Nothing But 'Net – Week #13 – 01/21/2019 – Gargling Peanut Butter

The (#2) University of Michigan men's basketball team played one game last week, and they lost it. On Saturday (01/19/2019), they lost at Wisconsin 64-54. The loss lowers Michigan's record to 17-1 (6-1 in the Big Ten).

Time for more Questions & Answers:

Q: Gargling peanut butter?

A: They choked. They let the pressure get to them. They played scared. They played "to not lose", instead of playing to win. The long winning streak. The great start to the season. The chance to move up to #1 in the AP poll. The loud, hostile crowd. It all got to them. They choked.

Maybe in the long run, this loss will turn out to be a good thing. Maybe, now that the pressure has been eased a little, they'll just play some hoops instead of worrying about the future. Maybe they'll start hitting the wide open shots that they've been missing. Maybe they'll stop throwing the ball away in crucial situations. Maybe.

Q: What happened?

A: Michigan played poorly, and they lost. Wisconsin played well, and they deserved to win.

Q: Was Michigan overrated?

A: Maybe. They certainly didn't play like the #2 team vs. UW.

Q: What was the problem?

A: Shooting, poor shooting. At its very heart, basketball is a game about putting the ball in the basket. Michigan played decent defense for most of the game, but they just couldn't put the ball in the basket, especially when they most needed to. They shot terribly overall (22-for-54 = 40.7%), they shot 3-pointers terribly (5-for-18 = 27.8%), and they shot free throws terribly (5-for-11 = 45.5%). That's how to lose a game. The complete stats are here.

I've said it before, and I'll say it again: when Michigan is hitting their 3-pointers, everything else seems to fall into place, and the game looks fun and easy. When Michigan can't hit their 3-pointers, everything is a struggle, and the game looks terrible.

Q: Any other problems?

A: Yup, turnovers. Michigan threw the ball away 16 times, tied for their worst performance of the season, and way over their average. Once again, many of those turnovers were at the exact worst time for momentum purposes.

Q: Any problems with the officiating?

A: It was fine, for the most part, but the refs did get a crucial call wrong in the last minute when they called an intentional foul against Michigan that wasn't. It tipped the game toward Wisconsin. However, if Michigan had played a decent game up to that point, it won't have mattered. They only had themselves to blame for being in a situation where one bad call could cost them the game.

Q: Did anyone look good for Michigan?

A: It's tempting to say "no", but it wasn't that bad. A few players had decent games:

- Jon Teske was high scorer, with 15 points. He was the only Michigan player to hit more than one 3-pointer (2-for-4). He did his part, he just didn't get enough support.
- Jordan Poole scored 14 points, but he took 15 shots to get them. He shot pretty poorly (6-for-15 overall, 1-for-5 from deep), he committed 4 fouls, and he had 3 turnovers.
- Zavier Simpson actually had a double-double, with 11 points and 10 rebounds. He played very hard, but it wasn't enough.
- Isaiah Livers did his best to pick the team up when they were floundering around out there, but he only scored 5 points, against 3 turnovers.

Q: Who looked not-so-good?

A: A couple players had a bad game:

- Ignas Brazdeikis was the main reason Michigan lost. He had a horrible game: 0 points on 0-for-5 shooting (0-for-3 from deep), 3 fouls, and 2 turnovers. He was one of Michigan's main scoring threats coming in, and he let the team down badly.
- Charles Matthews also let the team down, with only 5 points, 2 fouls, and 3 turnovers.

Q: Who else played?

A: It was a very short bench again:

- Eli Brooks didn't take a shot.
- Austin Davis scored 4 points.

Q: What did we learn this week?

A: We learned that Michigan isn't as good as they appeared to be. We learned that they won't be able to just "turn it on" whenever the going gets tough. They got away with that in their two close games so far (Western Michigan and the away Northwestern game), but they dug themselves too deep a hole this time.

Q: What's next for Michigan?

A: Michigan plays two games this week, one at home and one on the road. On Tuesday (01/22/2019, 7:00 p.m., BTN), they play Minnesota in Crisler, then on Friday (01/25/2019, 6:30 p.m., FS1), they play at (#25) Indiana.

Minnesota is currently 13-4 (3-3 in Big Ten), with wins over Texas A&M, Washington, Oklahoma State, Nebraska, and Wisconsin, and losses to Boston College, Ohio State, Maryland, and Illinois. They've got a 7-footer and a 6'10" guy, and a couple good players. This is a game that Michigan should win, but they can't play like they did against Wisconsin.

Indiana is currently 12-6 (3-4 in Big Ten), with wins over Marquette, Louisville, and Butler, and losses to Arkansas, Maryland, Nebraska, and Purdue. Michigan has already played them once, two weeks ago (01/06/2019), and beaten them solidly (74-63). It will be harder to beat them on the road, but Michigan can do it, if they play their "A" game.

That's it for this week. Check back next week to see how Michigan did.

Go Blue!