

## **Nothing But 'Net – Week #10 – 12/31/2018 – Ho-Ho-Ho-Hum & Midterm Grades**

Happy New Year! Forget about the Peach Bowl, Michigan is a basketball school now.

The (#2) University of Michigan men's basketball team played one game last week, and they won it. [On Sunday \(12/30/2018\), they beat Binghamton 74-52](#) in Crisler Arena. The win raises Michigan's record to 13-0 (2-0 in the Big Ten).

Time for more Questions & Answers:

Q: Wait, #2?

A: Oh yeah, I haven't mentioned Michigan's AP ranking this season. They started the season ranked #19, and have steadily climbed the rankings (#18, #9, #7, #5, and #4) to get to this point. The #1 team, Duke, has lost once, but they have looked very good. While all the other teams ahead of them in the rankings have lost a game or two, Michigan has managed to remain undefeated, including impressive wins over Villanova, North Carolina, and Purdue. Michigan is now one of only four teams that are still undefeated. The other three are: (#4) Virginia, (#6) Nevada, and (#22) Houston.

By the way, Michigan ended the calendar year 2018 with a record of 34-5, including a 14-game winning streak near the end of last season, and a 13-game winning streak to start this season. Wow! They've won 27 of their last 28 games.

Q: Why "Ho-Ho-Ho-Hum"?

A: It was a "ho-hum" kind of win, with some "Ho Ho Ho" thrown in for the Christmas/holiday break. Once again, Michigan "played down" to an obviously-inferior-but-pesky opponent in a guarantee game for all but the last eight minutes. The game started out looking like a rout, with UM hitting their first three shots, all 3-pointers, and leading 9-3. Then, they missed their next nine shots in a row, over a six-minute period, and trailed 11-9. The game was tied up 14-14 and 16-16 before UM went ahead for good, 19-16, at the 9:06 mark. Although they never let Binghamton catch up, they sure took their time shaking them off. The lead shrunk to 2 points a few times in the 1<sup>st</sup> half, and was only 5 points (34-29) at halftime. Binghamton was still within 3 points (46-43) with 11:49 to go in the game, and only down 7 points (50-43) with 8:36 left. That's when Michigan finally woke up, outscoring Binghamton 24-9 in the last eight minutes to win comfortably.

Q: What was the problem this time?

A: That's where the "Ho Ho Ho" comes in: Michigan looked like they had just gotten back from a few days off for their Christmas/holiday break. They looked rusty and distracted and just out of sorts. They didn't exactly "look past" Binghamton, but they didn't take them very seriously. Once again, I don't think it's a real problem, and I expect them to be much more focused when the Big Ten schedule resumes next week.

Q: What do the team stats tell us?

A: Actually, the stats were much better than I expected. Michigan shot pretty well overall (30-for-63 = 47.6%), they shot 3-pointers very well (11-for-18 = 61.1%), but they shot free throws poorly (3-for-6 = 50.0%). They won the rebounding battle (37-31) and the turnover battle (8-14). The 3-point barrage won the game for Michigan.

Complete stats [here](#).

Q: Who looked good for Michigan?

A: A few players had a good game:

- [Ignas Brazdeikis](#) had a real up-and-down-and-up-again game. He hit one of the early 3-pointers (at the 18:53 mark), then couldn't buy a basket until the 3:37 mark in the 1<sup>st</sup> half. He was more consistent in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, finishing with 21 points and 8 rebounds. He shot a decent percentage overall (9-for-18), but he was perfect shooting 3-pointers (3-for-3).
- [Jordan Poole](#) scored 18 points, all on 3-pointers (6-for-10). His six 3-pointers is a new career high for him.
- [Zavier Simpson](#) only scored 2 points, on free throws, but he contributed in other ways. He was Michigan's leading rebounder (9), and had 10 assists.
- [Isaiah Livers](#) wasn't the leading scorer for Michigan, but he was probably the reason Michigan won. He came off the bench and scored a career-high 17 points on fantastic shooting (8-for-10 overall, 1-for-2 from 3-point range), and he gave the team a much-needed spark every time he came in.

Q: Who looked not-so-good for Michigan?

A: A couple players had an "off" game:

- [Charles Matthews](#) had a miserable game, with 7 points on 3-for-12 shooting.
- [Jon Teske](#) had an "off" game as well, with 4 points. With his height advantage, he should have had 18-20 points, not 4. He kept settling for 8-foot jumpers instead of dunks, and he missed most of them (2-for-6 shooting).
- [Eli Brooks](#) had one of his least effective games, with 3 points on 1-for-4 shooting.

Q: Who else played?

A: Most of the scout team players got into the game:

- [Colin Castleton](#) played 1 minute, but didn't attempt a shot.
- [Austin Davis](#) played 6 minutes, but didn't attempt a shot.
- [David DeJulius](#) played 2 minutes, and scored 2 points.
- [Brandon Johns, Jr.](#) played 1 minute, but didn't attempt a shot.
- [Adrien Nuñez](#) played 1 minute, but didn't attempt a shot.

Q: Who didn't play?

A: [C.J. Baird](#) and [Luke Wilson](#) didn't get into the game.

Q: What's this about Midterm Grades?

A: Even though Michigan isn't quite to the halfway point in the season, with 13 games played and 18 left to go, the end of the non-conference portion of the schedule is a logical time to look back on the first (almost) half of the season and assign midterm grades. Here goes:

#### Freshman Eligibility

- [Ignas Brazdeikis](#) (A) – Iggy has been sensational so far this season, with only one "off" game (Western Michigan). He leads the team in scoring (16.5 points/game), and is shooting with pretty good accuracy (50.7% overall, 42.9% from deep). He's been Michigan's high scorer in 6 of the 13 games so far.
- [Colin Castleton](#) (Incomplete) – Colin has only played in 7 games so far, and scored 6 points. He hasn't appeared ready to play regularly and contribute yet.
- [David DeJulius](#) (Incomplete) – David has only played in 9 games so far, and scored 6 points. He hasn't appeared ready to play regularly and contribute yet.
- [Brandon Johns, Jr.](#) (Incomplete) – Brandon has only played in 9 games so far, and scored 7 points. He hasn't appeared ready to play regularly and contribute yet.

- [Adrien Nuñez](#) (Incomplete) – Adrien has only played in 9 games so far, and hasn't scored yet. He hasn't appeared ready to play regularly and contribute yet.

#### Sophomore Eligibility

- [C.J. Baird](#) (Incomplete) – C.J. has only played in 7 games so far, and scored 3 points. He's on the scout team, and only plays in "garbage time".
- [Eli Brooks](#) (B) – Eli has been the most pleasant surprise so far this season. He had a very quiet freshman season, but he's much more confident and productive this season. He has played in all 13 games, has scored 56 points (4.3 points/game), and has shot pretty well (44.9% overall, 34.5% from 3-point range).
- [Austin Davis](#) (C-) – Austin has had a slow start to this season. He has played in 10 games so far, and has only scored 15 points. He is shooting a nice percentage though: 7-for-11 (63.6%). He has had problems with committing silly fouls, and seems a step slow out there.
- [Isaiah Livers](#) (B+) – Isaiah has been another pleasant surprise this season. While he was nominally a starter last season, he didn't play much, and didn't do much when he did play. This season, he has been a big contributor to Michigan's success. He doesn't start, but he's Michigan's sixth man, and he usually sparks the team when he comes in. Last season, he played forward, but this season he is playing center much of the time. He's a different kind of center than Jon Teske, and he allows Michigan to play "small ball" and push the tempo a little more. He has played in all 13 games, he has scored 103 points (7.9 points/game), and has the 2<sup>nd</sup> best 3-point shooting percentage on the team (20-for-43 = 46.5%).
- [Jordan Poole](#) (B+) – Jordan has definitely improved from last season, but not as much as expected. Still, he is the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading scorer on the team (13.5 points/game), and the best 3-point shooter (34-for-68 = 50.0%). When he's hot from 3-point range, he's one of the best in the country, but when he's cold, it can be painful.
- [Luke Wilson](#) (Incomplete) – Luke has only played in 4 games so far, and hasn't scored yet. He's on the scout team, and only plays in "garbage time".

#### Junior Eligibility

- [Charles Matthews](#) (B+) – Charles can take over a game and be unstoppable, or he can go invisible out there. When he's "on" and into the game, he looks like a future NBA player, but he occasionally loses focus, and just drifts around. He is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading scorer on the team (13.9 points/game), but his shooting percentages aren't very good: 43.2% overall, 31.1% from deep. He has improved his free throw shooting from last season. He's up to 61.9%, which is respectable.
- [Zavier Simpson](#) (B) – It's hard to grade Zavier out there, since many of the things he does don't show up in the box score. He isn't scoring much (6.7 points/game), and his shooting percentages aren't very good (41.7% overall, 27.6% from deep), but he does have the most assists (81) and steals (20) on the team by far. He does a good job running the offense, and he is tenacious on defense.
- [Jon Teske](#) (B) – Jon has done a good job taking over as the starting center, and he does some things very well, but he's not a complete player. He is the 5<sup>th</sup> leading scorer on the team (7.5 points/game), he's shooting pretty well overall (50.0%), and he leads the team in rebounds (82) and blocks (27). On the other hand, he's not as quick or nimble as Isaiah Livers, and he's not the 3-point threat that Isaiah is, shooting 3-for-15 (20.0%) so far. Still, it's nice to have a 7'1" guy out there protecting the rim.

Q: What did we learn this week?

A: We learned that Michigan can win a guarantee game with a "ho-hum" performance after a distracting holiday break. That's about it.

Q: What's next for Michigan?

A: The Binghamton game was Michigan's last non-conference game. Big Ten play starts this week. Michigan plays two games this week, both at home. On Thursday (01/03/2019, 7:00 p.m., ESPN), Michigan plays [Penn State](#), then on Sunday (01/06/2019, 4:30 p.m., CBS), they play (#23) [Indiana](#).

Penn State is currently 7-6 (0-2 in Big Ten), with no impressive wins, and losses to DePaul, Bradley, and Alabama. They don't have much height: two 6'9" guys, and two 6'8" guys. This is a game that Michigan should win convincingly, but they'll need to focus and play their "A" game.

Indiana is currently 11-2 (2-0 in Big Ten), with wins over Penn State, Northwestern, and Louisville, and losses to Arkansas and Duke. They have a decent amount of height (three 6'10" guys), and a hotshot freshman guard ([Romeo Langford](#)). This game will be every bit as challenging as Michigan's other games against ranked opponents (Villanova, North Carolina, and Purdue), and Michigan will have to play very well to beat them.

That's it for this week. Come on down to Crisler for the two Big Ten games.

Go Blue!