

Nothing But 'Net – Week #18 – 02/26/2018 – Ruining Other People's Senior Nights

Quick Look

The (#17) University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, and they won both of them. [On Wednesday \(02/21/2018\), they won at Penn State 72-63](#), then [on Saturday \(02/24/2018\), they won at Maryland 85-61](#). The two wins raise Michigan's record to 24-7 (13-5 in the Big Ten).

What Happened

Two weeks ago (Sunday 02/18/2018), Michigan held their Senior Day, and beat Ohio State. Last week, Michigan was the visiting team for two more Senior Day/Night ceremonies, and they ruined both of them. They beat Penn State convincingly, and they absolutely destroyed Maryland. These were Michigan's final two games of the regular season, and they were very encouraging. Michigan ended the Big Ten regular season in 4th place, tied with Nebraska. Since Nebraska won the head-to-head matchup, they'll get the #4 seed (and double bye) in the Big Ten Tournament, and Michigan will be the #5 seed. The 13 wins and #5 seed are all big improvements on last season's results (10 wins and the #8 seed). Michigan also had a winning record (5-4) on the road in conference play this season, which is a significant accomplishment.

Instead of their traditional slow start, Michigan actually jumped out to a small early lead (5-0) in the first 90 seconds of the PSU game. PSU went on a quick 7-0 run, and took the lead (7-5) with 14:29 to go in the 1st half. Michigan quickly took the lead back (8-7), and led for the rest of the half, by as many as 13 points (30-17). They led by 8 points (34-26) at halftime, and it looked like they had the game under control. Wrong. PSU came out from halftime on fire, and they rattled off a 15-4 run to take the lead again (41-38) with 14:30 left in the game. Michigan didn't wilt under pressure, and they got the lead back (44-43) with 12:04 to go. They never trailed again. The game was tied once (46-46), then Michigan pulled away, and kept the lead in the 7-9 point range for the rest of the game. They fended off every PSU run, and made 9 of their 10 free throws on intentional fouls in the last minute to seal the game.

Michigan had another slow start against Maryland, but didn't fall too far behind. Maryland led 4-0 and 6-3 before Michigan got things straightened out. The teams traded baskets, and the lead went back and forth, until it was tied (12-12) with 12:46 left in the 1st half. That's when Michigan went on a beautiful 8-0 run to get a solid lead (20-12) that they never surrendered. They pushed the lead as high as 30 points (54-24) in the 1st half, right at the halftime buzzer, and momentarily pushed it to 32 points at the start of the 2nd half. That was all the lead that Michigan needed. They toyed with Maryland for the entire 2nd half, and kept the lead in the 20's, except for a brief period when Maryland got within 19 points (73-54) with 5:37 to go. That was way too little too late, and Michigan closed the game out easily.

Stats

[The stats for the PSU game](#) are pretty good. Michigan shot decently overall (23-for-51 = 45.1%), they shot 3-pointers very well (10-for-21 = 47.6%), and they shot free throws very well (16-for-19 = 84.2%). They (barely) won the rebounding battle (34-33), but they lost the turnover battle (12-10). When the 3-pointers are falling, this team looks gorgeous out there.

[The stats for the Maryland game](#) are very nice. Michigan shot very well overall (29-for-57 = 50.9%), they shot 3-pointers very well (15-for-31 = 48.4%), and they shot free throws pretty well (12-for-16 = 75.0%). They lost the rebounding battle (35-31), but they won the turnover battle (8-11). Once again, they hit their 3's, and everything else fell into place.

Who Looked Good

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

None of the starters hit double figures in both games. Wagner was the only starter to hit double figures in the PSU game (18 points), but he only had 8 points vs. Maryland.

MAAR continued his recent hot streak with a good game and a great game. He almost hit double figures (9 points) vs. PSU, then he had a career-high 28 points vs. Maryland. Once again, he was Michigan's leader in assists in both games, with 5 and 7.

Simpson also got close to double figures in both games, with 9 and 10 points. He did a very nice job running the offense, and he played some great defense in both games.

[Jordan Poole](#) was the only Michigan player to hit double figures in both games, with 13 and 12. He is fearless out there shooting 3-pointers, and he's got a great attitude. He is lots of fun to watch.

[Duncan Robinson](#) was the star of the PSU game, with 19 points off the bench, including 3-for-6 shooting 3-pointers. He cooled down a little in the Maryland game, with 7 points on 2-for-4 shooting from 3-point range.

[Jon Teske](#) played 12 and 10 minutes, and didn't score, but he contributed with rebounding and solid defense.

[Jaaron Simmons](#) played in both games, and didn't do much vs. PSU, but he looked good scoring 7 points vs. Maryland.

Who Looked Not-So-Good

Matthews finally broke out of his slump vs. Maryland, with 11 points on 4-for-6 shooting (2-for-3 from 3-point range). He was still in his slump in the PSU game, with 0 points (0-for-5 shooting).

Livers is also in a slump, and has been since he hurt his ankle in the game at Northwestern on 02/06/2018. He continues to start, but he only played 9 and 11 minutes this week, and he scored 2 and 0 points.

Who Else Played

[Eli Brooks](#) played in both games, and scored 2 and 0 points. The basket he made vs. PSU was his first basket since the Detroit-Mercy game on 12/16/2017.

[Austin Davis](#) played in the last minute of the Maryland game, and scored 2 points, for his first (and only) Big Ten basket. He hadn't made a basket since the Alabama A&M game on 12/21/2017.

[Ibi Watson](#) played in the last minute of the Maryland game, and failed to score.

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

Michigan is definitely a lock for the NCAA Tournament at this point. They chalked up two more big wins last week, and most bracket predictions have them as a #5 or #6 seed, up from a #8 or #9 seed last week. They can help their cause with a good showing in the Big Ten Tournament.

Predicted Win Total

With two more wins last week, Michigan has passed my Predicted Win Total from last week (23). They exceeded my expectations in the regular season. Let's see how they do in the Big Ten Tournament and the Big Dance.

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
17	02/19/2018	23

What's Next

Michigan plays in the [Big Ten Tournament](#) in [Madison Square Garden](#) in New York City this week, as the #5 seed. Their first game is on Thursday (03/01/2018, 2:30 p.m., BTN) vs. the winner of the game between the #12 seed (Iowa) and the #13 seed (Illinois), which will be played on Wednesday. Michigan beat Iowa twice, and Illinois the only time they played them, so they should be able to beat either one of them again. If they win that game, they'll face the #4 seed (Nebraska) on Friday at 2:30 p.m. on BTN. The complete bracket is [here](#).

Michigan won this tournament last season as a #8 seed, and they can win it again, but they have to play well every game. There are no easy games in the Big Ten Tournament. They have beaten most of the top teams in the regular season, except for Purdue, and they almost beat them, twice. The only team that beat Michigan convincingly was Nebraska, and Michigan can get another shot at them for some revenge.

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

Go Blue!