

Nothing But 'Net – Week #11 – 01/09/2012 – Almost Perfect

The (#16) University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, and they won one and lost one, to bring their record to 13-3 (3-1 in the Big Ten) on the season. [On Thursday \(01/05/2012\) they lost at \(#12\) Indiana 73-71](#), then [on Sunday \(01/08/2012\) they beat \(#18\) Wisconsin 59-41](#), in Crisler Arena. They came very close to winning the game at IU, and keeping their Big Ten record perfect. So, they were "almost perfect".

The IU game was exciting, and frustrating. Michigan never got the lead, but they battled back from a couple double-digit deficits to get within a point or two, or even tie the game up. In fact, they tied the game at 68-68 with 3:00 left, and got within one point (72-71) with 4 seconds left, but they just couldn't quite "get over the hump". UM just started a little too slowly, and had to play from behind the whole game. Not so in the Wisconsin game, where UM jumped out to an early 10-2 lead, fell behind 14-13, regained the lead at 16-14, and never looked back. They led by 6 (25-19) at halftime, pushed the lead up to double digits midway through the 2nd half, and kept it there the rest of the way. It was a good, convincing win against a quality opponent.

The difference in both games was free throws. In the [IU game](#), Michigan only went to the line 11 times, making 7, compared to IU, who were 12-for-19. Those 5 points were more than the IU margin of victory. UM made the same number of baskets (27) as IU, and more 3-pointers (10 vs. 7), but the free throws made the difference. Michigan shot pretty well in the IU game (27-for-58 = 46.6%), but IU shot better (27-for-49 = 55.1%). Likewise, UM shot well from 3-point range (10-for-24 = 41.7%), but IU shot even better (7-for-11 = 63.6%). The rebounding battle was very close (IU had 31, UM had 30), and Michigan had less turnovers (15-12), but none of that mattered; it was free throws that won the game for IU. In the [Wisconsin game](#), Michigan shot very well from the free throw line (17-for-20 = 85.0%), while Wisconsin shot pretty poorly (2-for-5 = 40.0%). However, it was the number of free throws that made the difference. Those 15 extra points almost make up the final margin of victory (19 points). Neither team hosted very well overall: UM was 19-for-48 (39.6%), while Wisconsin was 16-for-51 (31.4%). Wisconsin actually shot better from 3-point range (7-for-20 = 35.0%) than their overall shooting, and Michigan shot worse (4-for-15 = 26.7%) than their overall shooting, but the big difference was free-throw shooting. The Wolverines out-rebounded the Badgers handily (38-29), and had less turnovers (12-9), all of which helped.

Individually, two Michigan players hit double figures in both games: [Tim Hardaway Jr.](#) (19 vs. IU, 17 vs. Wisconsin) and [Trey Burke](#) (10 and 14). Two of the other starters almost did it: [Zack Novak](#) (8 and 12) and [Jordan Morgan](#) (12 and 4). The 5th starter, [Evan Smotrycz](#), had a sub-par week: 8 points vs. IU, and only 3 points in the Wisconsin game. Besides being UM's leading scorer in the Wisconsin game, THJ also had 10 rebounds, for his first double-double of the season. Morgan had even more rebounds (11, including 5 offensive boards) to go with his 4 points vs. Wisconsin.

Michigan got 14 points from the bench (11 from [Stu Douglass](#) and 3 from [Blake McLimans](#)) in the IU game, and 9 points (Douglass – 5, [Matt Vogrich](#) – 2, [Eso Akunne](#) – 2) in the Wisconsin game. Not bad.

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

Michigan plays two more Big Ten games this week. On Wednesday (01/11/2012, 6:30 p.m., Big Ten Network), Michigan plays Northwestern in Crisler Arena, then on Saturday (01/14/2012, 1:00 p.m. EST, Big Ten Network), they play at Iowa. These are going to be easier games than the ones last week, but they are both still "toss-up" games. Check back next week to see what happened, and why.

Go Blue!