

Nothing But 'Net – Week #24 – 04/07/2014 – Season Wrap-Up, Final Grades, Looking Ahead

Season Wrap-Up

The season is over for the University of Michigan men's basketball team, and it was a good one. Not a great one, but certainly better than most. On the positive side, they:

- Finished the season with a record of 28-9 (15-3 in the Big Ten).
- Ended up ranked #7 in the final AP poll.
- Won the Big Ten regular season championship by 3 games.
- [Got to \(and lost\) the Big Ten tournament championship game.](#)
- [Earned a #2 seed](#) in the [NCAA Tournament](#).
- Made it to the Elite Eight for the 2nd year in a row.

There were a few bumps along the way. On the negative side, they:

- Lost 2 home games for the first time in 3 seasons (Arizona and Wisconsin).
- Lost to a vastly inferior opponent ([Charlotte](#)) in the championship game of the [Puerto Rico Tip-Off](#) tournament.
- Dropped out of the AP poll, with a 6-4 record.
- [Lost their preseason All-American center \(Mitch McGary\)](#) for the rest of the season, after he only played in 8 games.
- Lost at [Indiana](#), in a season where IU wasn't very good.

Out of the 9 losses, only the Charlotte and Indiana losses were "bad" losses. The others were very understandable/forgivable:

- At [Iowa State](#). ISU was much better than expected, and they seldom lose at home.
- At (#10) [Duke](#), as part of the [ACC/Big Ten Challenge](#). No surprise here. Cameron Indoor Stadium is one of the toughest places in the country to play.
- At home vs. (#1) [Arizona](#). Michigan had a decent lead with 2 minutes left, and couldn't make a defensive stop to hold it. They lost by 2 points (72-70) in the closing seconds.
- At (#17) [Iowa](#). This was Iowa's last good game, as they lost 7 of their last 9 games.
- At home vs. (#21) [Wisconsin](#). This was the start of Wisconsin's amazing run at the end of the season that took them to the Final Four.
- In the championship game of the [Big Ten Tournament](#), in Indianapolis, vs. (#22) [Michigan State](#). It's hard to beat the same team 3 times in one season.
- In the Elite Eight, again in Indianapolis, vs. [Kentucky](#). Another last second basket.

All the wins were important, but some were more impressive than the others:

- [Florida State](#), in the Puerto Rico Tip-Off tournament. Michigan won 82-80 in overtime, after trailing for most of the game.
- [Stanford](#), in the Brooklyn Hoops Holiday Invitational. Another close game: UM won 68-65.
- At [Minnesota](#). This was Michigan's first Big Ten game, and it's hard to win at The Barn. Yet another close game: UM won 63-60.
- At [Nebraska](#). Nebraska was the surprise team in the Big Ten this season, finishing 4th in the league, and making it to the Big Dance. They also went 15-1 overall (8-1 in the Big Ten) at home, with their only loss to Michigan, 71-70. Michigan was lucky to win this one, since Nebraska missed 2 short shots in the last 3 seconds.
- At (#3) [Wisconsin](#). This was perhaps the biggest win of the season. Wisconsin is almost unbeatable at home, but Michigan beat them convincingly, 77-70.
- At home vs. (#10) [Iowa](#). This was the next game after the win at Wisconsin. Michigan won handily, 75-67.

- At (#3) [Michigan State](#). If the win at Wisconsin was Michigan's #1 win, this one was #1a. It's almost as tough to win in the Breslin Center as it is to win at the Kohl Center, but Michigan did it, 80-75.
- At (#22) [Ohio State](#). It's also tough to win in Columbus, but Michigan pulled it off, 70-60.
- At home vs. (#13) [Michigan State](#). This was the game that put Michigan solidly in control of the Big Ten title race. It was great to sweep the Spartans in the regular season. Michigan won handily, 79-70.
- At home vs. [Indiana](#). Sure, Indiana had a down year, and sure, Michigan had already clinched the undisputed Big Ten title, but this game was very important for several reasons:
 - Indiana had upset Michigan earlier in the season, in Bloomington.
 - Indiana had swept Michigan last season.
 - Michigan wanted some momentum going into postseason play.
 - Michigan wanted to get as high a seed as possible in the NCAA Tournament.
 - (The most important) It was Senior Night, and Michigan wanted to send their only senior, [Jordan Morgan](#), out with a win. UM had lost their last 2 Senior Nights (their only home losses in the previous 2 seasons), and they didn't want to let Jordan down. They didn't, and Jordan helped make sure that Michigan won, 84-80.
- (#24) [Ohio State](#), in the semifinals of the Big Ten Tournament. Michigan survived a last-second miss by good old Aaron Craft, and won 72-69.
- [Texas](#), in the 3rd round of the NCAA Tournament. This win (79-65) sent Michigan to the Sweet Sixteen, a notable milestone.
- [Tennessee](#), in the 4th round of the NCAA Tournament. This was another close win (73-71), and it sent Michigan into the Elite Eight, another important achievement.

That's a lot of big, important wins, including a lot of close games and a lot of road wins in tough arenas. In particular, the 3-game stretch where Michigan beat #3 Wisconsin on the road, #10 Iowa in Ann Arbor, then #3 Michigan State on the road, was very impressive.

Season Team Stats

So, why did Michigan do so well this season? Shooting, especially 3-point shooting. As a team, they shot 47.7% overall, and 40.2% from 3-point range. They jacked up almost 800 3-pointers (794), and made 319 of them. That's impressive.

So, why didn't Michigan win all their games this season? Defense, especially interior defense. Once teams figured out that they could drive to the basket on Michigan, they did it early and often. The biggest problem was the rule change this year dealing with the always-controversial block/charge call. The new interpretation made it very hard to get a charge called, which gave a big advantage to the "bully" offenses (I'm looking at you, MSU).

The other problem Michigan had all year was rebounding. For the season, Michigan barely won the rebounding battle, 1160-1154, and that includes all the non-conference "cupcakes" that Michigan played before they hit the big, bad Big Ten. In conference games, they lost the season rebounding battle, 535-537. Fortunately, the Beilein system doesn't depend too much on rebounding.

The Beilein system does depend on low turnovers, and Michigan did a good job there. They won the season turnover battle, 345-398. That works out to about 9.32 turnovers per game, which is very good.

The Beilein system also depends on assists, and Michigan did well there as well. They had 525 assists, which is 14.19 per game.

Season Individual Stats

The undisputed star of this season's team was sophomore [Nik Stauskas](#). He led the team in scoring (630 points = 17.5 points/game), he led the team in assists (118), he led the team in made 3-pointers (92), and he led the team in 3-point shooting percentage (92/208 = 44.2%). He hit double figures in 32 of the 36 games he played in, and he was the leading scorer for Michigan in 23 games. He was named Big Ten Player of the Year, and named to every All-American team. He was awesome.

The biggest (good) surprise on this season's team was sophomore [Caris LeVert](#). Last season, he was going to be redshirted, then he was un-redshirted after the first 7 games. He was lightly used last season, and he showed moments of potential, but nothing to indicate what was to come. This season, he was easily the most improved player on the team, and possibly in the entire Big Ten. He was the 3rd leading scorer on the team (478 points = 12.9 points/game), he was 2nd in assists (109), 3rd in made 3-pointers (60), and 1st in steals (44).

The most puzzling player on the team this season was sophomore [Glenn Robinson III](#). When he was good, he was very good, but when he disappeared, he was invisible. Still, he managed to be the 2nd leading scorer on the team (484 points = 13.1 points/game), the 2nd leading rebounder, and 2nd in steals (35). He was the leading scorer in 5 games, but he was held under 10 points in 9 of the 37 games he played in.

On a young team, [Jordan Morgan](#), the only (5th year) senior, provided brilliant leadership. He also had some nice stats: he led the team in shooting percentage (98/140 = 70.0%), and he led the team in rebounding (185), including a team-best 72 offensive rebounds. He only scored 235 points (6.4 points/game), but he scored important points.

The only freshman starter on the team was [Derrick Walton Jr.](#) He had a pretty good season, but he had a tough act to follow: last season's starting point guard, and national Player of the Year, Trey Burke. Derrick isn't Trey Burke, and he probably never will be, because players like Trey Burke only come around once in a generation. Derrick is a different kind of point guard, and he had a fine season statistically. He was the 5th leading scorer on the team, with 294 points (7.9 points/game). He was 3rd in assists (106), 3rd in steals (21), and 3rd in 3-point shooting percentage (43/105 = 41.0%).

The other scholarship freshman on the team was [Zak Irvin](#). He also had a pretty good season, in his role as 6th man. When he came in, his assignment was clear: shoot 3-pointers. He only averaged 15.4 minutes per game, but he made the 2nd most 3-pointers on the team (62), and had the 2nd best 3-point shooting percentage (62/146 = 42.5%).

Michigan didn't have much of a bench this season, with only 3 players seeing much playing time besides the 5 starters (Stauskas, LeVert, GR3, Morgan, and Walton): Irvin, [Spike Albrecht](#), and [Jon Horford](#). Spike, another sophomore, was the 2nd string point guard, and he did all right on offense, but he was a step slower than Walton on defense, and had trouble guarding quick point guards. None of his stats jump out: 40.4% overall shooting, 38.7% shooting 3-pointers, 75 assists, only 16 turnovers. Horford was the 2nd string center, and as a junior, he was the only other upperclassman on the team. He did help Morgan with the leadership thing, and he did have a few games where he made a difference, but he wasn't nearly as consistent as Morgan. His only meaningful stats were that he had the 2nd best overall shooting percentage (62/110 = 56.4%), and he led the team in blocked shots, with 26.

The only other player to play more than a few minutes was redshirt sophomore [Max Bielfeldt](#), who played in 19 of the 37 games, backing up Morgan and Horford when they had foul trouble, which was often. In those 19 games, he scored 15 points and got 20 rebounds.

Finally, there was The Bench Mob: freshmen [Brad Anlauf](#), [Andrew Dakich](#), [Sean Lonergan](#), and [Cole McConnell](#). They were the practice squad, and they played in just a few games, usually in "garbage time" for the last 2 minutes of a blowout win (or loss). They certainly provided lots of enthusiasm on the bench during the games, especially Dakich. Dakich played in the most games (12), McConnell the fewest (4, he broke his foot). Lonergan scored the most points (6), Anlauf the fewest (2, he was also injured).

Final Grades

Since I described each of the players above, I'll just list their grades:

Freshmen:

- Brad Anlauf - Incomplete
- Andrew Dakich - Incomplete
- Zak Irvin - B
- Sean Lonergan - Incomplete
- Cole McConnell - Incomplete
- Derrick Walton, Jr. - B

Sophomores:

- Spike Albrecht - B
- Max Bielfeldt - C
- Caris LeVert - A
- Mitch McGary - Incomplete
- Glenn Robinson III - B
- Nik Stauskas - A+

Junior:

- Jon Horford - B-

Senior:

- Jordan Morgan - A-

Coach:

- [John Beilein](#) - A

Looking Ahead

At this point, Coach Beilein has rebuilt the program so that it's a matter of reloading, not rebuilding. This season's team was one of the youngest in the NCAA, with only one junior and one senior. In theory, Jordan Morgan is the only player leaving the team, as he graduates with a BS in Industrial and Operations Engineering and a Masters in Manufacturing Engineering. However, three of Michigan's sophomores could leave school early for the upcoming NBA Draft:

- Mitch McGary - Mitch only played in 8 games this season, before he had surgery on his back. He has rehabbed to the point where he can practice with the team, but he hasn't played in a live game in almost 4 months. While the NBA wanted him after his incredible NCAA Tournament run last season, they're a little more hesitant now. I'm betting that he'll come back for one more season at Michigan, to show the NBA scouts what he can do when he's recovered from the surgery.
- Glenn Robinson III - GR3 had a very inconsistent regular season, and his draft stock dropped. However, he did pick up his game in the Big Ten and NCAA Tournaments, so he might be back in the 1st round of the NBA draft. However, I'm betting that he's returning as well, to show the NBA scouts that he can be dominant in every game.
- Nik Stauskas - Nik went from "only a shooter" at the beginning of last season to the Big Ten Player of the Year, and an All-American. He would certainly be picked in the 1st round of the NBA draft, if he decided to leave school early. On the other hand, he seems to really enjoy the college experience, and he seems close to his teammates.

I'm betting that he'll leave early, and declare for the draft next week, but I would love to be wrong.

If all three players return next season, Michigan will be a heavy favorite to get to the Final Four. If only Stauskas leaves, they will still be highly rated. If all three leave, it'll be a rebuilding year.

Regardless of which of the sophomores leave or stay, Michigan has another top-rated incoming freshman class:

- Kameron Chatman - 6' 6", 175 pounds, Wing. Kameron is the highest-ranked recruit in this class. He has the size and athleticism to be another Caris LeVert.
- Ricky Doyle - 6' 9", 230 pounds, Forward/Center. Ricky is yet another big man, giving Michigan lots of depth and options at the power forward and center positions. He has a 7' 2" wingspan, and can play with his back to the basket.
- Austin Hatch - 6' 6", 215 pounds, Wing. Austin is an interesting story. He committed to Michigan on 06/15/2011, then was in a plane crash 10 days later that killed his father and stepmother, and critically injured him. He was in intensive care for a couple months, and missed a lot of high school, so he was given an extra year of high school eligibility, and moved his college commitment to 2014. He has recovered enough to play limited minutes on his high school team, but it remains to be seen if he will ever be able to play Division 1 basketball. He'll get his chance at Michigan.
- DJ Wilson - 6' 8", 200 pounds, Forward. DJ sounds like another GR3. He's athletic, he can shoot the 3-pointer, and he runs the floor well.

It seems pretty likely that Hatch will redshirt for his freshman year, and if McGary comes back, there will be a real logjam with all the big men. Besides McGary and Horford, there's redshirt freshman [Mark Donnal](#) (6' 9", 230 pounds), and incoming freshmen Doyle and Wilson. I wouldn't be surprised if both of the freshmen big men redshirt as well.

Well, that's it for this season. Be sure to check back again next fall, a week before the first game of the season, for the season preview.

Go Blue!