

Nothing But 'Net – Week #06 – 12/05/2016 – Losing Ground

Quick Look

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, and they lost one and won one. [On Wednesday \(11/30/2016\), Michigan lost to Virginia Tech 73-70](#), then [on Saturday \(12/03/2016\), they beat Kennesaw State 82-55](#). Both games were in Crisler Arena. The loss and the win leave Michigan with a record of 6-2.

What Happened

Michigan is losing ground. At this point, they were supposed to start looking better, and developing some chemistry, but instead they're looking worse each week. The high point of the season was the two games in Madison Square Garden in the [2K Classic](#), vs. Marquette and SMU. Since then, they have not looked good. They were soundly beaten at South Carolina two weeks ago, and they threw away the game last week vs. Virginia Tech. Sure, they beat Mount St. Mary's two weeks ago, and Kennesaw State last week, but they didn't even look very good in those games. The chemistry is off, and the leadership doesn't look good.

The VT game was one of the more disappointing losses in a while. Michigan managed to avoid this kind of loss last season, but they were powerless to stop VT in the last 4:00 of the game. They outplayed VT for most of the game, led by 15 in the 1st half, and had a 10 point lead (60-50) with 7:44 left in the game. [Derrick Walton Jr.](#) missed the front end of a 1-and-1, VT rebounded the miss, and [DJ Wilson](#) fouled trying to get the rebound. The VT player hit both free throws to cut the lead to 8 points, and the momentum had swung permanently to VT. They outscored UM 21-10 the rest of the way, including a 10-3 run in the last 2:44 of the game. It was gut-wrenching.

[The stats for the VT game](#) actually aren't too bad. Michigan shot pretty well (47.5% overall, 37.0% from 3-point range), they were close on rebounds (26-28), and they won the turnover battle (9-14). They lost the game at the free throw line: VT went 19-for-21 (90.5%), while Michigan went 4-for-7 (57.1%). Those 15 extra points made all the difference.

Even though Michigan beat KSU by 27 points, they were in a dogfight for much of the 1st half. With 4:53 left in the 1st half, UM only led by 3 points (30-27). Fortunately, Michigan went on a 17-2 run to end the half up 18 points (47-29), and never let the lead dip below 17 points in the 2nd half.

[The stats for the KSU game](#) are much better. Michigan shot very well (56.6% overall, 45.0% from long range), they won the rebounding battle handily (32-19), and they won the turnover battle (7-13).

Who Looked Good

[Moritz Wagner](#) was the star of the KSU game, with a career-high 20 points, including 3-for-4 shooting from 3-point range. He also had double figures (11 points) vs. VT. More importantly, he cut way down on his turnovers (1 vs. VT, 0 vs. KSU) and his fouls (2 and 1).

[Zak Irvin](#) had two solid games this week, with 23 points vs. VT and 19 points vs. KSU. Unfortunately, he was cold in the closing minutes of the VT game, and missed a key shot that would have won the game.

[Derrick Walton Jr.](#) had a quiet game (6 points) vs. VT, but he looked better vs. KSU, with 13 points. He did have 5 assists vs. VT, and 8 vs. KSU.

[DJ Wilson](#) had a lousy game vs. VT, with 2 points and 5 fouls in just 11 minutes of play. He bounced back nicely with a double-double vs. KSU: 15 points and 11 rebounds.

[Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman](#) had a pretty good game (13 points) vs. VT, but he was held scoreless vs. KSU.

[Duncan Robinson](#) played more minutes (30) than usual vs. VT, since Wilson was in foul trouble for most of the game. He responded with 15 points. He didn't do quite as well vs. KSU, with 6 points.

Who Looked Not-So-Good

[Mark Donnal](#) had a quiet week, with 0 and 2 points.

[Xavier Simpson](#) also had 0 and 2 points.

[Jon Teske](#) had 0 and 1 points.

[Ibi Watson](#) played in both games, but failed to score.

Who Else Played

[Sean Lonergan](#) played in the KSU game, and had 4 points.

[Brent Hibbitts](#) and [Fred Wright-Jones](#) played in the KSU game, but failed to score.

The Big Picture

So far, Michigan has only played 2 good games, with uninspiring wins vs. the cupcakes. They manage to play one good half each game, but that isn't going to cut it vs. the tougher teams coming up. They have the talent to beat anyone on their schedule, and the lack of focus to lose to anyone. If they can figure out how to play two good halves in a game, they'll do fine.

What's Next

This week Michigan plays two more games, one in Crisler Arena and one on the road. On Tuesday (12/06/2016, 9:00 p.m., ESPN2), Michigan plays Texas in Crisler, then on Saturday (12/10/2016, 8:00 p.m. EST, ESPN2), Michigan plays at (#11) UCLA. The Texas game will be tough, but it's winnable. Texas is 4-3, with a decent win vs. Alabama, and 2 surprising losses, to Northwestern and Texas-Arlington. The UCLA game is virtually unwinnable. UCLA is 8-0, and they beat (#1) Kentucky 97-92 in Rupp Arena last week. They'll be even tougher in Pauley Pavilion, and I'll be happy if UM stays within 20 points of them.

Check back next week to see what happened, and why.

Go Blue!