

## **Nothing But 'Net – Week #21 – 03/21/2022 – Sweet Again, Times Five**

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this past week in the [NCAA Tournament](#), and they won them both. They are the #11 seed in the South Region, and they played the first two rounds in Indianapolis, IN. [On Thursday \(03/17/2022\), they beat the #6 seed \(#24\) Colorado State 75-63](#), then [on Saturday \(03/19/2022\), they beat the #3 seed \(#5\) Tennessee 76-68](#). The two wins raise Michigan's record to 19-14. They are now in the Sweet Sixteen.

### **What Happened?**

These were two huge wins, especially since Michigan was the lower seed in both games. It's a big deal that Michigan is moving on to the Sweet Sixteen, and it's even more impressive that Michigan has advanced to the Sweet Sixteen in the last five NCAA Tournaments. No other team in the Big Ten can come close to this achievement. In fact, since Michigan was the only Big Ten team to reach the Sweet Sixteen last season, no other team is close to five in a row. Purdue is the only other Big Ten team to make it to the Sweet Sixteen this season.

The other big story this week was Michigan FINALLY breaking "The Pattern". Starting with the home Purdue game on 02/10/2022, Michigan had gone W-L-W-L-W-L-W-L-W-L-W. When they won the CSU game, things didn't look good for the UT game, but Michigan finally won two games in a row, at the right time.

Both games were close and exciting, and Michigan came from behind in both games to win in the last few minutes. CSU missed their first 3-point attempt, then made their next four in a row, along with a 2-point shot, and they jumped out to a quick 14-7 lead at the 15:18 mark. Michigan hung around, and got within 5 points (18-13) with 9:25 to go, when CSU went on a bruising 10-0 run to go up by 15 points (28-13) at the 4:44 mark. Michigan could have packed it in at this point, but they responded to adversity with poise, and slowly fought their way back. They outscored CSU 16-8 to close out the half, down 36-29. Michigan came out hot to start the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, and went on a 6-2 run to get within 3 points (38-35) at the 18:02 mark. CSU pushed the lead back up to 6 points (44-38) with 15:27 to go, but Michigan answered with a 7-0 run to take the lead for the first time in a while, 45-44, with 12:53 left. CSU took the lead back, pushed it up to 4 points, and had their last lead (49-47) at the 11:03 mark. Michigan went ahead for good, 50-49, with 10:30 to go, pushed the lead up to the 6-8 point range, and made their free throws in the final minute to seal the victory. It was a solid, impressive win over a good CSU team.

Not many people gave Michigan much of a chance against UT. Unlike the CSU game, Michigan started this game hot, and led 10-2 at the 17:03 mark. That didn't last long, and UT cut the lead to 2 points (10-8) with 15:53 left in the half. Michigan held onto a slim lead until the 9:36 mark, when UT went ahead, 18-17. UM went back ahead, then the game was tied a couple times. Michigan pulled ahead again (24-22) with 6:27 to go, and kept the lead until the 3:02 mark, when UT went back ahead, 31-30. UT closed out the half with a 6-0 run, to lead 37-32. Once again, Michigan opened the 2<sup>nd</sup> half with strong play, and managed to tie the game up (45-45) at the 15:03 mark. For the next 4 minutes, the lead bounced back and forth, with Michigan up 54-53 with 11:29 to go. Michigan went cold, and UT got hot, and suddenly UT was ahead 60-54 with 8:27 left. Once again, Michigan patiently crept back into the game, and tied it up (60-60) at the 5:03 mark. It was still tied (62-62) with 4:01 left, when Michigan took the lead for good. Their lead was only 2 points (68-66) with 1:27 to go, but Michigan closed out the game with an 8-2 run, including 6 free throws, to win by 8. It was a glorious victory over a Top-5 opponent.

### **Stats**

[The stats for the CSU game](#) are solid, but not gaudy. Michigan shot well overall (26-for-48 = 54.2%), they shot 3-pointers poorly (4-for-14 = 28.6%), and they shot free throws very well (19-for-22 = 86.4%). They won the rebounding battle handily (36-25), but lost the turnover battle (15-11). They won this game at the free throw line, where CSU only shot 5-for-7.

[The stats for the UT game](#) are very similar to the CSU stats. Michigan shot well overall (27-for-54 = 50.0%), they shot 3-pointers decently (6-for-16 = 37.5%), and they shot free throws well (16-for-20 = 80.0%). They won the rebounding battle (36-33), but lost the turnover battle (15-7). They won this game with defense, especially 3-point defense, holding UT to 2-for-18 shooting from deep.

### **Who Started?**

The starters for the CSU game were [Eli Brooks](#), [Frankie Collins](#), [Moussa Diabate](#), [Hunter Dickinson](#), and [Caleb Houston](#). Collins started in place of [DeVante' Jones](#), who missed the CSU game with a concussion. Jones was back as a starter for the UT game.

### **Who Looked Good?**

Dickinson came to play. He was Michigan's leading scorer in both games, with 21 and 27 points. He was very efficient in both games: 8-for-10 shooting vs. CSU, and 8-for-13 vs. UT. He contributed a lot more than just points though: He had 6 rebounds and 4 blocked shots vs. CSU, and 11 rebounds (for a double-double) and 4 assists vs. UT. He even shot 3-for-5 from 3-point range in the UT game. He was awesome.

Brooks is playing like a 5<sup>th</sup> year senior who doesn't want his Michigan career to end. He was Michigan's 2<sup>nd</sup> leading scorer in both games, with 16 and 23 points. He also had 7 rebounds and 6 assists vs. CSU, and 5 more assists vs. UT.

Diabate had one good game (13 points, 6 rebounds) vs. UT, and one decent game (7 points, 9 rebounds) vs. CSU.

Houston was one of the heroes of the CSU game (13 points, 3-for-8 shooting from deep), but he was a complete non-factor in the UT game (0 points on 0-for-4 shooting). His three 3-pointers in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the CSU game got Michigan back in the game when it was slipping away. It's too bad he couldn't get anything going in the UT game.

Collins had one great game (14 points, 6 rebounds) vs. CSU, and one mediocre game (2 points) vs. UT. He was another of the heroes of the CSU game. His 14 points were a new career high, and he even hit another 3-pointer, his first since mid-December. He did a very nice job running the offense in Jones' absence. He wasn't nearly as effective vs. UT.

[Terrance Williams II](#) had a quiet game vs. CSU (2 points on free throws), but he was a big reason that Michigan won the UT game. He hit a huge 3-pointer, but his biggest contribution was a pair of offensive rebound-putback baskets late in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, when UT was trying to come back. Those were very important points.

### **Who Looked Not-So-Good?**

Jones only played 11 minutes in the UT game, all in the 1<sup>st</sup> half, and only scored 2 points. He apparently hurt his wrist, and he banged his head against the floor, and that was it for him.

[Brandon Johns, Jr.](#) was worthless out there, with 0 points in both games.

### **Who Else Played?**

[Kobe Bufkin](#) only played in the CSU game, and scored 2 points on free throws.

### **Who Didn't Play?**

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

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

### **What Does It Mean?**

Last week, we were holding our breath and crossing our fingers, hoping Michigan would be in the Big Dance. This week, we're celebrating two solid victories and looking for more in the Sweet Sixteen. At the beginning of the season, Michigan was ranked #6 and the Sweet Sixteen was taken for granted, but as the season went on and Michigan underachieved, just making the tournament became the new goal. Now, Michigan is "playing with house money". Winning the first round game vs. CSU was the break-even point, and beating UT was gravy. Any further wins are all beyond what was expected going into the NCAA Tournament.

### **What's Next?**

This week Michigan continues play in the NCAA Tournament. As mentioned above, they are the #11 seed in the South Region. Their next game is on Thursday (03/24/2022, 7:30 p.m. EDT, TBS) vs. the #2 seed (#6) Villanova, in San Antonio (TX). If they win and advance to the Elite Eight, they'll play the winner of the (#1 seed) Arizona/(#5 seed) Houston game on Saturday (03/26/2022, TBA, TBS) for a trip to the Final Four. [Here's the full bracket.](#)

[Villanova](#) is currently 28-7 (16-4 in Big East). During the regular season, they had impressive wins over (#17) Tennessee, (#15) Seton Hall (twice), Creighton, (#17) Connecticut (twice), and (#9) Providence. They lost to (#2) UCLA, (#6) Purdue, (#2) Baylor, Creighton, Marquette (twice), and (#21) Connecticut. A couple of those losses were pretty bad: 57-36 to Baylor and 79-59 to Creighton. So far in the Big Dance, they have beaten (#15 seed) Delaware and (#7 seed) Ohio State. They have one noteworthy player (Collin Gillespie), but no height (no one over 6'9"). If Michigan can get the ball inside to Dickinson, he could have a field day.

Note that Michigan has a special relationship with Villanova. They met in the National Championship game back on 04/02/2018, in San Antonio, and Villanova won 79-62. Three players from that Villanova team who played in that game are still playing on this season's team: Dhamir Cosby-Roundtree, Collin Gillespie, and Jermaine Samuels. For Michigan, Eli Brooks is the only player on this season's team who played in that championship game. Michigan will be out to avenge that loss.

Michigan has played Villanova since that loss in the championship game, the next season at their place, and Michigan throttled them 73-46 on 11/14/2018.

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

Go Blue!