

## Nothing But 'Net – Week #15 – 02/05/2024 – Rock Bottom

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this past week, and they lost both of them. [On Tuesday \(01/30/2024\), they lost at Michigan State 81-62](#), then [on Saturday \(02/03/2024\), they lost to Rutgers 69-59](#) in Crisler Arena. The two losses lower Michigan's record to 7-15 (2-9 in Big Ten). They have now lost 5 games in a row, and 10 of the last 11.

### What Happened?

Michigan has hit rock bottom for this season. Losing to MSU on the road isn't that embarrassing, but losing by almost 20 points makes it a lot worse. None of that compares to losing by 10 points at home to the second-worst team in the Big Ten. That's rock bottom. This season is over, even though there are still 10 games left to play.

### Game Flow

Michigan has been very consistent lately: they build up a decent lead in the 1<sup>st</sup> half, then throw it away. Once they get behind, they're sunk, and they never regain the lead on the way to another tragic loss. They've done it in many games this season, especially lately, and they did it twice this week. In the MSU game, they pulled out to an early 9 point lead (18-9) with 11:52 to go in the 1<sup>st</sup> half, then let it slip away. They were still up by 7 points (35-28) with 1:42 left in the half, but they let MSU go on a quick 5-0 run to end the half, with UM clinging to a 2-point lead, 35-33. As they have so many times this season, UM came out of halftime and threw the game away. After leading for most of the 1<sup>st</sup> half, building up a 9-point lead and watching it fritter away, they let MSU tie the game (39-39) at the 17:42 mark, then let MSU go ahead for good (41-39) just 22 seconds later, and that was the game. MSU never trailed again, and built up the lead as high as 20 points, winning by 19.

It was more of the same in the Rutgers game, except that this time Michigan waited until later in the game to collapse. Other than a brief 2-0 lead by Rutgers to start the game, Michigan led for the entire 1<sup>st</sup> half, by as many as 12 points. Rutgers had crept back to within 5 points (35-30) with 47 seconds left in the 1<sup>st</sup> half, when Michigan played things perfectly, and scored 4 points in the last 10 seconds to go into halftime with great positive momentum, up 39-30. Could this be the end of the "2<sup>nd</sup> half curse"? It looked good. Michigan started the 2<sup>nd</sup> half strong, pushing their lead up to 15 points (47-32) at the 17:03 mark. They still led by 12 points (51-39) with 12:43 left, when the wheels started coming off. Rutgers went on a quick 8-0 run to cut the lead to just 4 points (51-47) at the 10:27 mark. Michigan kept the lead between 4 and 6 points for a while, and it was still a 6-point lead (57-51) with 7:19 left. Look at that score: the final score was 69-59, Rutgers. That means that Rutgers outscored Michigan 18-2 in the last 7:19. 18-2! In that period, Michigan missed 3 3-pointers, missed 6 2-point shots, and committed 4 turnovers. That works out to 1-for-10 shooting in 7:19. Disgusting.

### Stats

[The game stats for the MSU game](#) were reasonable. Michigan shot decently overall (20-for-47 = 42.6%), they shot 3-pointers pretty well (8-for-20 = 40.0%), but they shot free throws poorly (14-for-26 = 53.8%). They won the rebounding battle handily (34-26), but they lost the turnover battle badly (13-6). They lost this game with poor defense, allowing MSU to shoot 55.7% (34-for-61).

[The game stats for the Rutgers game](#) were weak. Michigan shot decently overall (23-for-53 = 43.4%), they shot 3-pointers poorly (7-for-24 = 29.2%), and they shot free throws well, just not enough (6-for-7 = 85.7%). They lost the rebounding battle badly (40-32), and they were terrible with turnovers, losing that battle 19-9. They lost this game with terrible rebounding and turnovers, and, most importantly, absolutely horrible 3-point shooting in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half: 1-for-11!

## Who Started?

The starters for the MSU game were [Nimari Burnett](#), [Jaelin Llewellyn](#), [Olivier Nkamhoua](#), [Tarris Reed, Jr.](#), and [Terrance Williams II](#). [Dug McDaniel](#) didn't travel with the team for the MSU game (indefinite "road suspension"), but he started in place of Llewellyn in the Rutgers game.

## Who Looked Good?

No Michigan player hit double figures in both games this week. No one really looked good in both games.

McDaniel hit double figures in the one game he played in (Rutgers), with 10 points.

Nkamhoua had one decent game (14 points vs. Rutgers) and one mediocre game (9 points vs. MSU).

Williams had one decent game (14 points vs. MSU) and one mediocre game (7 points vs. Rutgers).

Llewellyn had a great game as a starter vs. MSU (18 points), and a lousy game (3 points) off the bench vs. Rutgers. He's done this several times this season: he's great as a starter when McDaniel isn't available, then he's lousy off the bench for the home games.

Reed actually had a pretty good week, with 5 and 12 points. More importantly, he had 9 and 15 rebounds, giving him a double-double vs. Rutgers.

[Tray Jackson](#) had 8 and 3 points off the bench.

## Who Looked Not-So-Good?

Burnett had a mediocre week, scoring 8 and 5 points.

[Will Tschetter](#) had 0 and 5 points off the bench.

## Who Else Played?

[Jace Howard](#) only played in the MSU game, where he missed his only shot attempt.

## Who Didn't Play?

[Youssef Khayat](#) and [George Washington III](#) were the scholarship players who didn't play this week.

None of the Scout Team played this week: [Ian Burns](#), [Harrison Hochberg](#), [Jackson Selvala](#) and [Cooper Smith](#). Smith is currently injured.

## What Does It Mean?

Even though there are still 10 games left in this season, it's over. Michigan has played all of the winnable games on their schedule, and lost most of them. The remaining games are all very low win-probability games. It's hard to see another win in there. Maybe at Rutgers or at Ohio State, but probably not. They're looking at a final record of 7-25 (2-18 in Big Ten).

## What's Next?

This week, Michigan plays two games. On Wednesday (02/07/2024, 7:00 p.m., BTN), they play (#6) Wisconsin in Crisler Arena, then on Saturday (02/10/2024, 6:30 p.m. EST, BTN) they play at Nebraska.

[Wisconsin](#) is currently 16-6 (8-3 in Big Ten). They have impressive wins over (#24) Virginia, (#3) Marquette, and Michigan State (twice), and unimpressive losses to Providence, Penn State, and Nebraska. They don't have any noteworthy players, but they do have some height: a 6'11" player and a 7-footer. Michigan stands no chance in this game. They'll be lucky to stay within 20 points.

[Nebraska](#) is currently 16-6 (6-5 in Big Ten). They have impressive wins over Michigan State, (#1) Purdue, and (#6) Wisconsin, and unimpressive losses to Minnesota, Iowa, Rutgers, and Maryland. They have one noteworthy player: Keisei Tominaga. His production is unexplainable. He looks like a bad YMCA player, but he still manages to baffle his opponents. Nebraska also has some height: two 6'10" players and a 6'11" player. This is not the Nebraska team we've gotten used to. They are in the upper half of the Big Ten, and they are knocking off the big boys. They should have no trouble dominating Michigan.

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

Go Blue!