

Nothing But 'Net – Week #23 – 04/04/2022 – Season Wrap-up, Final Grades, And Looking Ahead

The 2021-2022 season is over for the University of Michigan men's basketball team, and it was a mixed bag. It's time to look back on the season, hand out final grades, and look ahead to next season.

Season Wrap-Up

Michigan ended the season with a record of 19-15 (11-9 in Big Ten). They came in tied for 8th place in the Big Ten regular season standings, lost their only game in the [Big Ten Tournament](#), won their first two games in the [NCAA Tournament](#), then lost in the Sweet Sixteen. On the one hand, this performance is well below pre-season expectations, but on the other hand, it exceeded most expectations from early February, when their record was 11-9 (5-5 in Big Ten). Most of the pre-season "experts" picked Michigan as a Top-10 team, and I bought into it. Things didn't work out that way.

The season started out well enough, with solid wins in the (away) exhibition game ([Wayne State](#)) and the first 2 non-conference games ([Buffalo](#) at home and [Prairie View A&M](#) at a neutral site), then the first hints of trouble showed up: a 2-point home loss to [Seton Hall](#). At the time, Seton Hall wasn't ranked, and Michigan had climbed to #4 in the AP Poll, so this was a shocking result. By the end of the season, Seton Hall was a respectable 21-11, they were ranked for part of the season, and they were a #8 seed in the Big Dance, so this loss isn't as bad as it looked at the time.

Michigan went out to Las Vegas for a pre-Thanksgiving tournament, the [Roman Main Event](#). They beat a pretty good [UNLV](#) team in their home town, but they looked terrible in losing to [Arizona](#) 80-62 two days later. Once again, Arizona wasn't ranked at the time, but they sure were by the end of the season. They ended the season 33-4, ranked #2 in the final AP Poll, and a #1 seed in the Big Dance. In hindsight, this was not a very bad loss at all, but it sure felt like it at the time.

Michigan returned home, beat a mediocre [Tarleton State](#) team by only 11 points, then they went back on the road, for an ACC/Big Ten Challenge game at [North Carolina](#). UNC throttled them, 72-51. Do you see the pattern yet? At the time, UNC wasn't ranked, but they sure were for much of the season. They are currently 29-9, they're a #8 seed in the Big Dance, and they are playing in the National Championship game tonight. So, another loss that doesn't look so bad in the rearview mirror.

Michigan returned home again, and beat a pretty good [San Diego State](#) team handily, 72-58. This was one of Michigan's better wins. SDSU ended the season 23-9, and they were a #8 seed in the Big Dance. Michigan followed up this win with another solid win, 102-67 at [Nebraska](#). Sure, Nebraska wasn't predicted to be very good this season, but winning by 35 points on the road is pretty impressive. Just when it looked like Michigan had finally turned the corner, they played their worst game of the season, losing 75-65 to lowly [Minnesota](#) in Crisler Arena. This was one of the most embarrassing losses in the last 10 years. Minnesota was dreadful this season, finishing 13-17 (4-16 in Big Ten), tied for last place in the conference with Nebraska.

Michigan returned home yet again, and beat a decent [Southern Utah](#) team, 87-50. They were supposed to play [Purdue-Fort Wayne](#) in Crisler just before Christmas, but Fort Wayne had to cancel due to COVID-19 issues in their program. There was no wiggle room in the schedule to reschedule the game, so it was just canceled. Michigan's final non-conference game was at [Central Florida](#), and it was terrible. Michigan led by 12 points midway through the 2nd half, then they fell apart and lost 85-71. If the Minnesota loss a few weeks earlier was the worst loss of the season, this one was close behind.

On to the Big Ten! Michigan was a perfect 12-0 all-time against [Rutgers](#), so they should be able to beat them, even on the road, right? Wrong. Another disheartening loss. However, as

with several other opponents this season, Rutgers turned out to be a lot better than expected. They ended up 18-14 (12-8 in Big Ten), and were a #11 seed in the Big Dance.

As if the Rutgers loss wasn't bad enough, Michigan had COVID-19 issues in their program, and they had to postpone their next two games, both at home, against two of the tougher teams in the conference: (#10) [Michigan State](#) and (#4) [Purdue](#). At the time, it wasn't clear when, or even if, the games would be rescheduled, but they were. Of course, that made for a couple really busy weeks late in the season, but we'll get to that.

Michigan went on the road again, and lost big at (#25) [Illinois](#). They beat [Maryland](#) in Ann Arbor, [Indiana](#) on the road, and [Northwestern](#) in Ann Arbor. Ladies and gentlemen, that was Michigan's longest winning streak of the season: 3 games in a row.

Back on the road, another loss, this time at (#10) [Michigan State](#). Back home, playing a team that they beat by 35 points on the road earlier in the season, [Nebraska](#). No problem, right? Wrong! They struggled mightily, but managed to squeak out a win, 85-79. Back on the road, another Top-10 opponent, another loss: at (#4) [Purdue](#). The next game was a rare road win, at [Penn State](#). The season was hanging in the balance.

Look at the emerging pattern: besides the "awesome" 3-game winning streak, Michigan had almost always followed a win with a loss. The next game was at home, but it was against (#3) [Purdue](#). This was one of the two rescheduled/make-up games from earlier in the season. On paper, it looked like Michigan stood no chance. On the court, it was Michigan's best game of the season. They dominated Purdue, 82-58.

Unfortunately, this 2-game mini winning streak was the last time Michigan won two games in a row until the NCAA Tournament. The rest of the season looked like this:

- L – Home vs. (#16) [Ohio State](#)
- W – Away vs. [Iowa](#)
- L – Away vs. (#15) [Wisconsin](#)
- W – Home vs. [Rutgers](#)
- L – Home vs. (#15) [Illinois](#)
- W – Home vs. (#25) [Michigan State](#) (this was the other rescheduled/make-up game)
- L – Home vs. (#24) [Iowa](#)
- W – Away vs. (#23) [Ohio State](#)
- L – Neutral court vs. [Indiana](#) (Big Ten Tournament)
- W – Neutral court vs. (#24) [Colorado State](#) (NCAA Tournament)
- W – Neutral court vs. (#5) [Tennessee](#) (NCAA Tournament)
- L – Neutral court vs. (#6) [Villanova](#) (NCAA Tournament)

A few comments on this batch of games:

The win at Iowa was one of Michigan's better road wins this season, second only to their win at Ohio State to close out the regular season.

The win over Rutgers was nice revenge for their early loss to them on the road. Ditto for the MSU game.

It makes no sense that Michigan could beat Iowa on the road, then lose to them at home. Same idea for the Indiana game – Michigan beat them on the road, then lost to them on a neutral court. It makes no sense.

One of the bigger stories this season came right after the loss at Wisconsin. [Coach Howard](#) was upset by the behavior of some of the Wisconsin coaches and players during the game, and he lost his temper and slapped one of the Wisconsin assistant coaches in the post-game handshake line. A small brawl broke out, and in the aftermath, Howard was suspended for the last five games of the regular season, two Michigan players ([Moussa Diabate](#) and [Terrance Williams II](#)) were suspended for one game, one Wisconsin player was suspended for one

game, and the Wisconsin head coach (Greg Gard) was given a slap on the wrist. While Howard was suspended, associate head coach [Phil Martelli](#) coached the team, and did a fine job.

The loss to Indiana in the Big Ten Tournament was right up there in the "sad" category. Once again, Michigan had a nice lead (17 points) midway through the 2nd half, when they just stopped playing. That game, along with the Minnesota and UCF games, were the only three really bad games Michigan played all season. The rest of their losses were all explainable and forgivable.

That brings us to the NCAA Tournament. As the #11 seed, Michigan was not expected to beat the #6 seed ([#24] Colorado State) in the first round, and they certainly were not expected to beat the #3 seed ([#5] Tennessee) in the second round. Losing to the #2 seed ([#6] Villanova) is nothing to be ashamed of. Villanova went on to play in the Final Four.

So, what happened? How did pre-season #6 Michigan end up unranked and a #11 seed in the Big Dance? I think all of the experts were way too optimistic about the new players, including incoming freshmen and a transfer player. They eventually all contributed, but not at the beginning of the season, and not consistently. The freshmen often played like freshmen. It took longer than expected to develop the right team chemistry. The schedule also turned out to be a lot more challenging than it looked before the season.

Final Grades

Here are the final grades, with mid-term grades listed first.

Freshman Eligibility

- [Isaiah Barnes](#) (Inc./Inc.) – Isaiah played in 2 games, and didn't attempt a shot. He might be eligible for a redshirt, but probably not.
- [Kobe Bufkin](#) (C+/C+) – Kobe played in 28 games, and scored 85 points. He looked good in a few games (Prairie View A&M, Southern Utah, Central Florida, and away Iowa) and like a freshman in the rest. He didn't shoot very well from 3-point range (8-for-36 = 22.2%), and he had more turnovers (15) than assists (8).
- [Ian Burns](#) (Inc./Inc.) – Ian was on the scout team, and he only played 2 minutes in 2 games. He missed his only shot attempt.
- [Frankie Collins](#) (C+/B-) – Frankie played in 31 games, and scored 88 points. He looked good in a couple games (San Diego State and Colorado State) and like a freshman in the rest. He shot horribly from 3-point range (3-for-18 = 16.7%), and he had too many turnovers (35). However, he did have more assists (43) than turnovers. He played good defense, and he ran the team fairly well when he played point guard.
- [Moussa Diabate](#) (B/B+) – Moussa played in 32 games (started 26) and scored 289 points. He has also grabbed 92 rebounds and blocked 11 shots. He is very athletic, and brings lots of energy to the team when he's out there. He also fouls too much.
- [Caleb Houstan](#) (B+/B+) – Caleb started all 34 games this season and scored 343 points. He shot pretty well from 3-point range (60-for-169 = 35.5%) and he snagged 135 rebounds. He had several very good games, and a few very bad games. Even when he had a good game, he was too quiet out there. He needs to show some emotion to get the rest of the team fired up.
- [Will Tschetter](#) (Inc./Inc.) – Will was voluntarily redshirted. He didn't play in any games this season. He was the Most Valuable Cheerleader on the bench.

Sophomore Eligibility

- [Hunter Dickinson](#) (A-/A) – Hunter’s stats were actually up from last season, but it didn’t feel like it. He started out slower this season, almost appearing disinterested during some of the non-conference losses, but he picked up steam as the season went along. One aspect of his game is definitely better this season: 3-point shooting. Last season, he was 0-for-4. This season, he was 21-for-64 (32.8%). He led the team in scoring (18.6 points/game), rebounding (8.6 rebounds/game), and blocks (49). Unfortunately, he also led the team in fouls and turnovers.
- [Jace Howard](#) (C-/C-) – Jace played in 14 games and scored 16 points. He even hit a 3-pointer. He was often brought in for defensive purposes, and he contributed to a mean full-court press.
- [Zeb Jackson](#) (C-/Withdrawn) – Zeb only played in 4 games, then he stopped playing and traveling with the team. The reason was listed as “personal” (non-injury, non-COVID-19). [On 02/01/2022, he entered the transfer portal](#), and [on 04/02/2022, he announced his transfer to Virginia Commonwealth \(VCU\)](#). We wish him luck there. It’s too bad he didn’t work out at Michigan.
- [Terrance Williams II](#) (C/C+) – Terrance played in 31 games (started 1), and scored 146 points. He’s had a couple great games (Buffalo, at Nebraska, at Indiana, and at Ohio State) and a bunch of forgettable games. He was the 2nd best 3-point shooter on the team (20-for-52 = 38.5%). He’s a good defender, and a good rebounder for his size.

Junior Eligibility

- [Brandon Wade](#) (Inc./Inc.) – Brandon was on the scout team, and he didn’t appear in any games this season.

Senior Eligibility

- [Eli Brooks](#) (B/A-) – Eli started all 34 games this season. He had a real up-and-down season. He started out strong, as the only Michigan player scoring in double figures for the first 10 games, then he hit a rough patch, with only 2 decent games in the next 6. He got back on track, and finished the season well, with double figures (or very close) in 17 of his last 18 games. He was the 2nd leading scorer on the team (12.8 points/game), the leading 3-point shooter (56-for-142 = 39.4%), 2nd on the team in assists (100), and 1st on the team in steals (40). He ended his career with a couple all-time Michigan records: most wins (124) and most games played (159).
- [Jaron Faulds](#) (C/C) – Jaron played in 15 games, and scored 13 points. He provided valuable minutes when Dickinson wasn’t available.
- [Brandon Johns, Jr.](#) (C-/D+) – Brandon was the biggest disappointment on the team this season. As a senior with some starting experience, a lot was expected from him, and he didn’t deliver. In fact, after starting the first 6 games, he lost his starting role to Diabate. He played in 31 games (started 9), and scored 100 points. He had one good game (at Nebraska) and a bunch of forgettable games including 10 games with 0 points and 11 games with less than 5 points.
- [DeVante’ Jones](#) (B/B+) – DeVante’ started every game this season but one (Colorado State), and was the main point guard. He started the season slowly, but once he got the chemistry going, he did fine. He was the 3rd leading scorer on the team (10.3 points/game), and he led the team in assists (151), against 71 turnovers. His 3-point shooting was also pretty good: 27-for-79 = 34.2%.
- [Adrien Nuñez](#) (Inc./Inc.) – Adrien played in 10 games, and scored 8 points. For someone who was recruited as a 3-point specialist, his numbers were lousy: 1-for-6.

Looking Ahead

There are five main considerations for next season's roster:

- Who's graduating?
- Who's leaving early for the NBA Draft?
- Who's transferring?
- Who are the incoming freshmen?
- Who will join the team from the transfer portal?

Let's check out each of these considerations.

Who's Graduating?

The question of who's graduating used to be simpler, but with the new COVID-19 rules, it's a little trickier. The only player on the roster who has used up all his eligibility (5 years!) is Eli Brooks. The other four members of the senior class (Jaron Faulds, Brandon Johns, Jr., DeVante' Jones, and Adrien Nuñez) are all eligible to return for one more season, thanks to the COVID-19 rules. Jones has already announced that he is not returning, and will be entering the NBA Draft. The other three players have not announced their intentions, but I would be surprised if any of them returned.

Who's Leaving Early For The NBA Draft?

There are a few important dates related to the NBA Draft:

- 04/24/2022 – The deadline for underclassmen wishing to declare for the draft.
- 06/01/2022 – The deadline for underclassmen to withdraw from the draft and maintain their collegiate eligibility.
- 06/23/2022 – The NBA Draft.

At this point, only one player from this season's team has declared that he is entering the NBA Draft: DeVante' Jones. However, there are three more players who might consider joining him: Hunter Dickinson, Moussa Diabate, and Caleb Houston. None of the "mock" drafts I have seen show any Michigan players, including Jones, so it is hard to imagine any of the three underclassmen staying in the draft, although they might all put their names in so they can be evaluated, then withdraw from the draft by 06/01/2022. Dickinson did this last season, and he returned for this season based on the feedback he got from the process. Aside from wanting them all back for next season's team, I didn't see NBA skills from any of them this season. We'll just have to wait and see.

Who's Transferring?

At this point, no one from this season's team has announced their desire to enter the infamous Transfer Portal. However, I wouldn't be surprised if one or two players decided to transfer. The most likely is Kobe Bufkin, but I haven't heard anything concrete.

Who Are The Incoming Freshmen?

There are 4 incoming freshmen committed to Michigan for next season:

- [Gregg Glenn III](#) (6'7", 210 pounds, F) – Gregg is a 4-star power forward. He'll be a force in the paint, but his outside shot needs some work.
- [Jett Howard](#) (6'7", 220 pounds, G) – Jett is a 4-star shooting guard. Yes, he's the younger of Coach Howard's two sons, and probably the more talented. He's a good defender, and he's got a nice jump shot.

- [Dug McDaniel](#) (5'11", 155 pounds, G) – Dug is a 4-star point guard. He's kind of short, but very quick, with good court vision and a decent outside shot.
- [Tarris Reed, Jr.](#) (6'10", 230 pounds, C) – Tarris is a 4-star center. He appears to have all the moves for a back-to-the-basket center, but his jump shot is suspect from mid-range and out.

Who Will Join The Team From The Transfer Portal?

At this point, Coach Howard hasn't snagged anyone from the Transfer Portal, but there are plenty of possibilities out there. The big problem is that there aren't any open scholarships. However, Coach Howard has some flexibility, since he can afford to take one or both of his sons off scholarship and switch them to walk-on status. Also, it wouldn't be too surprising if one or two players left for the NBA Draft, and/or one or two players entered the Transfer Portal.

Projected Roster And Lineups

Putting all of the above together, my best guess at the roster for next season is:

- Gregg Glenn III – Freshman eligibility
- Jett Howard – Freshman eligibility
- Dug McDaniel – Freshman eligibility
- Tarris Reed, Jr. – Freshman eligibility
- Will Tschetter – Freshman eligibility (redshirt)
- Isaiah Barnes – Sophomore eligibility
- Kobe Bufkin – Sophomore eligibility
- Frankie Collins – Sophomore eligibility
- Moussa Diabate – Sophomore eligibility
- Caleb Houston – Sophomore eligibility
- Hunter Dickinson – Junior eligibility
- Jace Howard – Junior eligibility
- Terrance Williams II – Junior eligibility

Based on this roster, the positional lineups look like this:

- Point Guard: Collins, Bufkin, McDaniel
- Shooting Guard: Bufkin, Collins, Jett Howard, Barnes, McDaniel
- Small Forward: Houston, Barnes, Jett Howard, Tschetter, Jace Howard
- Power Forward: Diabate, Reed, Glenn, Tschetter
- Center: Dickinson, Diabate, Reed

As you can see, there are lots of possible combinations.

Check back in mid-October for next season's "Nothing But 'Net".

Go Blue!