

## **Nothing But 'Net – Week #20 – 03/13/2023 – Pop!**

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played one game this past week, and they lost it. [On Thursday \(03/09/2023\), they lost to Rutgers 62-50](#) in the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of the [Big Ten Tournament](#), in Chicago. The loss drops Michigan's record to 17-15 (11-9 in Big Ten).

### **What Happened?**

What's that "popping" sound you hear? It's the "NCAA Tournament bubble" that Michigan was maybe, sort of, possibly sitting on going "pop". No Big Dance for Michigan this season. They had their chances. They just had to win one of the last three games to have a fighting chance, and they lost all three of them. Sure, the first two were on the road, and Michigan went to overtime in both games, but they were still losses. Sure, the Rutgers game was looking promising at halftime, but the 2<sup>nd</sup> half was a nightmare. In the end, it was just three losses.

### **Game Flow**

As with so many games this season, Michigan had a decent lead several times in the 1<sup>st</sup> half: 7-0, 9-2, 18-11, and 23-17, then they went cold on offense. The game was all tied up, 25-25, with 56 seconds left in the 1<sup>st</sup> half, and Michigan hit a 3-pointer at the buzzer to lead 28-25. That was the high point of the game. The rest was downhill, steeply. Michigan **COULD NOT MAKE A BASKET** in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. They made a few free throws in the early going of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, and they made a 3-pointer at the 15:01 mark to pull within 3 points (37-34). The rest of the half was just free throws, no baskets until the last minute. Michigan actually got within one point (40-39) with 11:06 to go, then they let Rutgers pull away. It got as bad as 16 points (58-42) at the 2:03 mark. Stop to take a look at that: in 9 minutes, Michigan scored 3 points, all free throws. With 59 seconds left, Michigan hit their second basket of the half, another 3-pointer to cut the deficit to 13 points (58-45). They went from 15:01 to 0:59, 14 minutes and 2 seconds, between baskets. Before they made that 3-pointer with 59 seconds left, they were 1-for-17 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, with 7 turnovers. Unbelievable.

### **Stats**

[The game stats](#) were predictably bad. Michigan shot horribly overall (16-for-46 = 34.8%), they shot 3-pointers decently (6-for-18 = 33.3%), and they shot free throws decently (12-for-17 = 70.6%). They lost the rebounding battle (37-30) and the turnover battle (14-9). They lost this game with poor overall shooting, poor rebounding, and turnovers.

### **Who Started?**

The starters were [Kobe Bufkin](#), [Hunter Dickinson](#), [Jett Howard](#), [Dug McDaniel](#), and [Will Tschetter](#).

### **Who Looked Good?**

Dickinson was basically all of Michigan's offense, with 24 of their 50 points. Nobody else hit double figures.

Bufkin got close to double figures, with 9 points. He was OK.

[Joey Baker](#) chipped in 5 points off the bench.

That's it. Nobody else looked good.

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

Jett Howard was ineffective, with 6 points on 2-for-8 shooting.

McDaniel ran the offense pretty well, but only scored 2 points, both free throws.

Tschetter was worthless, with 0 points.

[Terrance Williams II](#) scored 3 points, and didn't contribute much.

[Tarris Reed, Jr.](#) was ineffective, scoring 1 point.

### **Who Else Played?**

[Jace Howard](#) played for 2 minutes, but didn't attempt a shot.

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

[Isaiah Barnes](#), [Gregg Glenn III](#), and [Youssef Khayat](#) were the scholarship players who didn't get to play.

[Ian Burns](#), [Jackson Selvala](#), and [Cooper Smith](#) were the practice squad players who didn't get to play.

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

As mentioned above, Michigan had to win at least one game in the Big Ten Tournament to stand a chance of a bid to the NCAA Tournament. They blew it, and now they're in the [National Invitation Tournament](#) (NIT) instead. They had their chances, and they blew them. They get another chance, but it's for a much lesser prize. It will be interesting to see if they take this last chance with a positive attitude, or if they pout about not making it to the Big Dance.

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

This week, Michigan plays in the NIT as a #3 seed. They were originally listed as a 2-seed, which would make a big difference for whether or not they get a second home game if they advance, but they were mysteriously changed to a 3-seed overnight. On Tuesday (03/14/2023, 7:00 p.m., ESPN2), they play [Toledo](#) in Crisler Arena. If they win that game, they would play the winner of the Vanderbilt/Yale game on Saturday (03/18/2023), location, time, and TV to be announced. The complete NIT bracket is [here](#).

Toledo is currently 27-7 (16-2 in the MAC). They were the regular season MAC champions, but they lost in the championship game of the MAC tournament. They have no impressive wins, and unimpressive losses to Kansas City, East Carolina, George Mason, Marshall, Ball State, and Kent State (twice). Of course, they did beat Central Michigan twice, which is much better than Michigan did against CMU. They have one noteworthy player, RayJ Dennis, but they don't have much height, one 6'10" guy. This is a game that Michigan can and should win, but it won't be easy. Toledo is only 40 miles down US-23, and they'll bring a large and loud crowd into Crisler. It will feel more like an away game or a neutral site game. I was there in 1981 when Michigan hosted Toledo for an NIT game, and it was raucous. The crowd was about 65% Michigan and 35% Toledo, and the crowd carried the Michigan team past Toledo 80-68.

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

Go Blue!