

Nothing But 'Net – Week #03 – 12/07/2020 – More Warm Up Games

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this week, and they won both of them. [On Wednesday \(12/02/2020\), they beat Ball State 84-65](#), then [on Sunday \(12/06/2020\), they beat Central Florida \(UCF\) 80-58](#). Both games were in Crisler Arena. Michigan's record is now 4-0.

What Happened?

Ball State led the game once, 2-0, before Michigan tied it up (2-2) with 18:42 left in the 1st half. The score was never tied again. Michigan led the rest of the way, usually by a comfortable margin. They steadily increased the lead up to 20 points (34-14) with 5:39 left in the half, then went cold, and let Ball State creep back into the game. Ball State ended the half on a 19-6 run, to cut the deficit to only 7 points (40-33) at halftime. They cut it to 5 points (40-35) on the first possession of the 2nd half, then Michigan woke up and took control of the game again. UM went on a 13-4 run of their own, to push the lead back up to 14 points (53-39) with 16:17 to go. They kept building the lead, and finally got it up to 25 points (73-48) with 8:50 left. They kept the lead over 20 points the rest of the way, until Ball State made a 3-pointer with 7 seconds left to cut it to 19, the final difference. Michigan played a good solid game, and handled the minor adversity at the end of the 1st half well.

The UCF game was very different. UCF led for most of the 1st half. The game was close for the first 7 minutes, with UCF up by 1 point (14-13) with 13:13 to go in the half, then they started to pull away. They increased their lead to 12 points (25-13) with 9:29 to go, and still led by 12 (28-16) with 8:56 left in the half. That's when Michigan finally woke up and got serious. Over the next 5:18, Michigan went on a 15-0 run to take the lead (31-28) with 3:38 remaining in the half. They pushed the lead as high as 6 points (38-32) with 1:36 to go, and led by 4 points (38-34) at halftime. They let UCF get within 3 points (40-37) at the 18:31 mark, then they pulled away for good. They increased the lead steadily, pushing it as high as 32 points before Coach Howard emptied the bench. The way UCF started the game, it looked like UM would be in a dogfight all afternoon, but once Michigan took control in the 2nd half, they made it look easy.

Stats

[The stats for the Ball State game](#) are pretty good. Michigan shot well overall (33-for-59 = 55.9%), they shot 3-pointers poorly (4-for-15 = 26.7%), and they shot free throws pretty well (14-for-19 = 73.7%). They won the rebounding battle handily (41-26), and tied in the turnover battle (13-13). They won this game with overall shooting and rebounding.

[The stats for the UCF game](#) are also pretty good. Michigan shot pretty well overall (32-for-65 = 49.2%), they shot 3-pointers pretty well (9-for-27 = 33.3%), and they shot free throws very well (7-for-8 = 87.5%). They crushed UCF on the boards (44-29), but lost the turnover battle narrowly (10-9). They won this game with 3-point shooting and rebounding.

Who Started?

The starters for both games were [Eli Brooks](#), [Austin Davis](#), [Isaiah Livers](#), [Mike Smith](#), and [Franz Wagner](#).

Who Looked Good?

[Hunter Dickinson](#) was the only player to hit double figures in both games, with 12 points vs. Ball State and 14 points vs. UCF. He also had 11 rebounds vs. Ball State, for his first career double-double. He is playing with confidence and composure out there.

Livers was the leading scorer in the Ball State game, with 21 points, but he had his first mediocre game of the season vs. UCF, with 5 points on 2-for-9 shooting (1-for-6 from deep).

Wagner finally had a good game, with 14 points and 6 rebounds vs. Ball State, but he slipped back into mediocrity vs. UCF, with 8 points. He still hasn't found his 3-point shot, which ignites the rest of his game.

Smith had a decent game vs. Ball State, with 10 points, but he didn't do much in the UCF game, with only 4 points on 1-for-6 shooting. He's running the offense well and playing decent defense, but he's not contributing much offensively.

Brooks is the only starter who did better in the UCF game than the Ball State game. He had 7 points vs. Ball State and 10 points vs. UCF.

Davis started both games, but only played 13 minutes vs. Ball State and 12 minutes vs. UCF. He scored 6 points vs. Ball State and 4 points vs. UCF.

[Chaundee Brown, Jr.](#) was the leading scorer in the UCF game, with 18 points, including 4-for-6 from 3-point range. He had a good game vs. Ball State, with 9 points. He gave the team a great energy boost in the 2nd half of the UCF game when he got hot from 3-point range.

[Terrance Williams II](#) hit double figures for the first time in his Michigan career, with 10 points vs. UCF. He had a quiet game vs. Ball State, with 0 points.

Who Looked Not-So-Good?

[Brandon Johns, Jr.](#) had 0 and 5 points this week. He was the only "mainstream" player who didn't have at least one good game.

Who Else Played?

[Jaron Faulds](#) played in both games, and made a basket vs. Ball State.

[Jace Howard](#) played in both games, but didn't take a shot.

[Zeb Jackson](#) played in both games, and made 3 of 4 free throws vs Ball State, for his first career points.

[Adrien Nuñez](#) played in both games, and made a basket vs. UCF.

Who Didn't Play?

Most of the scout team players ([C.J. Baird](#), [Rico Ozuna-Harrison](#), and [Luke Wilson](#)) didn't play this week.

What Does It Mean?

With the shortened season, Michigan is only playing 5 non-conference games, so they need to get as much experience as they can in a short amount of time. They have won all 4 games so far, but they have faced adversity in 3 of them, especially for most of the Oakland game and most of the 1st half of the UCF game. The good news is that UM handled the adversity well. Michigan will face much tougher opponents, game in and game out, once the Big Ten season starts, so they need to prepare for even more adversity.

What's Next?

This week, Michigan plays two games, both in Crisler Arena. On Wednesday (12/09/2020, 7:15 p.m., ESPN2) they play [North Carolina State](#), then on Sunday (12/13/2020, 2:00 p.m., BTN) they play [Penn State](#). The NC State game is part of the [ACC/Big Ten Challenge](#), and the PSU game is the Big Ten opener.

NC State was 20-12 (10-10 in the ACC) last season. They are 3-0 so far this season, but they haven't played anyone noteworthy. Their game against UConn was canceled for COVID-19 reasons. They have several very good players, and significant height. This will be Michigan's first big test of the season, and a good indicator of how they'll do in Big Ten play.

Penn State was 21-10 (11-9 in the Big Ten) last season. They are 2-0 so far this season, but they haven't played anyone noteworthy. They have a couple good players, but they don't have much height. This is an excellent game to ease into the Big Ten schedule: not too hard, but hard enough to keep Michigan on their toes.

Both of these games are "toss up" games, so winning both would be great, losing both would be sad, and splitting would be acceptable. Of the two, the PSU game is much more important.

Go Blue!