

Nothing But 'Net – Week #01 – 10/30/2023 – Basketball Is Back

Yeah, it's time for college basketball again. Sure, it's another exciting season for the football team, but basketball games start this week. Let's check out this season's team.

Here's my traditional standard description of this weekly column:

Yeah, it's time for University of Michigan men's basketball, and this is the place to read all about it: "Nothing But 'Net" on UMGoBlue.com. Check back every Monday morning between now and the end of the season for a quick, concise wrap-up of the previous week, and a look ahead at the upcoming week, all in one easy-to-read article.

As always here at UMGoBlue.com, the perspective is "by fans, for fans". I'm a fan (since 1974), and I go to all the home games, and watch/listen to all the away games. I don't have any special access (other than being an usher in Sections 209-210), I don't go to the press conferences, and I don't interview high school recruits. I see the same things you do, and write about them as a fan.

Once again, it was a very busy off-season, with lots of surprises and changes. Let's get to it.

Executive Summary

The big question: how good is Michigan going to be this season?

The big answer: not very good, but it's hard to predict. There have been a lot of changes, and the era of the Transfer Portal and NIL (Name, Image, and Likeness) money makes things really unpredictable.

What's New?

The biggest news in the offseason was when [Coach Howard](#) had successful heart surgery on 09/15/2023. From the [press release](#):

The scheduled operation was performed by Dr. Himanshu Patel, who successfully resected an aortic aneurysm and repaired Howard's aortic valve. Patel indicated that Howard is expected to fully recover in six to 12 weeks and could return to the program in four to six weeks.

U-M's associate head coach [Phil Martelli](#) will serve as the interim head coach during Howard's recovery process. [Saddi Washington](#) and [Howard Eisley](#) will maintain their assistant roles, while [Jay Smith](#) will be elevated to the third assistant during the interim period.

The most recent update to his condition says "no timetable for his return". I expect him back on the bench by the beginning of December.

There are lots of changes to the roster from last season:

- Players Leaving:
 - 1 senior graduated
 - 3 players transferred
 - 2 players left for the NBA Draft
- Players Arriving:
 - 1 incoming freshman
 - 3 incoming transfer players
 - 1 new Scout Team player

Graduating Seniors

Michigan didn't really have any seniors on last season's team. They did have 2 graduate transfers, and they were considered to have "graduated" at the end of last season. One of them (Jaelin Llewellyn) got injured 8 games into the season, applied for a medical redshirt, and was granted it, so now he's back again as a graduate transfer. The other graduate transfer from last season (Joey Baker) also applied for a waiver, then decided that he was done playing basketball and retired. He was very uneven during his one season in Ann Arbor, but he will still be missed.

Players Who Transferred

Three players transferred to other schools after last season. They are:

- Isaiah Barnes – In his only season at Michigan, Isaiah played in 15 games, and scored 16 points. He looked pretty good when he was out there, but he had trouble getting in the game. I wasn't surprised when he announced that he was entering the transfer portal. [He transferred to Tulsa](#). He might be missed.
- Gregg Glenn III – In his only season at Michigan, Gregg didn't play much (4 games, 11 minutes), and he didn't score much (6 points). He didn't look very comfortable out there in his limited action. [He transferred to Tulane](#). He probably won't be missed.
- Hunter Dickinson – This was the biggest surprise of the offseason. Hunter played at Michigan for 3 years, and he was the most valuable player all 3 years. He was the heart and soul of this program, but he decided that he wanted to play on a team that stood a good chance at a national championship, and Michigan wasn't going to be that team this season. [He transferred to Kansas](#), where he will be an integral part of their team, and stand a good chance of winning a national championship. He will definitely be missed.

Players Who Left For The NBA Draft

Two players left the team to enter the NBA Draft. They are:

- Kobe Bufkin – Kobe was probably the 2nd most valuable player on last season's team as a sophomore, after a relatively quiet freshman season. He was certainly the most improved player on last season's team. He was drafted by the Atlanta Hawks in the 1st round (15th overall). He will be missed.
- Jett Howard – Jett was another rare "one and done" for Michigan. He had a good freshman season, but not great. The funny thing is, Michigan seemed to play better when he was on the sidelines injured. It must have been a chemistry thing. He was drafted by the Orlando Magic in the 1st round (11th overall). He will be missed.

Incoming Freshmen

Last year, Michigan had the #13 recruiting class in the nation. This year, the recruiting class is miserable. There is only one incoming freshman player this season:

- [George Washington III](#) #40 (6'2", 170 pounds, G) – George is a 4-star shooting guard, the #23 shooting guard in his class. According to reports, he's a good shooter, including from 3-point range, and a good defender. He will be a key player on this season's team.

Two other freshmen were committed to Michigan at one point, but they aren't coming, maybe:

- Lee Aaliya is a 6'9" forward/center from Argentina. He announced his commitment to Michigan back in late August, but he's not enrolled at Michigan and he's not on the official

roster. The latest update I found says that his paperwork is very complicated, and there's still a chance that he could join the team for the winter semester.

- Papa Kante is a 6'10" forward/center from Senegal, by way of Connecticut. He committed to Michigan last winter, but didn't have the grades and/or English language skills to get admitted, so he's going elsewhere (Pittsburgh). He would have really helped.

Incoming Transfer Players

Let's see: the three best players from last season's team left (two to the NBA, the other to the transfer portal), and the recruiting class is almost nonexistent. What should Coach Howard do? To the transfer portal! There are three transfer players on this season's team:

- [Nimari Burnett](#) #4 (6'4", 200 pounds, G) – Nimari transferred to Michigan from Alabama (2 seasons, one of them a medical redshirt), with a stop at Texas Tech (1 season) before that. He's a graduate transfer, but by my count he has 3 seasons of eligibility left (2 regular and 1 COVID). He's a combo guard, but he hasn't been much of a scorer so far. His main contributions will probably be on the defensive end and as a backup point guard.
- [Tray Jackson](#) #2 (6'10", 215 pounds, F) – Tray transferred to Michigan from Seton Hall (3 seasons), with a stop at Missouri (1 season). He has one season of eligibility left. He's a true power forward, rumored to have a decent shot. We'll see.
- [Olivier Nkamhoua](#) #13 (6'9", 235 pounds, F) – Olivier transferred to Michigan from Tennessee (4 seasons). He has one season of eligibility left. He's another true power forward, and he could probably play some center. He's a good scorer, but not much of an outside threat.

New Scout Team Players

There's only one new player on the Scout Team:

- [Harrison Hochberg](#) #31 (6'7", 225 pounds, F) – Harrison is a freshman "preferred walk-on". Looking at his bio, he was quite the player in high school. He should be a valuable member of the Scout Team, and he might even get to play a couple minutes in blowout games.

Who's Coming Back?

Once again, Michigan is a young team this season, with a lot of new faces. However, there is a solid core of returning players.

Let's look at the returning players on the team:

Sophomore Eligibility

- [Youssef Khayat](#) #24 (6'9", 215 pounds, F) – Youssef played in 9 games last season, and scored 12 points. He looked a little lost out there at times, but he got better as the season went on.
- [Dug McDaniel](#) #0 (5'11", 175 pounds, G) – Dug took over as the starting point guard as a true freshman last season when Jaelin Llewellyn went down with a knee injury in game #8. He was a little "raw" at times, but he definitely grew into the job as the season went on.
- [Tarris Reed, Jr.](#) #32 (6'10", 265 pounds, F) – Tarris was a capable backup at center behind Hunter Dickinson last season, but he has suddenly been forced into the starting job with Hunter's defection to Kansas. He's a talented player, and he works hard out there,

but he's a definite step down from Dickinson. Center has been a position of dominance for Michigan for the last 3 seasons, but I expect it to be a liability this season.

- [Jackson Selvala](#) #34 (6'7", 230 pounds, F) – Jackson was a team manager who walked on as a player last season. He's in grad school now, but he still has 3 years of eligibility left. He's a valuable member of the Scout Team, and he might even get to play a couple minutes in blowout games. He played in 4 games last season, but didn't score.
- [Cooper Smith](#) #45 (6'1", 180 pounds, G) – Cooper transferred to Michigan from Kalamazoo College last season. He's a preferred walk-on. He's a valuable member of the Scout Team, and he might even get to play a couple minutes in blowout games. He played in 4 games last season, but didn't score.
- [Will Tschetter](#) #42 (6'8", 245 pounds, F) – Will was voluntarily redshirted his freshman season, and played a lot last season. He had a couple decent games, and too many mediocre games. He's a nice guy, really likable, but he hasn't produced on the court yet.

Junior Eligibility

- [Ian Burns](#) #14 (6'6", 205 pounds, G) – Ian is on the Scout Team. He played in 2 games as a freshman and 3 games as a sophomore. He has attempted one shot each season, but hasn't made one yet.
- [Jace Howard](#) #25 (6'8", 225 pounds, G) – Jace has played for 3 seasons, but thanks to the COVID-19 rule he has junior eligibility. He's played a lot, but he hasn't scored much. He was often brought in for defensive purposes, and he contributed to a mean full-court press. I expect him to contribute even more this season.

Senior Eligibility

- [Jaelin Llewellyn](#) #3 (6'2", 190 pounds, G) – Last season, Jaelin transferred to Michigan from Princeton. He was the main point guard last season, until he injured his knee in the Kentucky game in early December.
- [Terrance Williams II](#) #5 (6'7", 225 pounds, F) – Terrance is a real enigma. When he's "on", he's a force out there, but when he's "off", he's a disaster. I'm still trying to forgive him for single-handedly losing the Vanderbilt game in the NIT last season.

Starting Lineup/Depth Chart

This is really tricky this season, with all the new players. My guess:

Point guard: McDaniel (backups: Llewellyn and Burnett)
Shooting guard: Washington III (backups: Llewellyn and Burnett)
Small forward: Williams II (backups: Howard, Tschetter, and Khayat)
Power forward: Nkamhoua (backups: Jackson, and Khayat)
Center: Reed (backups: Nkamhoua and Jackson)

Wow, there are a lot of thin spots here: an unproven freshman shooting guard, slim pickings at small forward, and no real backup for an undersized center. I don't see anyone on the roster who can consistently score from outside, and I don't see anyone on the roster who will scare any opponents. I'm also wondering where the on-court leadership will come from. McDaniel? Williams II?

Predictions

Here are my predictions for player stats for the upcoming season (last season's leader in parentheses, all Hunter Dickinson):

Scoring: No one will score > 500 points. (629)
Points per game: No one will average > 15. (18.5)
Overall shooting percentage (minimum 100 attempts): No one will shoot > 50%. (56.0)
3-point shooting percentage (minimum 50 attempts): No one will shoot > 35%. (42.1)
Rebounding: No one will grab > 200 rebounds. (307)

Last Season

From last season's Wrap-Up article:

Michigan started the season ranked #22 in the preseason AP poll, and big things were expected of them. Certainly, they were expected to contend for the Big Ten title and make it to the NCAA Tournament. That's not how things worked out.

There were 31 regular season games and 3 post-season games, but one game ruined the whole season: the [Central Michigan game in Crisler Arena on 12/29/2022](#). Michigan played like they expected to win by just showing up, and by the time they realized that they could actually lose to a lower-division MAC team in their own arena, it was too late. They lost 63-61, and the season was in tatters. It really didn't matter much how many quality wins they got the rest of the season, that one horrible loss kept them out of the NCAA Tournament.

The theme for that game, and the rest of the season, was "keep the game close, and lose in the last 2 minutes". Michigan lost to the following 13 teams by 6 points or less, or in overtime:

- 11/29/2022 – Home vs. [\(#3\) Virginia: 70-68](#)
- 12/04/2022 – Neutral site vs. [\(#19\) Kentucky: 73-69](#)
- 12/21/2022 – Neutral site vs. [North Carolina: 80-76](#)
- 12/29/2022 – Home vs. [Central Michigan: 63-61](#)
- 01/07/2023 – At [Michigan State: 59-53](#)
- 01/12/2023 – At [Iowa: 93-84 \(overtime\)](#)
- 01/19/2023 – At [Maryland: 64-58](#)
- 01/26/2023 – Home vs. [\(#1\) Purdue: 75-70](#)
- 02/11/2023 – Home vs. [\(#18\) Indiana: 62-61](#)
- 02/14/2023 – At [Wisconsin: 64-59](#)
- 03/02/2023 – At [Illinois: 91-87 \(double overtime\)](#)
- 03/05/2023 – At [\(#15\) Indiana: 75-73 \(overtime\)](#)
- 03/18/2023 – At [Vanderbilt: 66-65](#) (NIT)

They could have won every one of those games, but they managed to lose them all, often in creative new ways. They often had double-digit leads late in the game. It was heartbreaking.

On the positive side, Michigan did have 9 impressive wins:

- 11/16/2022 – Neutral site vs. [Pittsburgh: 91-60](#)
- 01/01/2023 – Home vs. [Maryland: 81-46](#)
- 01/04/2023 – Home vs. [Penn State: 79-69](#)
- 01/15/2023 – Home vs. [Northwestern: 85-78](#)
- 02/02/2023 – At [Northwestern: 68-51](#)
- 02/18/2023 – Home vs. [Michigan State: 84-72](#)
- 02/23/2023 – At [Rutgers: 58-45](#)
- 02/26/2023 – Home vs. [Wisconsin: 87-79 \(overtime\)](#)
- 03/14/2023 – Home vs. [Toledo: 90-80](#) (NIT)

Most of those wins were against teams that eventually made the NCAA Tournament, and several of them were by impressive margins (Pitt, Maryland, Northwestern, and MSU).

The remaining 12 games were a mixed bag of blowout losses (3) and unimpressive wins over lesser opponents (9):

- 11/07/2022 (Win) – Home vs. [Purdue-Fort Wayne: 75-56](#)
- 11/11/2022 (Win) – Neutral site vs. [Eastern Michigan: 88-83](#)
- 11/17/2022 (Loss) – Neutral site vs. [Arizona State: 87-62](#)
- 11/20/2022 (Win) – Home vs. [Ohio: 70-66 \(overtime\)](#)
- 11/23/2022 (Win) – Home vs. [Jackson State: 78-68](#)
- 12/08/2022 (Win) – At [Minnesota: 90-75](#)
- 12/17/2022 (Win) – Home vs. [Lipscomb: 83-75](#)
- 01/22/2023 (Win) – Home vs. [Minnesota: 60-56](#)
- 01/29/2023 (Loss) – At [Penn State: 83-61](#)
- 02/05/2023 (Win) – Home vs. [Ohio State: 77-69](#)
- 02/08/2023 (Win) – Home vs. [Nebraska: 93-72](#)
- 03/09/2023 (Loss) – Neutral site vs. [Rutgers: 62-50](#) (Big Ten Tournament)

All of these losses were away from Crisler, and two of the three were to NCAA Tournament teams (Arizona State and Penn State).

Looking at the complete season, the real story was the CMU loss and all the close losses in the last 2 minutes. That's where the season went down the drain.

This Season

Let's look at Michigan's schedule for this season:

Date	Opponent	Location	Time (ET)
11/03/2023 (Fri)	Northwood (exhibition)	Ann Arbor, MI	7:00 p.m.
11/07/2023 (Tue)	UNC Asheville	Ann Arbor, MI	8:30 p.m.
11/10/2023 (Fri)	Youngstown State	Ann Arbor, MI	6:30 p.m.
Gavitt Tipoff Games			
11/13/2023 (Mon)	St. John's	New York, NY	6:30 p.m.
11/17/2023 (Fri)	Long Beach State	Ann Arbor, MI	7:00 p.m.
Battle 4 Atlantis			
11/22/2023 (Wed)	Memphis	Paradise Island, Bahamas	5:00 p.m.
11/23/2023 (Thu)	Arkansas/Stanford	Paradise Island, Bahamas	TBD
11/24/2023 (Fri)	TBD	Paradise Island, Bahamas	TBD
12/02/2023 (Sat)	Oregon	Eugene, OR	3:30 p.m.
12/05/2023 (Tue)	Indiana	Ann Arbor, MI	9:00 p.m.
12/10/2023 (Sun)	Iowa	Iowa City, IA	4:30 p.m.
12/16/2023 (Sat)	Eastern Michigan	Ann Arbor, MI	2:15 p.m.
Jumpman Invitational			
12/19/2023 (Tue)	Florida	Charlotte, NC	7:00 p.m.
12/29/2023 (Fri)	McNeese	Ann Arbor, MI	TBA
01/04/2024 (Thu)	Minnesota	Ann Arbor, MI	9:00 p.m.
01/07/2024 (Sun)	Penn State	Philadelphia, PA	12:00 p.m.
01/11/2024 (Thu)	Maryland	College Park, MD	7:00 p.m.
01/15/2024 (Mon)	Ohio State	Ann Arbor, MI	12:00 p.m.
01/18/2024 (Thu)	Illinois	Ann Arbor, MI	8:30 p.m.
01/23/2024 (Tue)	Purdue	West Lafayette, IN	9:00 p.m.
01/27/2024 (Sat)	Iowa	Ann Arbor, MI	5:00 p.m.
01/30/2024 (Tue)	Michigan State	East Lansing, MI	9:00 p.m.
02/03/2024 (Sat)	Rutgers	Ann Arbor, MI	4:00 p.m.
02/07/2024 (Wed)	Wisconsin	Ann Arbor, MI	7:00 p.m.
02/10/2024 (Sat)	Nebraska	Lincoln, NE	6:30 p.m.
02/13/2024 (Tue)	Illinois	Champaign, IL	7:00 p.m.
02/17/2024 (Sat)	Michigan State	Ann Arbor, MI	8:00 p.m.
02/22/2024 (Thu)	Northwestern	Evanston, IL	9:00 p.m.
02/25/2024 (Sun)	Purdue	Ann Arbor, MI	2:00 p.m.

02/29/2024 (Thu)	Rutgers	Piscataway, NJ	8:30 p.m.
03/03/2024 (Sun)	Ohio State	Columbus, OH	4:00 p.m.
03/10/2024 (Sun)	Nebraska	Ann Arbor, MI	12:00 p.m.
Big Ten Tournament			
03/13/2024 (Wed)	1 st Round	Minneapolis, MN	TBA
03/14/2024 (Thu)	2 nd Round	Minneapolis, MN	TBA
03/15/2024 (Fri)	Quarterfinals	Minneapolis, MN	TBA
03/16/2024 (Sat)	Semifinals	Minneapolis, MN	TBA
03/17/2024 (Sun)	Championship	Minneapolis, MN	TBA

Some comments on the schedule:

- The 11/13/2023 game vs. St. John's is being played at [Madison Square Garden](#) in New York City.
- Michigan won the [Battle 4 Atlantis](#) tournament in the Bahamas the last time they were in it (2019). They will have a tough time repeating that feat.
- The [Jumpman Invitational](#) game vs. Florida in Charlotte, NC, is going to be challenging. Sure, the game is technically at a neutral site, but Charlotte is much closer to Florida than Ann Arbor.
- As last season's disaster vs. Central Michigan showed, there is no such thing as a "guarantee" non-conference game any more for Michigan.
- Check out the day/time for the home Ohio State game of 01/15/2024: noon on a Monday. Who is going to be there?
- Each Big Ten team plays 6 teams once (3 home/3 away) and 7 teams twice, for a total of 20 games. This season, Michigan plays:
 - Once: Indiana (home), Minnesota (home), Penn State (neutral), Maryland (away), Wisconsin (home), Northwestern (away).
 - Twice: Iowa, Ohio State, Illinois, Purdue, Michigan State, Rutgers, Nebraska.

Expectations

Normally, I like to divide the games up into 3 categories ("Should Win", "Should Lose", and "Toss Up"), but after last season's collapse, and with all the roster changes, I have no idea any more. Looking at the schedule, I can only see 4 games that look pretty winnable, and more than a dozen that look pretty hopeless. I'm expecting Michigan to finish well below 0.500 overall and in the Big Ten, say 11-20 overall (6-14 in Big Ten). I think the ceiling for this team is 16-15 (10-10 in Big Ten).

This Week

This week, Michigan only plays one game. On Friday (11/03/2023, 7:00 p.m., B1G+) they play Northwood in Ann Arbor, in their only exhibition game.

[Northwood](#) was 2-26 (2-18 in the G-MAC) last season. They are a Division II team, and they lost badly to the only Division I school they played last season. They don't have any noteworthy players, but they do have a little height: a 6'10" guy. This should be a relatively easy exhibition game.

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

Go Blue!