

Nothing But 'Net – Week #05 – 11/27/2017 – The Maui Invitational And More

Quick Look

Remember last week's article, where I said that Michigan was going to play three games last week? Well, it was wrong: the University of Michigan men's basketball team played four games last week, not three. They played three games in the [Maui Jim Maui Invitational](#), then they played a fourth game at home when they got back from Hawaii. I completely missed that the fourth game was in the same week as the Maui Invitational. Oops.

Another oops: I said that Hawaii Standard Time was 6 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time. Well, HST is actually 5 hours behind (not ahead of) EST. I got that all messed up.

So, what happened with those four games? Michigan won three and lost one. [On Monday \(11/20/2017\), they lost to LSU 77-75, on Tuesday \(11/21/2017\), they beat Chaminade 102-64, on Wednesday \(11/22/2017\), they beat VCU 68-60, and on Sunday \(11/26/2017\), they beat UC Riverside 87-42.](#) The first three games were in Lahaina (HI), and the fourth game was in Crisler Arena. Michigan's record is now 6-1.

What Happened

Michigan really should have won the Maui Invitational opener against LSU. They were the better team, but they let LSU hang around, and LSU won it in the last 90 seconds. The 1st half was all LSU. LSU never trailed in the 1st half, and led by as many as 7 points. Michigan tied the game at 2-2 early, 29-29 late, and finished the half down only 2 points (31-29). Michigan tied the game again early in the 2nd half, 33-33, before LSU pulled ahead again. LSU got the lead up to 7 points again (49-42) with 12:15 to go. Michigan went on a nice 13-4 run to take their first lead (55-53) with 8:52 left, and pushed the lead up as high as 9 points (68-59) with 5:11 to go. LSU went on a 15-6 run to tie the game up (74-74) with 1:33 left, and they outplayed Michigan down the stretch. It was a sad game to lose.

The good news about losing to LSU was that they got to play the only weak team in the field, the host team: Division 2 Chaminade. Michigan got out to an early lead, and never took their foot off the gas. They led by 19 points at halftime (44-25), and got the lead as high as 41 points. It was no contest. Interestingly, Chaminade came back on Wednesday and beat up on a Division 1 team (California) in the 7th place/8th place game, 96-72.

With a loss and a win, Michigan played in the "consolation bracket championship" game, also known as the 5th/6th place game, against VCU. The 1st half was a seesaw battle, with Michigan playing strong in the last 2:30 to take a 6-point lead, 36-30, at halftime. They started the 2nd half strong as well, and pushed the lead up to 11 points (43-32) with 17:11 to go. Michigan still led by 10 points (46-36) with 15:05 left, when VCU started chipping away. VCU went on a 17-3 run to take a 4 point lead (53-49) with 8:11 left. During that run, Michigan went for almost 5 minutes without scoring a point. They were stuck on 49 points forever. It looked like Michigan was doomed. The momentum was all wrong. But, Michigan didn't give up. The teams traded the lead until the 1:48 mark, when it was tied 60-60. Michigan played great basketball down the stretch, and closed the game on an 11-0 run to win it.

The UCR game was everything that the first 3 "guarantee" games weren't: it was fun and easy. Michigan dominated from start to finish, and was never threatened. Everyone got to play, and there were plenty of highlights. The game flow is unimportant. Michigan opened a quick 7-2 lead, and never trailed. The lead was 24 points at halftime (41-17), and got as high as 50 points (85-35) late in the game, before the final 45-point win.

Stats

[The statistics for the LSU game](#) are not very impressive. Michigan didn't shoot very well overall (27-for-59 = 45.8%), they shot 3-pointers terribly (6-for-23 = 26.1%), and they shot free throws decently (15-for-21 = 71.4%). Michigan got out-rebounded (31-29), but they did

win the turnover battle (14-8). Poor 3-point shooting is what cost them the game. When they hit their 3-pointers, the rest of the game falls into place. When they miss them, they look terrible.

[The statistics for the Chaminade game](#) are much better. Michigan shot very well overall (37-for-57 = 64.9%), they shot 3-pointers very well (15-for-28 = 53.6%), and they shot free throws decently again (13-for-18 = 72.2%). They (barely) won the rebounding battle (33-32), and they won the turnover battle (13-8).

[The statistics for the VCU game](#) are surprisingly bad. Michigan shot pretty poorly overall (25-for-53 = 47.2%), they shot 3-pointers terribly (5-for-20 = 25.0%), and they shot free throws terribly (13-for-22 = 59.1%). They tied in the rebounding battle (34-34) and the turnover battle (10-10). They won because they shot more 3-pointers and free throws than VCU.

Finally, [the statistics for the UCR game](#) are decent, but not as impressive as the huge margin of victory would suggest. Michigan shot pretty well overall (34-for-63 = 54.0%), they shot 3-pointers well (13-for-28 = 46.4%), but they shot free throws pretty poorly (6-for-11 = 54.5%). They crushed UCR on the boards (44-32), and they won the turnover battle (11-15).

Who Looked Good

The starters for the LSU game were [Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman](#), [Charles Matthews](#), [Duncan Robinson](#), [Zavier Simpson](#), and [Moritz Wagner](#). [Eli Brooks](#) looked a little better in the LSU game, so he started in place of Simpson for the next three games.

Matthews was the undisputed star of the first two games (LSU and Chaminade) and he played well in the other two games. He scored 28, 22, 11, and 17 points this week. He also had 2 double-doubles: 22 points and 10 rebounds vs. Chaminade, and 17 points and 12 assists vs. UCR. 12 assists is very impressive, especially for a non-point guard.

When Matthews wasn't the star, Wagner was. He scored 24, 10, 12, and 21 points. He also had a double-double in the UCR game: 21 points and 10 rebounds. He even shot 3-pointers well this week: 3-for-7, 1-for-2, 1-for-3, and 4-for-5, which adds up to 9-for-17.

MAAR hit double figures in 3 of the 4 games: 12, 17, 10, and 2 points. Fortunately, his only quiet game was against UCR, which was a 45-point blowout, so his scoring wasn't needed.

Robinson also hit double figures in 3 of the 4 games: 3, 14, 18, and 13 points. Unfortunately, his only quiet game was against LSU, when Michigan needed every point they could get.

Brooks didn't score many points this week (4, 5, 5, and 8 points), but he did the best job of the 3 point guards at running the offense and playing defense. The battle for the point guard position isn't over yet, but Brooks is the clear favorite at this point.

[Jon Teske](#) also didn't score many points this week (0, 6, 8, and 0 points), but he did a very good job backing up Wagner. He played good defense, grabbed a few rebounds, and played with poise and confidence.

[Jordan Poole](#) finally got some playing time, and looked pretty good. He hit double figures twice this week (0, 10, 0, and 11 points), and he showed a nice touch from 3-point range (2-for-3 vs. Chaminade and 3-for-6 vs. UCR).

[Isaiah Livers](#) is looking more confident out there every game. He didn't have a big week scoring (2, 8, 0, and 6 points), but he played some decent defense and grabbed a few rebounds.

Who Looked Not-So-Good

Simpson had a miserable game vs. LSU, picking up 4 fouls in 10 minutes, and scoring 0 points on 0 shots. That cost him his starting role, and he didn't do much to try to get it back: 2, 2, and 0 points in the next 3 games.

Speaking of point guards, [Jaaron Simmons](#) is also struggling. He took a grand total of 4 shots last week, and missed them all.

[Ibi Watson](#) is looking more comfortable and confident out there with each passing game, but he isn't producing: 2, 2, 2, and 4 points. He's a shooter, and he needs to start shooting and making some shots.

Who Else Played

[C.J. Baird](#) played the last 4 minutes vs. UCR. He didn't attempt a shot.

[Austin Davis](#) played in 2 games (Chaminade and UCR) and scored 4 points vs. Chaminade and grabbed 4 rebounds vs. UCR.

[Brent Hibbitts](#) played in 2 games (Chaminade and UCR) and scored 2 and 5 points.

[Naji Ozeir](#) played the last 4 minutes vs. UCR, and missed his only shot attempt.

[Luke Wilson](#) played the last 4 minutes vs. UCR, and missed his only free throw attempt.

Who Didn't Play

Everyone got to play in at least one game, since all 16 players played in the UCR game.

The Big Picture

On the one hand, it would have been nice if Michigan had beaten LSU in the first game of the Maui Invitational. That way, they would have been in the winner's bracket, and could have finished no worse than 4th. On the other hand, if they had beaten LSU, they would have faced a very tough Notre Dame team in the 2nd round, which probably would have resulted in a loss. The 3rd/4th place game vs. Marquette would have been a "toss up", so they still could have gone 2-1 in the tournament. The only difference is that the win vs. Chaminade doesn't help UM at all if they're a "bubble" team for the NCAA Tournament.

The win over UCR was very encouraging, especially after the unimpressive early wins in the first 3 "guarantee" games (North Florida, CMU, and Southern Mississippi). Unfortunately, there are only 2 "guarantee" games left (Alabama A&M and Jacksonville), and the rest of the schedule is much tougher.

Predicted Win Total

While the win over VCU in a "toss up" game was encouraging, it didn't do anything to change my feelings about the Predicted Win Total.

This week's Predicted Win Total is: **16**

Here's a chart of the Predicted Win Totals for each week:

Week	Date	Predicted Win Total
1	10/30/2017	19
3	11/13/2017	19
4	11/20/2017	16
5	11/27/2017	16

What's Next

This week Michigan plays two games, and they're both big, tough ones. On Wednesday (11/29/2017, 7:30 p.m., ESPN), Michigan plays at (#9) [North Carolina](#) in the [ACC/Big Ten Challenge](#), then on Saturday (12/02/2017, 12:30 p.m., CBS), UM plays [Indiana](#) in Crisler Arena.

North Carolina is the defending national champs, and it would be a major upset if Michigan beat them on their home floor.

Indiana is currently 4-2, with no impressive wins and one embarrassing loss (90-69 to Indiana State in Bloomington). Their other loss was to (#22) Seton Hall, which is understandable. This is an important "toss up" game.

Incidentally, I want to register my disapproval of the Big Ten scheduling 2 conference games (at OSU is next week) in early December. It's purely a money grab so that they can play the Big Ten Tournament in Madison Square Garden. Since MSG is busy when the Big Ten Tournament would normally be played, the tournament has been moved up a week, which requires 2 conference games to be played in early December. It sucks.

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

Go Blue!