

Nothing But 'Net – Week #22 – 03/25/2019 – Sweetness

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week as the 2-seed in the West Region of the [NCAA Tournament](#) in Des Moines (IA), and they won both games. [On Thursday \(03/21/2019\), they beat \(15-seed\) Montana 74-55](#), then [on Saturday \(03/23/2019\), they beat \(10-seed\) Florida 64-49](#). The two wins raise Michigan's record to 30-6.

Time for more Questions & Answers:

Q: Sweetness?

A: Hey, it's the Sweet Sixteen again, baby! Sure, both wins were against teams that Michigan was supposed to beat, but that doesn't mean much in the NCAA Tournament. Ask (4-seed) Kansas State (lost to 13-seed UC Irvine) or (5-seed) Wisconsin (lost to 12-seed Oregon). Upsets happen all the time in the Big Dance, and as a 2-seed, Michigan's job is to avoid upsets and live to play another game.

This will be Michigan's third trip to the Sweet Sixteen in a row, and the fifth time in the last seven years. Only two other teams (Purdue and Kentucky) have been to the Sweet Sixteen in each of the last three years.

Q: So, what happened?

A: Michigan played two good, solid games this week, and won both games convincingly.

In the Montana game, Michigan jumped out to a quick 10-2 lead with 14:26 to go in the 1st half, then kept extending it, until it was 17 points (25-8) with 6:22 left. Montana got as close as 11 points (32-21 with 2:00 to go), but Michigan still lead by 13 (34-21) at halftime. Montana scored the first 5 points of the 2nd half, to get within 8 points (34-26), but that was as close as they got. Michigan went on a 10-0 run to put the game comfortably out of reach (44-26 with 16:12 left), and kept building on the lead, peaking at 27 points (66-39 with 6:01 to go). It was still 26 points (72-46 with 3:24 left) when [Coach Beilein](#) emptied the bench for three and a half minutes of "garbage time".

The Florida game was much closer, especially in the 1st half. Florida was ahead by 2 points (6-4) with 17:11 to go, when Michigan went on a nice 11-0 run to lead by 9 points (15-6) with 13:59 left in the half. Florida fought back, and got the lead back (23-21) with 6:47 to go in the half. Michigan closed the half on an 11-5 run to lead by 4 points (32-28) at halftime, then came out and started the 2nd half with an 11-0 run to push the lead up to 15 points (43-28) with 17:46 to go. Florida hung around, and got as close as 6 points (43-37), but Michigan kept the lead in the 7-9 point range for the next 12 minutes. Michigan finally pulled away at the 5:10 mark (55-44), and kept the lead over 10 points the rest of the way.

Q: How were the game stats?

A: OK, nothing earth-shaking.

[In the Montana game](#), Michigan shot well overall (25-for-51 = 49.0%), they shot 3-pointers pretty poorly (5-for-17 = 29.4%), and they shot free throws quite well (19-for-24 = 79.2%). They won the rebounding battle handily (39-30), but they uncharacteristically lost the turnover battle (12-10). They won this game with defense, holding Montana to 33.3% shooting (20-for-60).

[In the Florida game](#), Michigan shot decently overall (24-for-57 = 42.1%), they shot 3-pointers decently (7-for-21 = 33.3%), and they shot free throws pretty well (9-for-12 = 75.0%). They crushed Florida on the boards (42-29), but they lost the turnover battle again (10-9). Once again, they won the game with defense, holding Florida to 34.5% shooting (19-for-55).

Q: Who looked good for Michigan?

A: All the mainstream players had a good week:

- [Jordan Poole](#) was the only Michigan player to hit double figures in both games, with 10 points vs. Montana and a team-high 19 points vs. Florida. He didn't shoot particularly well in the Florida game (5-for-15), but he shot often.
- [Charles Matthews](#) was finally back to 100%, after playing hurt in the Big Ten Tournament two weeks ago. He was the high scorer for Michigan in the Montana game with 22 points, and he almost hit double figures in the Florida game, with 9 points. He had 10 rebounds vs. Montana, for a double-double. He played some great defense.
- [Jon Teske](#) only hit double figures in one game (11 points vs. Montana), but he got close in the Florida game (8 points). He also contributed on the glass, with 9 and 10 rebounds, and with solid defense.
- [Ignas Brazdeikis](#) had a good game vs. Montana (14 points) and a lousy game vs. Florida (5 points). He did play good defense.
- [Isaiah Livers](#) almost hit double figures in both games, with 8 and 10 points. His soaring dunk vs. Florida with 4:42 left in the game was the "dagger". It was brutal.
- [Zavier Simpson](#) didn't score a lot of points (4 and 9), but he did have a lot of assists (10 and 9). He also played excellent defense. He did have more turnovers than usual (4 and 3), but he still had 19 assists. He came close to a triple-double in the Florida game with 9 points, 9 rebounds, and 9 assists. A triple-nine.
- [Eli Brooks](#) contributed 3 and 4 points off the bench, and gave the starters some valuable minutes of rest. He also played some good defense, and ran the offense pretty well while Simpson was on the bench.

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

A: Nobody! Iggy didn't look great in the Florida game, but everyone else looked pretty good in both games.

Q: Who else played in the tournament?

A: [Coach Beilein](#) emptied the bench in the closing minutes of the Montana game, and in the last minute of the Florida game:

- [C.J. Baird](#) only played in the Montana game, but didn't attempt a shot.
- [Colin Castleton](#) played in both games, and attempted one shot vs. Montana. It missed.
- [Austin Davis](#) played in both games, and attempted one shot vs. Montana. It missed.
- [David DeJulius](#) played in both games, but didn't attempt a shot.
- [Brandon Johns, Jr.](#) played in both games, and attempted one shot vs. Montana. He made it, making him the only "deep bench" player to score this week.
- [Adrien Nuñez](#) played in both games, but didn't attempt a shot.
- [Luke Wilson](#) only played in the Montana game, but didn't attempt a shot.

Q: What did we learn this week?

A: We learned that Michigan can win the games they're supposed to win in the Big Dance. This is more important than it might seem. There are so many upsets, big and small, in the NCAA Tournament, and avoiding them is crucial. Michigan has all the talent they need, they just need to work on the mental side of the game. Winning these two games convincingly should help their confidence.

Q: What's next for Michigan?

A: Michigan continues play in the NCAA Tournament, as the 2-seed in the West Region. The next two rounds for Michigan are played in Anaheim (CA) on Thursday and Saturday. On

Thursday (03/28/2019, 9:39 p.m. EDT, CBS), they play (3-seed) (#9) [Texas Tech](#). If they win that game, they'll play on Saturday (03/30/2019, TBA, CBS/TBS) against the winner of the (1-seed) Gonzaga/(4-seed) Florida State game.

Texas Tech is currently 28-6, with impressive wins over West Virginia (twice), Kansas State, Oklahoma (twice), Kansas, and Iowa State, and losses to Duke, Iowa State, Baylor, Kansas State, Kansas, and West Virginia. They've got a couple 6'10" guys, but no real superstars. This is a game that Michigan can win, but they have to play with the same intensity they've shown in the first two games of the tournament.

Q: How's the rest of the NCAA Tournament going?

A: Pretty well. The Big Ten is doing fairly well, with 3 of the 8 teams that started play still alive in the Sweet Sixteen:

Eliminated

Iowa (10-seed in the South Region) – Beat (7-seed) Cincinnati, lost to (2-seed) Tennessee

Maryland (6-seed in the East Region) – Beat (11-seed) Belmont, lost to (3-seed) LSU

Minnesota (10-seed in the East Region) – Beat (7-seed) Louisville, lost to (2-seed Michigan State)

Ohio State (11-seed in the Midwest Region) – Beat (6-seed) Iowa State, lost to (3-seed) Houston

Wisconsin (5-seed in the South Region) – Lost to (12-seed) Oregon

Still alive

Michigan (2-seed in the West Region)

Michigan State (2-seed in the East Region)

Purdue (3-seed in the South Region)

In the first two rounds, some of the medium seeds have been knocked off:

- (4-seed) Kansas in the Midwest Region
- (4-seed) Kansas State in the South Region
- (5-seed) Marquette in the West Region
- (5-seed) Mississippi State in the East Region
- (5-seed) Wisconsin in the South Region
- (6-seed) Maryland in the East Region
- (6-seed) Villanova (the defending champs) in the South Region
- (6-seed) Iowa State in the Midwest Region
- (6-seed) Buffalo in the West Region

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

Go Blue!