Nothing But 'Net – Week #16 – 02/11/2018 – One Out Of Two Ain't Bad

Quick Look

The (#20) University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, and they lost one and won the other. On Tuesday (02/06/2018), they lost at Northwestern 61-52, then on Sunday (02/11/2018), they won at Wisconsin 83-72. The loss and the win leave Michigan with a record of 20-7 (9-5 in the Big Ten).

What Happened

The good news: Michigan managed to win one of their two road games last week. One out of two ain't bad. The bad news: While any road win in the Big Ten is a good win, that doesn't mean that any road loss is understandable or forgivable. While the win in Madison is a big deal, the loss in Evanston was extremely embarrassing. It was right up there with the loss at Nebraska a couple weeks ago as the worst loss of the season. Michigan appeared to have the game under control, and led for the entire 1st half, by as many as 10 points. They had a small lead at halftime (32-29), and held the lead until the 17:12 mark, when Northwestern went ahead for the first time, 35-33. Michigan never led again, falling behind by 10 points. They went stone cold, and let the game just slip away. Being held to 20 points in the 2nd half by Northwestern is disgraceful.

The win at Wisconsin is a big deal. The Kohl Center has been a "house of horrors" for Michigan, with only one previous win since 2000, in the 2013-2014 season. Sure, Wisconsin is way down this season, but they're still tough at home, and they really wanted to beat Michigan. Unfortunately for them, Michigan started the game hot, built a big lead, and managed to protect it down the stretch. UM never trailed, and led by 22 at halftime (44-22). They built the lead up to 25 points (53-28) at the 14:50 mark, and still led by 23 points (58-35) with 12:15 to go. That looked like an insurmountable lead, until Wisconsin went on a 12-0 run in just over 3 minutes to cut the lead to 11 points (58-47) with 8:52 left. The rest of the way, Michigan kept the lead in the 10-12 point range, but Wisconsin got as close as 7 points (79-72) with 39 seconds left, before Michigan put the game away with a 4-0 run.

Stats

The stats for the Northwestern game are horrible. Michigan shot terribly overall (17-for-44 = 38.6%), they shot 3-pointers terribly (5-for-22 = 22.7%), but they did shoot free throws reasonably well (13-for-19 = 68.4%). They were out-rebounded by Northwestern, again (32-27), and they lost the turnover battle (9-6). Only hitting five 3-pointers is disgraceful. It was just plain embarrassing.

The stats for the Wisconsin game are much better. Michigan shot well overall (28-for-50 = 56.0%), they shot 3-pointers well (9-for-20 = 45.0%), and they shot free throws pretty well (18-for-24 = 75.0%). They crushed Wisconsin on the boards (33-23), and they tied in the turnover battle (8-8). Michigan won this game with 3-point shooting.

Who Looked Good

The starters were Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman, Isaiah Livers, Charles Matthews, Zavier Simpson, and Moritz Wagner for the Northwestern game, with Duncan Robinson starting in place of Livers for the Wisconsin game, after Livers injured his foot/ankle early in the Northwestern game.

Wagner was the star of both games. He averaged a double-double, with 20 points in each game and 9 and 11 rebounds. He was pretty efficient shooting (7-for-10 and 8-for-14), including 3-for-6 shooting 3-pointers in the Wisconsin game.

The only other Michigan player who hit double figures in both games was MAAR, with 11 and 15 points.

Robinson had a good game vs. Wisconsin (16 points), but was one of many Michigan players who had a miserable game vs. Northwestern (3 points). He hit 4-for-7 shooting 3-pointers vs. Wisconsin.

Matthews was the only other player to hit double figures in one game this week, with 11 points vs. Wisconsin. He had 5 points vs. Northwestern.

Simpson didn't score much (6 and 4 points), but he did lead Michigan in assists in both games, with 5 and 6.

Jordan Poole provided some "instant offense" off the bench, with 5 and 8 points. He didn't shoot well in the Northwestern game (1-for-6), but he did a little better vs. Wisconsin (2-for-4).

Who Looked Not-So-Good

Jon Teske had a quiet week: 0 and 4 points. He did a decent job spelling Wagner.

Eli Brooks played in the Northwestern game, but didn't take a shot. He didn't play in the Wisconsin game.

Jaaron Simmons didn't play in the Northwestern game, but he did play in the Wisconsin game, and scored 3 points.

Ibi Watson played in both games, and scored 0 and 2 points.

Who Else Played

Livers only played 2 minutes, and scored 2 points, in the Northwestern game before he got injured. He didn't play in the Wisconsin game.

Austin Davis played in the Wisconsin game (0 points) but not in the Northwestern game.

Who Didn't Play

The practice squad players (C.J. Baird, Brent Hibbitts, Naji Ozeir, Rico Ozuna-Harrison, and Luke Wilson) didn't get into either game.

The Big Picture

It was a weird week, with one of the worst games this season (Northwestern) and one of the biggest road victories in a while (Wisconsin). At this point, Michigan is solidly in the NCAA Tournament, but they have to win a few more games to sew it up.

Predicted Win Total

The Northwestern game was a "toss up" game, but the Wisconsin game was a "should lose" game, so I'm bumping up the Predicted Win Total.

This week's Predicted Win Total is: 22

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
14	01/29/2018	20
15	02/05/2018	21
16	02/12/2018	22

What's Next

Michigan plays 2 games this week, both at home. On Wednesday (02/14/2018, 6:30 p.m., BTN), Michigan plays Iowa, then on Sunday (02/18/2018, 1:00 p.m., CBS), they play (#13) Ohio State.

Think way back; Michigan played at Iowa way back in early January (01/02/2018), and beat them 75-68. Since then, Iowa hasn't done much. They're currently 12-15 (3-11 in the Big Ten), with wins over Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, and losses to everyone else. Michigan should be able to win this one, as long as they play a solid game.

Think even further back; Michigan played at Ohio State way back in early December (12/04/2017), and lost to them 71-62. Since then, OSU has been the biggest surprise in the Big Ten in the last 20 years. They were predicted to come in last in the Big Ten, and they are currently all alone in 1st place (13-1 in the league, 22-5 overall). Their only Big Ten loss was at home vs. Penn State, and they've beaten all the other contenders (Michigan State, Purdue, and Nebraska), and everyone else. This will be a tough game for Michigan, but they can beat OSU. They'll need to play a flawless game, but they can do it. It'll be Senior Day, so there will be a lot of emotion.

OSU's game vs. Michigan back in December was a turning point in their season. Michigan was up 20 points (43-23) with 1:31 left in the 1st half, and cruising to an easy win. That was the moment when OSU turned their season around. They finished the half with a 7-0 run, then started the 2nd half with a 19-3 run to take the lead. The game was tied 60-60 with 3:38 left, and OSU closed the game on an 11-2 run for the win. They haven't looked back since.

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

Go Blue!