

Nothing But 'Net – Week #04 – 11/23/2015 – X-Posed

"Let's Go X! Let's Go X! Let's Go X!" There were about 1000 loud and rowdy Xavier fans, and they were having a great time cheering for their team, since they were manhandling Michigan. Michigan was X-Posed.

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, and they won one and lost the other. [On Monday \(11/16/2015\), UM beat Elon 88-68](#), then [on Friday \(11/20/2015\), they lost to Xavier 86-70](#). Both games were in Crisler Arena. The win and the loss leave Michigan with a record of 2-1.

There isn't much to say about the Elon game. They're a "cupcake", and Michigan didn't have much trouble putting them away. We didn't learn anything about Michigan in this game.

The more interesting, and troubling, game was against Xavier. Michigan was exposed as overrated. Even though Michigan matched up pretty well with Xavier height-wise, they got out-rebounded, out-muscled, and out-hustled. From the very first play of the game, Xavier drove through the UM defense, and did whatever they wanted under the basket. In the first 10 seconds, a Xavier player put his head down and drove right through the UM defense, laid the ball in, and drew a foul. It was a sign of things to come. Xavier owned the boards, shot well from outside, and beat Michigan in every phase of the game. They got off to a quick 7-0 lead, but UM fought back, and managed to tie the game up 10-10. The lead went back and forth, with Michigan leading by as much as 4 points (16-12), until there was 3:52 left in the 1st half. At that point, the game was tied at 32-32, when the roof fell in. Xavier went on a 13-4 run to end the half up 45-36, and Michigan never led or tied the score again. The Xavier lead was around 5-7 points for most of the 2nd half, although UM did get as close as 2 points a couple of times (56-54 with 12:14 left, and 61-59 with 9:59 left) before Xavier put the game out of reach.

For most of his time in Ann Arbor, [Coach Beilein](#) has worked with a short bench, a young team, and few big men. This season, he has a long bench, an experienced team, and 4 viable big men. Those big men were all exposed as weak defensively in this game. Even with 4 big men, they were all in foul trouble for most of the game. Michigan committed their 10th team foul of the 1st half with 2:32 left, and 8 of those 10 fouls were against the 4 big men, 2 on each. Xavier kept driving, and the only way the Michigan big men could stop them was by fouling. When Beilein started using double teams to stop the bleeding inside, Xavier took advantage with wide open 3-pointers, which they hit. The weakness inside led to the barrage of Xavier 3-pointers outside. It was a lose-lose situation.

So, is the season doomed? Now that every team on the schedule has seen a blueprint for how to beat Michigan, what can Beilein do? At least half of the Big Ten teams are better than Xavier. Maybe Michigan will get a refereeing crew that knows what a charge is. Maybe Beilein can shore up the interior defense. Maybe one of the big men will emerge as a reliable defender. If not, it looks like a long season.

Stats

The [stats for the Elon game](#) look a lot like the stats for the previous 2 games vs. cupcakes. UM shot pretty well overall (31-for-60 = 51.7%), they shot very well from 3-point range (13-for-24 = 54.2%), and they shot very well from the free-throw line (13-for-15 = 86.7%). They won the rebounding battle (32-27) and the turnover battle (11-17). They were dominant, which is why they won by 20 points.

On the other hand, the [stats for the Xavier game](#) are not very impressive. UM shot pretty poorly overall (21-for-52 = 40.4%), they shot pretty poorly from 3-point range (10-for-26 = 38.5%), and they shot pretty poorly from the free-throw line (18-for-26 = 69.2%). The big stats weren't shooting stats, but rebounding and turnovers. UM got hammered on the boards (47-29), and lost the turnover battle as well (11-9). That's 20 extra possessions for Xavier, which is why they shot 14 more shots than Michigan.

Individually, Beilein went with the same starting lineup as in the exhibition and Northern Michigan games for the Elon game: [Kameron Chatman](#), [Aubrey Dawkins](#), [Mark Donnal](#), [Caris LeVert](#), and [Derrick Walton Jr.](#) [Zak Irvin](#) had been recuperating from pre-season back surgery, so he didn't play in the exhibition or NMU games, but he did come off the bench for 15 minutes of action vs. Elon. He looked recuperated enough to start vs. Xavier, in place of Chatman. Now that Irvin's available to start, that is Beilein's preferred starting lineup.

Of the starters, only LeVert hit double figures in both games, with 11 points vs. Elon, and 29 points vs. Xavier. Walton was the only other starter to hit double figures in one game, with a career-high 24 points vs. Elon, and 4 points vs. Xavier. The other starters didn't do much scoring: Chatman had 6 points vs. Elon, and didn't start in the Xavier game, Dawkins had 7 and 5 points, Donnal had 6 and 0 points, and Irvin had 7 points vs. Xavier, and didn't start in the Elon game. That's not very good scoring balance.

The bench chipped in a few points: [Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman](#) had 2 and 0 points, [Spike Albrecht](#) had 0 and 5, [Ricky Doyle](#) had 8 and 3, [Duncan Robinson](#) had 19 and 9, [Moritz Wagner](#) had 0 and 2, and [DJ Wilson](#) had 5 and 3. Robinson's 19 points are a career high for him at Michigan, although he did score 30 points in one game for his previous team, (Division III) Williams College.

This Week

This week, Michigan plays three games in three days, all in Nassau (Bahamas), in the [Battle 4 Atlantis](#) tournament. On Wednesday (11/25/2015, 9:30 p.m., AXS TV), they play (#19) Connecticut. On Thursday (11/26/2015, 3:30 p.m./9:30 p.m., ESPN/AXS TV), they play either Charlotte or Syracuse. On Friday (11/27/2015, TBA, TBA), they play a team from the other side of the bracket ([#10] Gonzaga, Texas, Texas A&M, or Washington).

There are a couple tough teams in this tournament (UConn and Gonzaga), but now that UM has been exposed, every team they play will be a tough game. It wouldn't surprise me at all if UM went 0-3 in this tournament. They might be able to beat Charlotte, but that's about it.

Tune by to see how they do, if you can find any of their games on TV, and check back next week to see what happened, and why.

Go Blue!