

Nothing But 'Net – Week #10 – 01/01/2024 – So Much For "Guarantee" Games, And Mid-Term Grades

Happy New Year. Let's hope that 2024 is better than 2023 for Michigan basketball.

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played one game this past week, and they lost it. [On Friday \(12/29/2023\), they lost to McNeese 87-76](#) in Crisler Arena. The loss lowers Michigan's record to 6-7 (1-1 in Big Ten).

What Happened?

So much for "guarantee" games. These are games that "good" teams schedule against "not so good" teams at home, with no return visit. The "good" team guarantees a certain amount of money for the privilege of a home game without a return visit, and the "not so good" team is supposed to be happy with the money, since the "good" team will surely beat them. Well, Michigan isn't that good this season, and two of the "guarantee" games were decisive losses, not easy wins: Long Beach State (94-86) on 11/17/2023, and now McNeese (87-76) on Friday. Losing one "guarantee" game in a season is considered highly embarrassing; losing two of them in a season is unheard of.

Now, Long Beach State and McNeese aren't your normal "guarantee" game opponents, in fact, they both looked pretty darn good against Michigan, but still. These were both games that Michigan could have won, but they certainly didn't play their best ball. McNeese was bigger, faster, and much more athletic than Michigan, and they deserved to win, but Michigan made it easier than they should have.

Game Flow

Early on, the game was close. Michigan actually led for most of the first 6:15. They were up 17-13 with 14:22 to go in the 1st half, but they let McNeese go on a 9-1 run, and McNeese was up 22-18 at the 11:02 mark. Michigan got within 1 point (22-21) seconds later, then McNeese pulled away. They got the lead as high as 12 points (35-23) with 5:47 to go, and it looked like they were going to run away with it, but Michigan fought back. With 1:25 left in the half, Michigan actually led, 37-36, but that was the last time they led. McNeese scored the last 4 points of the half, and they led 40-37 at halftime.

The 2nd half was very discouraging. Michigan was powerless to stop McNeese. Every time they made a mini-run to cut the deficit down to something manageable, McNeese answered with a run of their own. They kept their lead up in the 7-9 point range for the rest of the game, occasionally letting Michigan get within 5 points. With 3:23 left, McNeese pushed their lead up to 10 points (75-65), and they never let Michigan get any closer. Michigan tried the desperation move of fouling a lot in the final 2:00, but McNeese hit enough of their free throws to keep the game out of reach. It was a depressing loss.

Stats

The game stats were miserable. Michigan shot poorly overall (22-for-56 = 39.3%), they shot 3-pointers pretty well (13-for-35 = 37.1%), and they shot free throws well (19-for-23 = 82.6%). They tied in the rebounding battle (36-36), but they lost the turnover battle horribly (15-4). They lost this game with **WAY** too many turnovers.

Who Started?

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

Who Looked Good?

Williams was the leading scorer, with 20 points on pretty good shooting: 5-for-9 overall, 4-for-8 from deep. He even had 3 assists and 0 turnovers. He held up his end.

McDaniel scored 17 points, and he kept Michigan in the game early with some timely 3-pointers, but he was cold in the 2nd half and sloppy with the ball (4 turnovers) the whole game. He wasn't the reason Michigan lost, but he hurt the effort as much as he helped it.

Nkamhoua also scored 17 points, all in the 2nd half, but he was also sloppy with the ball, with 4 turnovers. He tried his best to get Michigan back in the game, but it was too little, too late.

[Will Tschetter](#) was the only other Michigan player in double figures, with 11 points off the bench. He shot well (3-for-4 overall, 1-for-2 from deep), he grabbed 5 rebounds, and he had 0 turnovers. He held up his end.

Who Looked Not-So-Good?

Reed was terrible, just terrible. He missed his only shot attempt, and committed 4 fouls in 22 minutes of "action". Michigan could not get the ball in to him, and when they did, he couldn't do anything with it.

Burnett was also lousy out there. He scored 6 points on miserable shooting: 2-for-11 overall, 2-for-8 from deep. He also committed 4 fouls and had 2 turnovers. He hurt the team a lot more than he helped it.

Who Else Played?

[Tray Jackson](#) scored 3 points on 3-for-4 shooting from the free throw line. He was 0-for-2 from the floor.

[Youssef Khayat](#) scored 2 points on 2-for-2 shooting from the free throw line. He was 0-for-2 from the floor.

[George Washington III](#) missed his only shot attempt.

Who Didn't Play?

[Jaelin Llewellyn](#) was the only scholarship player who didn't play. He wasn't on the bench. I don't know what's up with him.

None of the Scout Team players played: [Ian Burns](#), [Harrison Hochberg](#), [Jackson Selvala](#), and [Cooper Smith](#).

[Jace Howard](#) is still recovering from an injury, and not playing yet. He's expected back "later in the season".

What Does It Mean?

I think we can stop hoping that Michigan will somehow finish above 0.500 and sneak into the NIT. They won't. This season is lost, and they will be lucky to finish 10-21, which was my preseason prediction. Most of the teams in the Big Ten are better than Long Beach State and McNeese, and Michigan was outplayed by both of them. Michigan might beat a couple of the bottom teams in the Big Ten, and they might even pull off an upset of one of the contenders, but they don't have the horses to win 10 Big Ten games.

Mid-Term Grades

With 13 games down, and 18 games to go, this is a good time to stop and hand out mid-term grades. As you can imagine, mid-term grades for an underachieving 6-7 team will not be very good.

Freshman Eligibility

- [Harrison Hochberg](#) (Inc.) – Harrison is on the Scout Team, and hasn't played much: 7 minutes in 4 games. He hasn't attempted a shot yet.
- [George Washington III](#) (C-) – George has been a major disappointment so far. He has had his chances, and he hasn't taken advantage of them. He has played 58 minutes in 10 games, and has scored 6 points: 2-for-12 overall shooting, 1-for-5 from deep, and 1-for-2 from the free throw line.

Sophomore Eligibility

- [Nimari Burnett](#) (B-) – Nimari has had some good games (St. John's, Memphis, Iowa, and EMU) and some bad games (Youngstown State, Texas Tech, Indiana, and McNeese). His 3-point shooting has been decent (23-for-69 = 33.3%), but his overall shooting has been weak (43-for-115 = 37.4%). He's averaging 9.8 points/game, which is OK.
- [Youssef Khayat](#) (C+) – Youssef has played 35 minutes in 7 games, and he's scored 15 points on lousy shooting: 4-for-13 overall (30.8%), 1-for-6 from deep (16.7%). He is 6-for-6 shooting free throws.
- [Dug McDaniel](#) (A) – Here it is: the only "A" in this batch of grades. Dug has played his heart out every minute of every game. He's fast, he's a great dribbler, he's shooting well, and he runs the offense pretty well. He's shooting 44.7% overall (85-for-190) and 39.0% from deep (32-for-82). He leads the team in scoring (19.0 points/game), assists (65), and steals (14). He's a warrior out there.
- [Tarris Reed, Jr.](#) (B) – Tarris has had some good games (Stanford, Iowa, EMU, and Florida) and some bad games (Texas Tech, Oregon, Indiana, and McNeese). He was a weapon against Iowa, but he was barely playable vs. McNeese. His shooting percentage is very good (42-for-71 = 59.2%), but he hasn't taken enough shots. Michigan has had trouble getting the ball in to him at the post, and when they have, he often turns it over (24 turnovers).
- [Jackson Selvala](#) (Inc.) – Jackson is on the Scout Team, and hasn't played much: 11 minutes in 5 games. He has attempted 2 shots, both 3-pointers, and he missed them both.
- [Cooper Smith](#) (Inc.) – Cooper is on the Scout Team, and hasn't played much: 8 minutes in 4 games. He has scored 2 points, on 1-for-2 shooting.
- [Will Tschetter](#) (B+) – Will has been a pleasant surprise so far this season. After not scoring much his freshman year, he has blossomed this season. He's averaging 8.3 points/game on great shooting: 39-for-54 overall (72.2%) and 13-for-20 from deep (65.0%). He has played small forward, power forward, and even (small) center, and he's held his own, even against much taller centers.

Junior Eligibility

- [Ian Burns](#) (Inc.) – Ian is on the Scout Team, and hasn't played much: 12 minutes in 4 games. He has attempted 2 shots, both 3-pointers, and he missed them both. He has scored 2 points on 2-for-2 free throw shooting.
- [Jace Howard](#) (Inc.) – Jace hasn't played yet this season. He has a foot injury that is taking forever to heal.

Senior Eligibility

- [Jaelin Llewellyn](#) (Inc.) – Jaelin has only played in 4 games for a total of 39 minutes as he continues to rehab from a knee injury. He's shooting well, but just not enough: 4-for-6 overall (57.1%) and 3-for-5 from deep (60.0%).
- [Tray Jackson](#) (B-) – Tray has provided some scoring and rebounding off the bench, but he only shows flashes of what he is capable of, then he disappears. He's averaging 5.7 points/game, with one great game (Long Beach State) and a bunch of too-quiet games (UNC-Asheville, Stanford, Florida, and McNeese). His overall shooting has been pretty good (25-for-57 = 43.9%), but his 3-point shooting has been terrible (3-for-18 = 16.7%).
- [Olivier Nkamhoua](#) (A-) – Olivier has been the second most valuable player on the team, after McDaniel. He has played a lot of power forward and a bit of (small) center. He has played hard in every game, and he has delivered. He's second on the team in scoring average (17.2 points/game), and he's the leading rebounder (7.5 rebounds/game). He's been shooting well: 88-for-157 (56.1%) overall, 18-for-43 (41.9%) from deep. His only blemish has been turnovers: 34 of them.
- [Terrance Williams II](#) (B+) – Terrance has been another nice surprise this season. After seeing him for 3 seasons, I thought I knew what to expect, but he has elevated his game this season. He's the third leading scorer on the team (12.3 points/game) with nice shooting numbers: 52-for-112 (46.4%) overall, 30-for-70 (42.9%) from deep. Most importantly, he's cut his fouls and turnovers way down from his career averages.

What's Next?

This week, Michigan plays two games. On Thursday (01/04/2024, 9:00 p.m., Peacock), they play Minnesota in Crisler Arena, then on Sunday (01/07/2024, 12:00 p.m., BTN), they play Penn State in [The Palestra](#) in Philadelphia, PA. Both games (and all the rest of Michigan's games) are Big Ten games.

[Minnesota](#) is currently 10-3 (1-1 in Big Ten), with no impressive wins, and an unimpressive loss to San Francisco. They don't have any noteworthy players, but they do have some height: two 6'11" players. This is a team that Michigan can beat, but not if they play the way they did vs. Long Beach State and McNeese.

[Penn State](#) is currently 7-6 (1-1 in Big Ten), with an impressive win vs. Ohio State, and unimpressive losses to Butler, VCU, and Bucknell. They don't have any noteworthy players, but they do have some height: one 6'10" player and two 6'11" players. This is one of the very few Big Ten games that Michigan could win, but they'll have to play their best ball to win in on the road, even at a supposedly neutral site.

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

Go Blue!