

## **Nothing But 'Net – Week #19 – 03/03/2014 – At Least A Share Of The Big Ten Title!**

The (#16) University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this week, and they won both of them. [On Wednesday \(02/26/2014\), they beat Purdue 77-76 \(overtime\) in West Lafayette](#), then [on Saturday \(03/01/2014\), they beat Minnesota 66-56 in Crisler Arena](#). The wins raise Michigan's record to 21-7 (13-3 in the Big Ten). Michigan has clinched at least a tie for the Big Ten championship, and they can win it outright with one more victory in their last two regular season games.

Coming into the Minnesota game, UM had a one-game lead on 2<sup>nd</sup> place Michigan State, and Michigan knew that they controlled their own destiny in the Big Ten race. If they could win their last 3 games, they couldn't be caught by MSU or Wisconsin. However, MSU was just one game back, and that put a lot of pressure on Michigan. Two hours before the UM/Minnesota game, MSU played at home against last-place Illinois, who they had already beaten handily on the road. No one expected Illinois to stand a chance, so of course [they beat MSU 53-46](#). That opened the door for Michigan to clinch at least a share of the title. All they had to do was beat Minnesota, and they did.

As important as the Minnesota win is, the win at Purdue is just as important. [After Michigan's emotional home victory over Michigan State last weekend](#), the Purdue game was the ideal "trap" game. Michigan started the game cold again, and quickly fell into a double-digit deficit (14-4) with 13:56 left in the 1<sup>st</sup> half. It got worse: Purdue led by 19 points (27-8) with 7:43 to go in the half. Michigan finally woke up, and got within 9 points (33-24) with 1:21 left, but they couldn't stop Purdue in the last 81 seconds, and trailed by 13 (37-24) at halftime. Things looked pretty grim, and it was still an 11-point lead for Purdue (45-34) with 14:15 left in the game. That's when good things finally started happening. Michigan went on a 12-2 run to get within 1 point (47-46) with 9:51 to go, and it looked like UM would finally take the lead. Nope. Purdue managed to get their lead back up to 6 points (63-57) with 3:20 to go. UM went on a 6-0 run to tie the game up (63-63) with 1:10 left, and the teams each scored 2 more points in regulation. UM had the ball with the score tied and the shot clock off, but they missed their last-second shot to win it in regulation.

In overtime, Michigan finally got their first lead of the game, 67-65, and pushed it as high as 3 points (73-70), with 2:29 to go. Purdue fought back, and went ahead by 1 (76-75) with 31 seconds left. UM missed a layup, and Purdue missed the front end of a one-and-one, so Michigan had the ball in their end of the court with 2.9 seconds left. [Caris LeVert](#) threw a perfect inbound pass to [Glenn Robinson III](#) on the baseline, and he banked in a layup that hung on the rim forever before dropping for the game-winning basket! It was very exciting.

By comparison, the Minnesota game was much less dramatic. Of course, Michigan got down early, but not by double digits, and not for as long. In this case, Minnesota led by 6 points (15-9) with 10:53 left in the 1<sup>st</sup> half, but Michigan came right back, and led by 1 point (16-15) with 8:16 to go. They never trailed again. It was still close (21-18) with 3:00 left in the half, when Michigan went on a 10-2 run to get to halftime up 11 points (31-20). Minnesota hung around in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, and managed to get within 2 points (54-52) with 4:31 left. Michigan finished the game with a 12-4 run to win by 10 points. They could have won by even more, but they wasted a lot of fast-break opportunities by getting too excited and trying for a highlight-reel play instead of holding the ball and running their offense. It's hard to get mad at them for getting too excited, but it was frustrating to see them waste so many opportunities.

The game stats are pretty much what you'd expect: very close for the [Purdue game](#), and a little bit more comfortable for the [Minnesota game](#). Michigan didn't shoot very well overall in the Purdue game (27-for-65 = 41.5%), and they sure didn't shoot 3-pointers very well (6-for-23 = 26.1%). They didn't even shoot free throws very well (17-for-25 = 68.0%). Fortunately, Purdue shot just a little bit worse across the board, except for free throws: Purdue hit their first 17 free throws in a row, then missed their last one. That turned out to be the break that UM needed, since they turned that rebound into the game-winning basket.

Speaking of rebounds, Purdue won the rebounding battle (39-37), but UM won the turnover battle (7-11), so that balanced out.

Michigan shot much better overall in the Minnesota game (25-for-50 = 50.0%), and they also shot 3-pointers a lot better (9-for-23 = 39.1%). They didn't shoot many free throws, but they shot them well: 7-for-9 = 77.8%. They won the rebounding battle, barely (28-27), and the turnover battle, barely (10-11). The difference in this one was 3-point shooting, since Minnesota only made five 3-pointers.

Individually, 3 Michigan players hit double figures in both games:

- [Caris LeVert](#) - 14 points vs. Purdue and 13 points vs. Minnesota. Caris led the team in assists in both games: 4 and 5.
- [Glenn Robinson III](#) - 17 and 12 points. Besides the game-winning shot vs. Purdue, GR3 was also the leading scorer in the game, and he had 8 rebounds.
- [Nik Stauskas](#) - 15 and 21 points. Nik was the difference against Minnesota, hitting 5-of-8 from 3-point range.

[Jordan Morgan](#) hit double figures (13 points) in the Purdue game, but only scored 5 points vs. Minnesota. However, he was the leading rebounder in both games (9 and 10).

3 other players scored in at least one game, just not in double figures:

- [Spike Albrecht](#) - 2 and 7 points.
- [Zak Irvin](#) - 8 and 0 points. The team needs more bench scoring from him.
- [Derrick Walton Jr.](#) - 8 and 8 points.

[Jon Horford](#) played in both games, but didn't score in either of them. The team needs more bench scoring from him as well.

### **This Week**

Michigan plays two games this week, their last two games of the regular season. On Tuesday (03/04/2014, 7:00 p.m. EST, ESPN), Michigan plays at Illinois, then on Saturday (03/08/2014, 6:00 p.m., ESPN) they play Indiana in Crisler Arena. These are very important games, since Michigan has to win at least one of them to claim the undisputed Big Ten title. Beyond that, they are important because Michigan is trying to regain some momentum going into the Big Ten Tournament, and then the NCAA Tournament. It is still possible for UM to get a #2 seed in the Big Dance, but they'll have to win their last 2 regular season games and the Big Ten Tournament. Finally, there is no other way to say it: we owe Indiana. Last season, they beat Michigan in Bloomington when UM was ranked #1, then they beat Michigan in Ann Arbor on the last home game (Senior Night) when Michigan stood a chance of tying for the Big Ten title. This season, they are the only unranked Big Ten team to beat Michigan. We owe them, and it will be Senior Night again. Jordon Morgan is the only senior on the team, and he deserves to go out with a victory in his final home game.

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

Go Blue!