

Nothing But 'Net – Week #14 – 02/01/2016 – A Win Is A Win (Times Two)

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this week, and they won both of them. [On Wednesday \(01/27/2016\), they beat Rutgers 68-57](#) in Crisler Arena, then [on Saturday \(01/30/2016\), they beat Penn State 79-72](#) in Madison Square Garden (New York City). The two wins raise Michigan's record to 17-5 (7-2 in the Big Ten).

Both of these wins fall solidly into the "a win is a win" category. PSU is pretty weak (again) this season, but Rutgers is really bad. These were games that UM could have won by 40-50 points, but they shot poorly (when they weren't shooting themselves in the foot), and they let inferior opponents hang around for most of the game. We can just hope that Michigan plays with more focus against the "upper division" opponents coming right up.

Michigan started off the Rutgers game ice cold. They missed their first 5 shots (along with a turnover), and Rutgers went ahead 6-0 in the first 3:00. UM finally started scoring, but they didn't catch Rutgers until they tied it up (20-20) with 5:27 left in the 1st half. Yes, Rutgers led for the first 15 minutes of the game. Ugh.

Once UM finally got the lead, they never trailed. They went on a 12-2 run to get a double-digit lead (32-22) with 1:06 left in the half, and led by 7 (34-27) at halftime. They kept the lead around 8-10 points for the first 10 minutes of the 2nd half, before Rutgers crept to within 5 points (48-43). Michigan pushed the lead back up to the 8-10 range, and kept it there the rest of the game. They never managed to pull away, but they also did a good job of keeping Rutgers from getting too close.

The PSU game was a little better. Michigan started much better than they had in the Rutgers game, and led 13-5 after the first 5:00. They did let PSU tie the game (13-13), but then they built the lead back up to 10 points (27-17) with 7:07 left in the half. UM hit a 3-pointer at the buzzer to lead by 12 (38-26) at halftime, and they kept the lead above 10 points for most of the 2nd half. Once again, they couldn't put PSU away, but they never let them get closer than 5 points in the 2nd half.

Once again, it was impressive that Michigan won both games without their best player, [Caris LeVert](#), who missed two more games this week with a left ankle injury. He has now missed 8 games, and is still listed as "day to day".

So, what did we learn about this season's UM team this week? Nothing new. It was a replay of last week's two wins over "lower division" opponents.

Stats

The [stats for the Rutgers game](#) are pretty dismal. Michigan shot poorly overall (20-for-49 = 40.8%), they shot fairly well from 3-point range (11-for-28 = 39.3%), but they did shoot free throws well, and often (17-for-20 = 85.0%). They (barely) lost the rebounding battle (30-29), but they did win the turnover battle (10-14). It really helped that Rutgers shot 3-pointers terribly (3-for-18 = 16.7%).

The [stats for the PSU game](#) aren't much better. UM shot poorly overall again (25-for-55 = 45.5%), they shot 3-pointers very poorly (6-for-20 = 30.0%), and they shot free throws pretty well (23-for-31 = 74.2%). They (barely) lost the rebounding battle again (36-34), and they won the turnover battle (7-11). The big difference in this game was free throws. UM hit 23 of them, while PSU only hit 11 (in 15 attempts). That's 12 points right there.

With LeVert still unavailable, [Coach Beilein](#) went with his new regular starting lineup: [Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman](#) (MAAR), [Mark Donnal](#), [Zak Irvin](#), [Duncan Robinson](#), and [Derrick Walton Jr.](#) Two of the starters hit double figures in both games: Donnal, with 10 points in each game, and Walton, with 14 and 13 points. Walton also had 10 rebounds in the PSU game, for another double-double.

The other three starters hit double figures in one game: MAAR had 3 and 15 points, Irvin had 8 and 20 points, and Robinson had 18 and 9 points. Irvin had 12 rebounds in the Rutgers game, for a double-double.

The bench contributed a few points this week. [Aubrey Dawkins](#) had 11 and 7 points, and [Ricky Doyle](#) had 4 and 5 points. That's it. [Kameron Chatman](#) and [Moritz Wagner](#) both played in the Rutgers game, but failed to score. [Andrew Dakich](#) and [DJ Wilson](#) both played in the PSU game, but failed to score. Michigan could really use more bench scoring.

This Week

This week, Michigan plays two more Big Ten games. On Tuesday (02/02/2016, 9:00 p.m., ESPN), they play (#19) [Indiana](#), then on Saturday (02/06/2016, 2:00 p.m., CBS), they play (#12) [Michigan State](#). Both games are in Crisler Arena.

Indiana is currently 18-4 (8-1 in the Big Ten). They're tied for 1st place in the league, one game ahead of Michigan. They don't have any impressive wins (Notre Dame is the closest), but they have a couple not-so-impressive losses (Wake Forest and UNLV), and a couple understandable losses (Duke and Wisconsin). They have an even hotter offense than Michigan, and a reasonable defense to go with it. It's going to be a tough game.

Michigan State started the season 13-0, and were ranked #1 for a few weeks. Since then, they've gone 5-5, all in the Big Ten, for a record of 18-5 (5-5 in the Big Ten). Three of their losses are understandable (Iowa [twice] and Wisconsin), but they also lost at home to Nebraska. They have a decent offense, and a powerful defense. It's also going to be a tough game.

Come on down to Crisler for both games, and check back next week to see what happened, and why.

Go Blue!