

Nothing But 'Net – Week #04 – 11/21/2016 – The 2K Classic Championship Games

Quick Look

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, and they won both of them. These games were the championship round games for the [2K Classic](#), played in [Madison Square Garden](#), in New York City. [On Thursday \(11/17/2016\), Michigan beat Marquette 79-61](#), then [on Friday \(11/18/2016\), they beat SMU 76-54](#). The two wins raise Michigan's record to 4-0.

What Happened

Michigan didn't look particularly good or sharp in either of the "Ann Arbor Regional" games in the first week of the season, against Howard and IUPUI, but they were a different team in NYC. They won both games comfortably, and they looked good and sharp and tough. [Coach Beilein](#) has had some good teams in his 10 years in Ann Arbor, including the 2012-2013 team that went to the National Championship game, but none of them were what you would call "tough". They were more "finesse". At least for the two games in the Garden, this season's team played tough. They blocked shots, they took charges, they played tight defense, and they scrapped for loose balls. It was quite a change from previous teams.

The Marquette game started out as a close, see-saw battle, and was tied up 15-15 with 13:21 to go in the half. Three minutes later, Michigan was up by 10 (27-17), and five minutes after that, they were up by 20 (42-22). They led by 24 (50-26) at halftime, and never looked back. They did let Marquette get a little close (12 points: 67-55) with 5:30 left in the game, but they pushed the lead back up to 20 (77-57) in 3 minutes, and coasted to the win. It was very impressive. Here are the [stats for the Marquette game](#).

SMU had beaten Michigan in Ann Arbor two years ago, and crushed them in Dallas last year, so this was a chance for Michigan to get some revenge, and they did. Michigan never trailed in this one, running out to a 9-point lead (13-4) in the first four minutes, and pushing it up to 19 points (44-25) at halftime. Once again, they let an opponent get a little close in the 2nd half (13 points: 44-31 with 19:10 to go), but they got the lead back up to 20 (53-33) in 3 minutes, and kept it there for the rest of the game, growing it to as many as 29 points. It was even more impressive than the Marquette win. Here are the [stats for the SMU game](#).

Michigan shot well overall in both games (50.9% vs. Marquette, 52.9% vs. SMU), they shot 3-pointers well in both games (39.1% and 41.9%), and they shot free throws well in both games (80.0% and 81.8%). They outrebounded Marquette (35-27), but got hammered on the boards against SMU (24-41). They had an uncharacteristic 17 turnovers in the Marquette game, but only 4 vs. SMU. They also had 9 more blocked shots, 5 vs. Marquette and 4 vs. SMU.

Who Looked Good

Even though he only hit double figures in one game, [DJ Wilson](#) was the big story in this tournament. He had his first career double-double in the Marquette game, with 10 points and 12 rebounds. He was a little quieter vs. SMU, with 6 points and 4 rebounds, but he still played a team-high 36 minutes, and was a terror on defense. He started both games, and impressed with his play.

[Derrick Walton Jr.](#) had a very inconsistent tournament. He scored 0 points vs. Marquette, then led the team in scoring against SMU with 23 points, including 7-for-12 shooting from 3-point range.

[Zak Irvin](#) had 16 points in each game, along with 7 and 6 rebounds, and 5 assists in each game. He still misses some easy shots, and takes too many long 2-point shots that could be 3-pointers if he would just move back a foot, but it's hard to complain about the results. He was selected as the Most Valuable Player for the 2K Classic tournament.

[Mark Donnal](#) also only hit double figures in one game (15 points vs. Marquette), but he really provided a spark when he came in. He got close to double figures (9 points) vs. SMU, and played good defense in both games.

[Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman](#) had double figures in both games (15 and 12), and had 4 rebounds in each game. He struggled a little with his 3-point shot (0-for-4 and 2-for-5), but he played some good defense.

Who Looked Not-So-Good

[Moritz Wagner](#) didn't have a very good tournament. He scored 9 points vs. Marquette, but he got in early foul trouble vs. SMU, and only scored 3 points in 11 minutes. He started both games, but Mark Donnal played more minutes than he did, and may take his starting position from him.

[Duncan Robinson](#) lost his starting job to DJ Wilson, and did OK coming off the bench. He had 10 points vs. Marquette, but only 2 points (on free throws) vs. SMU. It looked like he had finally found his 3-point stroke in the Marquette game, when he went 3-for-4, but then he went 0-for-2 vs. SMU, so we're back to square one.

[Xavier Simpson](#) played in both games, but only scored one point, vs. SMU. He played 18 minutes in the Marquette game, when Walton got in early foul trouble, but only 6 minutes vs. SMU. I'm sure he'll be fine as the season goes on, but he's having a slow start.

[Ibi Watson](#) played in both games, and scored 4 and 2 points. He isn't getting much playing time (3 and 7 minutes) because he isn't doing much when he's out there. Like Xavier Simpson, I'm sure he'll be fine as the season goes on, but he's also having a slow start.

Who Else Played

[Brent Hibbitts](#), [Sean Lonergan](#), [Jon Teske](#), and [Fred Wright-Jones](#) all played in both games, but failed to score, except for Teske, who hit 2 free throws vs. SMU.

Who Didn't Play

[Andrew Dakich](#) and [Austin Davis](#) are both being redshirted this season.

The Big Picture

Just one week after saying that we may have to adjust our expectations for Michigan downward a little for this season, they go into Madison Square Garden and dominate two pretty good teams. Can they keep it up? Will this translate into success in the Big Ten games? We shall see, but things sure look a lot more encouraging than they did just one week ago.

What's Next

This week Michigan plays two more games, one on the road and one at home. On Wednesday (11/23/2016, 5:00 p.m., ESPNU), Michigan plays at South Carolina, then on Saturday (11/26/2016, 7:00 p.m., ESPN3), Michigan plays Mount St. Mary's in Crisler Arena. The South Carolina game is Michigan's first true "away" game, and it will be tough. The home game vs. Mount St. Mary's should be much easier.

Come on down to Crisler for the home game, and check back next week to see what happened, and why.

Go Blue!