

Nothing But 'Net – Week #18 – 02/28/2022 – Those Pesky Ranked Opponents

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this past week, and they won one and lost one. [On Wednesday \(02/23/2022\), they beat Rutgers 71-62](#), then [on Sunday \(02/27/2022\), they lost to \(#15\) Illinois 93-85](#). Both games were in Crisler Arena. The win and the loss leave Michigan with a record of 15-12 (9-8 in Big Ten).

What Happened?

First things first: since last week's article, suspensions were handed out for the infamous handshake line debacle after the Wisconsin game. For Michigan, [Coach Howard](#) was fined \$40,000 and suspended for the last five regular season games, and [Moussa Diabate](#) and [Terrance Williams II](#) were each suspended for one game. For Wisconsin, head coach Greg Gard was fined \$10,000 (which the UW athletic department paid for him) but not suspended, and one player (Jahcobi Neath) was suspended for one game. In my humble opinion, Howard's suspension was a little long (2 games seems more reasonable), and Gard and one of his assistants (Joe Krabbenhoft) should have been suspended for 1-2 games each. The Big Ten let the schools suggest the punishments for their players and coaches, and Michigan went a little heavy and Wisconsin went very light.

So far this season, Michigan has done decently against unranked teams (14-6), but they have a terrible record against those pesky ranked opponents (1-6). Their only win against a ranked team was on 02/10/2022, when they beat (#3) Purdue 82-58. This week was another good example of that: they beat their unranked opponent (Rutgers), but lost to their ranked opponent (Illinois). That's no way to impress the NCAA Tournament selection committee.

The Rutgers game was close for the entire 1st half and the first portion of the 2nd half. After a brief 2-0 lead in the opening minute, Rutgers never led again, and Michigan kept their lead in the 4-6 point range for much of the 1st half. Rutgers closed to within 2 points (32-30) at halftime, and tied the game up (38-38) with 16:12 left in the game. Michigan went back ahead, but it was still a 2-point game (44-42) at the 13:53 mark. Michigan went on a 15-3 run over the next 6 minutes, to lead by 14 (59-45) with 8:50 to go. Michigan kept the lead in double figures for the rest of the game, until Rutgers scored the last basket to finish the game with a 9-point deficit. It was a good solid win against a team that had beaten Michigan earlier in the season.

The Illinois game was just the opposite. Illinois never trailed, although Michigan did tie the score twice early (2-2 and 10-10). Illinois lead by 5-7 points for the first 10 minutes of the 1st half, then by 10-12 points for the remainder of the half. Michigan managed to trim the deficit to 8 points (46-38) at halftime, but they couldn't get much closer in the 2nd half. They did get within 7 points (56-49) with 14:23 to go, but Illinois pushed the lead back into the 10-12 point range and kept it there. Michigan made one final push near the end of the game, getting within 2 points (82-80) with 2:03 left, but Illinois slammed the door, outscoring Michigan 11-5 in the last 2 minutes.

Stats

[The stats for the Rutgers game](#) are decent. Michigan shot pretty well overall (27-for-58 = 46.6%), they shot 3-pointers fairly well (7-for-22 = 31.8%), and they were perfect shooting free throws (10-for-10 = 100.0%). They won the rebounding battle (36-31), but lost the turnover battle (12-9). They won this game with overall shooting and defense.

[The stats for the Illinois game](#) are deceptive. Michigan shot well overall (29-for-57 = 50.9%), they shot 3-pointers pretty well (5-for-15 = 33.3%), and they shot free throws well (22-for-25 = 88.0%). They barely lost the rebounding battle (26-28) and the turnover battle (11-9). They lost this game with poor defense, allowing Illinois to shoot 56.7% (34-for-60) overall and 58.8% (10-for-17) from deep.

Who Started?

The starters for the Rutgers game were [Eli Brooks](#), [Hunter Dickinson](#), [Caleb Houston](#), [Brandon Johns, Jr.](#), and [DeVante' Jones](#). Johns started in place of Diabate (suspension), who started again in the Illinois game.

Who Looked Good?

For the first time in a while, Dickinson wasn't the "first star" this week. Instead, it was Jones, who had a good game vs. Rutgers (14 points) and a great game vs. Illinois (a team-high 25 points). He also had 10 assists in the Illinois game, for a nice double-double.

Usually, if Dickinson isn't the "first star" for the week, he's the "second star". Not this week. This week, the "second star" was Houston, with a team-high 21 points vs. Rutgers and 21 more points vs. Illinois. He was Michigan's big 3-point threat in both games, shooting 5-for-9 vs. Rutgers and 2-for-3 vs. Illinois.

Dickinson certainly had a good week, just not the "first star" or the "second star". He had 16 points (and 11 rebounds, for a double-double) vs. Rutgers, and 13 points (and 11 more rebounds, for another double-double) vs. Illinois.

Brooks had a decent week, with 11 points vs. Rutgers, but only 4 points vs. Illinois.

Diabate played pretty well in his one game this week, with 12 points vs. Illinois.

[Kobe Bufkin](#) played some solid minutes in both games, scoring 5 and 2 points.

[Frankie Collins](#) also contributes some solid minutes in both games, scoring 2 and 6 points.

Who Looked Not-So-Good?

Johns had a miserable week, both as a starter (2 points vs. Rutgers) and bench player (scoreless vs. Illinois).

[Terrance Williams II](#) didn't play in the Rutgers game (suspension), and scored 2 points vs. Illinois.

Who Else Played?

[Jaron Faulds](#), [Jace Howard](#), and [Adrien Nuñez](#) all played in the Rutgers game, but didn't score.

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?

Well, the season is slipping away, and Michigan is now on the wrong side of the "bubble" for the NCAA Tournament. They have 3 games left, 2 at home and 1 on the road, and 2 of the 3 opponents are ranked. They probably need to win all 3 to get into the Big Dance. That doesn't seem likely.

What's Next?

This week Michigan is scheduled to play three games. On Tuesday (03/01/2022, 8:30 p.m., FS1) they are scheduled to play Michigan State in Crisler Arena, on Thursday (03/03/2022,

9:00 p.m., FS1) they are scheduled to play (#25) Iowa in Crisler Arena, then on Sunday (03/06/2022, 12:30 p.m., FOX) they are scheduled to play at (#22) Ohio State. The MSU game on Tuesday was added to the schedule as the replacement when the game was postponed from 01/08/2022 due to COVID-19. It makes for a very busy week, with 4 games (including the Illinois game) in 8 days.

[Michigan State](#) is currently 19-9 (10-7 in Big Ten). They beat Michigan in East Lansing 83-67 back on 01/29/2022, but since then they have been skidding, going 3-6 with losses to Rutgers, Penn State, and Iowa. They are certainly beatable, but they always play their best games against Michigan, so it should be a challenging game.

[Iowa](#) is currently 20-8 (10-7 in Big Ten). Michigan beat them in Iowa City 84-79 just 11 days ago (02/17/2022), but they've won 3 games in a row since then, and they're now ranked. Still, if Michigan can beat them on the road, they stand a good chance against them in Crisler.

[Ohio State](#) is currently 18-8 (11-6 in Big Ten). They beat Michigan in Crisler Arena 68-57 a couple weeks ago (02/12/2022), and they've gone 3-2 since then, with an impressive win over (#15) Illinois, and losses to Iowa and Maryland. They were good enough to beat Michigan in Ann Arbor, so it should be a very challenging game in Columbus.

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

Go Blue!