

Nothing But 'Net – Week #12 – 01/17/2022 – More COVID-19 And A Moral Victory

The University of Michigan men's basketball team was supposed to play two games this past week, but they only played one, and lost it. [On Tuesday \(01/11/2022\), they were supposed to play \(#3\) Purdue in Crisler Arena, but it was postponed due to COVID-19 issues](#) in the UM program, then [on Friday \(01/14/2022\), they lost at Illinois 68-53](#). The loss lowers Michigan's record to 7-7 (1-3 in Big Ten).

What Happened?

The postponement of the Purdue game was not too surprising, after Michigan had to postpone their previous game, against Michigan State. Even though Michigan had enough scholarship players to play the Illinois game, they were missing two key players, which made for some crazy lineups and unusual minutes for rarely-used players.

Wait a minute, I thought that Michigan fans didn't believe in moral victories. Well, maybe in a good season, but this isn't a good season. Even though the Illinois game ended up being a 15-point loss, it was much closer than that for most of the game, with Illinois pulling away in the last couple minutes. Looking at the lineups that Michigan was forced to cobble together, and the huge size advantage that Illinois had, this game should have been a blowout from the opening tip, with Illinois leading by 30 and 40 points early in the 2nd half. That's not the way it went. Michigan played gritty, solid defense for the first 35 minutes, and it was only their anemic offense that kept them from pulling ahead and possibly sneaking out a victory.

The game was close for most of the 1st half, although Michigan never led. The score was tied 4 times (2-2, 4-4, 6-6, and 10-10) before Illinois pulled away for good. The Illini pushed the lead up to the 7-9 point range for a while, but Michigan fought back, and were within 2 points (24-22) with 1:54 left in the 1st half. Illinois scored another basket, to make it 26-22 at halftime. Illinois widened their lead in the 2nd half, going up by 8-10 points for most of the half, but never pulling away. Once again, Michigan fought back, pulling to within 1 point (45-44) with 7:27 left. They even had the ball, with a chance to go ahead for the first time, but they missed a layup, and that was the ball game. Illinois quickly pushed the lead back into double digits, and won by 15.

Stats

[The game stats](#) are horrible. Michigan shot terribly overall (22-for-60 = 36.7%), they shot miserably from 3-point range (1-for-10 = 10.0%), and they shot free throws poorly (8-for-14 = 57.1%). They lost the rebounding battle (33-32), but won the turnover battle (12-13). They lost the game due to their horrible overall and 3-point shooting.

Who Started?

The starters were [Eli Brooks](#), [Moussa Diabate](#), [Caleb Houston](#), and [DeVante' Jones](#), and [Terrance Williams II](#). [Hunter Dickinson](#) and [Brandon Johns, Jr.](#) were out with COVID-19 complications, so Diabate started at center, and Williams started at power forward. It was not an optimal lineup against an Illinois lineup with Kofi Cockburn and several other big, strong players.

Who Looked Good?

Jones was the only Michigan player to hit double figures, with 17 points. He also hit Michigan's only made 3-pointer.

Diabate gave it a good effort, scoring 9 points, but he only played 20 minutes due to foul trouble. He was no match on either end against Cockburn, giving up 45 pounds. When he was out, Michigan was really at a height disadvantage.

[Kobe Bufkin](#) had a solid game off the bench, with 6 points on 3-for-5 shooting.

[Frankie Collins](#) also had a solid game off the bench, with 5 points on 2-for-3 shooting.

Who Looked Not-So-Good?

Brooks had a lousy game, with 7 points on 3-for-11 shooting.

Houstan also had a lousy game, with 5 points on 2-for-9 shooting.

Williams also had a lousy game, with 2 points in 31 minutes of "action".

Who Else Played?

[Jace Howard](#) scored 2 points in 15 minutes.

[Jaron Faulds](#) scored 0 points in 12 minutes. With Dickinson and Johns out, and Diabate in foul trouble, Faulds had to try to contain Cockburn for 12 minutes. He did his best, but that's a big ask.

Who Didn't Play?

[Isaiah Barnes](#), [Zeb Jackson](#), [Brandon Johns, Jr.](#), [Adrien Nuñez](#), and [Will Tschetter](#) are the scholarship players who didn't play. Jackson stayed in Ann Arbor, for "personal" (non-COVID-19) reasons, but the rest of them were on the bench. At this point, it's obvious that Barnes and Tschetter are being voluntarily redshirted, and Johns was still recovering from COVID-19. I'm surprised Nuñez didn't get a few minutes.

[Ian Burns](#) and [Brandon Wade](#) are the scout team players who didn't play.

What Does It Mean?

It was encouraging to see Michigan fight back repeatedly against Illinois, and to hang with them for most of the game, especially with the makeshift lineups they were forced to use. If they can get this kind of effort against some of the lower division teams in the Big Ten, they might actually win another couple games. Getting the whole team back from COVID-19 would really help. Hitting some open 3-pointers would also help.

What's Next?

This week, Michigan is scheduled to play two games. On Tuesday (01/18/2022, 7:00 p.m., ESPN2) they are scheduled to play Maryland in Crisler Arena, then on Sunday (01/23/2022, 12:00 p.m., CBS) they are scheduled to play at Indiana.

[Maryland](#) is currently 9-8 (1-5 in Big Ten). Their only impressive win was over (#20) Florida, and they have unimpressive losses to George Mason and Rutgers. They have a couple noteworthy players (Eric Ayala and Donta Scott) and decent height (a 6'10" guy and a 6'11" guy). This is one of the few games that Michigan stands a chance of winning, but they'll have to play their "A" game.

[Indiana](#) is currently 12-4 (3-3 in Big Ten). They have impressive wins over Notre Dame and (#12) Ohio State, and less-than-impressive losses to Syracuse, Penn State, and Iowa. They have a few noteworthy players (Rob Phinisee, Miller Kopp, Tracie Jackson-Davis, and Race Thompson), and they have a 7-foot center. This will be a very challenging game for Michigan, especially on the road. UM has a lousy record in Assembly Hall, and this season's team is not exactly firing on all cylinders.

Check back next week to find out what happened and why.

Go Blue!