

Nothing But 'Net – Week #10 – 01/12/2015 – Sweeps Week & Mid-Term Grades

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, and they won both of them. [On Tuesday \(01/06/2015\), they beat Penn State in State College 73-64](#), then [on Saturday \(01/10/2015\), they beat Minnesota in Crisler 62-57](#). The two wins raise Michigan's record to 10-6 overall (3-1 in the Big Ten).

These were two very big wins for Michigan. Sure, PSU and Minnesota are teams expected to finish in the bottom half of the Big Ten this year, but given the problems that UM has been having lately, any win is a big win, and a sweep, including a road win, is huge.

In both games, Michigan had their opportunities to pull away for a comfortable victory, and in both games, they wasted those opportunities. In the PSU game, UM had a 10-point lead (51-41) with 11:40 left in the game, then they fell asleep and let PSU go on a 12-2 run over the next 4 minutes. Fortunately, UM closed out the game strong and never let PSU get the lead, outscoring them 20-11 down the stretch.

In the Minnesota game, Michigan had a chance to build up a nice lead in the opening minutes, and they wasted the opportunity. Minnesota missed their first 4 shots, and had a couple turnovers, but Michigan didn't do much better, missing 3 shots and 2 free throws, along with a turnover. So, instead of leading 12-0 or so at the 15:30 mark, they only led 4-0. Minnesota stayed cold, and only had 6 points with 11:45 left in the half. Unfortunately, Michigan couldn't take advantage of the opportunity, and only led 11-6. They managed to hold the 5-point lead for another couple minutes (17-12, with 9:09 left), then Minnesota finally woke up. They outscored Michigan 15-8 to close out the half, and led 27-25. In the early part of the 2nd half, Minnesota went into another bad stretch where they missed 6 shots in a row, along with 2 more turnovers. Once again, Michigan didn't take advantage of Minnesota's mistakes, and missed 2 shots and had 2 turnovers. From that point, Minnesota slowly built up a 9-point lead (49-40) with 8:56 left. Fortunately, Michigan finally woke up, and outscored Minnesota 22-8 down the stretch to win by 5.

Time for the game stats. First, the [PSU game](#): Michigan shot pretty well overall (24-for-45 = 53.3%), they shot 3-pointers really well (9-for-15 = 60.0%), and they shot free throws very well (16-for-19 = 84.2%). They won the rebounding battle (31-26), but they lost the turnover battle (15-10). That's a really large number of turnovers for Michigan, and that was the reason the game was as close as it was. Michigan shot well enough to win comfortably, but they kept throwing the ball away, often with little pressure.

The stats for the [Minnesota game](#) are miserable: Michigan shot poorly overall (21-for-52 = 40.4%), they shot very poorly from 3-point range (4-for-18 = 22.2%), but they did shoot free throws well (16-for-20 = 80.0%). They lost the rebounding battle (31-37), but they did win the turnover battle (9-17). The big problem was the 3-point shooting. This team looks terrible when the 3-pointers aren't falling, and they look great when they are.

Individually, it was the "Big 3" this week. [Zak Irvin](#) had 17 points vs. PSU and 12 points vs. Minnesota. He also had a career-high 9 rebounds vs. PSU. [Caris LeVert](#) had 18 and 15 points, and [Derrick Walton Jr.](#) had 12 and 15 points. It was great to see Walton play a little better. He's still recovering from the toe injury he suffered in the Villanova game.

The other 2 starters had a mixed week. [Spike Albrecht](#) is now starting in place of [Kameron Chatman](#), and he had 0 and 6 points. [Ricky Doyle](#) is starting to become an offensive presence underneath, with 8 and 12 points.

The bench contributed nicely in the PSU game: [Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman](#) had 3 points, [Max Bielfeldt](#) had 2 points, [Kameron Chatman](#) had 5 points, and [Aubrey Dawkins](#) had 8 points. [Mark Donnal](#) played in both games, but failed to score. Actually, Chatman was the only bench player to score in the Minnesota game, with 2 points.

Mid-Term Grades

With 16 games played, and at least 15 left to go, it's time for mid-term grades:

Freshman Eligibility

[Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman](#) - C

MAAR has had his opportunities in both non-conference and Big Ten games, and he hasn't shown us much. He's not bad, he just doesn't do much. He was a late addition to the recruiting class, so not much is expected from him.

[Kameron Chatman](#) - C

Kameron started the season as a starter, but failed to impress. He has now been replaced in the starting lineup by Spike Albrecht. He still seems tentative out there, and he hasn't really shown us his athletic ability. As the highest-ranked recruit in his class, a lot more was expected from him.

[Aubrey Dawkins](#) - B-

Aubrey has had a couple good games, especially his 20-point outburst against Illinois, but he has had other games where he just ran up and down the court without doing anything. He still seems a little lost out there on defense. He has a great 3-point touch, but he needs to figure out how to get open better.

[Mark Donnal](#) - C-

Mark also started the season as a starter, but played his way onto the bench. He was expected to be the starting center, but he has proven to be too "soft" for banging underneath. He's more of a finesse player, with a nice 3-point stroke. He needs to play tougher, especially on post defense and going to the rim on offense.

[Ricky Doyle](#) - B

Ricky has been steadily improving as the season has gone along. He started as an out-of-shape reserve, and worked his way into condition and a starting spot. He's good at banging underneath with the big guys, and he's gotten better and better at finishing under the basket. He gets fouled a lot, so he needs to work on his free throws.

[Austin Hatch](#) - Inc.

Austin has only played in a couple of games, and only for a few minutes. He's still recovering from his plane crash, and may never get to the point where he can play significant minutes. In the meantime, everyone is rooting for him, and cherishing every minute and point that he earns.

[DJ Wilson](#) -Inc.

DJ only played a little bit in a few games before he injured his knee, ending his freshman season. He could conceivably come back sometime in February, but it doesn't make sense, since he will have missed so many games. Instead, he is eligible for a medical redshirt, so he'll be back next year with freshman eligibility. In the brief glimpses we had of him before his injury, he looked athletic but raw. He's too thin/wiry to play center, but he can be a successful shooting forward. He showed us great "bounce" and hustle.

Sophomore Eligibility

[Andrew Dakich](#) - Inc.

Andrew is being voluntarily redshirted this season.

[Zak Irvin](#) - B

Zak is one of the 3 main players (along with Caris LeVert and Derrick Walton Jr.) on this team, and a lot is expected of him. He has shown us that he has progressed from being "just a shooter" last season to a more complete player this season. He still has his deadly 3-point shooting touch, but he's been taking the ball to the basket with authority, and hitting more 2-pointers. He rebounds well, but he's not generating many assists yet. He still has games where he can't find the range on his shots.

[Sean Lonergan](#) - Inc.

Sean has only played a few minutes in a few games, so we don't know what he's capable of.

[Derrick Walton Jr.](#) - B

Derrick is another of the "Big 3" on this team, and he's done pretty well, especially considering that he's still recovering from a toe injury he suffered in the Villanova game. He's been shooting 3-pointers pretty well, he drives to the basket well, he's been handing out a reasonable number of assists, he shoots free throws well, and he's been rebounding very well.

Junior Eligibility

[Spike Albrecht](#) - B

Spike is usually a steadying influence on the rest of the (young) team when he's out there, and he usually hits his 3-pointers when he decides to shoot them. He has a great assist/turnover ratio, and he's great at the sneaky steal on the other team's inbound play after a made basket. His biggest liability is speed; he has trouble staying in front of faster point guards on defense.

[Caris LeVert](#) - B+

Caris is the third of the "Big 3" on this team. So far, he's been the best player on the team. He's very athletic, and he uses his athleticism to score well in transition. He has a nice 3-point stroke, and he can play good defense. Sometimes he tries to do too much.

Senior Eligibility

[Max Bielfeldt](#) - C

Max is a couple inches too short to play center, but that's his position. He has a very nice 3-point shot, and he can be a matchup problem for the other team when he drifts out to the top of the key and hits a few 3-pointers. He's a smart ballplayer, and he's strong and powerful underneath, but he's just a little too short to play with the big boys.

This Week

This week, Michigan continues Big Ten play with two more games. On Tuesday (01/13/2015, 7:00 p.m., ESPN), they play at Ohio State, then on Saturday (01/17/2015, 8:15 p.m., BTN), they play Northwestern in Crisler. Winning in Columbus is a tall order, so I wouldn't be worried or upset if UM loses on Tuesday, but they should definitely be expected to beat Northwestern on Saturday.

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

Go Blue!