

## **Nothing But 'Net – Week #11 – 01/07/2019 – Good Basketball, Bad Officiating**

The (#2) University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, and they won them both. [On Thursday \(01/03/2019\), they beat Penn State 68-55](#), then [on Sunday \(01/06/2019\), they beat \(#21\) Indiana 74-63](#). Both games were in sold-out Crisler Arena. The two wins raise Michigan's record to 15-0 (4-0 in the Big Ten).

Time for more Questions & Answers:

Q: I get the "good basketball" part, but what's up with the "bad officiating" bit?

A: I've been watching Big Ten basketball since the 1974-75 season (44 years), and I'm still not used to how bad the officiating can be. This week was particularly bad. In both games, the refs took over in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, determined to keep the game close. I counted 12 bad calls in the PSU game, and 10 in the IU game. The really frustrating part was that 8 of the bad calls in the IU game were in a row, all against Michigan, just when UM was about to put the game out of reach. They showed the replays on the scoreboard, and they were all terrible calls. With fair officiating, Michigan wins this game by 25 points.

Q: You're really going to complain about the officiating when Michigan won both games by double figures?

A: You bet! The refs are supposed to officiate the game without looking at the score, but they really tried hard to keep both games close. UM couldn't buy a decent call for over 7 minutes in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the IU game. It was ridiculous. The Big Ten has always had mediocre officiating, but these two crews really took it to the extreme. They were just horrible.

Q: Enough of that; let's hear about the "good basketball".

A: Michigan played very well in both games, despite the poor officiating (that's the last time I'll mention it). Michigan was supposed to beat PSU, probably by more than 13 points, and they played a good solid, unimpressive game against them. Michigan was also favored in the IU game, by 8 points, so they actually beat the point spread. IU was ranked, and they have two very good players, so UM had to play well to beat them.

In the PSU game, Michigan only trailed twice (5-4 and 7-6) before they got the lead for good, and kept it in the 6-8 point range for the rest of the 1<sup>st</sup> half, and in the 10-12 point range for most of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. PSU did get within 8 points a few times in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half (51-43, 53-45, and 55-47) before UM pushed the lead up into double digits for most of the rest of the game.

In the IU game, Michigan led for the entire game, although it was only a 2 point lead early (11-9), before UM went on a quick 12-0 run to make the lead a little more comfortable. UM got the lead as high as 19 points (32-13, with 8:29 left in the 1<sup>st</sup> half), but generally kept the lead in the 12-14 point range. IU crept a little closer in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, but UM kept them at arm's length.

Q: What do the team stats tell us?

A: Actually, the stats were much less impressive than I expected.

[In the PSU game](#), Michigan shot pretty well overall (25-for-55 = 45.5%), they shot 3-pointers decently (5-for-14 = 35.7%), and they shot free throws decently (13-for-19 = 68.4%). They lost the rebounding battle (37-29), but they won the turnover battle (10-18). Michigan won this game because PSU couldn't hit 3-pointers (1-for-14 = 7.1%). Was that good defense by Michigan, or ineptness by PSU? A little of both.

[In the IU game](#), Michigan shot well overall (29-for-58 = 50.0%), they shot 3-pointers pretty poorly (4-for-16 = 25.0%), and they shot free throws pretty well (12-for-16 = 75.0%). Once again, UM lost the rebounding battle (34-31), but they won the turnover battle (3-7). Look at

those turnover numbers: 10 turnovers total between the two teams! Those 4 extra possessions were key to Michigan's win. Not-so-fun fact: UM started the game 4-for-6 from 3-point range, and missed their last 10 attempts.

Q: Who looked good for Michigan?

A: A few players had a good week:

- [Jordan Poole](#) was the high scorer for Michigan in both games, with 17 vs. PSU and 18 vs. IU. He had a little trouble with his 3-point shot (1-for-4 and 2-for-6), but he managed to score in other ways to help Michigan to victory.
- [Charles Matthews](#) hit double figures in both games (14 and 18 points), and even grabbed a few rebounds (5 and 6). He shot 3-pointers very well this week (1-for-1 and 2-for-3), and played great defense, especially in the IU game.
- [Ignas Brazdeikis](#) hit double figures in both games (16 and 10 points), and grabbed 11 rebounds vs. PSU for his first career double-double.
- [Zavier Simpson](#) almost hit double figures in both games (8 and 12 points), and he did a great job running the offense and playing tough defense.
- [Jon Teske](#) didn't hit double figures in either game (9 and 6 points), but he was very important defensively in both games. He couldn't stop either of the opposing centers completely, but he did his best to slow them down. He had 2 blocked shots in each game.
- [Brandon Johns, Jr.](#) had one forgettable game (no shots taken in 2 minutes vs. PSU) and one breakout game this week (8 points and 8 rebounds in 13 minutes vs. IU, both career highs). He looked very comfortable and poised out there vs. IU, and helped hold the fort when both Teske and Davis had foul problems.

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

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

- [Eli Brooks](#) had one of his least effective weeks, with 2 and 0 points.
- [Austin Davis](#) scored 2 points in each game, but committed too many fouls to stay out there for long (2 and 4).

Q: Who else played?

A: Only one of the scout team players got into a game:

- [David DeJulius](#) played 1 minute in the IU game, but didn't attempt a shot.

Q: Who didn't play?

A: The big story this week was the absence of [Isaiah Livers](#). He missed both games with back spasms. He warmed up in both games, but didn't play. His availability going forward is "day to day"/"game time decision". UM needs him back and healthy, as soon as possible. He's become a very valuable 6<sup>th</sup> man, subbing in at either the 4 or 5 and giving Michigan a spark.

Other than DeJulius, the rest of the scout team players didn't play this week: [C.J. Baird](#), [Colin Castleton](#), [Adrien Nuñez](#), and [Luke Wilson](#).

Q: What did we learn this week?

A: We learned that Michigan can elevate their level of play when the Big Ten schedule rolls around. In the five December games after the Purdue game (at Northwestern, home vs. South Carolina, Western Michigan, Air Force, and Binghamton), Michigan didn't look particularly sharp, although they were sharp enough to win them all. If Michigan had played the way they did vs. WMU this week against PSU or IU, they probably would have lost, but they elevated their game to match the competition.

We also learned that Brandon Johns is starting to "get it", and that he can be a viable sub at the center position.

Q: What's next for Michigan?

A: Michigan plays two games this week, one on the road and one at home. On Thursday (01/10/2019, 8:00 p.m. EST, FS1), Michigan plays at [Illinois](#), then on Sunday (01/13/2019, 7:30 p.m., BTN), they play [Northwestern](#) in Crisler Arena.

Illinois is currently 4-11 (0-4 in Big Ten), with no impressive wins, and losses to Iowa State, Nebraska, Florida Atlantic, and Northwestern. They have some height: two 7'0" guys, but no true "stars". It's tough to win any game on the road in the Big Ten, but this is a game that Michigan should win convincingly, if they focus and play their "A" game.

Northwestern is currently 10-5 (1-3 in Big Ten), with one decent win (Georgia Tech) and losses to Fresno State, Indiana, and Oklahoma. They have a little bit of height (three 6'10" players), and a few decent players. Michigan has already played Northwestern once this season (in Evanston on 12/04/2018), when they won a close game 62-60. This game should be a lot like the UM/PSU game last week. If UM plays a decent game, they should be able to beat Northwestern by double digits.

That's it for this week. Come on down to Crisler for the Northwestern game.

Go Blue!