

Nothing But 'Net – Week #17 – 03/15/2021 – Nice Win, Tough Loss

The (#4) University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this past week in the [Big Ten Tournament](#), and they won the first and lost the second. Both games were in Indianapolis, IN. [On Friday \(03/12/2021\), they beat the #8 seed, Maryland, 79-66](#), then [on Saturday \(03/13/2021\), they lost to the #5 seed, \(#9\) Ohio State, 68-67](#). The win and the loss leave Michigan with a record of 20-4.

What Happened?

The Maryland game was a nice win, but the OSU game was a heartbreaking loss.

The Maryland game didn't start out very well. Michigan led briefly, 2-0, then Maryland took control. They were ahead 15-6 with 13:13 to go in the 1st half, when Michigan got back within 2 points (17-15) at the 11:05 mark. Maryland pushed the lead back up to 12 points (36-24) with 4:45 left in the half, but that's when Michigan woke up. They ended the half on a 16-2 run, to lead by 2 at halftime, 40-38. Maryland tied the score up (40-40) to start the 2nd half, then Michigan went ahead for good. They pushed the lead up to 9 points (51-42) with 15:50 to go, and kept it in the 8-10 point range for the rest of the game.

The only dicey part came at the 10:44 mark: Maryland was down 10 points (57-47), and shot a 3-pointer that missed. The ball went out of bounds, and it sure looked like it should have been Michigan's ball, but the refs gave it to Maryland. There was a media timeout, so [Coach Howard](#) headed out onto the floor on the Maryland side of midcourt to talk to the refs about the call, and somehow he got into a yelling match with Maryland's head coach (Mark Turgeon). Turgeon got a technical, and Howard got two technicals and was ejected from the game. After the timeout, Maryland shot two free throws and got the ball. They cut the Michigan lead to 5 points (57-52) with 9:49 to go, but Michigan shook it off, and pushed the lead back up to 13 points (65-52) at the 7:23 mark, and that was the game. Maryland got as close as 6 points once (67-61 with 5:15 to go), but Michigan quickly pushed the lead back into the teens, and won by 13. It was a good, solid win.

The OSU game was close for the entire 1st half, and well into the 2nd half. OSU led for much of the 1st half, but Michigan went ahead (22-21) with 4:06 left in the half, and still led by one point (27-26) at halftime. The 2nd half was more of the same, with OSU leading for most of the half, but Michigan finally getting a 1-point lead (43-42) with 11:40 to go. That was Michigan's last lead. OSU went on an 11-0 run, to push the lead up into the 8-10 point range, and kept it there until the 1:55 mark, when it was 68-60. That's when Michigan made a final push, outscoring OSU 7-0 in the last 1:55, but they couldn't get the last basket that they needed to win. They had the ball, with no shot clock, and ran the clock down to 2 seconds before taking a low-percentage shot for the win. It missed, and the clock ran out. It was heartbreaking.

Stats

[The stats for the Maryland game](#) are very nice. Michigan shot well overall (31-for-60 = 51.7%), they shot 3-pointers well (10-for-22 = 45.5%), and they were perfect shooting free throws (7-for-7 = 100.0%). They won the rebounding battle (32-26) and the turnover battle (8-11). They won this game with all-around play: overall shooting, 3-point shooting, rebounding, and defense.

[The stats for the OSU game](#) are terrible. Michigan shot poorly overall (20-for-57 = 35.1%), they shot 3-pointers poorly (6-for-19 = 31.6%), but they did shoot free throws well (21-for-23 = 91.3%). They barely lost the rebounding battle (37-36), and they won the turnover battle handily (2-9). They lost the game with poor shooting, compounded by very hot 3-point shooting by OSU: 12-for-22 (54.5%).

Who Started?

The starters for the Maryland games were [Eli Brooks](#), [Hunter Dickinson](#), [Isaiah Livers](#), [Mike Smith](#), and [Franz Wagner](#). Unfortunately, it turned out that Livers had been playing with a broken bone in his foot since the Illinois game (03/02/2021), and he didn't play in the OSU game. Instead, [Brandon Johns, Jr.](#) started in his place.

Who Looked Good?

Smith was the star of the Maryland game, with a team-high 18 points and a tournament-record 15 assists. He also hit double figures in the OSU game (10 points), but he was ice-cold in that game: 1-for-11, including the terrible final shot that missed badly. He scored 7 of his 10 points in the OSU game from the free throw line, to go with a 3-pointer.

Brooks hit double figures in both games (16 vs. Maryland, 12 vs. OSU), which was even more impressive because it wasn't clear whether or not he'd even be able to play, due to an ankle injury in the away MSU game last week (03/07/2021). He not only played, he played well.

Dickinson was the leading scorer in the OSU game (21 points), but he had a sub-par game vs. Maryland (6 points).

Wagner had a solid game vs. Maryland (16 points), but he had a miserable game vs. OSU (8 points, on 2-for-10 shooting). He was held scoreless in the 2nd half of the OSU game.

[Chaundee Brown, Jr.](#) had a good game vs. Maryland (10 points), but didn't do much vs. OSU (3 points, on 1-for-6 shooting).

[Austin Davis](#) had a solid week, with 6 points in each game.

Johns also had a solid week, with 7 points in each game, one off the bench (Maryland) and one as a starter (OSU).

Who Looked Not-So-Good?

Livers only played in the Maryland game, and he was lousy: 0 points on 0-for-5 shooting. Of course, we now know that he was playing with a broken foot.

[Terrance Williams II](#) only played in the OSU game, and he looked like a freshman, with 0 points.

Who Else Played?

No one else played.

Who Didn't Play?

None of the scholarship players who aren't part of the main rotation ([Jace Howard](#), [Zeb Jackson](#), and [Adrien Nuñez](#)) played in either game.

None of the scout team players ([C.J. Baird](#), [Jaron Faulds](#), [Rico Ozuna-Harrison](#), [Brandon Wade](#), and [Luke Wilson](#)) played in either game.

What Does It Mean?

Michigan didn't win the Big Ten Tournament, which is disappointing. They played very poorly for much of the OSU game, and OSU played better than they have all season. That's a bad combination. On the other hand, it's kind of impressive that Michigan managed to stay in that game, and have a chance to win it at the buzzer, without Livers.

On to the [NCAA Tournament](#). The good news is: Michigan is a #1 seed, in the East Region. The bad news is: Michigan is staggering into the playoffs. They have lost 3 of their last 5

games, and they haven't won 2 games in a row in a couple weeks. They are the weakest #1 seed I can remember. I think anything beyond the Sweet 16 would be a pleasant surprise.

What's Next?

This week, Michigan is scheduled to play in the NCAA Tournament, in the Indianapolis area. As mentioned above, they're a #1 seed, and they start play on Saturday (03/20/2021, 3:00 p.m. EDT, CBS) in Purdue's Mackey Arena in West Lafayette, IN, vs. the winner of the (#16 seed) play-in game between Mount St. Mary's and Texas Southern, which is scheduled for Thursday (03/18/2021). They should be able to win that game, regardless of the opponent, even without the services of Livers, who is questionable.

If they win that game, they'll play on Monday (03/22/2021, TBA, TBA), vs. the winner of the game between the #8 seed (LSU) and the #9 seed (St. Bonaventure), which is also on Saturday. This game will be trickier, but Michigan can still win it and move on to the Sweet 16. Maybe by the next weekend Livers will be back at full strength, and Michigan will be able to play with the big boys sure to be around in the Sweet Sixteen and beyond.

The other top teams in the East Region are: (#2) Alabama, (#3) Texas, and (#4) Florida State. The other Big Ten teams in the East Region are: (#10) Maryland and (#11) Michigan State, but MSU has to win a play-in game vs. UCLA to get in the main bracket. The full bracket is [here](#).

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

Go Blue!