

## Nothing But 'Net – Week #13 – 01/22/2018 – A Brutal Week

### Quick Look

The (#23) University of Michigan men's basketball team played three games last week, and they won two and lost one. [On Monday \(01/15/2018\), they beat Maryland 68-67](#) in Crisler Arena, [on Thursday \(01/18/2018\), they lost at Nebraska 72-52](#), then [on Sunday \(01/21/2018\), they beat Rutgers 62-47](#) in Crisler Arena. The two wins and one loss leave Michigan with a record of 17-5 (6-3 in the Big Ten).

### What Happened

Wait, what made this a "brutal week"? Winning 2 out of 3 is pretty good, right? It's tough to win on the road in the Big Ten, right? Well, yes, 2 out of 3 ain't bad, and it is tough to win on the road in the Big Ten, but it was the way Michigan played this week that made it "brutal". Combined with the (glorious) win over Michigan State last Saturday (01/13/2018), Michigan played 4 games in 8 days, 2 of them on the road, and they showed it. They played with "tired legs" and a distinct lack of crispness. They made way too many physical and mental errors that they hadn't made in weeks. They should have beaten Maryland by 20 – 25 points, not one point. They should have battled Nebraska to the final possession, with a 50-50 chance to win it at the end, not lose by 20. They never should have fallen behind Rutgers by 6 points (8-2) with 6 minutes gone in the game. They were just off all week, and they were lucky to win 2 out of 3 games.

The Maryland game was very frustrating. After the huge win at MSU just 2 days before, the crowd was just waiting for a reason to cheer, and the team refused to give it to them. Turnovers. Missed layups. Bricked wide-open 3-pointers. Dumb fouls. The first 27 minutes were miserable. Maryland led for the entire 1<sup>st</sup> half, by as many as 14 points, and for the first 7 minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. Michigan got their first lead (42-41) with 13:02 left in the game, then gave it away again (47-46) with 10:40 to go. They got it back again (49-47) 13 seconds later, and led the rest of the game, until the final seconds. In the part of the game where Michigan caught up to Maryland, Michigan hit five 3-pointers in a row in about 2 minutes. That finally gave the crowd something to cheer about. Things were looking pretty solid, with Michigan leading by 5 (66-61) with only 25 seconds left, but Maryland hit two 3-pointers, and Michigan missed a pair of free throws, and suddenly Maryland led by one point (67-66) with only 3.5 seconds left. Fortunately, Maryland fouled [Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman](#) as he drove to the basket with 1.2 seconds left, and he hit both free throws to win the game. It was very exciting, but it shouldn't have been. Michigan should have won this game easily, not by one point in the last second.

The Nebraska game was horrible, just horrible. Michigan made way too many mistakes, and handed the game to Nebraska. With 13:51 to go in the 1<sup>st</sup> half, UM hit a 3-pointer to get their last lead, 12-10. They missed a shot, committed 2 turnovers, and made another basket. At that point (11:10 left in the 1<sup>st</sup> half), they were only down 4 points (16-12). They then proceeded to miss 8 shots in a row, and commit 3 more turnovers. The next time they scored was a pair of free throws with 5:05 left, to pull within 8 points (24-16). They finally made a basket with 3:43 to go, which got them within 9 points (28-19), and they limped into halftime down 11 points (32-21). The big turning point in the game came early in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. Michigan hit a basket to pull within 8 points (35-27) with 17:43 to go. Nebraska shot and missed, and [Charles Matthews](#) got the rebound cleanly. He stood there for a couple seconds, deciding who to pass it to, then he threw it right to a Nebraska player. The Nebraska player didn't do anything sneaky to steal the ball, Matthews threw it right to him. To make things even worse, he just stood there and watched as the Nebraska player ran past him for an uncontested layup. He just froze. That was the game right there. Michigan never got any closer than 12 points, and Nebraska kept the lead in the 16-18 point range for most of the rest of the game. It was the worst game Michigan has played in a while.

At least the Rutgers game was a solid win. It wasn't pretty, and it wasn't as easy as the final score would suggest, but it was a solid win. In the early going, both teams had trouble

scoring, with Rutgers leading 8-2 with 14:02 left in the 1<sup>st</sup> half. Yes, Michigan had scored 2 points in the first 6 minutes of the game. They made their first shot, then missed 9 shots in a row. They missed layups, short jumpers, and open 3-pointers. They got the shots they wanted, they just couldn't get them to fall. Michigan finally got the lead back (13-10) with 10:35 to go, and they never trailed again. They led by 6 at halftime (27-21), and finally got a double-digit lead (37-27) at the 15:34 mark. They never let the lead get below 7 points, and kept it in the 12-14 point range for most of the rest of the game.

## Stats

[The stats for the Maryland game](#) are not very impressive. Michigan shot pretty poorly overall (25-for-61 = 41.0%), they shot 3-pointers pretty well (11-for-26 = 42.3%), and they shot free throws pretty poorly (7-for-12 = 58.3%). They lost the rebounding battle (36-30), but they won the turnover battle (6-12). The 3-point shooting is what won the game for Michigan.

[The stats for the Nebraska game](#) are embarrassing. Michigan shot terribly overall (21-for-56 = 37.5%), they shot even more terribly from 3-point range (4-for-18 = 22.2%), and they shot free throws pretty poorly (6-for-10 = 60.0%). They won the rebounding battle (32-29), but they lost the turnover battle (12-9). Poor shooting and turnovers – not a good combination.

[The stats for the Rutgers game](#) are mediocre. Michigan shot poorly overall (23-for-54 = 42.6%), they shot 3-pointers poorly (8-for-25 = 32.0%), and they shot free throws pretty well (8-for-11 = 72.7%). They tied in the rebounding battle (33-33), and they won the turnover battle (9-13). Michigan won this game with defense, not offense. They held Rutgers to even worse shooting (17-for-51 = 33.3% overall, 2-for-9 = 22.2% from 3-point range).

## Who Looked Good

The starters this week were [Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman](#), [Isaiah Livers](#), [Charles Matthews](#), [Zavier Simpson](#), and [Moritz Wagner](#).

No one had a great week this week. A few players had 2 good games, but no one had 3 good games. Wagner had 18 points (and 11 rebounds, for another double-double) vs. Maryland, and 16 points vs. Rutgers, but he only had 2 points (on 1-for-5 shooting) vs. Nebraska.

Similarly, Matthews had 15 points vs. Nebraska (the only Michigan player in double figures), and 10 points vs. Rutgers, but only 7 points vs. Maryland.

The only other players with double figures this week were Simpson (5, 3, and 10), [Jordan Poole](#) (11, 5, and 4), and [Duncan Robinson](#) (6, 0, and 12).

MAAR got close to double figures (7, 9, and 6), and he did hit the 2 clutch free throws to win the Maryland game.

Livers also got close to double figures in 2 games (7 and 8 points), then laid an egg (0 points) vs. Rutgers. Once again, he played good, solid defense.

As usual, [Jon Teske](#) didn't score much (5, 2, and 2), but he did play good defense, and he grabbed some important rebounds. He also gave Wagner a rest every now and then.

[Jaaron Simmons](#) is now the backup point guard, and he did a decent job spelling Simpson with 2, 4, and 2 points.

## Who Looked Not-So-Good

[Eli Brooks](#) played in the Maryland and Nebraska games, and failed to score. He didn't even get into the Rutgers game. He is now the 3<sup>rd</sup> point guard, behind Simpson and Simmons.

## Who Else Played

[Ibi Watson](#) didn't play in the Maryland game, but he did get into the Nebraska and Rutgers games. He scored 4 points vs. Nebraska, and 0 vs. Rutgers.

### 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 any of the games this week.

### The Big Picture

Michigan doesn't know how to handle prosperity. They finally got ranked last week, and they came out and played 3 lousy games, even though they won 2 of them. In close games, they work hard to get a defensive stop at a key moment, then throw the ball away. They don't seem to understand the importance of momentum, both in an individual game and in the season as a whole. I don't think they're intentionally throwing the ball away or trying to lose key games, but I don't think they understand how a key play can change the entire complexion of a game, and how a key win can turn around a whole season. It's very frustrating to watch them play hard, have things under control, then just throw it all away with a dumb turnover or a missed easy layup.

So, Michigan survived their "hell week" (4 games in 8 days) with a 3-1 record, including their signature win against MSU. They probably don't stand a chance of catching Purdue or Ohio State, but they could still finish as high as 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the Big Ten, if they can get back to the level of play they had vs. Purdue and MSU 2 weeks ago.

### Predicted Win Total

I had the Nebraska game as a "Should Win" game, even though it was on the road. Michigan had never lost to Nebraska, [and they crushed Nebraska 93-57 last year in Lincoln](#), so I figured they should win again this year. Wrong. I had the Rutgers game as a "Should Win", and the Maryland game as a "Toss Up". At the halfway point in the Big Ten season, here's what's left on Michigan's schedule:

- Should Win (1) – Penn State.
- Should Lose (3) – Purdue, Wisconsin, Maryland.
- Toss Up (5) – Iowa, Northwestern (both), Minnesota, Ohio State.

At 17-5 (6-3), if Michigan wins the game they should win, loses the games they seem destined to lose, and goes 3-2 in the "Toss Up" games, that would give them a record of 21-10 (10-8). I'm going to leave the Predicted Win Total right where it is.

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
13	01/22/2018	20

### **What's Next**

After playing three games last week, this week Michigan only plays one game. On Thursday (01/25/2018, 7:00 p.m., ESPN), Michigan plays at (#3) [Purdue](#).

Michigan just played Purdue in Crisler Arena 2 weeks ago, and they lost by one point on a questionable out-of-bounds call in the final seconds. It's going to be a lot harder to stay with Purdue in their house. They are currently 19-2 (8-0 in the Big Ten), and riding a 14-game win streak. On the one hand, if Michigan plays like they have since the MSU game, they'll get blown off the court. On the other hand, if they play like they did at MSU, they can beat Purdue, even on the road.

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

Go Blue!