

Nothing But 'Net – Week #19 – 03/29/2021 – Sweet And Elite

The (#4) University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this past week in the [NCAA Tournament](#), and they won both of them. Both games were in Indianapolis, IN. [On Monday \(03/22/2021\), they beat the #8 seed \(LSU\) 86-78](#), then [on Sunday \(03/28/2021\), they beat the #4 seed \(\[#14\] Florida State\) 76-58](#). The two wins raise Michigan's record to 23-4. Michigan is now in the Elite Eight.

What Happened?

These two wins are HUGE! The first (LSU) put Michigan in the Sweet Sixteen for the 4th tournament in a row, and the second (FSU) put Michigan in the Elite Eight for the 4th tournament in the last 8 years. Michigan played good, solid ball in both games, and didn't let the pressure faze them.

The LSU game was close and tense for most of the game, with LSU leading most of the time, controlling the tempo, and having the momentum. UM actually led early, 2-0, but LSU quickly went ahead and stayed ahead by 5-7 points for most of the 1st half. Michigan tied the game (40-40) with 1:02 to go in the half, and led by 1 point (43-42) at halftime. The 2nd half was more of the same: Michigan led early (45-44 at the 18:17 mark), then LSU went ahead. The lead went back and forth, but the momentum was still lousy for Michigan. LSU went up by 5 points (63-58) with 10:48 to go, and things looked grim. Michigan called a timeout, regrouped, and started their final push. They pulled back ahead for good (64-63) with 9:13 left, pushed the lead up into the 6-8 point range, and kept it there the rest of the game. It was a big, important win.

The FSU game was not as close. Michigan led for most of the game, except for the first 5 minutes. The early going was close, with FSU leading 4-2 with 18:44 to go in the 1st half. Michigan tied it up (4-4), and went ahead for good (5-4) at the 15:13 mark. They pushed the lead as high as 13 points in the 1st half, keeping it in the 10-12 point range for most of the half. Michigan led by 11 (32-21) at halftime. Michigan kept the lead in the 9-11 point range in the early part of the 2nd half, until FSU finally starting hitting their 3-pointers. FSU missed their first 10 3-point attempts, then hit 3 in a row, to cut the Michigan lead to 5 points (41-36) with 14:51 to go. Michigan kept their composure, and pushed the lead back into the 9-11 point range, then up to the 16-18 point range for the rest of the game. With 1:35 left, both coaches emptied their benches and let the scrubs battle it out. It was a dominant victory.

Stats

[The stats for the LSU game](#) are pretty good. Michigan shot well overall (28-for-52 = 53.8%), they shot 3-pointers pretty well (10-for-25 = 40.0%), and they shot free throws well (20-for-25 = 80.0%). Michigan won the rebounding battle (37-30), but lost the turnover battle badly (12-3). Michigan won this game with overall shooting, rebounding, and defense.

[The stats for the FSU game](#) are not very good. Michigan shot pretty well overall (29-for-59 = 49.2%), they shot 3-pointers pretty poorly (3-for-11 = 27.3%), and they shot free throws pretty poorly (15-for-23 = 65.2%). They won the rebounding battle (37-31) and the turnover battle (9-14). They won this game with defense. If you had told me before the game that Michigan would only make three 3-pointers, I would have predicted a double-digit loss.

Who Started?

The starters for both games were [Eli Brooks](#), [Hunter Dickinson](#), [Brandon Johns, Jr.](#), [Mike Smith](#), and [Franz Wagner](#). [Isaiah Livers](#) is out "indefinitely" with a broken bone in his foot, so Johns started in his place.

Who Looked Good?

The hero for this week isn't a starter, it's [Chaundee Brown, Jr.](#) He tied for high scorer in the LSU game, with 21 points (his season high), and scored another very important 12 points in the FSU game, including 2 of Michigan's 3 made 3-pointers. He really helped make up for the absence of Livers.

The other hero of the LSU game was Brooks, with 21 points, a career high. However, he had a sub-par game vs. FSU, with only 6 points, on 3-for-9 shooting.

Wagner had two solid games, with 15 points vs. LSU and 13 points vs. FSU. He also had 10 rebounds in the FSU game, for a double-double.

Dickinson also had two solid games, with 12 points vs LSU and a team-high (tied) 14 points vs. FSU. He had 11 rebounds in the LSU game, for a double-double.

Smith was a warrior out there, especially in the FSU game. FSU played an aggressive full-court press the whole game, and Smith was the guy who had to bring the ball up court, often against a double-team. He wasn't perfect (2 turnovers), but he did a very good job. He also chipped in 5 points vs. LSU and 8 points vs. FSU.

Johns had a decent game vs. LSU (7 points), and a great game (tied for team-high 14 points) vs. FSU. He did a very good job filling in for Livers.

[Austin Davis](#) did a good job spelling Dickinson, with 1 point vs. LSU and 6 points vs. FSU.

Who Looked Not-So-Good?

[Terrance Williams II](#) played in both games, scoring 4 and 0 points. He still plays too fast, and makes too many unforced mistakes. Of course, he is still a freshman...

Who Else Played?

[Jaron Faulds](#) played in the closing minutes of the FSU game, and didn't attempt a shot.

[Jace Howard](#) played in the closing minutes of the FSU game, and scored 3 points on an "and-1".

[Zeb Jackson](#) played in the closing minutes of the FSU game, and missed his only shot attempt.

[Adrien Nuñez](#) played in the closing minutes of the FSU game, and missed his only shot attempt.

Who Didn't Play?

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

What Does It Mean?

Michigan is still alive in the Big Dance, which is all you can ask. Survive and advance. All of the other Big Ten teams in the field were eliminated in the first two rounds:

- Michigan State (11-seed) lost to UCLA (11-seed) in a "First Four" game on Thursday
- Ohio State (2-seed) lost to Oral Roberts (15-seed) in a 1st round game on Friday
- Purdue (4-seed) lost to North Texas (13-seed) in a 1st round game on Friday
- Illinois (1-seed) lost to Loyola-Chicago (8-seed) in a 2nd round game on Sunday
- Wisconsin (9-seed) lost to Baylor (1-seed) in a 2nd round game on Sunday
- Rutgers (10-seed) lost to Houston (2-seed) in a 2nd round game on Sunday
- Iowa (2-seed) lost to Oregon (7-seed) in a 2nd round game on Monday
- Maryland (10-seed) lost to Alabama (2-seed) in a 2nd round game on Monday

Of those eight losses by the Big Ten teams, one of them was a "toss up" (MSU), three of them were expected (Wisconsin, Rutgers, and Maryland), and four of them were upsets (OSU, Purdue, Illinois, and Iowa). The Big Ten hasn't looked very good in this year's tournament.

What's Next?

This week, Michigan is scheduled to continue play in the NCAA Tournament, in Indianapolis. They play on Tuesday (03/30/2021, 10:00 p.m. EDT, TBS) vs. the #11 seed ([UCLA](#)). If they win that game, they'll move on to the Final Four, and play the winner of the West Region, either the #1 seed (Gonzaga) or the #6 seed (USC), on Saturday (04/03/2021). The full bracket is [here](#).

UCLA is currently 21-9. So far in the NCAA Tournament, they beat 11-seed Michigan State in a "First Four" play-in game, beat 6-seed BYU in the 1st round, beat 14-seed Abilene Christian in the 2nd round, and beat 2-seed Alabama in the Sweet Sixteen. During the regular season, they had impressive wins over Colorado, Arizona, and Oregon State, and less-than-impressive losses to San Diego State, Stanford, Washington State, and Oregon State. They don't have any superstars on the roster, and they don't have much height: one 6'10" guy. On paper, it looks like Michigan should be able to handle them, but they have played very well in the tournament so far. This could be a tough, challenging game.

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

Go Blue!