

Nothing But 'Net – Week #19 – 03/06/2017 – End Of The Regular Season

Quick Look

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, both on the road, and they lost one and won one. [On Wednesday \(03/01/2017\), Michigan lost at Northwestern 67-65](#), then [on Sunday \(03/05/2017\), they beat Nebraska 93-57](#) in Lincoln. The loss and the win leave Michigan with a final regular season record of 20-11 (10-8 in the Big Ten). They ended up tied for 5th place in the Big Ten with Northwestern, Michigan State, and Iowa.

What Happened

It was a week of contrasts. The loss at Northwestern on Wednesday was devastating, but Michigan bounced back big time, and crushed Nebraska on Sunday. Northwestern has a good team this season, and the game was very close, but the way Michigan lost was gut-wrenching. Northwestern led for most of the game, but usually by only 4-6 points, with a high of 11 points. UM led briefly a couple times, but never by more than 2 points. Northwestern led by 2 points at halftime (30-28), but Michigan had their last lead (63-62) with 2:32 left in the game. Northwestern tied it up at 63-63, and it was still tied, 65-65, a minute later. Both teams missed shots, and Michigan got the ball on a Northwestern miss with 12 seconds left, and took a potential game-winning shot that missed. Northwestern got the ball out of bounds under the Michigan basket with only 1.7 seconds left, and it was nightmare time. Somehow, Northwestern managed to throw a pinpoint pass the length of the court and get a layup as the horn sounded. It was the biggest win in Northwestern's basketball history, since it pretty much sewed up their first ever trip to the NCAA Tournament. It was also the worst possible way to lose a game that looked like it was headed to overtime.

On the other hand, the Nebraska game was never close, and never tense. After Nebraska scored on their opening possession for their only lead, 2-0, UM went on a 14-0 run to take charge, and never looked back. They led by 16 points (45-29) at halftime, and pushed the lead as high as 38 points (93-55) in the 2nd half, before emptying the bench. It was a dominant victory.

The [stats from the Northwestern game](#) are mediocre. Michigan shot pretty poorly overall (23-for-51 = 45.1%), they shot 3-pointers reasonably well (8-for-22 = 36.4%), but they shot free throws poorly, again (11-for-17 = 64.7%). They tied in the rebounding battle (29-29), and won the turnover battle (9-12). They lost the game at the free throw line, again. For a team that had been leading the nation in free throw shooting percentage 2 weeks ago, this is a baffling trend.

The [stats for the Nebraska game](#) are awesome. Michigan shot very well overall (34-for-54 = 63.0%), they shot very well from 3-point range (14-for-27 = 51.9%), and they shot free throws well enough (11-for-14 = 78.6%). They won the rebounding battle (29-26) and the turnover battle (10-16). When they shoot well from 3-point range, they are awesome.

Who Looked Good

[Derrick Walton Jr.](#) hit double figures in both games this week (15 and 18 points), and he also had 16 assists vs. Nebraska (a new school record), for another double-double. He was the leading scorer for Michigan in both games.

[Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman](#) also hit double figures in both games (13 in both games). He was 4-for-7 shooting 3-pointers for the week.

[Zak Irvin](#) was the 3rd starter to hit double figures in both games (12 and 15). He shot 6-for-9 overall vs. Nebraska, including 3-for-5 from 3-point range. It was great to have him back, after a few rough weeks.

[Moritz Wagner](#) almost had a double-double vs. Northwestern, with 8 points and 10 rebounds, and he hit double figures (11 points) vs. Nebraska, including 3-for-4 shooting 3-pointers.

[Duncan Robinson](#) almost had double figures in both games, with 8 and 10 points. He shot 2-for-3 from 3-point range in both games.

[Xavier Simpson](#) didn't score much (2 and 6 points), but he looked much more comfortable out there, and he played some nice defense.

[Mark Donnal](#) had a quiet game vs. Northwestern (3 points), but he looked much better vs. Nebraska (9 points). He even hit another 3-pointer vs. Nebraska.

Who Looked Not-So-Good

[DJ Wilson](#) had a quiet week, with 4 and 7 points.

Who Else Played

[Sean Lonergan](#), [Jon Teske](#), [Ibi Watson](#), and [Fred Wright-Jones](#) all played in the last 4 minutes of the Nebraska game, and Lonergan and Watson both scored 2 points. None of them played in the Northwestern game.

Who Didn't Play

[Brent Hibbitts](#) didn't play this week.

The Big Picture

Michigan is definitely in [the NCAA Tournament](#), probably with an 8 or 9 seed. They finished the regular season strong, and they have momentum going into postseason play. They have an elite offense, and a capable defense. It all depends on whether or not they are hot. If the 3-pointers are falling, they're tough to beat. If they're having a cold-shooting game, they can occasionally scratch out a win, but they're much more likely to lose. We'll just have to wait to see which Michigan team shows up each game.

What's Next

On to [the Big Ten Tournament](#). This year, for the first time, the tournament is being held in Washington, DC, in [the Verizon Center](#). Michigan is the #8 seed, and they will begin play in the tournament against the #9 seed, Illinois, on Thursday (03/09/2017, 12:00 noon, BTN). If they win that game, they move on to face the #1 seed, Purdue, on Friday (03/10/2017, 12:00 noon, ESPN). If they keep winning, the semifinal game is on Saturday (03/11/2017, 1:00 p.m., CBS), and the championship game is on Sunday (03/12/2017, 3:00 p.m., CBS). Here's [the complete bracket](#).

Michigan has enough talent to win the tournament, and enough mental instability to lose in their first game. They have already beaten both Illinois and Purdue (in Ann Arbor), but they also lost to Illinois on the road. Which UM team will show up? Who knows!

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

Go Blue!