

Nothing But 'Net – Week #17 – 02/21/2022 – Good News And Very Bad News

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this past week, and they won one and lost one. [On Thursday \(02/17/2022\), they beat Iowa 84-79](#) in Iowa City, then [on Sunday \(02/20/2022\), they lost at \(#15\) Wisconsin 77-63](#). The win and the loss leave Michigan with a record of 14-11 (8-7 in Big Ten).

What Happened?

The good news? Michigan won a Big Ten road game in an arena where they've had trouble in the past. The very bad news? Michigan lost to Wisconsin on the road. But wait, that's only "regular" bad news, not "very" bad news. The very bad news is that [Coach Howard](#) punched/slapped a Wisconsin assistant coach in the handshake line after the game, and it turned into a minor brawl. Howard will probably be suspended for at least one game, maybe more. A couple Michigan players might also get suspended for one or more games, since they joined in the melee. I've watched the replays of the fight, and read a lot of details on what was said and done leading up to the fight, and it looks like there's enough blame to go around. It looks like Wisconsin started it, but Howard shouldn't have reacted the way he did. Once it got going, I can't blame any of the players who were caught up in it. It's a mess, and the punishments haven't been decided yet.

The Iowa game was close and exciting the whole way. The teams traded slim leads all game, with Iowa up 2 points (39-37) at halftime. It was all tied up (50-50) with 15:14 to go, when Michigan finally started pulling away. They got the lead up to 7 points (57-50) at the 13:10 mark, then pushed it into the 9-11 point range. Michigan led by 12 points (78-66) with 3:25 left, then they just fell asleep. Iowa scored 9 straight points, to pull within 3 points (78-75) with 1:20 to go, when Michigan woke up, and started scoring again. Iowa got within 2 points (81-79) with 6 seconds left, but they missed a 3-pointer with 1 second left, Michigan got the rebound, got fouled, and made the free throws to make it a 5-point win. It was very exciting.

The Wisconsin game went fine until it didn't. For the whole first half, it was close and exciting, with lots of runs and lead changes. The game was tied (31-31) at halftime, and Michigan exploded out of the gate for the 2nd half, going up 38-33 with 18:40 to go. Just when things were looking promising, Michigan fell asleep, again. This time, they didn't wake up in time. They let Wisconsin go on a miserable 14-1 run to make it 47-39 at the 13:25 mark, and they never recovered. Wisconsin quickly pushed the lead up into double digits, and Michigan never got closer than 10 points the rest of the way.

Stats

[The stats for the Iowa game](#) are decent. Michigan shot well overall (31-for-62 = 50.0%), they shot 3-pointers poorly (4-for-20 = 20.0%), and they shot free throws well (18-for-23 = 78.3%). They won the rebounding battle (40-37), and tied in the turnover battle (11-11). They won this game with overall shooting, but NOT with 3-point shooting. They were lucky to win a Big Ten road game shooting 20% from deep.

[The stats for the Wisconsin game](#) are miserable. Michigan shot poorly overall (25-for-64 = 39.1%), they shot 3-pointers terribly (4-for-25 = 16.0%), and they shot free throws decently (9-for-13 = 69.2%). They won the rebounding battle handily (38-28), but lost the turnover battle (12-8). They lost this game with horrible 3-point shooting.

Who Started?

The starters for both games were [Eli Brooks](#), [Moussa Diabate](#), [Hunter Dickinson](#), [Caleb Houstan](#), and [DeVante' Jones](#).

Who Looked Good?

Dickinson had a good week, with 14 points vs. Iowa and 21 points vs. Wisconsin. He did his part, but he needed more support vs. Wisconsin.

Brooks also had a good week, with 13 points vs. Iowa and 14 points vs. Wisconsin.

Jones hit double figures in both games, with 11 points in each. He also had 10 rebounds in the Iowa game, for a double-double.

Diabate had one great game, followed by a lousy game. He was the star of the Iowa game, with a new career-high 28 points, but he disappeared in the Wisconsin game, with a meager 3 points on 1-for-3 shooting and a free throw. If he could have played just an average game vs. Wisconsin, Michigan might have stood a chance, but he was a no-show.

[Kobe Bufkin](#) had a nice game (10 points) vs. Iowa, but didn't do much vs. Wisconsin (2 points).

[Jace Howard](#) played in both games, and scored 2 points in each game. He played good defense again.

Who Looked Not-So-Good?

Houston had a lousy week, with 6 points in each game. His shooting was horrible: 2-for-9 (0-for-5 from deep) vs. Iowa, and 2-for-10 (2-for-7 from deep) vs. Wisconsin.

[Frankie Collins](#) played in both games, but didn't score.

[Brandon Johns, Jr.](#) played in both games, but didn't score.

[Terrance Williams II](#) didn't play in the Iowa game (minor ankle injury), and scored 4 points vs. Wisconsin.

Who Else Played?

[Jaron Faulds](#) played in both games, but didn't score.

[Adrien Nuñez](#) played in the Wisconsin game, but didn't attempt a shot.

Who Didn't Play?

[Isaiah Barnes](#) and [Will Tschetter](#) are the scholarship players who didn't play in either game.

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

What Does It Mean?

As I've said many times before, any win on the road in the Big Ten is a good win, and the Iowa win was a very nice win. The odds of beating Wisconsin in Madison were very low, but it would have been nice if Michigan had put up more of a fight (before the handshake line). Still, the win and the loss leave Michigan just on the right side of "the bubble" for the NCAA Tournament. Unfortunately, they play 3 ranked teams in their last 5 games, and they're likely to be playing some of those games without Coach Howard and maybe a couple players. They probably need to win 3 of the 5 games to sneak into the Big Dance, and that could be tough.

What's Next?

This week Michigan is scheduled to play two games. On Wednesday (02/23/2022, 7:00 p.m., BTN) they are scheduled to play Rutgers, then on Sunday (02/27/2022, 2:00 p.m., CBS) they are scheduled to play (#12) Illinois. Both games are in Crisler Arena.

[Rutgers](#) is currently 16-10 (10-6 in Big Ten). At this point, they are the hottest team in the Big Ten. Before losing to (#5) Purdue on Sunday, they had 4 wins in a row against ranked opponents: (#13) Michigan State, (#16) Ohio State, (#14) Wisconsin, and (#12) Illinois. They beat Michigan 75-67 back on 01/04/2022 in Piscataway, and it felt like an upset at the time, but with Rutgers continued success, it looks like a well-deserved win. Back in December, they also beat then (#1) Purdue. They are good, and the two players I noted last time have been very good: Geo Baker and Ron Harper, Jr. This will be a very challenging game for Michigan. If they play the way they did last week vs. Purdue, they can win, but if they play like they did in the 2nd half of the Wisconsin game, they're going to be in big trouble.

[Illinois](#) is currently 19-7 (12-4 in Big Ten). They beat Michigan 68-53 back on 01/14/2022 in Champaign, and since then they have beaten (#10) Michigan State, (#11) Wisconsin, and (#19) Michigan State. The players I noted last time have been very good: Kofi Cockburn and Trent Frazier. Once again, Dickinson will have his hands full with Cockburn, who I still think is the most powerful basketball player I've ever seen. This will be a very challenging game for Michigan. Illinois is in the thick of the Big Ten title race, and they will be out for blood. Michigan can win, but only if they play a flawless game.

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

Go Blue!