

## Nothing But 'Net – Week #20 – 03/21/2011 – So Close

They got SO close. The Michigan men's basketball team almost upset the #1 seed in their regional in the [NCAA Tournament](#) (Duke), but they came up just a couple points short. [On Sunday \(03/20/2011\), Michigan lost to Duke 73-71](#), to end their season. Still, they played hard, and they showed the world how good they could be. They have nothing to be embarrassed about. For a young, inexperienced team picked to finish 10<sup>th</sup> in the Big Ten, they greatly exceeded expectations. They finished in the top half of the Big Ten (tied for 4<sup>th</sup>), they won their first game in the [Big Ten Tournament](#) (against [Illinois](#)), and they won their first game (2<sup>nd</sup> round) in the NCAA Tournament, [thumping Tennessee on Friday, 75-45](#). They put themselves in position to upset Duke and move on to the Sweet Sixteen, but they just missed the game-tying shot in the last seconds. It wasn't a win, but it sure was a big Moral Victory. I know, Michigan doesn't believe in Moral Victories, but this was a unique circumstance.

The win and the loss this weekend leave Michigan with a final season record of 21-14 (9-9 in the Big Ten). This is a huge improvement over last season's record (15-17, 7-11).

The Tennessee game was a thing of beauty, especially the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. The 1<sup>st</sup> half was a seesaw battle, with Michigan leading by 4 (33-29) at halftime. The start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half was magical, with a 19-2 run in the first 6 minutes of the half. That was all the lead they needed, and they just toyed with the Volunteers for the rest of the game. The 30-point margin of victory was the largest ever by a #8 seed.

The Duke game was close for most of the game, although Duke led almost the whole way. For most of the game, UM was 3-5 points down, hanging in there. When Duke went up by 15 points (58-43) with 10:51 left in the game, it looked like the game was out of reach, but UM managed to get as close as 1 point (72-71) with 10 seconds left, but they couldn't get the final shot to drop.

Stats, for the last time this season. The way Michigan destroyed [Tennessee](#), it's not too surprising that the stats are lopsided in Michigan's favor. Michigan shot well (51.6% overall, 34.6% from 3-point range), and UT didn't. As an extra bonus, UM won the rebounding battle handily (36-26). An odd tidbit: Michigan became the 1<sup>st</sup> team to win an NCAA Tournament game without making a single free throw. UM only got to the line once, and missed that one attempt.

The [Duke](#) stats are a lot closer. Michigan actually shot better than Duke from the field, but got outscored from the free-throw line (18-10). That was the difference in the game. Duke out-rebounded UM (33-22), but had 4 more turnovers (11-7). The game was lost at the free-throw line.

Individually, it was a great tournament for scoring balance. Michigan had 5 players ([Zack Novak](#) – 14, [Tim Hardaway, Jr.](#) – 11, [Stu Douglass](#) – 11, [Matt Vogrich](#) – 11, and [Jordan Morgan](#) – 10) in double figures vs. Tennessee, and 5 players ([Darius Morris](#) – 16, Hardaway – 15, [Evan Smotrycz](#) – 13, Novak – 12, and Morgan – 10) in double figures vs. Duke. That means that 3 players (Hardaway, Novak, and Morgan) hit double figures in both games. It could have been 5 players, since Morris and Smotrycz came close to double figures (8 points) in the Tennessee game. It was great to see so much bench scoring in both games.

Oh yeah, Novak had a double-double (14 points, 10 rebounds) in the Tennessee game, and Morris broke the Michigan single-season record for assists in the Duke game.

The Nothing But 'Net Expectation-O-Meter (NBNEOM) finishes the season firmly pointing to "Greatly Exceeds Expectations".

The season may be over, but Nothing But 'Net will be back again next week for one last article: season wrap-up, final grades, and awards.

Go Blue!