

## Nothing But 'Net – Week #12 – 01/16/2017 – Not Dead Yet

### Quick Look

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, and they lost one and won the other. [On Wednesday \(01/11/2017\), Michigan lost at Illinois 85-69](#), then [on Saturday \(01/14/2017\), they beat Nebraska 91-85](#) in Crisler Arena. The loss and the win leave Michigan with a record of 12-6 (2-3 in the Big Ten).

### What Happened

After the truly disappointing loss at Illinois, it looked like Michigan might not win another game this season, and that all was lost. But, as Monty Python says, "I'm not dead yet": they played one of their better games in a while in beating Nebraska. Normally, we'd say "eh, Nebraska", but not this season. Nebraska has beaten Indiana and Maryland on the road, so beating them is more of an accomplishment than usual.

"Disappointing" might not cover it for the Illinois debacle. Michigan needed that win, and they didn't show up. The game was close for most of the 1<sup>st</sup> half, and it was tied up 34-34 with 3:18 left in the half. That's when the roof fell in. [Derrick Walton Jr.](#) got called for a foul, and lost his cool. He slammed the basketball to the court, and got called for a technical. So, Illinois got 2 free throws (which they made) and the ball, and got a basket for 2 more points. That started a 15-2 run to end the half up 13 points (49-36), which was all the lead Illinois needed. The closest Michigan got the rest of the game was 9 points (53-44) with 17:22 left, but the lead got as high as 20 points several times. It was ugly.

To their credit, Michigan could have folded their tents and just gone through the motions vs. Nebraska, but they played hard and smart. They didn't play much defense, again, but they managed to get just enough timely stops to win the game. They led the entire game, but never by more than 10 points, and often by 1 or 2 points. They managed to keep the lead in the 3-6 point range most of the game, but they could never shake Nebraska. Fortunately, they hit their free throws in crunch time, and won the game.

The stats for both games are remarkably similar. Michigan played great offense in both games, and terrible defense. In the [Illinois](#) game, Michigan shot very well overall (27-for-51 = 52.9%), they shot 3-pointers well (7-for-14 = 50.0%), and they shot free throws well (8-for-10 = 80.0%). They were crushed on the boards (30-17), but they won the turnover battle (8-11). They lost the game on the boards: all those extra possessions added up for Illinois.

In the [Nebraska](#) game, UM shot very well overall (27-for-50 = 54.0%), they shot very well from 3-point range (11-for-22 = 50.0%), and they shot very well from the free throw line (26-for-30 = 86.7%). As usual, they lost the rebounding battle (29-23), and they won the turnover battle (10-13). They won the game at the free throw line: Nebraska only shot 5 free throws.

### Who Looked Good

For the second week in a row, in both games, 4 of the 5 starters hit double figures.

[DJ Wilson](#) was the star of the Illinois game, with 19 points (on 8-for-12 shooting). He also played well vs. Nebraska, with 11 points, including 3-for-4 shooting from 3-point range.

[Moritz Wagner](#) was the star of the Nebraska game, with 23 points, including 4-for-6 shooting from 3-point range. He had one of his worst games of the season vs. Illinois, with only 6 points, and no defense.

[Derrick Walton Jr.](#) hit double figures in both games (11 and 20 points), but his mental error (technical foul) in the Illinois game swung the momentum the wrong way at the wrong time.

[Zak Irvin](#) also hit double figures in both games (10 and 21). On the downside, he was 0-for-1 and 0-for-4 shooting 3-pointers this week.

[Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman](#) was the other starter to hit double figures in one game (14 vs. Illinois) and have a rough time the other game (6 vs. Nebraska).

### **Who Looked Not-So-Good**

[Duncan Robinson](#) had another quiet week: 2 and 6 points. This is the same Duncan Robinson who shot 60% from 3-point range in the early part of last season. Michigan needs that Duncan Robinson back.

[Mark Donnal](#) had 2 points in each game. This is the same Mark Donnal who had 28 points against Illinois last season in Champaign. Michigan needs that Mark Donnal back.

[Xavier Simpson](#) had 3 and 2 points. He did a decent job of running the offense, and he has quick hands on defense, but he's still got a ways to go.

[Sean Lonergan](#) had 2 points vs. Illinois, and didn't play in the Nebraska game.

### **Who Else Played**

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

[Brent Hibbitts](#), [Jon Teske](#), and [Fred Wright-Jones](#) all played in the Illinois game, but not the Nebraska game. None of them scored.

### **Who Didn't Play**

Everyone played in at least one game this week. Once the Illinois game got out of hand, [Coach Beilein](#) emptied the bench.

### **The Big Picture**

While Michigan hasn't completely ruined their chances for getting into the NCAA Tournament, they certainly didn't help things by sleepwalking through the Illinois game. Their margin for error is getting very thin. At this point, I'd say an NIT bid is much more likely.

### **What's Next**

This week Michigan plays two more games, one on the road, and one in Crisler Arena. On Tuesday (01/17/2017, 9:00 p.m. EST, ESPN), Michigan plays at (#18) [Wisconsin](#), then on Saturday (01/21/2017, 2:15 p.m., BTN), they play [Illinois](#) in Crisler Arena.

Michigan stands no chance at all vs. Wisconsin in Madison. Zero. Wisconsin is 14-3 overall, 3-1 in the Big Ten, and they are virtually unbeatable at home. Just write this one off and move on.

Illinois just beat Michigan last week, but it was a closer game than the final score would indicate. The rematch is a "toss up" game, and Michigan really needs to win it if they want to have any hope of making the Big Dance. If they lose this one, it's NIT time.

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

Go Blue!