besides Smotrycz's 14 points, UM also got 3 points from [Matt Vogrich](#) and 2 points from [Blake McLimans](#). 19 points from the bench is very impressive.

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

So, now the regular season is over, and it's on to the [Big Ten Tournament](#). This season, it's in Conseco Fieldhouse in Indianapolis. Michigan is the #4 seed, so they get a bye on Thursday, and start play on Friday (3/11) vs. the #5 seed, Illinois. Michigan lost their only game vs. Illinois this year, but it was on the road, which is a lot different than a neutral site. Illinois was 7-2 at home, but only 2-7 on the road. If Michigan can beat Illinois, they get to play on Saturday vs. the winner of the game between the #1 seed (Ohio State) and the winner of the #8 (Northwestern) vs. #9 (Minnesota) game. Presumably the winner of that game will be Ohio State. If Michigan can get by Ohio State, who knows who will emerge from the other half of the [bracket](#) for the championship game on Sunday. It should be interesting.

Go Blue!