

Nothing But 'Net – Week #04 – 12/14/2020 – End Of The Warm Ups, Start Of The Big Ten Schedule

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this week, and they won both of them. [On Wednesday \(12/09/2020\), they beat Toledo 91-71](#), then [on Sunday \(12/13/2020\), they beat Penn State 62-58](#). Both games were in Crisler Arena. Michigan's record is now 6-0 (1-0 in the Big Ten).

What Happened?

First of all, Toledo? In last week's article, I said that Michigan would be playing North Carolina State on 12/09/2020, as part of the [ACC/Big Ten Challenge](#). Well, NC State had COVID-19 issues, so they couldn't play, and Michigan scrambled to find a replacement. They found a very acceptable replacement on very short notice, and the game went on. Toledo is the highest (Kenpom) ranked team in the Mid American Conference, and they gave Michigan a good game. The NC State game will not be rescheduled, since Michigan has played the maximum number of non-conference games allowed (5). By the way, the Big Ten won the Challenge again this year, 6-5.

The Toledo game started out close, with Toledo up by a point (9-8) with 15:36 to go in the 1st half. That was the last time Toledo led. Michigan pulled out to a comfortable 11-point lead (25-14) with 10:37 to go, and pushed it as high as 21 points (42-21) with 1:23 left. The lead was still 18 (44-26) at halftime. Toledo started the 2nd half with a 10-3 run to get back within 11 points (47-36) with 17:36 to go, but that was their last gasp. Michigan pushed the lead back up into the 20s, getting it as high as 26 points, and won by 20. Michigan looked good.

The PSU game was much closer. Michigan led for the entire 1st half, by as many as 15 points (36-21, with 2:14 left), but PSU fought back, and took their first lead (39-38) with 16:36 to go. From that point on, neither team got more than 6 points ahead. In fact, PSU only led a few times, usually by 1 point, and once by 2 points, but they never let Michigan pull away. The last 5:06 of the game was particularly dramatic. At that point, Michigan led 56-50, but PSU strung together an 8-0 run to take their biggest (and final) lead, 58-56, with 2:53 left. Michigan scored the last 6 points, and won by 4. It was a big, important win, and Michigan handled some serious adversity to get it.

Stats

[The stats for the Toledo game](#) are very good. Michigan shot well overall (34-for-59 = 57.6%), they shot 3-pointers very well (9-for-16 = 56.3%), and they shot free throws well (14-for-18 = 77.8%). They won the rebounding battle (35-30) and the turnover battle (8-14). They won this game with 3-point shooting. Any time Michigan shoots over 50% from 3-point range, they're going to stand a great chance of winning.

[The stats for the PSU game](#) are pretty good. Michigan shot pretty well overall (20-for-45 = 44.4%), they shot 3-pointers decently (5-for-14 = 35.7%), and they shot free throws very well (17-for-20 = 85.0%). They (barely) won the rebounding battle (36-35), but lost the turnover battle badly (16-8). This was a close game, and the stats show it. Michigan won because of overall shooting.

Who Started?

The starters for the Toledo game were [Eli Brooks](#), [Austin Davis](#), [Isaiah Livers](#), [Mike Smith](#), and [Franz Wagner](#). Davis got hurt in the Toledo game, so [Hunter Dickinson](#) started for him in the PSU game.

Who Looked Good?

He may only be a true freshman, but this is Dickinson's team now. He was the leading scorer in both games, with 18 vs. Toledo and 20 (a new career high) vs. PSU. He was also the

leading rebounder in both games, with 7 in each game. He is playing like a veteran, and the team is leaning on him for key baskets in crunch time. After 6 games, he is leading the team in scoring (15.7 points/game), rebounding (7.3 rebounds/game), and blocked shots (10).

Livers had one good game (16 points vs. Toledo) and one decent game (10 points vs. PSU). He shot very well vs. Toledo (5-for-7 overall, 3-for-4 from 3-point range), but terribly vs. PSU (1-for-7 overall, 0-for-3 from deep). He scored most of his points vs. PSU at the free throw line (8-for-8).

Brooks had a good week, with 12 points in each game. He didn't shoot very well, especially vs. Toledo (5-for-12 overall), but he helped run the offense.

Wagner had another week with one good game (14 points vs. Toledo) and one mediocre game (6 points vs. PSU). As I mentioned last week, he still hasn't found his 3-point shot, which ignites the rest of his game.

Smith also had another so-so week, with 7 and 8 points. I think that's what we should get used to with him: not bad, but not flashy.

Davis only played in part of one game this week, injuring his right foot (plantar fasciitis) with 16:08 left in the 2nd half of the Toledo game. At that point, he had scored a career-high 12 points, including Michigan's first 10 points of the game. He'll be out "indefinite weeks" due to the injury, so Dickinson is the only true center left on the roster.

[Chaundee Brown, Jr.](#) had a good game (9 points) vs. Toledo, but he disappeared vs. PSU (0 points). He shot perfectly (4-for-4 overall, 1-for-1 from 3-point range) vs. Toledo.

Who Looked Not-So-Good?

[Brandon Johns, Jr.](#) had 3 and 6 points this week. He did hit a 3-pointer vs. PSU.

[Terrance Williams II](#) played in both games, but failed to score. He missed a pair of clutch free throws with 24 seconds left in the PSU game, but UM still won.

Who Else Played?

[Jace Howard](#), [Zeb Jackson](#), and [Adrien Nuñez](#) all played in the last 4 minutes of the Toledo game, but they didn't score.

Who Didn't Play?

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

What Does It Mean?

With the shortened season, Michigan only played 5 non-conference games, and they won all 5 of them. They managed to get some decent competition, and they learned something from each game. It was very important that they win their Big Ten opener, and they did. The injury to Davis puts a lot of pressure on Dickinson, but so far he seems to be handling it well.

What's Next?

This week, Michigan doesn't have any games scheduled! I'll still be back next week to wrap up the non-conference portion of the schedule, and to look ahead to the rest of the Big Ten schedule.

Go Blue!