

Nothing But 'Net – Week #22 – 03/25/2013 – Sweet!

The (#10) University of Michigan men's basketball team is going to the Sweet Sixteen in the [NCAA Tournament](#)! It's been 19 years (1993-1994) since UM made it past the first week in the Big Dance, but the long wait is finally over. Michigan, the #4 seed in the South Region, played two games in the tournament last week, both in the Palace of Auburn Hills (MI), and they won both of them. [On Thursday \(03/21/2013\), they beat the #13 seed, South Dakota State \(SDSU\), 71-56](#), then [on Saturday \(03/23/2013\), they beat the #5 seed, Virginia Commonwealth \(VCU\), 78-53](#). The two wins raise Michigan's record to 28-7.

After last season's embarrassing loss to Ohio University in the first game (2nd round) of the NCAA Tournament, Michigan wasn't about to take any team lightly this season. On paper, SDSU looked like a prime candidate to upset UM in the first game. The game was close most of the way, with Michigan finally pulling away late in the 2nd half. Still, in a single-elimination tournament, any win is a good win. Survive and advance.

The VCU game was much more interesting. VCU runs a kamikaze, all-out full-court press for the entire game, something they call "Havoc". Remember the Arkansas game back in December, with their "40 Minutes Of Hell"? This was supposed to be much worse. VCU leads the nation in turnovers forced per possession, and Michigan leads the nation in fewest turnovers committed per possession. Something had to give. Guess which one? That's right: Michigan had a few more turnovers than usual, but well below the average that VCU usually caused. Watching "Havoc" was interesting and kind of impressive, but Michigan handled it with poise and composure, and won the game decisively. They never let the press get to them, and they stayed focused and worked hard to bring the ball across mid-court under control every possession. It was very impressive. The downside to running a full-court press is that it's hard to get back on defense once the other team breaks the press, and that's exactly what happened in this game. Michigan broke the press most of the time, and got fairly easy baskets on many of those possessions. Even when they didn't get a basket right off the press break, they had an easier time than usual in their half-court offense, since VCU had short, fast players in the lineup for "Havoc" purposes. These short, fast players were well-suited for pressing and stealing, but not for defending the post. So, that's where Michigan attacked, and it worked. More about that below, in the individual player stats.

First, let's look at the team stats. In the [SDSU](#) game, Michigan shot pretty well overall (28-for-55 = 50.9%), and they shot well from 3-point range (9-for-20 = 45.0%). They didn't shoot many free throws, but they hit a decent number of them (6-for-9 = 66.7%). They tied in the rebounding battle (29-29), and they won the turnover battle (9-12). The stats for the [VCU](#) game aren't quite as impressive, but they're not bad. Michigan's overall shooting was good (31-for-60 = 51.7%), but their 3-point shooting was mediocre (6-for-20 = 30.0%). They didn't shoot many free throws, but they made them count (10-for-11 = 90.9%). The big difference was rebounding, where UM won 41-24. Those 17 extra possessions really helped. UM lost the turnover battle, but just barely: 12-11.

The interesting stories for both games are found in the individual stats. Individually, 3 players hit double figures in both games last week:

- [Tim Hardaway Jr.](#) - 21 points vs. SDSU and 14 points vs. VCU. Tim also helped a lot bring the ball upcourt vs. "Havoc", with only 1 turnover.
- [Mitch McGary](#) - 13 and 21 points. Here's the first, and most interesting story of both games. Mitch started both games in place of [Jordan Morgan](#), who was playing "out of sorts" in the last couple weeks. Not only did he start, but he played serious minutes in both games (25 and 34), and dominated the post in both games. He had 9 rebounds vs. SDSU, just missing a "double double", and career-high 14 rebounds vs. VCU. His 21 points in the VCU game were also a new career-high. Mitch was unstoppable in the VCU game, especially against the shorter "Havoc" players.
- [Glenn Robinson III](#) - 21 and 14 points. Here's another interesting story. After having a few "quiet" games at the end of the regular season, especially in the Big Ten

Tournament (5 and 8 points), Glenn had a monster game vs. SDSU, and followed it up with another solid game vs. VCU.

One player hit double figures in only one game last week:

- [Trey Burke](#) - 6 and 18 points. Here's another interesting story. Trey had hit double figures in every game this season, until the SDSU game. He got his shots vs. SDSU, but he just couldn't hit them: he was 2-for-12 (0-for-5 from 3-point range). But wait, there's more: Trey had 7 assists in the VCU game, which gave him 236 for the season, which breaks the previous school record (Darius Morris - 235 - 2010-2011).

The remaining starter didn't hit double figures in either game:

- [Nik Stauskas](#) - 8 and 8 points. Nik had a miserable time shooting 3-pointers: 1-for-4 vs. SDSU and 0-for-4 vs. VCU.

The bench players had a terrible week at scoring:

- [Eso Akunne](#) - DNP and 0 points.
- [Spike Albrecht](#) - 0 and 3 points.
- [Josh Bartelstein](#) - DNP and 0 points.
- [Jon Horford](#) - 2 and 0 points.
- [Caris LeVert](#) - 0 and 0 points.
- [Blake McLimans](#) - DNP and 0 points.
- [Jordan Morgan](#) - 0 and DNP points. Here's the final interesting story. After starting almost every game this season, Mitch McGary started instead of Jordan in both games this week. That's interesting, but what's even more interesting is that Jordan only played one minute vs. SDSU, and didn't play at all in the VCU game. Keep in mind that the 5 senior benchwarmers (Akunne, Bartelstein, McLimans, Person, and Vogrich) all got into the VCU game in the final minute, but Jordan didn't. Very interesting...
- [Corey Person](#) - DNP and 0 points.
- [Matt Vogrich](#) - DNP and 0 points.

That's 5 points of bench scoring, which is miserable. Michigan needs much more bench scoring to keep winning the tournament, especially from Albrecht, Horford, LeVert, and Morgan.

This Week

The [NCAA Tournament \(bracket\)](#) rolls on this week, and Michigan is still alive. They are in the Sweet Sixteen, and they play their next game(s) in Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, TX. On Friday (03/29/2013, 7:37 p.m. EDT, TBS) they play (#1 seed) Kansas. If they win that game, they play again on Sunday (03/31/2013) against the winner of the (#3) Florida vs. (#15) Florida Gulf Coast game. The Sunday game would be for a spot in the Final Four.

Michigan actually matches up pretty well against any of the other 3 teams in Arlington. The games will certainly be tough and tense, but if Michigan plays at the level they showed us last week in Auburn Hills, they'll do fine. As I said several times in the last couple weeks, Michigan has the talent to win the whole tournament, and the youth and inexperience to lose to any team. We'll just have to watch the games to see how they do.

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

Go Blue!