

## Nothing But 'Net – Week #15 – 02/03/2020 – 1.5 Road Wins

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this week, both on the road, and they won both of them. [On Tuesday \(01/28/2020\), they won at Nebraska 79-68](#), then [on Saturday \(02/01/2020\), they beat \(#25\) Rutgers in Madison Square Garden 69-63](#). The wins raise Michigan's record to 13-8 (4-6 in the Big Ten). Michigan is still tied for 11<sup>th</sup> place in the Big Ten.

### What Happened?

After starting the season 0-5 in true road games, Michigan finally won one. Well, maybe one and a half, since the Rutgers game was a neutral court game in name only. The crowd in Madison Square Garden was distinctly pulling for Rutgers. Sure, Nebraska is having a down season, but a road win is a rarity in the Big Ten this season. The win over Rutgers is even more impressive, since Rutgers is ranked for the first time in several decades.

In the Nebraska game, Nebraska led for the first 7 minutes, but only by 2-4 points. The lead seesawed for the next few minutes, and the game was tied 27-27 with 5:05 left in the 1<sup>st</sup> half. That's when Michigan went ahead for the rest of the half, opening up a 5-point lead (40-35) at halftime. Michigan led for all but one minute of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, when Nebraska caught up and went ahead 52-50 with 13:49 left in the game. In all Michigan's previous road games, that would have been the beginning of the end, but UM didn't fold this time, and took the lead back for good 53-52 at the 12:44 mark. They got the lead as high as 15 points (71-56 with 5:47 to go), and kept the lead around 9-11 points the rest of the way. It was a good, solid win.

In the Rutgers game, the lead seesawed for the first 5 minutes, then Michigan pulled ahead, leading by 10 points (24-14) with 7:17 left in the 1<sup>st</sup> half. Rutgers fought back, and got within a point (35-34) with 0:27 left in the half. Michigan got a layup at the buzzer, and led 37-24 at halftime. Michigan came out stone cold to start the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, and didn't score for the first 4:26 of the half. By then, Rutgers was back in front, 38-37. Once Michigan got the lead back, they pushed it up to 14 points (60-46 with 9:17 to go), and it looked like they had the game under control. Nope. Rutgers fought back again, and got within 5 points (63-58) with 2:50 left, within 3 points (63-60) with 0:27 left, and within 2 points (65-63) with 0:19 left. Michigan made their free throws, played some defense, and finished strong to win by 6 (69-63).

### Stats

[The stats for the Nebraska game](#) are mixed. Michigan shot well overall (28-for-56 = 50.0%), they shot 3-pointers poorly (7-for-24 = 29.2%), and they shot free throws poorly (16-for-24 = 66.7%). They won the rebounding battle handily (41-27), but they lost the turnover battle (17-14). Michigan won this game by controlling the boards.

[The stats for the Rutgers game](#) are amazing. Michigan shot well overall (22-for-47 = 46.8%), they shot 3-pointers well (9-for-19 = 47.4%), but they shot free throws poorly (16-for-24 = 66.7%). They were crushed in the rebounding battle (51-37), and they lost the turnover battle as well (16-10). Of those 51 rebounds, Rutgers had 26 offensive rebounds, which is amazing. Between the -14 in rebounds and the -6 in turnovers, Rutgers had 20 more possessions than Michigan. Michigan won because they shot well and Rutgers didn't.

### Who Started?

The starters for the Nebraska game were [Eli Brooks](#), [David DeJulius](#), [Brandon Johns, Jr.](#), [Jon Teske](#), and [Franz Wagner](#). DeJulius started in place of [Zavier Simpson](#), who was suspended for one game due to "violation of team rules". He started in the Rutgers game. Johns started both games in place of [Isaiah Livers](#), who missed 6 games because of a groin injury, returned to the starting lineup for the Illinois game, then re-injured his groin in that game. Once again, he's out indefinitely.

### Who Looked Good?

Johns had a great week. He hit a new career high with 16 points in the Nebraska game, then hit another career high with 20 points in the Rutgers game. He was the star and the high scorer in the Rutgers game. He shot a nice percentage from 3-point range: 1-for-1 vs. Nebraska and 4-for-7 vs. Rutgers. He also had 7 rebounds in each game.

Wagner was the only other player to hit double figures in both games, with 18 and 10 points. He continues to shoot poorly from 3-point range: 1-for-5 vs. Nebraska and 1-for-3 vs. Rutgers. If he starts hitting his 3-pointers, Michigan will be deadly. He's getting the open 3-pointers he needs, he's just not hitting them.

Brooks almost hit double figures in both games, with 20 and 9 points. He was the leading scorer in the Nebraska game. He hit a lot of big 3-pointers in both games, shooting 4-for-10 vs. Nebraska and 3-for-6 vs. Rutgers.

Teske also almost hit double figures in both games, with 9 and 13 points.

Simpson didn't play in the Nebraska game (suspension), but he almost had a double-double in the Rutgers game, with 9 points and 10 assists. On the negative side, he did have 6 turnovers, several of them "silly" or "unforced".

[Austin Davis](#) is on track to be the Most Improved Player this season. He has gone from being a liability to being a positive force out there. He's gotten his silly fouls under control, he's playing great defense, and he chips in some points every now and then. He had 3 points vs. Nebraska and 8 points vs. Rutgers.

[Colin Castleton](#) only played in the Nebraska game, but he did pretty well, scoring 5 points on 2-for-2 shooting.

### **Who Looked Not-So-Good?**

DeJulius didn't make much of his first starting assignment, with 5 points (on 1-for-7 shooting) vs. Nebraska. He came off the bench vs. Rutgers, and failed to score.

[Adrien Nuñez](#) played in both games, and didn't do much. He scored 3 points (on 1-for-6 shooting, all 3-pointers) vs. Nebraska, and failed to score in the Rutgers game.

### **Who Else Played?**

[C.J. Baird](#) played for 8 minutes in the Nebraska game, but didn't take a shot. What's the significance of this? He wears number 24, and he played for 8 minutes, both a tribute to Kobe Bryant.

There was one other tribute to Kobe in the Nebraska game: Michigan won the opening tip, and intentionally held the ball in the backcourt for 10 seconds, getting a backcourt violation. Nebraska inbounded the ball, and intentionally held the ball for 30 seconds, getting a shot clock violation. These are the college versions of the tributes from the NBA, where their backcourt violation is 8 seconds (a Kobe number), and their shot clock violation is 24 seconds (Kobe's other number).

### **Who Didn't Play?**

As mentioned above, Livers was injured and didn't play in either game.

The rest of the practice squad ([Cole Bajema](#), [Jaron Faulds](#), [Rico Ozuna-Harrison](#), and [Luke Wilson](#)) didn't play in either game.

### **What Does It Mean?**

It was great that Michigan finally won 1.5 road games, and it certainly helped their chances for making the NCAA or NIT Tournaments. It didn't change much in the Big Ten race; they're still in 11<sup>th</sup> place, and they still stand no chance of contending for the title. It would be nice if they could move up to 10<sup>th</sup> place or better, so they won't have to play on Wednesday in the Big Ten Tournament. There are 10 games left in the regular season, and they need to win at least 7 of them to make the NCAA Tournament, or 3 of them to make the NIT Tournament.

### **What's Next?**

This week, Michigan plays two games, both at home. On Tuesday (02/04/2020, 7:00 p.m., ESPN2), they play [Ohio State](#), then on Saturday (02/08/2020, 12:00 p.m., FOX), they play (#14) [Michigan State](#).

Ohio State is currently 14-7 (4-6 in the Big Ten). They are tied with Michigan for 11<sup>th</sup> place in the Big Ten standings. They have impressive wins over Cincinnati, Villanova, North Carolina, Penn State, Kentucky, and Indiana, but they have lost to Wisconsin, Minnesota (twice), Penn State, and Indiana. They started the season ranked #18, got as high as #2, then lost 7 out of 8 games to drop out of the rankings. They don't have much height (two 6'9" players), but they do have the Wesson brothers, Andre and Kaleb. This is a game that Michigan can win, and has to win, but they need to play their "A" game to do it.

Michigan has already played MSU once this season, back on 01/05/2020 in East Lansing, when State won 87-69. They are now 16-6 (8-3 in the Big Ten), in 2<sup>nd</sup> place. Since that game, MSU has gone 4-3, with wins over Minnesota (twice), Wisconsin, and Northwestern, and losses to Purdue (71-42!), Indiana, and Wisconsin. They're not unbeatable, but Cassius Winston had a great game the last time they played Michigan, and Michigan will have to play like they did in the Bahamas to beat MSU.

Check back next week to see how Michigan did.

Go Blue!