

Nothing But 'Net – Week #01 – 10/31/2011 – Season Preview

Hey, welcome back for another season of Nothing But 'Net. Let's start things right off with a few questions/answers:

Q: What is this "Nothing But 'Net" thing, and how is it different from the other 5000 University of Michigan men's basketball sites?

A: Good question! "Nothing But 'Net" (NBN) is the longest running (since 1999) UM basketball site on the Web, with a special angle you won't find anywhere else: the view from the cheap seats, specifically sections 209/210. The motto for UMGobBlue.com is "By Fans ... For Fans", and NBN is a great example of that. I've been a UM basketball fan since 1974, and I've been to almost every home game since then, win or lose, good or bad. During the season, I write once a week (by noon Monday) about the games from the previous week, but I also look at season-long trends, all from the viewpoint of a fan. Sure, there are plenty of other UM basketball sites out there, and I read several of them myself (MGobBlue.com, AnnArbor.com, UMHoops.com, and MGobBlog.com), but the viewpoint at those sites is "journalist", with media access. I write about what I see during the game, as a spectator, a fan, and an usher. Yeah, I'm working as an usher again, for sections 209 and 210. If you go to a game, drop by and say "hi".

Q: Hey, wait a minute: what's with this "sections 209 and 210" stuff? I thought you ushered sections 8 and 11.

A: Ooh, you're a sharp one! As part of the renovations to [Crisler Arena](http://CrislerArena.com), they renumbered the sections. Now, the lower bowl (used to be "blue seats") sections are all numbered in the 100's, and the upper bowl (used to be "gold seats") sections are all numbered in the 200's. They put in all new seats, and they're all blue, so "blue seats" and "gold seats" doesn't make sense any more. Now it's "lower bowl" and "upper bowl". I'm still ushering in the same spot, but the section numbers are different. Here's an [updated seating chart](#). By the way, the "new" Crisler Arena is very nice, and it's only going to get better over the next couple years as they work on the outer concourse. I also got a sneak peek of the new Player Development Center (PDC), and it's gorgeous. I hope they have an Open House, so everyone can check it out.

Q: Is writing NBN your job? (I get this question more often than you'd expect)

A: Not at all. My job is working as a High Performance Computing (HPC) Middleware Programmer for the [University of Michigan Medical School](http://UniversityofMichiganMedicalSchool.com) ([Information Services Solutions Center](http://InformationServicesSolutionsCenter.com)). I don't get paid a dime to write NBN; it's a labor of love.

OK, enough background questions, let's get to the reason you're here: the 2011-2012 season. Here's the "executive summary":

It's going to be a good season.

You want more details? I can do that:

Michigan had a much better season last year than most people expected, and just about every player from that team is back this year, with one notable exception, which we'll get to. Michigan had a young team last year, and the young players got to play, a lot, so they're returning this season with lots of good game experience. Several of them added 15-30 pounds of muscle, which was something UM needed more of last season. In addition to the returning players, coach [John Beilein](http://JohnBeilein.com) brought in a solid group of freshmen, including a potential solution to the "one notable exception" problem I mentioned above.

You want even more details? OK:

Last Season

I mentioned above that last season went better than most people expected. For that to make sense, you need to go back and look at all 4 of Beilein's seasons at Michigan:

2007-2008 – Expectations: Low, Results: Low. Michigan finished 10-22 (5-13 in the Big Ten). No one was too concerned, since Beilein was coaching a group of players that he inherited.

2008-2009 – Expectations: Low, Results: High. Michigan finished 21-14 (9-9 in the Big Ten), and advanced to the 2nd round of the NCAA Tournament. This was much better than anyone expected. Expectations were high for next season.

2009-2010 – Expectations: High. Results: Low. Michigan finished 15-17 (7-11 in the Big Ten). After the success of the previous season, expectations were high, but the results were disappointing.

2010-2011 – Expectations: Low. Results: High. Michigan finished 21-14 (9-9 in the Big Ten), and advanced to the 2nd round of the NCAA Tournament, just like in 2008-2009.

So, now the expectations are high again for UM. Most of last season's team is back, and Beilein brought in another good recruiting class. In fact, UM starts the season ranked #18.

Players Lost

Michigan lost three players from last season's team:

- Darius Morris ([story](#))
- Jordan Dumars ([story](#))
- Darrick Ervin II

Of the three, only Morris really matters. Dumars was a transfer from South Florida who never played in a game, and Ervin was a practice player who played 3 minutes total in 3 games and never took a shot. Morris was the starting point guard, the most valuable player on the team last season, and he led the Wolverines in scoring (15.0 points/game), assists (235 – a new school single-season record), and steals (36). He will be missed. But... there is hope. Read about the new players, below.

Players Returning

Here's the really good news: other than Darius Morris, everyone else is back! Here they are:

Sophomore Eligibility

Colton Christian #45 (6'6", 215 pounds, F) – Colton played in 27 games last year, but he only scored 4 points, on 2-for-11 shooting. However, one of those two baskets was a biggie in the pivotal win over MSU in East Lansing. You should have heard the MSU ~~homers~~ announcers crying about how unfair it was that he hit that shot! Classic! Anyway, Colton plays good defense, and gets some rebounds, but he needs to work on his shot.

Tim Hardaway Jr. #10 (6'5", 185 pounds, G) – With Darius Morris gone, Tim is the #1 player on the team. He had a brilliant freshman season, and [he did very well on Team USA at the 2011 FIBA U19 World Championships](#). He's quick, he's tough, he can shoot from outside and drive to the basket, he's got good vision, and he's got great "basketball smarts".

Jon Horford #15 (6'9", 250 pounds, F) – Jon had a quiet freshman season. He showed flashes of potential, but he often looked a little lost out there. I'm hoping that a year of practice and game experience will get him to the next level. He's got a Big Ten body, and tons of potential. He also put on 30 pounds of muscle since the start of last season.

Blake McLimans #22 (6'10", 240 pounds, F) – Blake is listed as a Junior on the official UM web page, but he voluntarily redshirted during his freshman year, so he has sophomore eligibility. He played in 25 games last season, but he never really asserted himself while he was out there. He came to Michigan with a reputation as a good 3-point shooter, but he went 1-for-19 last season. He needs to correct that.

Jordan Morgan #52 (6'8", 240 pounds, F) – If Tim Hardaway Jr. was the most pleasant surprise on the team last year, Jordan was a close second. Like McLimans, he redshirted his freshman year, but his redshirt was a medical redshirt for various injuries. Once he started playing as a redshirt freshman last season, he showed us what he could do. He plays taller than his listed height, and he plays hard and tough underneath. He was the 3rd leading scorer on the team last season (9.2 points/game), and the 2nd leading rebounder (5.4 rebounds/game). He had the best shooting percentage (62.7%), and he led the team in blocked shots (19). He's a warrior.

Evan Smotrycz #23 (6'9", 235 pounds, F) – Evan had an uneven freshman season. When he was good he was very good, but when he was off he was awful. He bulked up over the summer, adding 10 pounds of muscle, and he has said that he wants to work on his post game.

Junior Eligibility

Eso Akunne #5 (6'3", 220 pounds, G) – Eso played in 16 games last season, but he didn't score much (7 points). He is primarily a practice squad player.

Josh Bartelstein #20 (6'2", 205 pounds, G) – Josh played in 11 games last season, and only made one basket, a 3-pointer. He is primarily a practice squad player. He also writes a very interesting and amusing blog during the season.

Corey Person #32 (6'3", 200 pounds, G) – Corey only played in 5 games last season, and scored 1 point. He is primarily a practice squad player. He is listed as a Senior, but he has Junior eligibility.

Matt Vogrich #13 (6'4", 190 pounds, G) – Matt is the only mainstream player in the Junior class. He led the team in 3-point shooting percentage last season (38.7%). He needs to work on his overall game a bit to get more playing time.

Senior Eligibility

Stu Douglass #1 (6'3", 190 pounds, G) – Ah, senior leadership. Stu has been a key player on the team for all 4 years, and he and Zack Novak have provided leadership for a couple years now. Stu is an excellent "6th man", and he does everything well.

Zack Novak #0 (6'4", 210 pounds, G) – Ah, more senior leadership. Zack will battle Tim Hardaway Jr. and Jordan Morgan for team MVP honors, but if it comes down to competitiveness, bet on Zack. He just hates to lose, and he's a fiery leader on the court. He plays about 6 inches taller than his listed height. He's a fierce rebounder, and he NEVER stops hustling. It is a joy to watch him play.

By the way: if you look at the full roster, you'll see that everyone is listed as either a Guard or a Forward; no Centers. Well, Jordan Morgan is the main Center, with help from Smotrycz, Horford, and McLimans.

New Players

There are four new players on the team this season:

Max Bielfeldt #44 (6'8", 240 pounds, F) – I don't know much about Max, other than what I have read online. I've never seen him play. Check back next week.

Carlton Brundidge #2 (6'2", 200 pounds, G) – I don't know much about Carlton, other than what I have read online. I've never seen him play. Check back next week.

Trey Burke #3 (6'1", 175 pounds, G) – Finally, we get to Trey Burke. Remember up there where I said that there might be a solution to the "Darius Morris left" problem? Here it is. If he can adapt to the speed of Big Ten basketball, he can replace Morris.

Sai Tummala #24 (6'7", 200 pounds, F) – I don't know much about Sai, other than what I have read online. I've never seen him play. Check back next week.

This Season

Let's take a look at Michigan's schedule for this season:

Date	Opponent	Location	Time (ET)
11/04/2011 (Fri)	Wayne State (exhibition)	Ann Arbor, MI	7:00 p.m.
11/11/2011 (Fri)	Ferris State	Ann Arbor, MI	7:00 p.m.
11/14/2011 (Mon)	Towson	Ann Arbor, MI	8:30 p.m.
11/17/2011 (Thu)	Western Illinois	Ann Arbor, MI	8:30 p.m.
EA Sports Maui Invitational			
11/21/2011 (Mon)	Memphis	Lahaina, HI	4:00 p.m.
11/22/2011 (Tue)	Duke/Tennessee	Lahaina, HI	TBA
11/23/2011 (Wed)	3 rd Round	Lahaina, HI	TBA
ACC/Big Ten Challenge			
11/29/2011 (Tue)	Virginia	Charlottesville, VA	7:00 p.m.
12/03/2011 (Sat)	Iowa State	Ann Arbor, MI	12:00 p.m.
12/10/2011 (Sat)	Oakland	Auburn Hills, MI	TBA
12/13/2011 (Tue)	Arkansas-Pine Bluff	Ann Arbor, MI	7:00 p.m.
12/17/2011 (Sat)	Alabama A&M	Ann Arbor, MI	12:00 p.m.
12/22/2011 (Thu)	Bradley	Ann Arbor, MI	6:30 p.m.
12/29/2011 (Thu)	Penn State	Ann Arbor, MI	7:30 p.m.
01/01/2012 (Sun)	Minnesota	Ann Arbor, MI	4:00 p.m.
01/05/2012 (Thu)	Indiana	Bloomington, IL	9:00 p.m.
01/08/2012 (Sun)	Wisconsin	Ann Arbor, MI	TBA
01/11/2012 (Wed)	Northwestern	Ann Arbor, MI	6:30 p.m.
01/14/2012 (Sat)	Iowa	Iowa City, IA	1:00 p.m.
01/17/2012 (Tue)	Michigan State	Ann Arbor, MI	7:00 p.m.
01/21/2012 (Sat)	Arkansas	Fayetteville, AR	2:00 p.m.
01/24/2012 (Tue)	Purdue	West Lafayette, IN	7:00 p.m.
01/29/2012 (Sun)	Ohio State	Columbus, OH	1:00 p.m.
02/01/2012 (Wed)	Indiana	Ann Arbor, MI	6:30 p.m.
02/05/2012 (Sun)	Michigan State	East Lansing, MI	1:00 p.m.
02/08/2012 (Wed)	Nebraska	Lincoln, NE	8:30 p.m.
02/12/2012 (Sun)	Illinois	Ann Arbor, MI	1:00 p.m.
02/18/2012 (Sat)	Ohio State	Ann Arbor, MI	9:00 p.m.
02/21/2012 (Tue)	Northwestern	Evanston, IL	8:00 p.m.
02/25/2012 (Sat) or 02/26/2012 (Sun)	Purdue	Ann Arbor, MI	6:00 p.m. or 1:00/4:00
03/01/2012 (Thu)	Illinois	Champaign, IL	7:00 p.m.
03/04/2012 (Sun)	Penn State	State College, PA	TBA
Big Ten Tournament			
03/08/2012 (Thu)	1 st Round	Indianapolis, IN	TBA
03/09/2012 (Fri)	2 nd Round	Indianapolis, IN	TBA
03/10/2012 (Sat)	Semifinals	Indianapolis, IN	1:40/4:05

03/11/2012 (Sun)	Championship	Indianapolis, IN	3:30 p.m.
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Some quick thoughts about the schedule:

- [The field for the Maui Invitational is loaded](#): Michigan, Memphis, Duke, Tennessee, UCLA, Georgetown, and Kansas.
- The Towson game (on 11/14) is technically part of the Maui Invitational, although it has no effect on whether or not Michigan “advances” to the games in Maui.
- Other than the Oakland game, at the Palace of Auburn Hills, Michigan plays all home games (5 of them) in December.
- There are 2 really tough stretches in the schedule:
 - 1/17 – 1/29 (home vs. MSU, @Arkansas, @Purdue, @OSU)
 - 2/5 – 2/18 (@MSU, @Nebraska, home vs. Illinois, home vs. OSU)
- Michigan only plays Minnesota and Wisconsin once (home) and Iowa and Nebraska once (away). Not having to play at Wisconsin is a very good thing.

Expectations

I like to divide the games up into 3 categories (“Should Win”, “Should Lose”, and “Toss Up”):

- Should Win (14) – Ferris State, Towson, Western Illinois, Oakland, Arkansas-Pine Bluff, Alabama A&M, Bradley, Penn State (twice), Minnesota, Northwestern (twice), @Iowa, Indiana.
- Should Lose (2) – @Purdue, @OSU.
- Toss Up (15) – All 3 games in Maui, Virginia, Iowa State, @Indiana, Wisconsin, MSU (twice), @Arkansas, @Nebraska, Illinois (twice), OSU, Purdue.

So, if UM can win all 14 of the “Should Win” games, and about half of the 15 “Toss Up” games, that would give them a record of 22-9 (12-6 in the Big Ten).

This Week

As you can see in the schedule above, Michigan’s first (exhibition) game is this Friday (11/4, 7:00 p.m., No TV) vs. Wayne State. Of course, UM will win handily, and get to try all kinds of combinations of players out there. Come on down to the newly renovated Crisler Arena to check out this season’s edition of Michigan Basketball, and stop by sections 209/210 to say hi.

Go Blue!