

Nothing But 'Net – Week #04 – 11/20/2023 – Back To Earth

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this past week, and they won one and lost the other. [On Monday \(11/13/2023\), they beat St. John's 89-73](#) in Madison Square Garden in New York City (a Gavitt Tipoff Game), then [on Friday \(11/17/2023\), they lost to Long Beach State 94-86](#) in Crisler Arena. The win and the loss leave Michigan with a record of 3-1.

What Happened?

After playing very well in their first three games, fans were starting to raise their expectations about this season's team. Long Beach State? Another blowout win! Wrong. Back to Earth. While this team might still exceed initial expectations, they are not going to blowout every opponent on the way to an undefeated season and a National Championship.

First, the delightful St. John's game. This was Michigan's toughest test to date in the young season, and they passed it with flying colors. It was a fun game to watch on TV, since the announcers were so excited about the **Return Of Rick Pitino**. Michigan ran SJU out of the gym. The game started out as a see-saw battle, with the lead going back and forth. With 7:14 to go in the 1st half, it was all tied up, 28-28. SJU went ahead, 31-29, at the 6:28 mark, and that was the last time they led. Michigan ended the half with a 19-7 run, to lead 48-38 at halftime. The 2nd half was all Michigan, as they pushed the lead up as high as 26 points, before the Scout Team let SJU sneak back to within 16 points at the end.

Speaking of 16 points, that was the high water mark for Michigan in the ill-fated LBSU game. Michigan started strong, and built up a 16 point lead (23-7) with 13:16 to go in the 1st half. It looked like LBSU was going to fold and UM was going to get another blowout win, but the Beach didn't give up. Michigan still led by 12 points (32-20) at the 8:56 mark, and 10 points (34-24) with 7:38 to go. That's when UM stopped playing defense, and LBSU went on a 24-16 run to end the half. That cut Michigan's lead to 2 points (50-48) at halftime. The 2nd half was a disaster. The lead went back and forth, with LBSU ahead for most of the half. Still, UM kept battling, and they actually got a small lead (80-76) with 4:28 left in the game. LBSU outscored them 18-6 down the stretch, to win by 8. It was frustrating.

Stats

[The game stats for the SJU game](#) were pretty good. Michigan shot well overall (32-for-62 = 51.6%), they shot 3-pointers well (11-for-26 = 42.3%), and they shot free throws decently (14-for-23 = 60.9%). They lost the rebounding battle (39-47) and the turnover battle (13-11). They won this game with good shooting and defense. The biggest negative was that SJU grabbed 27 offensive rebounds, for 33 second-chance points.

[The game stats for the LBSU game](#) were mediocre. Michigan shot decently overall (31-for-66 = 47.0%), they shot 3-pointers poorly (9-for-28 = 32.1%), and they shot free throws decently (15-for-25 = 60.0%). They won the rebounding battle (38-30), but lost the turnover battle (16-12). They lost this game with poor 3-point shooting and too many turnovers.

Who Started?

The starters for both games were [Nimari Burnett](#), [Dug McDaniel](#), [Olivier Nkamhoua](#), [Tarris Reed, Jr.](#), and [Terrance Williams II](#).

Who Looked Good?

McDaniel was the star this week, with 26 (a new career high) and 20 points. He was the leading scorer in the SJU game, and 2nd leading scorer vs. LBSU. He also had 7 and 6 assists. Unfortunately, he had 6 turnovers vs. LBSU, several of them at key moments in the closing minutes of the game.

Nkamhoua had a decent game vs. SJU (9 points) and was the leading scorer vs. LBSU (22 points). He also had 7 and 11 rebounds, giving him another double-double vs. LBSU.

Williams was the only other player to hit double figures in both games, with 12 and 10 points. He wasn't very efficient: 5-for-12 overall (2-for-6 from deep) vs. SJU, and 2-for-8 overall (2-for-7 from deep) vs. LBSU. His poor shooting vs. LBSU really cost Michigan in that game.

Burnett had a career game vs. SJU (21 points) and a mediocre game vs. LBSU (5 points). He scored all 21 of his points in the 1st half of the SJU game, shooting 8-for-8 overall, 4-for-4 from deep. Unfortunately, he shot 0-for-5 overall (0-for-3 from deep) in the 2nd half of the SJU game, and 2-for-9 overall (1-for-7 from deep) vs. LBSU, for a combined 2-for-14 overall (1-for-10 from deep) since that 1st half outburst. His poor shooting vs. LBSU really cost Michigan in that game.

Reed had a quiet week, with 5 and 8 points. He was the leading rebounder in the SJU game with 11, and he had 4 more rebounds vs. LBSU.

[Will Tschetter](#) had one good game (10 points vs. SJU) and one quiet game (4 points vs. LBSU).

[Tray Jackson](#) had one very good game (17 points vs. LBSU) and one quiet game (4 points vs. SJU).

Who Looked Not-So-Good?

[George Washington III](#) played in both games (5 and 4 minutes), and failed to score. He took one shot, in the SJU game.

Who Else Played?

[Harrison Hochberg](#) played for 1 minute in the SJU game, and didn't attempt a shot.

[Youssef Khayat](#) played in the SJU game, and scored 2 points.

[Jackson Selvala](#) played for 1 minute in the SJU game, and didn't attempt a shot.

[Cooper Smith](#) played for 1 minute in the SJU game, and didn't attempt a shot.

Who Didn't Play?

[Ian Burns](#) didn't play in either game.

[Jace Howard](#) and [Jaelin Llewellyn](#) are injured, and not playing yet. They are both expected back "later in the season".

What Does It Mean?

It wasn't surprising that Michigan went 1-1 last week, but it would have made more sense for them to lose their first road game against a team coached by Rick Pitino and beat Long Beach State in Crisler. Wrong. Oh well. We knew they weren't going to win them all, but I think most people expected them to beat LBSU. This just shows that this is a team that hasn't been playing together for very long, and that they've got some work to do. They could still have a better season than predicted, but they've got to avoid those upsets.

What's Next?

This week, Michigan plays three games, all in the [Battle 4 Atlantis tournament](#) in Paradise Island, Bahamas. On Wednesday (11/22/2023, 5:00 p.m., ESPN2) they play Memphis, on Thursday (11/23/2023, 5:00/7:30 p.m., ESPN/ESPNU) they play (#14) Arkansas/Stanford,

then on Friday (11/24/2023, TBA, TBA) they play one of the teams from the other half of the bracket ([#20] North Carolina, Northern Iowa, Texas Tech, or [#21] Villanova). The full bracket is [here](#).

[Memphis](#) is currently 3-0, with a win over Missouri. They were 26-9 (13-5 in the AAC) last season, with some decent wins. They won the AAC conference tournament, then lost in the 1st round of the NCAA Tournament to Florida Atlantic. They don't have any noteworthy players, and they've only got one tall player, a 6'11" redshirt senior. This game is a toss-up. If Michigan plays like they did in their first three games, they'll stand a good chance against Memphis. If they play like they did in the 2nd half vs. LBSU, not so much.

The way the tournament bracket is set up, it is crucial to win the first game. That gets you into the winner's bracket, where the worst you can do is 4th place. Lose on the first day, and you drop into the loser's bracket, where 5th place is the best you can do. When Michigan played in the Battle 4 Atlantis tournament in November 2019, they won a hard-fought game against Iowa State in the 1st round, then upset (#6) North Carolina and (#8) Gonzaga to win it all. I went to that tournament, and it was a great time. I hope UM can play that well again.

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

Go Blue!