

## Nothing But 'Net – Week #12 – 01/15/2018 – So Close

### Quick Look

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, and they lost one and won one. [On Tuesday \(01/09/2018\), they lost to \(#5\) Purdue 70-69](#) in Crisler Arena, then [on Saturday \(01/13/2018\), they won at \(#4\) Michigan State 82-72](#). The loss and the win leave Michigan with a record of 15-4 (4-2 in the Big Ten).

### What Happened

This week was SO CLOSE to being a perfect week. The win over MSU was huge, and very unexpected, but the loss to Purdue was heartbreaking. After trailing for most of the game, UM fought back in the closing moments of the Purdue game, only to have it stolen away by some lousy officiating. If the last 6.2 seconds of the game had been called correctly, Michigan could have won that game, but the officials blew it.

Purdue is a very good team, and they played very well. They outplayed Michigan for much of the game, and had a couple 14-point leads, but they couldn't stop the relentless UM comeback in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. The game was all tied up (69-69) with 28 seconds left, and Michigan had the ball with no shot clock. They ran the clock down to 6 seconds, and drove in for the go-ahead layup, or at least a foul. Instead, Purdue knocked the ball away, and the officials (correctly) signaled that it was UM's ball. No problem, still plenty of time to take a go-ahead shot. Actually, they could have called a reach-in foul on the knock-away, but instead they viewed the replay for almost 5 minutes, then gave the ball to Purdue! Absolutely wrong! They compounded the error with 4 seconds left on the clock when they called a foul on Michigan on a clean take-away. The Purdue player hit one of the two free throws, and Michigan's last second heave from near half-court rimmed out. The Purdue players danced like they had won the National Championship, the boos rained down, and the officials hustled off the court, the damage done. They were terrible, just terrible.

If you had told me that UM would go 1-1 last week, I would have been positive that it was a home win vs. Purdue and a road loss at MSU, not the other way around. UM rarely wins at MSU, and MSU has a loaded team this season. The game was close most of the way, with UM holding a small lead most of the game. MSU led by 3 at halftime (37-34), but the lead changed hands several times in the first 11+ minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. The turning point came at the 8:10 mark, with MSU up by one point (55-54). UM hit a 3-pointer, and never trailed again. Once Michigan got the lead up to 7-9 points, they kept it there. It was a very impressive win.

### Stats

[The stats for the Purdue game](#) are actually pretty solid. Michigan shot pretty well overall (26-for-58 = 44.8%), they shot 3-pointers very well (10-for-22 = 45.5%), and they shot free throws reasonably well (7-for-11 = 63.6%). They won the rebounding battle (36-29) which is stunning, considering Purdue's height advantage (a 7'2" guy with a 7'3" backup), but they lost the turnover battle (9-8). The reason Purdue won the game was their 3-point shooting (12-for-21 = 57.1%), including 5-for-5 to start the game, and 7-for-10 in the 1<sup>st</sup> half. It was like a videogame for much of the 1<sup>st</sup> half.

[The stats for the MSU game](#) are not nearly as impressive. Michigan shot decently overall (24-for-57 = 42.1%), they shot 3-pointers OK (6-for-15 = 40.0%), and they shot free throws pretty well (28-for-35 = 80.0%). Michigan lost the rebounding battle (31-32), but won the turnover battle big time (7-18). The important stat here is free throws. That's where Michigan won the game. Why did Michigan shoot 35 free throws (and why did MSU shoot 32 free throws)? Because "TV Teddy" Valentine and his motley crew called 51 fouls in 40 minutes (25 against UM, 26 against MSU).

### Who Looked Good

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

The star this week was definitely Wagner, with 11 points vs. Purdue, and a career-high 27 points vs. MSU, on 8-for-13 overall shooting (3-for-4 from 3-point range), and 8-for-8 shooting from the free throw line. He did a decent job defending the 7'2" and 7'3" guys from Purdue, and a great job defending the MSU centers.

If Wagner was "#1" this week, Simpson was "#1A". He scored 15 points vs. Purdue (Michigan's high scorer) and a career-high 16 points vs. MSU, had 5 assists in each game, and grabbed 6 and 4 rebounds. His only weak spot was free throw shooting: 1-for-2 vs. Purdue, and 5-for-10 vs. MSU. Michigan only missed 7 free throws vs. MSU, and he missed 5 of them. Sigh.

Matthews had a good week, with double figures in both games (14 and 10 points). He wasn't very efficient (5-for-14 vs. Purdue, 3-for-10 vs. MSU), but he was UM's leading rebounder (7) vs. Purdue.

MAAR had a pretty good week, with 7 and 14 points. He was also inefficient (3-for-9 and 3-for-11), but he did a good job on defense.

Livers hit double figures (10 points) off the bench vs. Purdue, and 6 points as a starter vs. MSU. He played hard in both games, and is becoming a solid defender. I really liked his dunk with 11 seconds left in the MSU game.

[Jon Teske](#) played in both games, and scored 0 and 4 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.

[Jordan Poole](#) continued to provide quality minutes off the bench, scoring 8 and 2 points.

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

Robinson played in both games, and didn't do much. He scored 4 and 3 points, but was overwhelmed on the defensive end.

[Eli Brooks](#) played a few minutes in each game as the 2<sup>nd</sup> point guard. He failed to score. He plays good defense, and he runs the offense pretty well, but he isn't much of a factor offensively.

### **Who Else Played**

[Austin Davis](#) played for 2 minutes in the MSU game, and failed to score. He did commit 2 fouls.

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

[Jaaron Simmons](#), [Ibi Watson](#), 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**

This was a big week for Michigan, and it could have been even bigger. At 4-2 in Big Ten play, Michigan is right in the thick of things, but Purdue and (what?) Ohio State are both undefeated in league play and tied for 1<sup>st</sup> place. They played both Purdue and MSU tough, and if they continue to play that well, they'll finish in the top half of the Big Ten standings.

## Predicted Win Total

Michigan won a "Should Lose" game and lost a "Toss Up" game. They're at 15 wins, with 12 games left. If they can split those, that would be 6 more wins, so I'm moving the Predicted Win Total up one game.

This week's Predicted Win Total is: **20**

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
12	01/15/2018	20

## What's Next

This week Michigan plays three games, all in the Big Ten. On Monday (01/15/2018, 6:30 p.m., FS1), Michigan plays [Maryland](#) in Crisler Arena, on Thursday (01/18/2018, 9:00 p.m. EST, BTN), they play at [Nebraska](#), then on Sunday (01/21/2018, 12:00 p.m., BTN), they play [Rutgers](#) in Crisler Arena. Combined with the MSU game on 01/13/2018, that's 4 games in 8 days.

Maryland is currently 14-5 (3-3 in the Big Ten). They don't have any impressive wins, and their only embarrassing loss was to St. Bonaventure. Michigan should win this game, but it could be tricky.

Nebraska is currently 12-7 (3-3 in the Big Ten). They've got a few impressive wins (Minnesota, Northwestern, and Wisconsin), and a few unimpressive losses (St. John's, UCF, and Penn State). It's always tough to win on the road in the Big Ten, and I expect this game to be a tough one.

Rutgers is currently 11-8 (1-5 in the Big Ten). They've got a couple impressive wins (#15 Seton Hall and Wisconsin), and a couple embarrassing losses (Stony Brook and Hartford). After a few years as the doormat of the Big Ten, Rutgers is moving up in the standings a little. They aren't the automatic win they used to be. They took MSU to overtime in Breslin last week before losing. I expect Michigan to beat them, especially in Crisler, but it won't be as easy as it used to be.

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

Go Blue!