

## Nothing But 'Net – Week #16 – 02/13/2017 – Back From The Brink

### Quick Look

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, and they won both of them. [On Tuesday \(02/07/2017\), Michigan thrashed Michigan State 86-57](#) in Crisler Arena, then [on Sunday \(02/12/2017\), they beat Indiana 75-63](#) in Bloomington. The two wins raise Michigan's record to 16-9 (6-6 in the Big Ten).

### What Happened

This is easily the best week that Michigan has had this season, even better than the big wins in the 2K Classic in November. They played two of their biggest rivals, and they beat them both handily. The win over MSU was a total beat-down, with not even a hint of a moral victory for MSU. They were exposed on national TV (ESPN). The win at IU was almost bigger, since Michigan had lost 17 of the last 18 games in Assembly Hall, and hadn't won a true road game this season. The two wins pull Michigan back from the brink, and put them squarely on the right side of the NCAA bubble. They still need to win 4 of their last 6 games, with all of them either on the road or against the top teams in the Big Ten, but Michigan has momentum now, and they're finally playing some defense to go with their high-powered offense.

Question: where has this team been up until now? I'm glad they finally showed up, but it would have been nice if they had shown up a month ago.

Michigan never trailed in either game, which is pretty impressive, and they opened up some nice leads along the way. In the MSU game, the game was close for the first 11 minutes (23-19 with 9:11 left), then UM started to pull away. They started hitting 3-pointers, and grew the lead from 4 to 16 points in less than 3 minutes (35-19 with 6:26 to go in the 1<sup>st</sup> half). They got the lead up to 20 points (47-27) with 1:49 left, then went on a nice 6-0 run to end the half, up 26 points (55-29). Michigan opened the 2<sup>nd</sup> half with 2 quick baskets to make it a 30 point lead (59-29) with 18:50 to go, and forced MSU into a timeout just 1:10 into the half. UM held the Feisty Farmers at arm's length the rest of the game, never letting the lead down below 20 points. The Crisler Arena crowd had a great time chanting "Little Brother!" and "Just Like Football!" It was a great win. MSU's "pain in the butt" head coach, Tom Izzo, actually sat down and shut up for the last 5 minutes!

Back [on 01/26/2017, Michigan throttled Indiana in Crisler Arena, 90-60](#), so IU was out for revenge. Once again, the game was close in the early going, with UM only up by 3 points (14-11) with 12:09 to go in the 1<sup>st</sup> half. The 3-pointers started falling, and Michigan stretched the lead to 13 points (33-20) with 4:01 left in the half. UM went cold at that point, and didn't score again until the 17:40 mark in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, almost 6 and a half minutes. Fortunately, IU didn't score much either, and UM still had an 8-point lead (35-27). Michigan got the lead back up to 13 points again (56-43) with 8:30 left in the game, then again with 4:58 left. They managed the end of the game very well, hitting their free throws, and won by 12. It was a good, solid win.

The [stats for the MSU game](#) are very impressive. Michigan shot very well overall (32-for-53 = 60.4%), they shot 3-pointers very well (10-for-21 = 47.6%), and they shot free throws very well (12-for-14 = 85.7%). They lost the rebounding battle (26-22), but they won the turnover battle handily (8-21). Michigan dominated everywhere but on the boards, and crushed MSU.

The [stats for the IU game](#) are not nearly as impressive, but they're good enough for a Michigan victory. Michigan shot fairly well overall (26-for-55 = 47.3%), they shot 3-pointers pretty well (8-for-22 = 36.4%), and they shot free throws very well (15-for-19 = 78.9%). They lost the rebounding battle (32-29), but they won the turnover battle (8-15). Those extra 7 possessions really helped.

### Who Looked Good

[Derrick Walton Jr.](#) continued his recent streak of great games with 2 more. He was the high scorer for Michigan in both games, with 20 and 25 points. He went 9-for-9 from the free throw line vs. IU, to help seal the win.

[Moritz Wagner](#) had a great week, with 19 and 11 points. He also had 10 rebounds vs. IU, for his first career double-double. He did foul out of the IU game in the last minute, but by then the result was no longer in doubt. He could have had another 10 points vs. IU if he had dunked the ball instead of laying it up for 5 missed layups.

[Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman](#) had a good week, even if he only hit double figures once, in the MSU game. He had 16 big points vs. MSU, and 7 vs. IU.

[DJ Wilson](#) had a rough game vs. MSU, with only 6 points in 22 minutes of action, but he bounced back nicely with 13 points and 35 minutes vs. IU.

[Duncan Robinson](#) had a good week, with 10 and 8 points. His defense was also improved.

[Xavier Simpson](#) finally figured things out in the MSU game, and played his best game so far. He finally took a few shots, and made most of them, for 7 points on 3-for-4 shooting. He also had a rebound and 2 assists. It was great to see him contribute. He scored 2 more points, and had 2 more assists, in the IU game.

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

[Zak Irvin](#) is almost completely worthless out there anymore. He is in a major slump, but he keeps on shooting, and missing. In his last 4 games, here's how he has shot:

- At Michigan State: 0-for-8 (0-for-2 from 3-point range)
- Ohio State: 2-for-10 (1-for-6)
- Michigan State: 1-for-5 (1-for-2)
- At Indiana: 1-for-8 (0-for-5)

That adds up to 4-for-31 (12.9%) overall, 2-for-15 (13.3%) from 3-point range.

[Mark Donna](#) had a quiet week, with 3 and 4 points.

### **Who Else Played**

[Brent Hibbitts](#), [Sean Lonergan](#), [Jon Teske](#), [Ibi Watson](#), and [Fred Wright-Jones](#) all played in the MSU blowout, and Wright-Jones actually scored (2 free throws). Lonergan, Teske, and Watson played in the last minute of the IU game, but didn't score.

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

Everyone got to play in (at least) the MSU massacre.

### **The Big Picture**

Remember what I said last week about the NIT instead of the NCAA Tournament? Not so fast! Michigan still has some tough games to win, but they control their own destiny. If they keep playing like they did last week, they stand a fighting chance in all 6 of their remaining regular season games.

### **What's Next**

This week Michigan plays two games again, one in Crisler and one on the road. On Thursday (02/16/2017, 7:00 p.m., ESPN), they play (#7) Wisconsin in Crisler Arena, then on Sunday (02/19/2017, 7:00 p.m. EST, BTN), they play at Minnesota.

Michigan played at Wisconsin about a month ago (01/17/2017), and they put up a good fight in an extremely hostile environment. [Wisconsin won 68-64](#), but Michigan was up by 6 points (49-43) with 6:29 left in the game, before they fell apart at the end. Michigan can beat them in Crisler Arena, but they need to play the way they did against IU twice and MSU once, not the way they played against Ohio State. This will be a tough game, but it's winnable.

This is the only time Michigan plays [Minnesota](#) this season. Minnesota is 18-7 overall, 6-6 in the Big Ten, with only one impressive win (Purdue), and a couple not-so-hot losses (Penn State and Ohio State). They're pretty tough at home (13-3), but not unbeatable. This will also be a tough game.

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

Go Blue!