

## **Nothing But 'Net – Week #12 – 01/26/2015 – Hanging In There**

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, and they won one and lost one. [On Tuesday \(01/20/2015\), they won at Rutgers 54-50](#), then [on Saturday \(01/24/2015\), they lost to \(#6\) Wisconsin 69-64 \(overtime\) in Crisler Arena](#). The win and the loss leave Michigan with an overall record of 12-8 (5-3 in the Big Ten).

Even though UM "only" went 1-1 this week, it was actually a fairly encouraging week. [After losing their best player \(Caris LeVert\)](#) to a season-ending foot injury 2 weeks ago, they could have easily lost both games, including a blowout loss to Wisconsin. Instead, they played hard in both games, and managed to win a road game, which is not easy, and take Wisconsin to overtime before running out of gas. [Coach Beilein](#) managed to patch together a makeshift lineup out of the available players, and he did a great job of substituting them in and out to keep them fresh. He managed to get significant contributions from former benchwarmers and lightly-used subs, and it was enough to beat Rutgers, and almost enough to pull off the huge upset vs. Wisconsin.

The Rutgers game was close all the way. Michigan led for much of the game, but never by more than 8 points, and often just 2 or 3 points. UM led by 2 (24-22) at halftime, and pushed the lead up to 7 (32-25) with 17:00 left in the game. At that point, UM went cold, and Rutgers caught fire, and they went on a 15-2 run to go up by 6 (40-34) with 9:04 left. UM could have just given up then, but they fought back, and managed to tie it up (42-42) with 5:51 left. They went ahead (45-45) with 4:09 to go, and they never trailed again. They got the lead up to 8 (52-44) with 33 seconds left, and managed to hang on for the win.

The Wisconsin game was also pretty close for most of the game, but Wisconsin led for most of the game. The start of both halves, the start of the overtime period, and the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> half were all disastrous for Michigan. Wisconsin started the 1<sup>st</sup> half with a 9-2 run in the first 4:38, before UM finally got going. Michigan got their first lead (17-16) with 8:53 left in the 1<sup>st</sup> half, and were only down 1 point (24-23) with 0:50 left before halftime, when Wisconsin poured it on again. They went on a 6-0 run, to end the half with a 7-point lead (30-23).

The start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half wasn't quite as bad as the start of the 1<sup>st</sup> half, but it was still bad. Wisconsin went on another mini-run, this time 8-4, to push their lead up to 11 points (38-27) with 16:04 left to go. Once again, UM could have given up at this point, but instead they fought back. They went on an 11-0 run of their own, to tie it up (38-38) with 11:15 to go. They exchanged 3-pointers, so it was still tied up (41-41) with 9:51 to go, then Wisconsin started pulling away again. They got the lead up to 7 points (48-41) with 7:33 to go, but UM hung around, and the Wisconsin lead was 2-3 points the rest of the way. [Derrick Walton Jr.](#) hit a huge 3-pointer with 1.3 seconds left to tie the game up (57-57), and Wisconsin couldn't get off another shot in regulation.

After all the effort UM used to get to overtime, it wasn't too surprising that they were running on fumes in the extra period. Once again, Wisconsin started the period with a run, this time 6-0. They never trailed again, and Michigan never got closer than 4 points.

Still, it was a gutsy performance by Michigan, and it showed that they still have the talent and ability to play with any team in the country (except Kentucky), but it's a delicate balancing act. They don't have enough depth or raw athletic talent to beat the big boys consistently, but they do have enough talent to hang in there, and hope for some luck in the end game. It was almost enough vs. Wisconsin, but not quite.

Time for some stats. First the [Rutgers](#) game: Michigan shot terribly overall (17-for-49 = 34.7%), they shot pretty poorly from 3-point range (8-for-26 = 30.8%), but they shot free throws very well (12-for-14 = 85.7%). They (barely) lost the rebounding battle (34-35), and they tied in the turnover battle (11-11). The difference in the game was free throw shooting: Rutgers also shot 14 free throws, but they only made 7 of them. That's 5 points less than UM, in a 4-point win.

The stats for the [Wisconsin](#) game are actually better, although they're still not great. Michigan shot OK overall (23-for-54 = 42.6%), they shot poorly from 3-point range (7-for-20 = 35.0%), and they shot free throws extremely well (11-for-12 = 91.7%). Stunningly, Michigan won the rebounding battle (33-30), but they (barely) lost the turnover battle (9-8). It was close game, and the stats show it.

Individually, the two remaining players of the "Big 3" had good weeks. [Zak Irvin](#) had 10 points vs. Rutgers, and 12 points vs. Wisconsin. [Derrick Walton Jr.](#) had 12 and 17. The only other starter to hit double figures this week was [Aubrey Dawkins](#), with 11 points vs. Rutgers, but only 3 vs. Wisconsin. The other 2 starters didn't do much: [Spike Albrecht](#) had 2 and 2, and [Ricky Doyle](#) had 0 and 4. It should be mentioned that Albrecht, Doyle, and Irvin all played while sick with the flu, and Walton is still battling the effects of his "turf toe" from back in December.

The bench chipped in more than usual this week, which will be very important for the rest of the season:

- [Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman](#) played very well, contributing important minutes on offense and defense. He only had 4 points vs. Rutgers, but he had 9 big points vs. Wisconsin. He's looking much more confident and explosive out there.
- [Max Bielfeldt](#) also stepped up his game this week, on both ends of the court. He went up against 7-footer Frank Kaminsky from Wisconsin underneath, and he fought hard. Kaminsky has 7 inches on him, but Bielfeldt didn't back down, and he won a decent percentage of the battles for position and loose balls. He had 8 points in the Rutgers game, and 9 points in the Wisconsin game.
- [Kameron Chatman](#) continues to struggle out there. He looks tentative on offense, and a step slow on defense. He only scored 2 points in each game this week. To be fair, Chatman played both games on a gimpy knee. There are a lot of injuries and illness on the team right now.
- [Andrew Dakich](#) was planning on voluntarily redshirting this season, but he agreed to "burn his shirt" and start playing in the rest of the games this season, even though he missed more than half of them. He played 4 minutes vs. Rutgers, and 2 minutes in the Wisconsin game, and he didn't take a shot in either game. It was fun watching him check Kaminsky a couple times when UM was in a 2-3 zone.
- [Mark Donnal](#) is improving every game, and is starting to look more comfortable out there. He had some fierce battles underneath with Kaminsky, and he played tougher than he's played so far this season. Once again, he didn't win many of the battles, but he didn't back down either. He had 3 points (on a 3-pointer) vs. Rutgers, and 6 points vs. Wisconsin.
- [Sean Lonergan](#) is playing more, now that UM is shorthanded. He played 13 minutes, and scored 2 points, vs. Rutgers, but he only played 1 minute vs. Wisconsin, and didn't attempt a shot.

For those keeping count, that's 19 bench points vs. Rutgers, and 26 bench points vs. Wisconsin. Those are good numbers.

By the way, that's everyone who's eligible on the roster except [Austin Hatch](#) and [DJ Wilson](#). Hatch just isn't ready for Big Ten play, and the plan is still to get a medical redshirt for Wilson, unless there's a real injury problem in the forecourt.

### **This Week**

This week, Michigan continues Big Ten play with two more games. On Tuesday (01/27/2015, 7:00 p.m., ESPN), they play Nebraska in Crisler, then on Sunday (02/01/2015, 1:00 p.m., CBS), they play at Michigan State. Nebraska isn't unbeatable, especially on the road, and if UM can play with the same intensity that they showed in the Rutgers and Wisconsin games, they should be able to keep the game close, and hope for good things at the end. Playing in East Lansing is never easy, and even though MSU isn't quite the powerhouse they usually are, it would be quite the upset for this shorthanded, patchwork Michigan team to win there.

However, if UM can play Wisconsin tough enough to force overtime, they stand a small chance vs. MSU in East Lansing.

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

Go Blue!