

## Nothing But 'Net – Week #09 – 01/05/2015 – The Start Of The Big Ten Schedule

Happy New Year!

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, and they won one and lost one. [On Tuesday \(12/30/2014\), they beat Illinois 73-65 \(overtime\) in Crisler Arena](#), then [on Saturday \(01/03/2015\), they lost at Purdue, 64-51](#). The win and the loss leave Michigan with a record of 8-6 (1-1 in the Big Ten).

This is going to be a real rollercoaster of a season for UM. They looked terrible for the first 29 minutes of the Illinois game, then they suddenly woke up, erased a big deficit, forced overtime, and looked dominant in the overtime period. They started out strong in their next game at Purdue, built up a 10-point lead in the 1<sup>st</sup> half, and led by 8 at halftime. Then they just fell apart. They went for over 12 minutes without a basket, and only managed 4 baskets (18 points total) in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. It was miserable. They missed 13 shots in a row: layups, mid-range jumpers, and 3-pointers. They got very few second chances, and played lousy defense. It's the "perfect storm" for losing a basketball game.

So, what's up with this season's team? How can they beat quality opponents (Oregon, Syracuse, Illinois) one game, and look so lost out there the next? Youth, certainly, but [Coach Beilein](#) has managed to win with young, inexperienced teams the last few years. It appears to be a void in leadership on the floor, and the lack of a consistent big man. I'm sure they'll work it out, and improve as the season goes on, but I'm afraid they'll lose too many winnable games in the process. The goal this season is making the NCAA Tournament, not contending for the Big Ten title. Maybe next season.

Let's look at the stats for both games. The [stats for the Illinois game](#) aren't very impressive: Michigan shot pretty poorly overall (27-for-66 = 40.9%), they shot poorly from 3-point range (10-for-28 = 35.7%), and they shot free throws pretty poorly (9-for-14 = 64.3%). They barely won the rebounding battle (39-36), but they won the turnover battle handily (5-12). They won the game with 3-point shooting. Even though they didn't shoot a very good percentage, they made more 3-pointers than Illinois (10-6).

The [stats for the Purdue game](#) are even worse: UM shot poorly overall (15-for-47 = 31.9%), they shot 3-pointers pretty poorly (8-for-20 = 40.0%), and they shot free throws pretty poorly (13-for-20 = 65.0%). They got hammered on the boards (44-22), and they barely won the turnover battle (11-14). They lost this game on the boards, and at the free throw line.

Individually, no one had a good week, but a couple players had good games. 3 starters ([Ricky Doyle](#) - 13 points, [Zak Irvin](#) - 13 points, and [Caris LeVert](#) - 19 points) hit double figures in the Illinois game, but none of the starters hit double figures in the Purdue game. The real story this week was bench players: [Aubrey Dawkins](#) had a career-high 20 points in the Illinois game, including 6-for-7 shooting from 3-point range, and [Spike Albrecht](#) tied his career high with 17 points in the Purdue game.

However, no one had 2 good games this week: after their good games vs. Illinois, Doyle had 6 points vs. Purdue, Irvin had 8 points (on 2-for-12 shooting) vs. Purdue, and LeVert had 6 points vs. Purdue. Dawkins played 18 minutes against Purdue, took 2 shots, and didn't score. Albrecht had 4 points vs. Illinois. The other 2 starters didn't do much either game: [Kameron Chatman](#) had 2 and 0 points, and [Derrick Walton Jr.](#) had 0 and 8 points.

Besides Albrecht and Dawkins, the bench didn't contribute much this week: [Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman](#) and [Mark Donnal](#) both played in both games, but failed to score, and [Max Bielfeldt](#) had 2 and 6 points.

### This Week

This week, Michigan continues Big Ten play with two more games. On Tuesday (01/06/2015, 7:00 p.m., BTN), they play at Penn State, then on Saturday (01/10/2015, 1:00 p.m., ESPN),

they play Minnesota in Crisler. These are both games that UM can win, and if they want to stay in the race for the Big Ten title, they need to win both of them. If they play like they did in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the Illinois game, they'll be fine. If they play like they did in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the Purdue game, they're doomed.

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

Go Blue!