

Nothing But 'Net – Week #08 – 12/18/2017 – Winning Away From Crisler

Quick Look

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, and they won both of them. [On Tuesday \(12/12/2017\), they won at Texas 59-52](#), then [on Saturday \(12/16/2017\), they beat Detroit 90-58 in Little Caesars Arena in Detroit](#). The two wins raise Michigan's record to 10-3 (1-1 in the Big Ten).

What Happened

These two wins are a bigger deal than they would appear. The win at Texas was Michigan's first true road win, after losing their first two road games (at North Carolina and at Ohio State). True, they have won away from Crisler Arena (in Maui), but this was their first win in a hostile environment. Now, Texas isn't a Top-25 team, and they have some glaring flaws, but this was still very much a "toss up" game, and Michigan won it convincingly.

On the other hand, the win over UDM (University of Detroit-Mercy) was less of a surprise. Michigan is much better than UDM, and it showed. The challenge was to avoid "playing down to the competition", and to avoid getting rattled by a hostile crowd at a not-really-neutral site. Michigan did both very well.

The Texas game started slowly. Really slowly. With 15:40 left in the 1st half, the score was 2-0, Texas. At that point, Michigan finally scored (a 3-pointer) to go up 3-2, and they never trailed again, but it was still slow: 12-6 with 8:26 left in the half. The last 8:26 were closer to a normal game, and Michigan led 32-20 at halftime. Texas had a good run (14-5) to start the 2nd half, and got within 3 points (37-34) with 14:11 left. UM promptly hit three 3-pointers in a row, to take the lead back up to 12 (46-34) with 12:02 to go. That was enough of a lead to last them the rest of the game. Texas got as close as 6 points (56-50), with 29 seconds left, but it was too little too late, and Michigan won by 7.

The UDM game was much easier. Michigan never trailed, and pulled away steadily from the opening tipoff. They got the lead up to 10 points (14-4) with 12:37 to go in the 1st half, up to 21 points (34-13) with 6:13 left, and up to 31 points (48-17) with 2:00 to go. They led by 35 (54-19) at halftime. They pushed the lead as high as 39 points in the 2nd half, and won by 32 points. It was an easy, dominating victory.

Stats

[The statistics for the Texas game](#) are pretty weak for an impressive road win. Michigan shot pretty poorly overall (22-for-55 = 40.0%), they shot 3-pointers pretty poorly (6-for-19 = 31.6%), and they shot free throws decently (9-for-12 = 75.0%). They won the rebounding battle big time (40-31), and tied in the turnover battle (10-10). All those extra rebounds made the difference.

[The statistics for the UDM game](#) are not as impressive as you'd expect for a 32-point blowout. Michigan shot decently overall (34-for-72 = 47.2%), they shot 3-pointers well (11-for-23 = 47.8%), but they shot free throws pretty poorly (11-for-19 = 57.9%). They won the rebounding battle (44-37), and they really won the turnover battle (9-23).

Who Looked Good

The starters for the Texas games were [Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman](#), [Eli Brooks](#), [Charles Matthews](#), [Duncan Robinson](#), and [Moritz Wagner](#). Wagner got hurt in the 2nd half of that game, so [Jon Teske](#) started in his place in the UDM game.

Among the starters, only two hit double figures in both games: Robinson had 10 and 11 points, and Matthews had 12 and 20 points. Robinson still isn't hitting 3-pointers like he used

to, but he did better this week: 1-for-3 and 3-for-4. Matthews had 8 and 7 rebounds to go with his points.

Wagner only started (and played) in one game, and he had 10 points when he got hurt.

Teske only started one game, and he had a career-high 15 points and 10 rebounds, for a double-double. He played in the Texas game, but failed to score. He did a fine job filling in for Wagner.

MAAR had a weird week. He was UM's high scorer in the Texas game, with 17 points, and he also had 10 rebounds, for a double-double. Then he came back and only scored 2 points vs. UDM.

Two bench players hit double figures: [Zavier Simpson](#) and [Jordan Poole](#), both against UDM. They both had 12 points. Coincidentally, they both had 4 points in the Texas game.

[Ibi Watson](#) played in both games. He failed to score in the Texas game, but he had 7 points vs. UDM. He's not afraid to shoot when he's in there.

Who Looked Not-So-Good

Brooks was the only starter who didn't have a very good week. He had 0 and 4 points, and may have fallen behind Simpson in the Point Guard Derby.

[Isaiah Livers](#) has had a rough couple of weeks. Once again, he didn't score much (2 and 0 points), but he did play decent defense, and grabbed some rebounds (3 and 6).

[Jaaron Simmons](#) only played in the UDM game, and he only scored 3 points, all on free throws. He continues to slide down the bench.

[Austin Davis](#) didn't play in the Texas game, but he was the backup center in the UDM game, with Wagner out. He scored 4 points in 7 minutes, and managed to foul out. It's not easy to commit 5 fouls in 7 minutes, but he did it.

Who Else Played

[Brent Hibbitts](#) played in the UDM game, but failed to score.

Who Didn't Play

The bench players ([C.J. Baird](#), [Naji Ozeir](#), and [Luke Wilson](#)) didn't play in either game.

The Big Picture

These 2 wins were both very encouraging. The Texas win was encouraging because it was Michigan's first true road win, and the UDM win was encouraging because Michigan beat an inferior opponent soundly, instead of "playing down to the competition".

Predicted Win Total

Finally: a reason to increment the Predicted Win Total. Michigan now has 10 wins, with 2 more fairly certain wins left on the non-conference schedule (see below). They should resume Big Ten play in January with a record of 12-3, so my previous Predicted Win Total (16) seems a bit pessimistic. Looking at the Big Ten schedule at this point, here's how it breaks down:

- Should Win (4) – Illinois, Nebraska, Rutgers, Penn State.
- Should Lose (4) – Michigan State, Purdue (away), Wisconsin (away), Maryland (away).
- Toss Up (8) – Iowa (both), Purdue (home), Maryland (home), Northwestern (both), Minnesota, Ohio State (home).

So, if Michigan can split the "toss up" games, that would give them a league record of 9-9. Since they're already 1-1, that means 8-8, which added to 12-3, works out to 20-11. I still think that's too high, but 16 was too low. Let's split the difference.

This week's Predicted Win Total is: **18**

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
6	12/04/2017	16
7	12/11/2017	16
8	12/18/2017	18

What's Next

This week Michigan only plays one game. On Thursday (12/21/2017, 9:00 p.m., ESPNU), Michigan plays [Alabama A&M](#) in Crisler Arena.

Alabama A&M is currently 0-11, and is easily the worst team that Michigan will play this season. They have lost to some pathetic competition, and stand no chance vs. Michigan. This game was scheduled to give UM an easy game after finals and before the Christmas break.

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

Go Blue!