

Nothing But 'Net – Week #18 – 02/29/2016 – Limping Home

Happy Leap Day.

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this week, and they won one and lost the other. [On Wednesday \(02/24/2016\), they beat Northwestern 72-63](#) in Crisler Arena, then [on Sunday \(02/28/2016\), they lost at Wisconsin 68-57](#). The win and the loss leave Michigan with a record of 20-10 (10-7 in the Big Ten).

With one game left in the regular season, Michigan is limping to the finish line. They have lost 3 of their last 4 games, and are teetering on the edge of the bubble for the NCAA Tournament.

The win over Northwestern was hard to watch. It was ugly. Michigan started out slow, missing their first 8 shots, along with 2 turnovers, and trailed 10-0. When they finally got going, they managed to get within 2 points a couple times (19-17 and 23-21), but they always failed to score when they had the chance to tie or take the lead. They missed their first nine 3-point attempts before finally making one at the halftime buzzer to pull within 1 point (29-28). They got the ball to start the 2nd half, and promptly threw it away. They let Northwestern go on another 8-0 run, this time with 2 missed shots and 3 turnovers, before they finally got going again. They got back within 1 point again (42-41) with 12:30 left, and finally tied the game up 44-44 with 11:10 to go. They got their first lead (45-44) with 9:15 left, and played even with Northwestern for the next 4 minutes. With 5:01 left, Michigan tied it up 54-54, then went ahead for good on a nice 3-pointer. Michigan should have handled Northwestern easily, but they struggled to get any offensive flow.

The game at Wisconsin was also hard to watch, but for a different reason. Michigan actually played pretty well for most of the game, and led for a lot of the way. They had a 7 point lead (9-2) early, and led by 1 point at halftime (30-29). They still led by 1 point (40-39) with 13:13 to go when the roof fell in. UM missed 4 shots in a row, and let UW go on an 8-0 run to make it 47-40. Wisconsin pushed the lead as high as 13, and Michigan got as close as 5 points, but that 8-0 run was the big difference. Michigan isn't good enough to come from behind against a good team on the road. They need to manage the game better. They need to have a few "go to" plays that they can run when they really need a basket to stop a crippling run.

So, what did we learn about this season's UM team this week? We learned that they probably aren't an NCAA Tournament team. If they can beat Iowa this Saturday, or win a couple games in the Big Ten Tournament, maybe they'll sneak in, but they'll be lucky to win a game in the Big Dance. This is a team in disarray.

Stats

The [stats for the Northwestern game](#) aren't as bad as you'd expect for such an ugly game. Michigan shot fairly well overall (24-for-49 = 49.0%), they shot 3-pointers terribly (4-for-15 = 26.7%), and they shot free throws pretty well (20-for-25 = 80.0%). They won the rebounding battle handily (33-24), and they tied in the turnover battle (9-9). UM won the game at the free throw line. Northwestern was 5-for-9 shooting free throws, so Michigan outscored them by 15 points at the line.

The [stats for the Wisconsin game](#) aren't bad either. Michigan shot fairly well again overall (24-for-50 = 48.0%), they shot a decent percentage from 3-pointer range (5-for-13 = 38.5%), but they shot free throws pretty poorly (4-for-7 = 57.1%). They got clobbered on the boards (33-20), and they barely won the turnover battle (11-12). Just as they beat Northwestern at the free throw line, Wisconsin beat Michigan at the free throw line. They shot 12-for-15. Those 8 extra points go a long way towards explaining an 11 point loss.

I know this is sounding like a broken record, but once again [Caris LeVert](#) didn't play this week. So far, he has played one full Big Ten game (Illinois on 12/30/2015) and 11 scoreless minutes vs. Purdue on 02/13/2016, and that's been it. With one regular season Big Ten game left and

the Big Ten Tournament and (maybe) the NCAA Tournament, there aren't many games left for him to play in. Sigh.

With LeVert unavailable again, [Coach Beilein](#) went with his regular starting lineup: [Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman](#) (MAAR), [Mark Donnal](#), [Zak Irvin](#), [Duncan Robinson](#), and [Derrick Walton Jr.](#) Only one of the starters hit double figures in both games: Walton, with 16 and 10 points. MAAR had a great game against Northwestern, with 19 points, but he had a lousy game against Wisconsin, with 2 points. Donnal was in foul trouble in both games, and only scored 7 and 6 points. Irvin had a quiet game against Northwestern, with 6 points, but was UM's best offensive threat in the 1st half at Wisconsin. He ended up with 14 points. Robinson had 5 and 10 points.

The bench contributed more points than usual this week:

- [Kameron Chatman](#) had 2 and 0 points.
- [Andrew Dakich](#) had 0 and 2 points.
- [Aubrey Dawkins](#) had 11 and 3 points.
- [Ricky Doyle](#) had 6 and 10 points. He did a great job filling in for Donnal in both games.
- [Moritz Wagner](#) didn't play in either game.
- [DJ Wilson](#) didn't play in the Northwestern game, and played but failed to score in the Wisconsin game.

This Week

This week, Michigan plays one Big Ten game, the last regular season game. On Saturday (03/05/2016, 8:00 p.m., BTN), they play (#8) [Iowa](#) in Crisler Arena. Michigan already played Iowa once this season, and [lost 82-71 in Iowa City back on 01/17/2016](#). Iowa is currently 20-8 (11-4 in the Big Ten), but they have lost 4 of their last 5 games, mostly on the road. They are beatable, but UM must play their "A" game to stand a chance. They can't allow any of the long scoreless droughts that have cost them so many games this season.

Since this is the last home game of the season, it's Senior Night. At the start of the season, there were 2 seniors in the lineup: LeVert and [Spike Albrecht](#). Now there are none. Albrecht had double hip surgery in the off-season, and never got back into playing shape. [He finally retired on 12/11/2015](#). LeVert injured his "lower left leg" near the end of [the Illinois game on 12/30/2015](#), and that was the end of the senior class. I don't know if either of them will try to play for even a minute on Saturday, but I doubt it. Albrecht would qualify for a medical redshirt if he wanted to come back next season, or use the grad transfer rule, but I suspect he could get permission to play on Senior Night without endangering his medical redshirt. We'll just have to wait and see.

Come on down to Crisler on Saturday, then check back next week to see what happened, and why.

Go Blue!