

Nothing But 'Net – Week #05 – 12/21/2020 – A Bye Week

The (#25) University of Michigan men's basketball team didn't play any games this week. They had a "bye" week. Michigan's record is currently 6-0 (1-0 in the Big Ten).

What Happened?

Everything is crazy this season, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead of the normal 31 games (11 non-conference, 20 Big Ten), Big Ten teams are only allowed to play 25 games (5 non-conference, 20 Big Ten). The start of the season was delayed from early November to November 25th. Michigan scheduled, and played, their 5 non-conference games by December 9th, and played their first Big Ten game on December 13th. Now they have a 12-day break before their next Big Ten game, on Christmas Day, at Nebraska.

Even though Michigan made it through their 5-game non-conference schedule undefeated, they faced a little adversity along the way. They played all 5 games in Crisler Arena, and they looked good in most of them, but they had a couple bad halves mixed in.

They looked very solid in their opener against [Bowling Green on 11/25/2020, winning 96-82](#). Bowling Green is picked to win the Mid American Conference this season, so they were a good opening test. The new starters looked good, and Michigan got good support from the bench.

The next game, against [Oakland on 11/29/2020](#), was not so good. Michigan trailed for much of the game, managed to tie the game in regulation, then woke up and won handily in overtime, 81-71. Michigan looked disorganized and sluggish for much of the 1st half, but they did look better in the last 10 minutes of the 2nd half and overtime.

Michigan looked sharp and focused in their next game, [beating Ball State 84-65 on 12/02/2020](#). They led for most of the game, and everyone played well.

Once again, after playing a good game, Michigan came out flat and played a lousy 1st half vs. [Central Florida \(UCF\) on 12/06/2020](#). The 2nd half was much better, and Michigan won easily, 80-58.

The final non-conference game on 12/09/2020 was supposed to be against North Carolina State, as part of the [ACC/Big Ten Challenge](#), but NC State had COVID-19 issues, so [that game was cancelled](#). Michigan scrambled and found a very acceptable replacement on very short notice: [Toledo](#). It was a good game, and Michigan won easily, 91-71.

Michigan played their first Big Ten game of the season [on 12/13/2020, beating Penn State 62-58](#) in Crisler Arena. It was a close game, and Michigan had to play well to win. Penn State isn't a title contender this season, but they're a good solid team that could knock off a few of the top-division teams along the way.

Who Looked Good?

He may only be a true freshman, but the best player on the team so far has been [Hunter Dickinson](#). He came off the bench in all 5 non-conference games, with [Austin Davis](#) getting the start, but he became the starter when Davis suffered a foot injury in the Toledo game. He leads the team in scoring (15.7 points/game) and rebounding (7.3 rebounds/game). He's shooting a great percentage (38-for-55 = 69.1%), he's scored in double figures in all 6 games, and he was the leading scorer in the last 2 games. He looks very composed out there.

[Isaiah Livers](#) has also looked very good out there so far this season. He's 2nd on the team in scoring (15.2 points/game), and leads the team in made 3-pointers (13) and free throw percentage (16-for-17 = 94.1%). He's scored in double figures in 5 of the 6 games (only 5 points vs. UCF), and he was the leading scorer in 2 games. He has provided good leadership out there.

[Chaundee Brown, Jr.](#) is the only other player averaging double figures, at 10.0 points/game. He is 2nd on the team in made 3-pointers (12). He has had 2 great games (Bowling Green and UCF), 2 good games (Ball State and Toledo), and 2 miserable games (Oakland and Penn State). He was the leading scorer in the Bowling Green and UCF games. He has come off the bench in all 6 games.

[Eli Brooks](#) is almost averaging double figures, at 9.7 points/game. He has started all 6 games, and has scored in double figures in 4 of the 6 games. He's 2nd on the team in assists. He has shared point guard duties with [Mike Smith](#), and done a good job running the offense.

[Austin Davis](#) looked smooth and solid out there for the first 5 games, then he got injured. He only played 12-13 minutes/game, because [Hunter Dickinson](#) looked so good when he replaced Davis. The only estimate I've heard about Davis' return from the injury is "extended weeks".

Who Looked Not-So-Good?

[Franz Wagner](#) still hasn't really gotten going this season. He's had a couple good games (Ball State and Toledo), a couple decent games (Bowling Green and UCF), and a couple mediocre games (Oakland and Penn State). Much was expected of him, and so far, he hasn't delivered. He's got a bunch of 25-30 point games in him, and he just needs to get his confidence back. If he misses his first shot of the game, he tends to sulk for the rest of the game.

[Mike Smith](#) has started all 6 games at point guard, and done a very nice job running the offense. He plays good defense, but his offense has been streaky. He looked good in the opener (Bowling Green), with 16 points, and he had 10 points vs. Ball State, but the rest of the games haven't been as good. He needs to get his 3-point shot going again.

[Brandon Johns, Jr.](#) hasn't really had a good game yet. He's averaging 4.8 points/game. He can be an important part of the team, once he gets going.

[Terrance Williams II](#) has shown flashes of what he's capable of, but he's lacked consistency. He's only a true freshman, so it isn't a big surprise if he takes some time to get up to speed.

Who Else Played?

[Jace Howard](#), [Zeb Jackson](#), and [Adrien Nuñez](#) are the remaining scholarship players. Jackson has played in 5 games so far, and Howard and Nuñez have played in 3 games. Nuñez has a basket, Jackson has 3 free throws, and Howard hasn't taken a shot yet.

Of the scout team players ([C.J. Baird](#), [Jaron Faulds](#), [Rico Ozuna-Harrison](#), and [Luke Wilson](#)), only Faulds has played so far this season. In 2 games, he has 1 basket.

What's Next?

This week, Michigan plays one game: on Friday (12/25/2020, 6:00 p.m. EST, BTN), they play at [Nebraska](#). Yes, they play on Christmas Day in beautiful Lincoln, NE. The glamour!

Nebraska is currently 4-3 (0-0 in Big Ten). They haven't beaten anyone noteworthy, they lost at home to a mediocre Nevada team, and they got crushed on the road by a decent Creighton team. They don't have any superstars on their roster, and they don't have a lot of height. They do have one of the best names in the league: Thorir Thorbjarnarson, from Iceland.

This will be Michigan's first road game of the season, against a capable Big Ten team. Since it's on the road, it's a "toss up" game, and it would be a nice win for Michigan if they can pull it off.

Go Blue!