

## Nothing But 'Net – Week #03 – 11/12/2018 – Ugly Wins Are Still Wins

The (#19) University of Michigan men's basketball team played their first two regular season games last week, and they won both of them. [On Tuesday \(11/06/2018\), they beat Norfolk State 63-44](#), then [on Saturday \(11/10/2018\), they beat Holy Cross 56-37](#). Both games were in Crisler Arena. Michigan's record is now 2-0.

Time for more Questions & Answers:

Q: Why were these "ugly wins"?

A: These were both opponents that Michigan should beat easily, and look good doing it. While they won both games by comfortable margins, they certainly didn't look good doing it. The biggest problem is outside shooting, specifically, 3-point shooting. When the 3-pointers are falling, Michigan looks good. Everything else seems to fall into place: the inside game, rebounding, defense, everything. When the 3-pointers won't go in, everything else seems to go wrong. So far, in an open practice, exhibition game, and two regular season games, no one on Michigan's roster seems to be able to hit 3-pointers consistently.

Q: Wait. If everything else went wrong, how did Michigan hold Norfolk State to 44 points and Holy Cross to 37 points?

A: OK, you got me. In both games, the defense was fine. In fact, the defense was what kept Michigan in both of these games when the offense was flailing around. The 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the Holy Cross game was one of the better defensive efforts we've seen in a while. Michigan held Holy Cross to 13 points in the last 20 minutes, including a 7-minute stretch where Michigan held Holy Cross scoreless. It's a good thing they did, since Holy Cross actually led the game (24-18) at halftime. Yes, you read that right: Michigan only scored 18 points in 20 minutes of basketball against Holy Cross. Ugh.

Q: How bad was the 3-point shooting?

A: Very bad. Michigan was 6-for-26 (23.1%) vs. Norfolk State, and 3-for-19 (15.8%) vs. Holy Cross. Most of these shots were good shots, wide open, out of the set offense. That's the really frustrating part: Michigan is running their offense pretty well, moving the ball around, getting good open 3-pointers, and clanking them.

Q: What else went wrong?

A: Overall shooting was also pretty bad, pulled down by the really bad 3-point shooting. Michigan shot 36.7% (22-for-60) vs. Norfolk State, and 36.0% (18-for-50) vs. Holy Cross. Also, turnovers were a little high: 12 in the Norfolk State game, 9 in the Holy Cross game.

Q: Did Michigan do anything right?

A: Well, the defense was good, as mentioned above, and they did rebound fairly well. They out-rebounded Norfolk State 52-40 and Holy Cross 39-31. They also had 8 blocked shots vs. Norfolk State and 9 blocked shots vs. Holy Cross. [Jon Teske](#) had 4 and 5 for the week. Finally, they shot free throws well in the Holy Cross game (17-for-21 = 81.0%), although they were terrible shooting free throws in the Norfolk State game (13-for-29 = 44.8%).

Q: Who looked good?

A: [Ignas Brazdeikis](#) (12 and 19 points) and [Charles Matthews](#) (10 and 20 points) both hit double figures in both games. Teske (13 and 5 points) hit double figures in one game. [Isaiah Livers](#) had 10 rebounds in the Holy Cross game. [Zavier Simpson](#) ran the offense well, keeping the ball moving. He got the ball to the right players, they just bricked the shots. [Eli Brooks](#) is definitely the most improved player compared to last year.

Q: Who didn't look very good?

A: I'm still waiting for [Jordan Poole](#) to wake up. He had 3 points in each game last week. I was counting on him to be one of the leading scorers in every game, on high volume shooting. So far, he's 1-for-10 shooting, including 0-for-6 from 3-point range. Simpson also didn't shoot well this week (1-for-4 and 0-for-3).

Q: What about the rest of the team?

A: Lots of players got in for a few minutes at the end of both games, but no one did anything noteworthy.

Q: What did we learn?

A: We learned that this is a young team, with lots of talent, but still (very) rough around the edges. We learned that Matthews and Iggy are the two "to-go" guys on the team offensively. We learned that this is not a very good shooting team, at least right now. We learned that the defense is way ahead of the offense at this point.

Q: What's next?

A: Michigan has three games next week, all on the road. On Wednesday (11/14/2018, 6:30 p.m., FS1), they play at (#9) [Villanova](#), as part of [the Gavitt Tipoff Games \(Big East/Big Ten Challenge\)](#). On Saturday (11/17/2018, 12:00 noon, ESPN3), they play against [George Washington](#) in [the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall Of Fame Tip-Off Tournament](#) in Uncasville, Connecticut. On Sunday (11/18/2018, TBA, ESPN/ESPN2), they play either [Providence](#) or [South Carolina](#) in the championship or consolation game of the tournament.

So, Villanova, again. The last time Michigan played Villanova was in San Antonio in April for the National Championship. Michigan led early, hung around for a while, then got buried under a pile of 3-pointers. Both teams are very different this season, with major departures from both rosters. This will be Michigan's first big test, and the way they've played so far, I expect Villanova to beat them to a pulp.

George Washington is coming off a 15-18 season, with only 2 returning starters, and not much height. This is a game that Michigan should win, but they'll need to play better than they have so far.

I'm not going to worry about Providence or South Carolina too much, since there's no way to tell which one Michigan is going to play. Of the two, Providence is probably the better team.

That's it for this week.

Go Blue!