

Nothing But 'Net – Week #09 – 12/26/2011 – A Dangerous Cupcake, And First Trimester Grades

The (#20) University of Michigan men's basketball team played one game last week, and they won it, to improve their record to 10-2 on the season, including 5 wins in a row. [On Thursday \(12/22/2011\) they beat Bradley 77-66](#), in Crisler Arena. Coming in, Bradley looked to be the final "cupcake" in a series of three cupcakes, but they put up quite a fight.

The final margin of victory looks pretty comfortable, but for first 30 minutes it was a seesaw battle. Michigan opened up a few small leads in the first half (25-19 with 8:32 to go, 31-26 with 3:45 to go), but Bradley kept coming back, and tied the game (33-33) at halftime, on a long 3-pointer at the buzzer. The crowd and the Michigan team seemed deflated, and things looked dicey for the second half. With 18:05 to go in the game, Bradley was ahead (38-36), but that was their last lead. The game was tied 4 more times, and Michigan never led by more than 3 points until their big run, but once UM pushed the lead past 3 (54-49, with 11:02 to go), it was over. The Wolverines went from a 52-49 lead with 12:00 left to 71-56 with 6:21 left, a 19-7 run in just over five and a half minutes. It was a very exciting run, with a couple steals, a couple dunks, and a couple 3-pointers mixed in. Bradley had been playing with good composure, answering every Michigan basket with one of their own, but once the Michigan run started, they panicked, which cost them the game.

The [stats](#) for the game aren't nearly as impressive as you would expect. Michigan shot fairly well overall (31-for-68 = 45.6%), but not that well from 3-point range (10-for-31 = 32.3%). Free throws weren't a factor (5-for-8 = 62.5%). After a few games in a row with too many turnovers, UM did a much better job, committing only 6 turnovers (Bradley had 11). The Wolverines also did a great job passing the ball, with 25 assists on 31 made baskets.

Individually, all five starters hit double figures, which is quite an accomplishment. [Evan Smotrycz](#) was the leading scorer, with 20 points (and 10 rebounds, for his 2nd double-double in a row). [Tim Hardaway Jr.](#) had 16 points, [Jordan Morgan](#) had 15, [Trey Burke](#) had 12, and [Zack Novak](#) had 11. Add those up, and you get 74 points, which means that there were only 3 points scored by the bench: [Stu Douglass](#) with a 3-pointer. The rest of the bench got shut out.

The Nothing But 'Net Expectation-O-Meter (NBNEOM) remains pointing at "Meets Expectations".

Grades!

The season breaks down nicely into 3 "trimesters": non-conference (12 games), 1st half of the Big Ten schedule plus the Arkansas game (10 games), 2nd half of the Big Ten schedule plus the Big Ten Tournament and any other postseason play (at least 10 games). Now that the "preseason" games are done, it's time for the 1st trimester grades:

Freshmen

[Max Bielfeldt](#): Inc.

Unless there's a catastrophe, Max is going to be redshirted this season.

[Carlton Brundidge](#): C

Carlton hasn't played much (4.4 minutes/game), although his minutes have been increasing lately. When he's been in, he's played pretty well, for a freshman. He just needs more game experience.

[Trey Burke](#): A

Trey has been a very pleasant surprise. He played very well in high school, but that doesn't always translate into playing well as a freshman, especially at point guard. Trey has exceeded all expectations, and developed into a very good college-level point guard. He leads the team in minutes played, he's the 2nd leading scorer, and he's the team leader in assists (5.0/game). When he's on the floor, Michigan just plays better.

[Sai Tummala](#): Inc.

Unless there's a catastrophe, Sai is going to be redshirted this season.

Sophomores

[Colton Christian](#): C

Colton hasn't played much (8 games, 27 minutes), and he hasn't scored much (4 points on 2-for-6 shooting). He's still looking for his place on the team. He's too short to be a "big", and not a good enough ballhandler and shooter to be a guard.

[Tim Hardaway, Jr.](#): A

Tim had a great freshman year, and he's playing even better as a sophomore. He is easily the best player on the team, and he has stepped up and played well when the team needs him. He's the leading scorer on the team (15.4 pts/game), his shooting numbers are very good (46.1% and 32.8%), he's gotten some rebounds (34), and he has more assists (35) than turnovers (21).

[Jon Horford](#): B-

Jon showed great improvement over last season, and was looking more comfortable out there, then he hurt his foot. He has missed the last 3 games, and his injury is described as "week to week". Before he got hurt, he had decent stats (2.7 points/game, 52.9% shooting percentage, 32 rebounds). We'll see how he does when his injury has healed.

[Blake McLimans](#): C+

With Horford out, McLimans has been getting more minutes earlier in the game, but he hasn't been doing much with them. He's averaging 1.1 points/game, and shooting a nice percentage (55.6%), but he gets surprisingly few rebounds (11, in 11 games), and looks a little lost out there sometimes.

[Jordan Morgan](#): B+

To date, Jordan hasn't been as effective as he was last season. He shows flashes of his old self, then disappears again. Still, he's averaging 7.8 points/game, shooting a blistering 70.7% from the floor, and grabbing 4.7 rebounds/game.

[Evan Smotrycz](#): A

Evan had a few quiet games in the middle of the non-conference schedule (Western Illinois – 3 points, Memphis – 7 points, Duke – 5 points, UCLA – 7 points, Iowa State – 8 points), but since the Iowa State game, he's been on fire (Oakland – 20 points, Arkansas-Pine Bluff – 16 points, Alabama A&M – 17 points, Bradley – 20 points). He's been hitting his 3-point shots (57.9%, including 15 of his last 19 attempts), he's been hitting his shots in general (57.1%), and he's been rebounding with a vengeance (6.7/game, including 9, 8, 11, and 10 in his last 4 games). In short, he's been a force out there, and a match-up nightmare for the opposition.

Juniors

[Eso Akunne](#): C

Eso hasn't played much (9 games, 38 minutes), and he hasn't scored much (18 points), but he has been shooting well (7-for-8 = 87.5% overall, 4-for-5 = 80.0% from 3-point range).

[Josh Bartelstein](#): Incomplete

Josh has only played in "mop up" action so far (5 games, 8 minutes), and he hasn't scored yet. He does write a very interesting and informative blog on MGoBlue.com.

[Corey Person](#): Incomplete

Corey is another player who has only played in "garbage time" so far (4 games, 4 minutes). He hasn't scored yet.

[Matt Vogrich](#): C

Matt has come off the bench in every game so far, and he's done OK, but not great. He hit double figures once (Arkansas-Pine Bluff), but he's also had a few scoreless games. He's shooting pretty well overall (32.4%), but he still hasn't found his 3-point shot this season (4-for-21 = 19.0%). He needs to make more of the minutes he's been getting.

Seniors

[Stu Douglass](#): B

Stu has accepted his role as "6th man", and he's a good team leader. He's scoring 6.9 pts/game, which is pretty good, and his shooting percentages are decent (39.2% and 30.0%). He's done a pretty good job running the point when he's been in, and he helps settle things down when the team gets a little crazy.

[Zack Novak](#): A-

Zack is getting to play his natural position (shooting guard), instead of playing "over his head" at small forward. The last 3 seasons, he's had to play out of position, guarding players 4-6 inches taller and 30-50 pounds heavier, and he's held his own. Now that he's playing a guard position, his scoring (9.4 pts/game) is up, but his rebounding is down. His shooting percentages are great (51.9% and 41.5%), and he's got a lot more assists (32) than turnovers (9). However, there's a lot more to Zack than his stats. As I've said before, the one thing about Zack that doesn't necessarily show up on the stat sheet is his hustle. He never stops hustling out there, and he never gives up. He scraps and dives for loose balls, he chases down opposing players on breakaways, and he sets brutal picks. He is a fierce competitor, and a true leader.

Big Ten Report

It's time to check in on our Big Ten brethren. [See my weekly Big Ten Report, starting now.](#)

Next Week

Michigan begins league play, and plays two games this week. On Thursday (12/29/2011, 7:30 p.m., Big Ten Network), Michigan plays Penn State, then on Sunday (01/01/2012, 4:00 p.m., Big Ten Network), they play Minnesota. Both games are in Crisler Arena. If Michigan is going to be a contender for the Big Ten title this season, they absolutely have to beat the lower-division teams (like Penn State and Minnesota) at home. Come on down to the new-and-improved Crisler Arena to check out the Wolverines.

Go Blue!