

Nothing But 'Net – Week #13 – 01/23/2012 – A Split During Livestock Week

It was Livestock Week for the (#19) University of Michigan men's basketball team last week. They played the "cows" (Michigan State) and the "hogs" (Arkansas), and they won one and lost one. [On Tuesday \(01/17/2012\) they beat \(#9\) MSU 60-59 in Crisler Arena](#), then [on Saturday \(01/21/2012\) they lost at Arkansas 66-64](#). This brings Michigan's record to 15-5 (5-2 in the Big Ten).

Both games were exciting, and both games came down to the visiting team taking the last shot with a chance to win the game. In both games, the last-ditch shots failed. In the MSU game, our old buddy Draymond Green missed a runner with about 2 seconds left, and his follow-up tip-in attempt also missed, even though it wouldn't have counted anyway, since the horn had already sounded. In the Arkansas game, [Trey Burke](#) got off a good 3-point attempt at the buzzer, and it rimmed out.

UM played a very good game vs. the ~~Farmers~~ Spartans, getting ahead early and keeping a comfortable lead for most of the game. After leading by 7 points (36-29) at halftime, Michigan pushed the lead up as high as 11 points (47-36) with about 12 minutes left in the game. Everyone knew that MSU would have a run at some point in the game, and this was the point. State went on a 16-2 run, and led 52-49 with 5:47 left to play. The rest of the game was very tense, with UM recapturing the lead with 37 seconds left, and MSU holding for the last shot, which didn't go in. When the final horn sounded, the place exploded, and a certain usher in the upper bowl might have behaved less than professionally.

Oh yeah, in case you haven't heard, Michigan has beaten MSU 3 times in a row now in basketball.

The good news here is that Michigan won a big rivalry game, and looked good doing it. They are also tied for 1st place in the Big Ten. The bad news is that UM has had one of the easiest Big Ten schedules so far, and they play most of their remaining games on the road, or against the other contenders, or both.

The Arkansas game was the exact opposite of the MSU game: Michigan got down early, fell way behind, and spent the whole game playing "catch-up". Arkansas started the game as hot as any team I have ever seen. They hit their first 11 shots, including a few 3-pointers, and built up a 20-point lead midway through the 1st half. Michigan never gave up, and they managed to close the gap to "only" 13 points at halftime (46-33). They kept scrapping and clawing, and got within 2 points a few times in the closing minutes of the game, including the final 7.6 seconds. Burke got open, took the shot, and ... oh well.

The good news here is that UM never gave up, even when they were down by 20. The bad news is that they played pretty poorly to start the game, which is how they got down by 20 in the first place. So far, UM is 0-for-4 in true road games, with a much better record (3-1) in neutral site games (2-1 in Maui, 1-0 in the Palace of Auburn Hills).

Stats? Stats. The [stats for the MSU game](#) are decent. UM shot pretty well overall (23-for-45 = 51.1%), not quite so well from 3-point range (6-for-21 = 28.6%), and just OK from the free-throw line (8-for-13 = 61.5%). However, the free throw battle turned out to the difference in a one-point win, since MSU only shot 5 free throws,

making 4 of them. Those extra 4 points sure came in handy. It's very impressive that these two teams played such a hard, physical game for 40 minutes and only got called for 20 fouls total, 12 against MSU and 8 against Michigan. It's even more impressive that UM won the game despite being out-rebounded 31-18. Michigan did win the turnover battle though, 8-14.

The [stats for the Arkansas game](#) are pretty similar. UM didn't shoot quite as well overall (25-for-61 = 41.0%), they shot pretty poorly from 3-point range (8-for-28 = 28.6%), and they did pretty well from the free-throw line (6-for-7 = 85.7%). They won the rebounding battle (35-29), but they lost the turnover battle (10-8). This game was also decided at the free-throw line, since Arkansas attempted 3 times as many free throws as Michigan. They shot 13-for-21 (61.9%) from the free-throw line. That was the difference in the game.

Individually, two players hit double figures in both games this week: Trey Burke (20 vs. MSU and 13 vs. Arkansas) and [Zack Novak](#) (10 and 17). One of the other starters came close: [Tim Hardaway Jr.](#) (10 and 9). The other two starters did pretty well: [Jordan Morgan](#) (4 and 16) and [Stu Douglass](#) (9 and 5). Yes, [Coach Beilein](#) changed his starting lineup for the MSU and Arkansas games, going with Douglass instead of [Evan Smotrycz](#).

Speaking of the bench, they didn't help much this week. Smotrycz had 5 points vs. MSU, and 4 points vs. Arkansas. [Matt Vogrich](#) had 2 and 0. That was it: 7 points vs. MSU, and 4 points vs. Arkansas. Michigan needs a lot more bench scoring.

The Nothing But 'Net Expectation-O-Meter (NBNEOM) has been reset to point back to "Meets Expectations". Beating MSU was a big deal, and losing to Arkansas on the road wasn't too surprising.

Michigan plays two games this week, both on the road. On Tuesday (01/24/2012, 7:00 p.m. EST, ESPN), Michigan plays at Purdue, then on Sunday (01/29/2012, 1:00 p.m. EST, CBS), they play at Ohio State. Given Michigan's record on the road this season, and the problems they've had winning at Purdue and Ohio State in the past, I don't expect Michigan to win either of these games.

Check back next week to see what happened, and why.

Go Blue!