

Nothing But 'Net – Week #25 – 04/15/2013 – So Close, Again

The (#10) University of Michigan men's basketball team played in the National Championship game in the [NCAA Tournament](#) on Monday (04/08/2013), and they came close to winning it all, but fell just a few points short. [They lost to the #1 seed in the Midwest Region \(and #1 seed overall in the tournament\), Louisville, 82-76, in the Georgia Dome.](#) The loss leaves Michigan with a final record of 31-8.

I have mixed feelings about the game, and the season. On the one hand, I'm very proud of the team and how hard they played to get to the Championship Game, but on the other hand, I'm disappointed that they couldn't seal the deal. If you look back over the last 14 years of articles, you'll see that I very seldom blame a loss on poor officiating, and I'm trying hard to avoid that in this case, but it's difficult. Let's just say that the refs "let them play", and that Louisville was quicker to take advantage of the situation. Let's also say that one controversial call (see below) could have changed the final outcome, and it went against Michigan. I'm not saying that that one call would have resulted in a UM win, but I am saying that the (incorrect) call did make it next to impossible for Michigan to win. Sigh.

It was a game of runs in the 1st half. Michigan led from the opening tip, and built up a nice little 7-point lead (20-13) with 12:05 left in the half. Louisville cut it to 3 (20-17) in the next minute, then Michigan went on their best run of the night: 13-4 over the next 7 minutes, to make it a 12-point lead (33-21) with 3:56 minutes left in the half. That's when the roof fell in: Louisville went on a 16-3 run to take their only lead of the half, 37-36, with 22 seconds left. Michigan managed to score 2 points in the last 22 seconds, and clung to a 1-point lead (38-37) at halftime.

The 2nd half was tense and close, but once Louisville got the lead back, they never let it go. Michigan managed to stretch their halftime lead up to 4 points (46-42) in the first 3 minutes of the 2nd half, but Louisville went on a 10-1 run, and that was the game. Sure, as close as 2 points (63-61) with 7:57 left, and within 4 points (78-74) with 1:20 left, but they couldn't get the stops they needed on defense, and they couldn't hit the big shots they needed on offense. Still, it all came down to one bad call by the officials that made it too hard for Michigan to come back:

The Call. It happened with 5:09 left in the game, and Louisville up by 3 points (67-64). Peyton Siva for Louisville broke away for a dunk, but [Trey Burke](#) chased him down, went up with him, and blocked him cleanly. Michigan got the loose ball, and they were headed downcourt for their own dunk and a chance to cut the lead down to one point, when the officials called a foul on Burke on the blocked shot. Replays from every angle showed that the blocked shot was clean, and the officials blew it, but there's no review of that kind of play, and Siva hit 2 free throws to put Louisville up by 5 points, instead of 1. That was enough to keep Michigan just far enough behind that they couldn't catch up. It's a real shame that one bad call had such a big effect on a great basketball game, but that's the way it goes sometimes.

Was the Louisville the better team on Monday night? Probably, but not by much. Did they deserve to win the game? Yeah, but so did Michigan. Was it fair that Louisville won? Not really, but that's basketball. The refs are human, they make mistakes, and I sure didn't feel like they were favoring Louisville, they just blew a big call that went Louisville's way.

The [stats](#) show just how close the game was. Michigan shot very well overall (25-for-48 = 52.1%), which was better than Louisville's percentage (28-for-61 = 45.9%). However, those 3 extra baskets (6 points) on 13 extra shots were the difference in the game. Both teams made exactly the same number of 3-pointers (8-for-18 = 44.4% for Michigan, 8-for-16 = 50.0% for Louisville) and exactly the same number of free-throws (18-for-25 = 72.0% for Michigan, 18-for-23 = 78.3% for Louisville). The big difference came on the boards, where Louisville won the rebounding battle (32-27) and in the turnover battle, where Louisville won 9-12. There are 8 extra possessions for Louisville right there.

Individually, the leading scorer was Burke, with 24 points, and he played a great game, but he did have more turnovers (4) than assists (3) for the first time in a while. He also only played 26 minutes, with foul trouble in the 1st half. When he came out, [Spike Albrecht](#) went in, and he had the game of his career. He hit all four of 3-pointer attempts in the 1st half, and ended up with 17 points at halftime. Unfortunately, he was held scoreless in the 2nd half, but it was still an amazing

performance.

Two more Michigan players hit double figures, both starters. [Tim Hardaway Jr.](#) and [Glenn Robinson III](#) both had 12 points. Unfortunately, it took Tim 13 shots (5-for-13 overall, and 0-for-4 shooting 3-pointers) to score those 12 points.

After going scoreless in the semifinal game vs. Syracuse, [Nik Stauskas](#) finally hit a 3-pointer, in the 1st half, but those were his only points. He had a forgettable Final Four weekend.

The big story was [Mitch McGary](#). Mitch had been playing at a very high level through the whole tournament, and his scoring was the "X factor" that could push Michigan past Louisville. It didn't happen. Mitch played a solid-but-unspectacular game, scoring 6 points on 3-for-6 shooting, but he wasn't a factor. Bummer.

Remember how the bench helped beat Syracuse on Saturday to put Michigan in the Championship Game? Other than Spike's 17 points, they weren't much of a factor either in this game. [Jordan Morgan](#) was the only other bench player to score, with 2 points. [Jon Horford](#) and [Caris LeVert](#) both played, but didn't score. A little more bench scoring would have really helped in this one.

So, the season is over, and it was a great season and a successful season, but it could have been so much better. Check back here next week for a complete season wrap-up, final grades, and a look ahead to next season.

Go Blue!