

Nothing But 'Net – Week #04 – 11/21/2011 – An Underwhelming Week

The (#17) University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, and they won both of them, to move to 3-0 on the season. [On Monday \(11/14/2011\) they beat Towson, 64-47](#), then [on Thursday \(11/17/2011\) they beat Western Illinois \(WIU\), 59-55](#). No, that 2nd score isn't a typo: they only won by 4. It was part of an underwhelming week. Sure, they won the Towson game by 17 points, but they were actually outscored after the first 10 minutes of the game. They opened with a brilliant 21-0 run to start the game, then played even with Towson for the rest of the game. The WIU game was even worse. Every time UM started pulling away, WIU grabbed the momentum back and made the game close again. Michigan never led by more than 9 points, and WIU had a lead in both halves. Not very impressive.

So, what happened? How did UM fumble through two games against teams they should have handled easily? Shooting. They did a reasonable job of running the set offense, and getting the shots they wanted, then CLANK. They missed way too many wide open shots, ones that they usually make. If those shots had fallen, we'd be talking about two blowout wins instead of two disappointing performances.

The funny thing is that the stats for both games look pretty reasonable. In the [Towson game](#), Michigan shot 46.3% (25-for-54), and in the [WIU game](#), they shot 45.2% (19-for-42). These numbers are distorted by dunks and easy layups; the outside shots set up by the half-court offense weren't falling. The 3-point shooting numbers tell the story a little better: 24.0% (6-for-25) vs. Towson, and 35.0% (7-for-20) vs. WIU. Actually, 35% is pretty good, but only 20 shots is too low. Finally, the free-throw shooting continues to be a problem. UM shot 50.0% (8-for-16) vs. Towson, and 63.6% (14-for-22) vs. WIU. That's ugly.

The individual stats are a mixed bag. [Tim Hardaway Jr.](#) (15 points vs. Towson and 16 vs. WIU) and [Trey Burke](#) (13 and 13) both hit double figures in both games. The other three starters weren't as consistent. [Evan Smotrycz](#) had a very nice game vs. Towson (13 points), but he was ice cold vs. WIU (3 points, on 1-for-8 shooting). [Jordan Morgan](#) started both games, and had a decent game (6 points) vs. Towson, and a good game (11 points) vs. WIU. [Zack Novak](#) (8 and 5 points) didn't score much, but he did have his usual collection of great "hustle" plays.

The bench. Not much there, especially in the Towson game. [Stu Douglass](#) (0 and 5 points), [Matt Vogrich](#) (4 and 3 points), [Jon Horford](#) (4 and 2 points), and [Carlton Brundidge](#) (1 point vs. Towson, didn't play vs. WIU) accounted for all the bench scoring. That adds up to 9 points vs. Towson and 10 points vs. WIU, which isn't nearly enough.

The non-shooting stats weren't very impressive. UM out-rebounded Towson (32-30), but got out-rebounded by WIU (27-22). Michigan had more assists than turnovers in both games, and had more assists and less turnovers than both opponents.

The Nothing But 'Net Expectation-O-Meter (NBNEOM) remains firmly pointing at "Does Not Meet Expectations".

Enough about the past, on to the [EA Sports Maui Invitational](#) tournament. This week, Michigan plays three games in three days, starting with (#10) Memphis on

Monday afternoon (3:00 p.m. EST, ESPN2). The next game (Tuesday) will be against either Tennessee or (#6) Duke. The final game (Wednesday) will be against Who Knows? This is a tough tournament field, and we'll learn a lot about Michigan from these three games. UM should win at least one game, hopefully two, and three would be fabulous. Check back next week to see what happened, and why.

Go Blue!