

Nothing But 'Net – Week #14 – 02/22/2021 – Two Huge Wins & Rescheduled Games

The (#3) University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this week, and they won them both. [On Thursday \(02/18/2021\), they beat Rutgers 71-64](#) in Crisler Arena, then [on Sunday \(02/21/2021\), they beat \(#4\) Ohio State 92-87](#) in Columbus, OH. The wins raise Michigan's record to 16-1 (11-1 in the Big Ten). Michigan is still all alone in 1st place in the Big Ten standings.

What Happened?

The Rutgers game was a see-saw battle in the early going, before Michigan pulled ahead for good. Rutgers led early (11-6 with 13:50 left in the 1st half), Michigan tied it (13-13) at the 11:01 mark, and led for the rest of the game, up by 9 points (37-28) at halftime. UM pushed the lead as high as 17 points in the 2nd half, and still led by 14 points (63-49) with 3:01 to go. Rutgers made one last push, and got the deficit down to 7 points at the end, but couldn't get any closer.

The OSU game was very close the whole way. OSU led in the early going, by 2-4 points. Michigan finally got ahead, 20-19, with 9:02 left in the 1st half. They led by 3-5 points until the 2:47 mark, when OSU went back ahead, 38-37. The lead went back and forth, with UM scoring at the buzzer to lead by 2 points (45-43) at halftime. The 2nd half was more of the same, with the lead going back and forth. With 13:09 left, Michigan was up by 1 point (59-58), then OSU went ahead for a while. The game was tied (69-69) with 6:30 to go, when Michigan went ahead for good. They pushed the lead as high as 9 points (88-79) with 0:23 left, then hung on to win by 5.

I try really hard not to complain about the officiating, especially in a big win, but the officials were terrible in the OSU game. They've been spotty all season, but they were especially bad in this game. I'm just glad Michigan was able to overcome the "home cooking".

Stats

[The stats for the Rutgers game](#) are just OK. Michigan shot pretty well overall (24-for-52 = 46.2%), they shot 3-pointers well enough (6-for-15 = 40.0%), and they shot free throws pretty well (17-for-23 = 73.9%). They won the rebounding battle handily (40-27), but lost the turnover battle badly (11-30). Michigan won this game with rebounding and defense.

[The stats for the OSU game](#) are pretty good. Michigan shot well overall (31-for-58 = 53.4%), they shot 3-pointers well (11-for-23 = 47.8%), and they shot free throws well enough (19-for-24 = 79.2%). They won the rebounding battle (30-26) and the turnover battle (7-9). Michigan won this game with 3-point shooting, but there's more to that story: Michigan shot a blazing 10-for-13 (76.2%) from 3-point range in the 1st half, then went cold in the 2nd half, shooting 1-for-10. That still works out to 47.8%, but if they could have just hit 40% in the 2nd half, the game would have been much less tense.

Who Started?

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

Who Looked Good?

Smith hit double figures in both games, with 12 points vs. Rutgers and 11 points vs. OSU. As usual, he did a fine job running the offense, with 7 assists in the OSU game.

Dickinson also hit double figures in both games, with 10 points vs. Rutgers and 22 points vs. OSU. He was the high scorer for Michigan in the OSU game. It was good to see him back in double figures again, after a few sub-par scoring games.

Wagner almost hit double figures in both games, with 20 points vs. Rutgers and 9 points vs. OSU. He was the high scorer for Michigan in the Rutgers game.

Livers had one good game (12 points vs. OSU) and one mediocre game (7 points vs. Rutgers). He shot very poorly in the Rutgers game (3-for-10 overall, 0-for-4 from deep).

Brooks also had one good game (17 points vs. OSU) and one mediocre game (4 points vs. Rutgers). He also shot very poorly in the Rutgers game (1-for-5 overall, 0-for-1 from deep).

[Chaundee Brown, Jr.](#) was one of the heroes in the OSU game, with 15 points, including 3-for-4 shooting from 3-point range. He chipped in 6 points in the Rutgers game.

[Austin Davis](#) spelled Dickinson in both games, and chipped in 7 and 4 points.

[Brandon Johns, Jr.](#) chipped in 5 and 2 points, including another 3-pointer vs. Rutgers.

Who Looked Not-So-Good?

[Terrance Williams II](#) played for 6 minutes in the Rutgers game, but didn't do anything. He didn't play in the OSU game.

Who Else Played?

No one else played in either game.

Who Didn't Play?

3 of the 4 scholarship players who aren't part of the main rotation ([Jace Howard](#), [Zeb Jackson](#), and [Adrien Nuñez](#)) didn't play in either game.

The scout team players ([C.J. Baird](#), [Jaron Faulds](#), [Rico Ozuna-Harrison](#), [Brandon Wade](#), and [Luke Wilson](#)) didn't play in either game.

What Does It Mean?

Wow! These were two huge wins! Rutgers was unranked by the time Michigan beat them, but they had been ranked for much of the season, as recently as 2 weeks ago. Ohio State was ranked #4, and they had won 7 games in a row coming into their game against Michigan. They were projected as a #1 seed in the upcoming NCAA Tournament. They were the toughest opponent that Michigan has faced so far, and UM played them tough. It was very encouraging.

In terms of the Big Ten title race, these were very important wins for Michigan. They keep them all alone in 1st place, two games ahead of Illinois and four games ahead of Ohio State and Iowa in the all-important loss column. It has been officially announced that the league champion will be determined by win percentage, since several teams (including Michigan) are not going to have enough time to play all 20 scheduled Big Ten games. At this point, Michigan has a 0.5 game lead over Illinois in the standings, a 1.5 game lead over OSU, and a 2 game lead over Iowa, based on win percentage.

The big news this week was that the Big Ten rescheduled a bunch of postponed games, including 2 of the 5 that Michigan missed. They also moved a few games to make this new schedule possible, including one of Michigan's games. Here is Michigan's schedule for the last 2 weeks of the regular season:

02/25/2021 (Thu) vs. Iowa (home) – moved from 03/04/2021

02/27/2021 (Sat) at Indiana (away) – original schedule

03/02/2021 (Tue) vs. Illinois (home) – rescheduled from 02/11/2021

03/04/2021 (Thu) vs. Michigan State (home) – rescheduled from 02/06/2021

03/07/2021 (Sun) at Michigan State (away) – original schedule

There are a couple 2-day turnarounds in there (Iowa/Indiana and Illinois/MSU) that could be tricky.

If Michigan plays all 5 of these games as scheduled, they'll end up playing 17 Big Ten games, skipping the following 3 games:

01/27/2021 at Penn State

01/30/2021 home vs. Indiana

02/03/2021 at Northwestern

Since they already played (and beat) PSU and Northwestern, and they still have a game scheduled at Indiana, missing these 3 games isn't a big deal. In fact, they are all games that Michigan was likely to have won.

Obviously, the last 5 games are all important, but the games vs. Iowa and Illinois are crucial, and it's always important to beat MSU as often as possible.

Also, for any trivia nerds out there: there are 4 "vowel" teams in the Big Ten (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and Ohio State), and Michigan is playing them all in a row. As far as I can tell, this is the first time Michigan has had this schedule quirk. They're not only playing them in a row, they are also playing them just one time each this season, and they're playing them in reverse alphabetical order. Weird how it worked out, huh?

What's Next?

This week, Michigan is scheduled to play two games, one at home and one on the road. On Thursday (02/25/2021, 7:00 p.m., ESPN), they are scheduled to play (#11) [Iowa](#) in Crisler, then on Saturday (02/27/2021, 12:00 p.m. EST, FOX), they are scheduled to play at [Indiana](#).

Iowa is currently 17-6 (11-5 in Big Ten), with impressive wins over (#16) North Carolina, Iowa State, (#19) Northwestern, (#14) Rutgers, (#16) Minnesota, Michigan State, (#25) Rutgers, and (#21) Wisconsin, and less-than-impressive losses to Minnesota and Indiana (twice). They have probable national player of the year Luka Garza, who has always given Michigan fits, along with 2 long-range 3-point gunners (Jordan Bohannon and Joe Weiskamp). They have some height: Garza is 6'11", and they have one other 6'11" guy. This will be quite a test for Hunter Dickinson.

Indiana is currently 12-10 (7-8 in Big Ten), with impressive wins over (#4) Iowa and (#8) Iowa, and less-than-impressive losses to Northwestern, Purdue, Rutgers, and Michigan State. They don't have any superstars, and not much height (only one 6'11" dude). On paper, Michigan should win this game handily, but it's always tough to win on the road in the Big Ten, especially on one day's rest. This is a classic "trap" game.

Check back next week to see what happened, and why.

Go Blue!