

Nothing But 'Net – Week #12 – 01/16/2012 – An Ugly Week

It was an ugly week for the (#13) University of Michigan men's basketball team last week. They played two games, and they won one and lost one, but the win was ugly, and the loss was even uglier. [On Wednesday \(01/11/2012\) they beat Northwestern 66-64 in overtime in Crisler Arena](#), then [on Saturday \(01/14/2012\) they lost at Iowa 75-59](#). This brings Michigan's record to 14-4 (4-2 in the Big Ten).

OK, I'll admit that Michigan's narrow victory over Northwestern looks a little better after [NU beat \(#7\) Michigan State](#) convincingly in their next game. MSU came into the game unbeaten in Big Ten play, and NU handled them, so I guess NU is better than their record would suggest. So, maybe the UM win over NU wasn't quite as ugly as it looked in person. Michigan played very poorly for most of the game, and were trailing by 8 points (44-36) with 13 minutes to go. They fought their way back into the game, but they still trailed by 3 (54-51) with less than 3 minutes left. They managed to tie it up and force overtime, where they scratched out a 2-point win.

[Coach Beilein](#) said after the game that "It's not your grandfather's Northwestern. This is a really good team." All I can say is "a win is a win", especially compared to a miserable loss like the Iowa game. UM had another slow start, but managed to fight their way to their one and only lead (13-12), before they fell apart completely. The Iowa game was Michigan's 3rd game in 6 days, and it really showed. They were a step slower, they didn't jump as high as usual, their open shots weren't falling, and they didn't hustle for the loose balls. It was sad. They seem to lack the mental toughness to win on the road in the Big Ten. If they can't beat Iowa, there aren't too many other road games they stand much of a chance in. Maybe at Nebraska and Penn State, but that's it. Before I saw Northwestern almost beat Michigan on the road, then beat MSU at home, I would have said that UM stood a decent chance vs. Northwestern in Evanston, but not now.

I don't want to look at the stats, but I guess I have to. The [Northwestern stats](#) are sad, except for free-throw shooting. Michigan shot horribly overall (22-for-66 = 33.3%), even worse from 3-point range (7-for-30 = 23.3%), but very well from the free-throw line (15-for-16 = 93.8%). UM did win the rebounding battle (36-32), and they also won the turnover battle (7-16), which helped. Surprisingly, Michigan shot a little better (less poorly?) in the [Iowa game](#): 20-for-52 (38.5%) overall, 8-for-31 (25.8%) from 3-point range, and 11-for-17 (64.7%) from the free-throw line. However, this time Michigan lost the rebounding battle (39-30) and the turnover battle (10-8). It's hard to win a game where you shoot less than 40% and get out-rebounded by 9.

Individually, only [Trey Burke](#) hit double figures in both games, with 19 points in each. [Tim Hardaway Jr.](#) also had 19 points in the NU game, but he only had 9 points vs. Iowa. Michigan really struggles when THJ has a bad game. The only other starter to hit double figures this week was [Zack Novak](#), with 14 points in the Iowa game. He only had 4 points in the Northwestern game. The other 2 starters had a tough week: [Jordan Morgan](#) had 6 and 4 points, and [Evan Smotrycz](#) had 5 and 0 points. The team doesn't depend too much on scoring from Morgan, but Smotrycz is another player that the team depends on, and just like THJ, when Smotrycz has a bad game, UM struggles.

The bench chipped in 13 points in each game. [Stu Douglass](#) had 10 and 9, [Matt Vogrich](#) had 3 and 0, and [Blake McLimans](#) had 0 and 4. That's it. Michigan desperately needs more bench scoring, and more scoring balance.

The Nothing But 'Net Expectation-O-Meter (NBNEOM) has been reset to point to "Slightly Below Expectations". The close win vs. Northwestern is understandable, but the ugly loss at Iowa was definitely not expected.

Michigan plays two games this week, one in the Big Ten, and one non-conference game. On Tuesday (01/17/2012, 7:00 p.m., ESPN), Michigan plays Michigan State in Crisler Arena, then on Saturday (01/21/2012, 2:00 p.m. EST, CBS), they play at Arkansas. These are going to be much tougher 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!