

Nothing But 'Net – Week #12 – 01/13/2014 – A Close Win & Midterm Grades

The University of Michigan men's basketball team only played one game this week, and they won it. [On Thursday \(01/09/2014\), they beat Nebraska 71-70 in Lincoln.](#) The win raises Michigan's record to 11-4 (3-0 in the Big Ten).

It's a cliché, but "any win on the road in the Big Ten is a big win". That said, this "big win" was almost a "depressing loss". Nebraska is improving, but they haven't improved enough that they should beat Michigan, even in their fancy new arena in Lincoln. Basketball is a game of emotion and momentum, and when Nebraska got the momentum and played with emotion, they gave Michigan all they could handle.

It was a back-and-forth game, with 10 ties and 11 lead changes. Michigan's largest lead was only 6 points, and Nebraska's largest lead was only 3 points. The game came down to the last 3 seconds, when Nebraska got off a couple shots, which fortunately didn't go in.

Normally, I only look at Michigan's [stats](#), but in this case it's really informative to compare both teams' stats. Michigan shot very well overall (31-for-50 = 62.0%), but they allowed Nebraska to shoot well as well (26-for-49 = 53.1%). The 3-point shooting was a wash: Michigan shot 35.3% (6-for-17) and Nebraska shot 35.0% (7-for-20). The biggest difference was free-throwing shooting: Michigan was just terrible (3-for-9 = 33.3%), while Nebraska was great (11-for-12 = 91.7%). Those 8 extra points almost sunk Michigan, but the extra 5 baskets that UM made were just enough to win. Michigan lost the rebounding battle (20-26), but they won the turnover battle (9-13).

Individually, all 5 of the Michigan starters hit double figures, for the first time this season:

- [Caris LeVert](#) – 10 points. Caris also led the team in assists, with 5.
- [Jordan Morgan](#) – 15 points. Jordan shot very well (7-for-9).
- [Glenn Robinson III](#) – 19 points. GR3 was the leading scorer.
- [Nik Stauskas](#) – 12 points. Once again, Nik scored in many different ways, including a couple key 3-pointers.
- [Derrick Walton Jr.](#) – 10 points. Derrick had the 2 biggest baskets in this game: he hit a 3-pointer from beyond half-court with 0.6 seconds left in the 1st half, and he also hit the game-winning basket with 23 seconds left to give Michigan their final lead.

[Spike Albrecht](#) (3 points) and [Jon Horford](#) (2 points) accounted for all the UM bench scoring. Not enough. [Zak Irvin](#) played, but did not score.

Midterm Grades

Michigan plays 30 regular season games this season, not counting at least one game in the Big Ten Tournament, so with 15 games played and 15 to go, it's time for Midterm Grades:

Freshman Eligibility

[Brad Anlauf](#) – Incomplete

Brad joined the team after the season started, and he's strictly on the team as part of the practice squad. He has played in 6 games so far, and has made one basket.

[Andrew Dakich](#) – Incomplete

Andrew is another practice squad player. He has played in 7 games so far, and has made one basket (a 3-pointer).

[Mark Donnal](#) – Incomplete

Mark is being redshirted this season, unless a disaster hits the team and there is another injury to one of the remaining "bigs". He played in both exhibition games, but that's it, so we hardly got to see him.

[Zak Irvin](#) – B

Zak has had a few good games (Coppin State, Houston Baptist, Stanford, and Minnesota) and a lot of forgettable ones (Iowa State, Florida State, Duke, and Arizona). So far, he has been mostly a one-dimensional player (“just a shooter”), but we have seen glimpses of the rest of his game.

[Sean Lonergan](#) – Incomplete

Sean is another practice squad player. He has played in 6 games so far, and has made one basket.

[Cole McConnell](#) – Incomplete

Cole is another practice squad player. He has played in 4 games so far, and has made one basket (a 3-pointer). He injured his foot, so he’s not currently available to practice/play.

[Derrick Walton Jr.](#) – B

Derrick is slowly getting used to the speed of the college game. He hasn’t done a bad job out there, but he hasn’t been much of a force either. Of course, we all got spoiled by Trey Burke, and Derrick has only played in 15 games so far, but the team really needs him to pick up his game a little more. In particular, we know that he can shoot a lot better than he’s been showing us so far.

Sophomore Eligibility

[Spike Albrecht](#) - B

Derrick Walton Jr. is the nominal starter at point guard, but Spike has been playing a lot of minutes there as well. He’s not as athletic as Derrick, and he’s not as good on defense, but he does a better job of running the team when he’s out there. He doesn’t panic, and he tosses in a 3-pointer every now and then.

[Max Bielfeldt](#) - C

Max has played a minor role so far this season. He’s played in 10 games so far, and scored 12 points, 6 of them on a pair of 3-pointers. With Mitch McGary out for a while (see below), he’s now the 3rd “big”. When he’s been in, he’s looked solid, if unspectacular. He’s a strong kid, and he knows where the ball is going, so he gets a fair share of the rebounds while he’s on the floor. He’s not much of a scoring threat, but he’s turning into a pretty good post defender.

[Caris LeVert](#) – B-

Caris is certainly the most improved player on the team this season, and he started the season off strong, but he’s settled into mediocrity recently. He’s had several great games, including 3 games of 20+ points, and he’s had several games where he just disappeared. He’s averaging 12 points/game, and if he can keep that up in Big Ten games, he’ll be a valuable player this season.

[Mitch McGary](#) - Incomplete

Mitch has been a major disappointment this season. He came into the season as a pre-season All American, but a back injury, along with a couple other short-term injuries, has held him back. [He recently decided to have surgery on his back](#), so he’s probably lost for the rest of the season. While he’s eligible for a medical redshirt year for this season, there’s no way he’ll play 4 full seasons at Michigan, so the redshirt year doesn’t really matter. He probably not get drafted in the 1st round of the NBA draft this spring, so I expect him to return to play one more season at Michigan next year.

[Glenn Robinson III](#) - B

Glenn has had a real up-and-down season so far. When he’s been good, he’s been very good, but when he disappears, he is missed. He hasn’t shot particularly well, and he has trouble creating his own shot, but he’s awesome in the transition game.

[Nik Stauskas](#) - A

Nik is the "go to scorer" this season, and he's pretty good in that role. He has scored in a variety of ways, not just with his 3-point shot. In fact, he's scoring more by driving and shooting free throws than he did last year. He's got great moves, a good first step, and he's good at finishing at the rim. He hasn't been hitting his 3-pointers as consistently as he did last year, but he's still dangerous.

Junior Eligibility

[Jon Horford](#) - B

Jon has played better this season. He's shown a real talent for blocking shots and playing tough defense. His offensive game is a little behind.

Senior Eligibility

[Jordan Morgan](#) - B

Jordan is having a solid season, which is good, since he and Jon Horford are trying to replace Mitch McGary.

This Week

Michigan plays two games this week. On Tuesday (01/14/2014, 8:00 p.m., BTN) they play Penn State in Crisler Arena, then on Saturday (01/18/2014, 6:00 p.m. EST, ESPN) they play at Wisconsin. Penn State is having their usual "rebuilding" year (20 in a row, so far), and I expect Michigan to beat them, but the game at Wisconsin is going to be brutal. It's always tough to win on the road in the Big Ten, but the Kohl Center is one of the toughest places to win in the country, right up there with Cameron Indoor Stadium (Duke) and the Breslin Center (Michigan State). UM can win the game, but they will have to play flawlessly.

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

Go Blue!