

Nothing But 'Net – Week #17 – 02/18/2013 – A Tough Week Playing "State" Teams

The (#4) University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, both against "State" teams, and they played miserably in both games. Fortunately, they managed to win one of them, but they got blown out in the other. [On Tuesday \(02/12/2013\), they lost to \(#8\) Michigan State 75-52](#) in East Lansing, then [on Sunday \(02/17/2013\), they beat Penn State 79-71](#) in Crisler Arena. The loss and the win leave UM with a record of 22-4, 9-4 in Big Ten play. They are tied for 3rd place in the Big Ten.

Michigan looked terrible in the MSU game. Just terrible. They looked like deer in the headlights. MSU came out hot and hit them early and often, and Michigan just went into a shell and never came out. The large, frantic crowd in the Breslin Center completely flustered them, and the game was over before the 2nd media timeout in the first half. It's hard to believe that this team was ranked #1 in the nation just a few short weeks ago. They are in tatters at this point. Sure, they managed to eke out a narrow victory over PSU on Sunday, but they almost lost that one as well. They might not win another game this season, if they keep playing the way they've been playing recently.

So, what's wrong with UM? Why are they having such a tough time lately? Some of it is fatigue, but most of it is confidence. The MSU game was the 4th in a row vs. ranked teams, 3 of them on the road, in 3 of the most hostile environments in the country: Indiana's Assembly Hall, Wisconsin's Kohl Center, and MSU's Breslin Center. They lost all 3 of those games, and they got flustered by the loud crowds in all 3 games. The game that really broke their backs was the overtime loss at Wisconsin. UM had that game won, and let it slip away in the last 2.4 seconds. Since that point, Michigan has been "playing scared": "playing not to lose" instead of "playing to win".

The Penn State game was supposed to be a breather, a laugh, an easy win at home where everyone got to play, and the stars got their confidence back. Instead, it turned into a nasty dogfight, with Michigan trailing for most of the 1st half, and never really pulling away in the 2nd half. UM never pushed the lead into double digits, and the game was still in doubt in the final minutes. Penn State came in 0-12 in the Big Ten, but they played like they expected to beat Michigan on their home court, and Michigan let them push them around. PSU played their best game of the year, and UM played one of their worst games, and the combination was almost enough for the big upset.

The stats for the 2 games are either ugly or unimpressive. In the [MSU](#) game, Michigan shot terribly overall (21-for-53 = 39.6%) and from 3-point range (6-for-19 = 31.6%). They barely got to the free throw line, but they shot OK when they got there: 4-for-6 = 66.7%. They got crushed on the boards (30-41) and in the turnover battle (16-8). It was easily the worst game Michigan has played since the loss to Ohio University in the NCAA Tournament last season. The stats for the [PSU](#) game are a little better, but still not good. UM shot a little better overall (23-for-49 = 46.9%) and from 3-point range (6-for-18 = 33.3%). They got to the free throw line often, and shot well when they did: 27-for-35 = 77.1%. Once again, they lost the rebounding battle (29-35), but they did manage to win the turnover battle (6-13).

Individually, 2 players hit double figures in both games:

- [Trey Burke](#) - 18 points vs. MSU, and 29 vs. PSU. Trey's 29 points in the PSU game are a season-high, just one point short of his career-high 30 points vs. Minnesota last season.
- [Nik Stauskas](#) - 10 and 18 points. Nik still isn't hitting his 3-pointers the way he did earlier in the season, but he's scoring in other ways.

One player hit double figures in one game: [Glenn Robinson III](#). He only had 2 points in the MSU game, but 21 vs. PSU. Glenn's 21 points tie his career-high, and he added 10 rebounds for a double-double.

The other starters didn't do so well scoring:

- [Tim Hardaway Jr.](#) - 2 and 8 points. Tim was absolutely terrible vs. MSU, shooting 1-for-11 (0-for-5 from 3-point range). He had a slow start vs. PSU, but came alive down the stretch.
- [Mitch McGary](#) - 4 and 0 points. Mitch got his first career start vs. MSU, and did OK. He came off the bench in the PSU game, and had a miserable time. Dunk, Mitch, dunk!
- [Jordan Morgan](#) - 1 and 0 points. After missing one game with an injured ankle, and coming off the bench for a minute or two in the last few games, Jordan finally started again vs. PSU. He played 7 minutes, but still looked slow and tentative out there.

The bench players didn't have much success scoring:

- [Eso Akunne](#) - 2 and DNP points.
- [Spike Albrecht](#) - 5 and 0 points.
- [Josh Bartelstein](#) - 0 and DNP points.
- [Max Bielfeldt](#) - 2 and 0 points.
- [Jon Horford](#) - 0 and 0 points.
- [Caris LeVert](#) - 2 and 1 points.
- [Blake McLimans](#) - 1 and DNP points.
- [Corey Person](#) - 3 and DNP points.
- [Matt Vogrich](#) - 0 and 2 points.

Once again, the bench didn't provide much support. Most of the bench points in the MSU game were scored in "garbage time". This is not good.

This Week

After a brutal stretch of tough games, mostly on the road, with 2 games every week, Michigan finally gets to their "bye" week. They only have one game this week, and it's at home vs. one of the "lower division" teams. On Sunday (02/24/2013, 1:00 p.m., ESPN), they play Illinois. Illinois is very unpredictable this season, with wins at home against Indiana and Ohio State, and a road win at Minnesota, but they also lost at home to Northwestern. Michigan beat them earlier this season in Champaign, but that was back before UM had their confidence shattered. It should be a close, exciting game, but I expect Michigan to keep their unbeaten home record intact.

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

Go Blue!