

Nothing But 'Net – Week #16 – 02/15/2016 – Two Exciting Endings

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this week, and they won both of them. [On Wednesday \(02/10/2016\), they won at Minnesota 82-74](#), then [on Saturday \(02/13/2016\), they beat \(#18\) Purdue 61-56](#) in Crisler Arena. The two wins raise Michigan's record to 19-7 (9-4 in the Big Ten).

Both of these games featured exciting endings, with different setups. In the Minnesota game, Michigan led for most of the game, by as many as 19 points early in the 2nd half, then let Minnesota sneak back in and get within 2 points in the last 2:00. Michigan went on an 8-2 run to end the game, for a very exciting finish. In the Purdue game, Purdue led for most of the game, although UM was usually within 5-6 points. With 3:13 left in the game, Purdue went up by 6 points (56-50), and things were looking pretty gloomy. Notice the Purdue score at that point, and the final score; UM went on an 11-0 run to end the game, which was really exciting. The crowd was really into it, and Crisler was as loud as I've heard it this season.

So, what did we learn about this season's UM team this week? We learned that they have more mental toughness than they showed in last week's two blowout home losses. We also learned that they can win a game when they don't shoot well, even against a Top-25 team.

Stats

The [stats for the Minnesota game](#) are pretty impressive. After several poor shooting performances, UM shot very well in this game. They shot very well overall (28-for-52 = 53.8%), they shot very well from 3-point range (14-for-25 = 56.0%), and they shot free throws just OK (12-for-20 = 60.0%). They lost the rebounding battle (33-28) and the turnover battle (10-7), but they shot well enough to make up for it.

The [stats for the Purdue game](#) are surprisingly bad. It's hard to believe UM beat anyone with a game like this, much less a Top-25 team. They shot very poorly overall (20-for-55 = 36.4%), they shot 3-pointers terribly (5-for-20 = 25.0%), but they did hit their free throws (16-for-22 = 72.7%). Here's the shocker of the week, maybe of the whole season: even though Purdue has one of the tallest and most experienced teams in the country, with a 7'0" guy and a 7'2" guy, and even though Purdue is one of the best rebounding teams in the country, UM out-rebounded them, 39-35 (11-7 on the offensive boards). That is truly amazing. Michigan also won the turnover battle (6-9). Those 7 extra possessions really helped.

There was one other big story during the Purdue game: [Caris LeVert](#) is back! He went out with a vaguely-described "lower left leg injury" in the waning minutes of [Michigan's big win at Illinois \("Donnal-Fest"\) on 12/30/2015](#), the first game of the Big Ten season. Since then, he had missed 12 games before he entered the Purdue game with 12:59 left in the 1st half. He looked pretty good out there, and seemed to move at his normal speed without any sign of a limp. He played for 11 minutes, and took (and missed) one shot and one free throw, grabbed 5 defensive rebounds, and had one assist and one turnover. He didn't play at all in the 2nd half. It was good to see him back out there, and he got a very good ovation from the crowd. Hopefully, he'll be able to get back in playing shape quickly and contribute during the important games down the homestretch.

With LeVert unavailable or not ready to start, [Coach Beilein](#) went with his new regular starting lineup: [Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman](#) (MAAR), [Mark Donnal](#), [Zak Irvin](#), [Duncan Robinson](#), and [Derrick Walton Jr.](#) None of the starters hit double figures in both games, but 4 of the 5 hit double figures in one game. MAAR had 16 and 9 points, Irvin had 4 and 22, Robinson had 14 and 4, and Walton had 26 and 6. The 5th starter, Donnal, had 8 in both games.

As you can see, Irvin, Robinson, and Walton all had real "up and down" weeks. Irvin was just terrible vs. Minnesota, but he carried Michigan on his back in the Purdue game. Robinson had a solid game vs. Minnesota, but he couldn't get open for a shot vs. Purdue. And Walton, whoa. He had a career game vs. Minnesota, but was still scoreless (on 0-for-9 shooting) until

there was just 2:06 left in the Purdue game. He had missed several easy, open jump shots, and seemed doomed to be the first starter to go scoreless this season, when he made an incredible driving layup high off the glass over the outstretched arms of a Purdue 7-footer. It was the most difficult shot he took all day, and it was the only one that went in. He was fouled on the shot, but he missed the free throw. He made up for it by hitting the next 4 free throws to seal the win. So, he scored all 6 of his points in the last 2:06, during "crunch time".

The bench didn't contribute very many points this week:

- [Kameron Chatman](#) didn't play in the Minnesota game and had 2 points in the Purdue game.
- [Andrew Dakich](#) didn't play in the Purdue game and failed to score in the Minnesota game.
- [Aubrey Dawkins](#) had 8 and 4 points.
- [Ricky Doyle](#) had 6 and 4 points.
- LeVert didn't play in the Minnesota game and failed to score in the Purdue game.
- [Moritz Wagner](#) played in both games and failed to score in either.
- [DJ Wilson](#) didn't play in the Minnesota game and had 2 points in the Purdue game.

Once again, Michigan needs more bench scoring.

This Week

This week, Michigan plays two more Big Ten games, both on the road. On Tuesday (02/16/2016, 7:00 p.m., ESPN), they play at [Ohio State](#), then on Sunday (02/21/2016, 1:00 p.m., CBS), they play at (#2) [Maryland](#).

OSU is currently 16-10 (8-5 in the Big Ten), with one impressive win (Kentucky, on a neutral floor), and several embarrassing losses (Texas-Arlington, Louisiana Tech, Memphis, and Maryland [not a bad opponent, but the score was 100-65]). They're 12-4 at home, so they're not unbeatable, but Michigan will have to play very well to beat them in Columbus.

Michigan has already played Maryland once, and [beat them in Crisler Arena](#) with probably their best game of the season. Maryland will be looking for revenge, they were just upset by Wisconsin on Saturday, and they're playing for a #1 seed in the NCAA Tournament, so this will be Michigan's most difficult road game of the season.

Tune by on Tuesday and Sunday, then check back next week to see what happened, and why.

Go Blue!