

Nothing But 'Net – Week #11 – 01/08/2018 – Two Solid Wins

Quick Look

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, and they won both of them. [On Tuesday \(01/02/2018\), they won at Iowa, 75-68](#), then [on Saturday \(01/06/2018\), they beat Illinois 79-69](#), in Crisler Arena. The two wins raise Michigan's record to 14-3 (3-1 in the Big Ten).

What Happened

After playing two Big Ten games early in December ([12/02/2017 win at home vs. Indiana](#), and [12/04/2017 loss at Ohio State](#)), Michigan resumed Big Ten play in the new year with two solid wins against middle-of-the-pack teams. The Iowa game was a "toss up" game, but the Illinois game was a "should win" game. Regardless, they were games that Michigan was favored to win, and they took care of business. The Iowa win was definitely more impressive, since it's tough to win on the road anywhere in the Big Ten, and Michigan hadn't won in Iowa since 2011.

The early stages of the Iowa game were sloppy, with Iowa leading 10-7 at the 14:07 mark. Michigan went on a nice 22-4 run to build up a comfortable 15-point lead (29-14) with 8:11 to go in the half. Iowa crept back within 8 points (35-27), and Michigan answered with a 9-0 run to push the lead up to 17 (44-27), at the 4:02 mark. Iowa closed the half with a 9-4 run of their own, to make it a 12-point game at halftime, 48-36.

Iowa continued their run at the start of the 2nd half, and pulled to within 7 points (48-41) with 17:23 to go. But, that was as close as they got the rest of the game, while Michigan pushed the lead as high as 17 points (71-54) along the way. Every time Iowa got the lead down under 10 points, Michigan answered with a run of their own to push it back into double digits. It was a solid, encouraging performance.

The first 13:25 of the Illinois game were really ugly. Heck, the first 15 seconds were ugly. Michigan won the opening tip, and threw the ball away on their first pass, then fouled trying to get the ball back. Michigan had 7 turnovers, 7 fouls, and 14 missed shots in the first 13:25 of the half, and trailed by 8 points (21-13). They finally settled down, and went on a 12-2 run to take the lead (25-23) with 4:06 to go. They still led by 2 points (31-29) with 1:58 left in the half, then let Illinois finish the half on a 5-0 run to lead by 3 at halftime, 34-31.

Michigan came out of the locker room fired up, and played some crisp basketball to start the 2nd half. They quickly erased the Illinois lead, and went up by 5 points (41-36) before the 1st media timeout. They pushed the lead up to 9 points (51-42) with 12:52 to go, and kept the lead in the 9-11 point range the rest of the way, winning by 10 points.

It seems weird to complain about the officiating in a 10-point win, but the refs for the Illinois game (Bo Boroski, Chris Beaver, and Kelly Pfeifer) were as bad as they get, even for the Big Ten. They called way too many fouls (22 on Illinois, 17 on Michigan, 39 total), many of them "phantom fouls", and they were obsessed with offensive fouls. I don't think their terrible officiating changed the outcome of the game, but it made it unwatchable at times.

Stats

[The stats for the Iowa game](#) are pretty impressive. Michigan shot well overall (28-for-57 = 49.1%), they shot 3-pointers very well (11-for-25 = 44.0%), and they shot free throws very well (8-for-10 = 80.0%). They just barely lost the rebounding battle (31-30), and they won the turnover battle (10-13). As I've said many times, when the 3-pointers are falling, this team looks great.

[The stats for the Illinois game](#) are also impressive. Once again, Michigan shot well overall (26-for-51 = 51.0%), they shot 3-pointers well (8-for-20 = 40.0%), and they shot free throws

well (19-for-24 = 79.2%). They lost the rebounding battle again (31-27), and they won the turnover battle again (15-17). 15 turnovers is a lot for this team, but they managed to do enough other things right to win the game.

Who Looked Good

The starters for the Iowa game were [Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman](#), [Eli Brooks](#), [Charles Matthews](#), [Duncan Robinson](#), and [Moritz Wagner](#). [Zavier Simpson](#) has been playing better than Brooks lately, so he got the start in the Illinois game.

MAAR had a big week, with double figures in both games (15 and 13), and lots of other nice stats: 11 rebounds (7 and 4), 10 assists (6 and 4), and 4 steals (2 and 2). That's called "stuffing the stat sheet".

Matthews was the only other starter to hit double figures in the both games (14 and 10), but he just barely made it in the Illinois game. He's the player who got the 1st foul, 15 seconds into the game, so he sat for a while. He came back in 6 minutes later, and picked up his 2nd foul in less than a minute, so he sat for the rest of the half. He started the 2nd half, and managed to play about 3 minutes before picking up his 3rd foul on a VERY questionable offensive foul call. This was probably the worst call we've seen this season, and it really got the crowd riled up. When Matthews finally got back in at the 11:31 mark, he managed to avoid any more fouls, and he finally got to play and score.

The only other player to hit double figures in both games wasn't a starter, it was [Isaiah Livers](#). He looked great in both games, with 13 and 12 points. It wasn't just the number of points he scored, it was how and when he scored them. In both games, he scored important baskets to either stop an opponent's run, or to start an important Michigan run. All of his baskets were big, and he hit a nice combination of 3-pointers and emphatic dunks. To top it all off, he shot a very nice percentage in both games: 5-for-6 overall (3-for-3 from 3-point range) vs. Iowa, and 5-for-7 overall (2-for-3 from 3-point range) vs. Illinois.

Most of the other starters each had one good game and one so-so game. Robinson had 5 points vs. Iowa, but came back for 13 points vs. Illinois. Wagner had 4 points vs. Iowa, and looked rusty again, but scored 14 points vs. Illinois, and finally looked a little like his old self.

Simpson had 15 off the bench vs. Iowa, but only had 5 points as a starter vs. Illinois.

[Jordan Poole](#) came off the bench in both games, and had one so-so game (3 points vs. Iowa) and one good game (11 points vs. Illinois). He and Livers sparked a nice UM comeback late in the 1st half of the Illinois game.

[Jon Teske](#) played in both games, and scored 6 and 0 points. He wasn't much of a factor on offense, but he did play good defense, and he grabbed some important rebounds. He also gave Wagner a rest every now and then.

Who Looked Not-So-Good

Brooks was the only starter (vs. Iowa) who didn't have a very good week. He played 8 minutes vs. Iowa, and 4 minutes vs. Illinois, and failed to score. Simpson has definitely passed him, for now.

[Jaaron Simmons](#) played 4 minutes in the Illinois game, and scored 1 point. He didn't play vs. Iowa. He continues to slide down the bench.

Who Else Played

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

Who Didn't Play

[Austin Davis](#) and the practice squad players ([C.J. Baird](#), [Brent Hibbitts](#), [Naji Ozeir](#), [Rico Ozuna-Harrison](#), and [Luke Wilson](#)) all failed to get into either game.

The Big Picture

These were two important wins for Michigan. UM has to win as many of the games against the unranked Big Ten teams as they can, because the games against the ranked teams are coming right up. Michigan State and Purdue look like the two teams to beat in the Big Ten this season, so Michigan is playing for 3rd place.

Predicted Win Total

Michigan won a "Should Win" game and a "Toss Up" game, and they've won enough "Toss Up" games to move the Predicted Win Total up one game.

This week's Predicted Win Total is: **19**

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
9	12/25/2017	18
10	01/01/2018	18
11	01/08/2018	19

What's Next

This week Michigan plays two games, both in the Big Ten. On Tuesday (01/09/2018, 9:00 p.m., ESPN), Michigan plays (#13) [Purdue](#) in Crisler Arena, then on Saturday (01/13/2018, 12:00 p.m., FOX), they play at (#1) [Michigan State](#).

Purdue is currently 15-2 (4-0 in the Big Ten), with a couple impressive wins (Arizona and Louisville) and a couple less-than-impressive losses (Tennessee and Western Kentucky, both on a neutral floor). Their 4 Big Ten wins aren't very exciting (at Maryland, Northwestern, Rutgers, and Nebraska), but they've won handily. They still have their incredibly tall center (Isaac Haas, 7'2") and an even taller freshman with a similar name (Matt Haarms, 7'3"). Teske is going to be busy. Michigan can beat Purdue, but they'll need to play their best game so far this season to do it.

Ah, our old friends, Michigan State. We only play them once this season, in East Lansing, and that's probably a good thing. They are loaded this season, and could really stomp on UM if things get out of hand. They are currently 15-2 (3-1 in the Big Ten), with one understandable loss, to (#2) Duke on a neutral court, and one surprising loss, at unranked Ohio State. They've beaten a couple very good teams already this season (North Carolina and Notre Dame), and they've won their Big Ten games handily, other than OSU. Michigan stands very little chance in this game, and keeping it close late in the 2nd half would be a moral victory.

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

Go Blue!

