

Nothing But 'Net – Week #18 – 03/09/2015 – The End Of The Regular Season

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, and they lost one and won the other. [On Tuesday \(03/03/2015\), they lost at Northwestern 82-78 \(2 overtimes\)](#), then [on Saturday \(03/07/2015\), they beat Rutgers 79-69 in Crisler Arena](#). The loss and the win leave Michigan with a final regular season record of 15-15 (8-10 in the Big Ten). They finished in 9th place.

The loss to Northwestern was one of the most frustrating and heartbreaking sporting events I have ever seen. Yes, including the UM/Appalachian State football game and the UM/NJIT basketball game. Michigan had not one, but two excellent chances to win the game, and NW managed to defy incredible odds to tie the game up twice, then finally win in the 2nd overtime. Each of the three highly-improbable 3-pointers that NW made in the closing seconds of regulation and the 1st overtime were 1-in-1000 chance shots, and all three of them went in, making the odds 1-in-1,000,000,000 (that's one in a billion). Of course, Michigan could have put the game out of reach if they had hit one more free throw, or if they had fouled NW instead of allowing any of the 3-pointers, but that's another matter. Let's just say that everything that could go wrong for Michigan did. That's the kind of season this has been.

The Rutgers game was much better. It was Senior Day, and Michigan only has one "senior", who's really a redshirt junior: [Max Bielfeldt](#). Max had himself quite a day, getting his first career start, then his first career double-double, with 14 points and 11 rebounds (also a career-high). Michigan pulled away from Rutgers early, built up a comfortable lead at halftime (47-28), built the lead up to 29 points (79-50) with 8 minutes left, and watched Rutgers score the last 19 points to make it look like a close game. It was a 30-point win disguised as a 10-point win.

Let's look at the stats. First, the miserable [Northwestern](#) game. Michigan actually shot well overall (25-for-56 = 44.6%), shot very well from 3-point range (11-for-24 = 45.8%), and shot free throws very well (17-for-21 = 81.0%). They (barely) lost the rebounding battle (35-36) and the turnover battle (8-11). They should have won this game.

The stats for the [Rutgers](#) game are even better. UM shot very well overall (29-for-57 = 50.9%), they shot very well from 3-point range (14-for-31 = 45.2%), and they shot free throws pretty well (7-for-10 = 70.0%). They did lose the rebounding battle (25-33), but they won the turnover battle (6-12).

Individually, only 2 players hit double figures in both games: [Aubrey Dawkins](#) and [Zak Irvin](#). However, they didn't just hit double figures in both games, they did it in impressive fashion. Dawkins had 21 points vs. NW, which was a new career high, then he followed it up with 31 points against Rutgers, which was obviously another new career high. Irvin had 28 points vs. Northwestern, which was a new career high for him, and he also had 11 rebounds, for an impressive double-double. He only had 12 points against Rutgers, but it was still a good week for him.

[Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman](#) and [Spike Albrecht](#) were the other 2 players to start both games. MAAR had a quiet week, with 6 points vs. NW and 2 points vs. Rutgers. Albrecht had 16 and 7 points, but he did dish out 9 assists in the Rutgers game.

[Ricky Doyle](#) started in the NW game, but didn't play in the Rutgers game, due to "a stomach illness". He didn't look very good in the NW game, scoring only 1 point. In his place in the Rutgers game, [Max Bielfeldt](#) had his big game (14 points, 11 rebounds), but he didn't do much when he came off the bench in the Northwestern game (4 points, 0 rebounds).

The bench didn't chip in much in the Northwestern game, with the 4 points from Bielfeldt and 2 points from [Mark Donnal](#). Donnal played, but failed to score, in the Rutgers game. [Kameron Chatman](#) played in the NW game, but failed to score, then he exploded for a career-high 13 points in the Rutgers game. [Andrew Dakich](#) played in both games, but failed to score.

[Austin Hatch](#) and [Sean Lonergan](#) both played in the closing moments of the Rutgers game, but failed to score, although Hatch almost hit a 3-pointer.

Finally, two of the student managers (Ryan Kaputstka and Jon Rubenstein) were added to the roster for the Rutgers game, and they both played in the final minute, but failed to score. Rubenstein did attempt a free throw, but he missed it.

This Week

This week, [the Big Ten Tournament](#) is being held in Chicago. This is the first season with 14 teams. To accommodate the extra 2 teams, the tournament has been extended from 4 days to 5 (Wednesday - Sunday). The first day (Wednesday 03/11/2015), the bottom 4 teams play, the next day (Thursday), the middle 6 teams, along with the 2 surviving teams from Wednesday, play. Finally, on Friday, the top 4 teams play, along with the surviving 4 teams from Thursday. The semifinals are on Saturday, and the championship game is on Sunday.

As the #9 seed, Michigan starts play on Thursday, against the #8 seed, Illinois. The game is at noon on BTN. If Michigan beats Illinois, they'll play the #1 seed, Wisconsin, on Friday at noon on ESPN.

Michigan played Illinois twice in the regular season, winning at home (73-65 in overtime on 12/30/2014), and losing on the road (64-52 in overtime on 02/12/2015). It should be another tight, exciting game. If UM beats Illinois on Thursday, they will have a tough time vs. Wisconsin on Friday.

If UM wants to have any chance of playing in the NIT, they need to beat Illinois. After the predictable loss to Wisconsin in the next round, that would leave them with a record of 16-16. While the NIT doesn't have an actual rule that a team needs to be at or above 0.500 to be selected, no team with a losing record has ever been invited.

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

Go Blue!