

Nothing But 'Net – Week #05 – 11/30/2015 – Lost And Found In The Bahamas

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played three games last week, and they lost one and won the next two. [On Wednesday \(11/25/2015\), UM lost to \(#18\) Connecticut 74-60](#), then [on Thursday \(11/26/2015\), UM beat Charlotte 102-47](#), and finally [on Friday \(11/27/2015\), UM beat Texas 78-72](#). All three games were played in Nassau (Bahamas), in the [Battle 4 Atlantis](#) tournament. Michigan came in 5th. Whoopee! The loss and wins leave Michigan with a record of 4-2.

The UConn game looked a lot like the disastrous [Xavier game from last week](#): UConn exploited UM's weak interior defense, and just overpowered UM. It started out OK, with UM playing pretty well, and opening up a nice 7-point lead (12-5) with 14:31 left in the 1st half, when the roof fell in. UConn went on a 19-4 run to go up by 8 (24-16) with 5:27 left, and pushed the lead up to 14 (36-22) at halftime. Yes, UM only scored 10 points in the last 14:31 of the 1st half. They shot 24%. It was ugly. The 2nd half was a little better, since UM played UConn even, but that meant a 14-point loss. The UConn lead got as high as 19 points (52-33) with 10:00 left in the game, but Michigan fought back, got as close as 8 points a few times, but never got any closer.

The bad part about playing in a 3-day, 8-team tournament is that you have to play 3 games in 3 days. The good part is that you don't have time to dwell on a loss, you have to get ready for another game. Michigan looked lost in the UConn game, but they found themselves in the 2nd game, against Charlotte. Now, Charlotte is not a very good team, but the way UM throttled them is impressive, no matter who the opponent is. The margin of victory (55 points) is the highest for Michigan in 70 years. The 102 points they scored is a tournament record. It was quite a game. It was almost over at halftime, when UM led 44-22, and it was certainly over just 2:30 into the 2nd half, when UM went on 10-2 run to make it a 30-point lead (54-24). The last 17:30 was "mop up" time.

I was worried that UM might come out flat and tired in the 3rd and final game, vs. Texas, but they played well for the whole game. Texas is a quality opponent, and UM handled them. Michigan never trailed, and jumped out to another 12-5 lead, with 14:15 left in the 1st half. This time, they built on it, instead of letting their opponent back into the game. They got the lead up to 10 (25-15) with 10:11 left, and 12 points (44-32) at halftime. The lead stayed around 12 points for most of the 2nd half, although Texas did get as close as 1 point (67-66) with 4:26 to go. Michigan outscored them 11-6 down the stretch, and won solidly.

So, did we learn anything about this season's UM team this week? We sure did. We learned that they're not going to just give up when the going gets tough. They lost 2 miserable games in a row (Xavier and UConn), but they bounced back very nicely against Charlotte and Texas. They've still got a lot of work to do, and a lot of things to figure out, but they're headed in the right direction. Do I think they could beat Xavier or UConn yet if they had another chance? No, not yet, but they have the players to get there by the end of the season.

Stats

The [stats for the UConn game](#) are horrible, the worst in a while. UM shot terribly overall (18-for-56 = 32.1%), they shot terribly from 3-point range (8-for-29 = 27.6%), but at least they shot free throws well (16-for-20 = 80.0%). They got hammered on the boards (42-31), but they did win the turnover battle (9-12). Since UConn shot 50% overall, and 40% from 3-point range, 32%/28% just won't make it.

The [stats for the Charlotte game](#) are very good. It's hard to believe that this is the same team as the one that stunk up the joint against UConn. UM shot very well overall (39-for-63 = 61.9%), they shot 3-pointers very well (12-for-23 = 52.2%), and they shot free throws very well (12-for-14 = 85.7%). They crushed Charlotte on the boards (44-27), and they won the turnover battle (8-10). It was a dominating performance.

Finally, [the stats for the Texas game](#) are almost as good as the Charlotte stats. UM shot very well again overall (29-for-50 = 58.0%), they shot incredibly well from 3-point range (14-for-25 = 56.0%), but they shot free throws pretty poorly (6-for-12 = 50.0%). They won the rebounding battle (31-27), but lost the turnover battle (13-10). Keep in mind that the new Texas coach this season is Shaka Smart, who designed Virginia Commonwealth's "Havoc" defense. Well, [Michigan crushed VCU in the NCAA Tournament in 2013](#), and they handled the Texas version of "havoc" pretty well this season. 13 turnovers isn't too bad.

For this tournament, [Coach Beilein](#) changed the starting lineup, starting [Ricky Doyle](#) instead of [Mark Donnal](#). The other 4 starters were [Aubrey Dawkins](#), [Zak Irvin](#), [Caris LeVert](#), and [Derrick Walton Jr.](#) Of the starters, only LeVert scored in double figures for all 3 games, with 21 vs. UConn, 13 in the Charlotte game, and 19 vs. Texas. Irvin (2, 12, and 13 points) and Walton (10, 8, and 13 points) both hit double figures in 2 of the 3 games. Dawkins hit double figures in one game (8, 10, and 6 points), and Doyle didn't score much (5, 6, and 0 points).

A couple of the bench players hit double figures in one game. [Moritz Wagner](#) was the star of the Charlotte game, with a career-high 19 points on 8-for-9 shooting. He had 0 points in the UConn game, but he chipped in 7 points vs. Texas. [Duncan Robinson](#) had a great game vs. Texas, scoring 14 points, after scoring 5 vs. UConn and 9 vs. Charlotte.

The rest of the bench chipped in some points: [Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman](#) had 4, 4, and 0, [Kameron Chatman](#) had 0, 6, and 0, Donnal didn't play in the UConn game, and had 7 and 4 in the other 2 games, and [DJ Wilson](#) had 5, 8, and 2 points.

[Spike Albrecht](#) played in the UConn and Charlotte games, but didn't score. He didn't play in the Texas game. He is clearly not recovered from his double hip surgery, and isn't playing well at all. I have no idea if or when he'll be back to his old playing form.

This Week

This week, Michigan plays two games. On Tuesday (12/01/2015, 7:00 p.m., ESPN2), they play at North Carolina State, then on Saturday (12/05/2015, 2:00 p.m., ESPNU), they play Houston Baptist in Crisler Arena. The game vs. N.C. State is part of the [ACC/Big Ten Challenge](#), and should be, well, a challenge. Houston Baptist is a cupcake that Michigan has snacked on in the recent past. They will be no challenge.

Tune by to see how Michigan does vs. N.C. State, and come by Crisler for the Houston Baptist game. In any case, check back next week to see what happened, and why.

Go Blue!