

Nothing But 'Net – Week #18 – 02/26/2024 – Two More Predictable Losses

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this past week, and they lost both of them. [On Thursday \(02/22/2024\), they lost at Northwestern 76-62](#), then [on Sunday \(02/25/2024\), they lost to \(#3\) Purdue 84-76](#) in Crisler Arena. The two losses lower Michigan's record to 8-20 (3-14 in Big Ten). Michigan has now lost 5 games in a row.

What Happened?

These were two very predictable losses. Northwestern is having a very good year, especially for them, and Purdue has been in the top 5 all season, while Michigan is having one of their worst seasons in the last 50 years. That's a bad combination.

Game Flow

Once again, the Northwestern game was a tale of two halves. In the 1st half, Michigan played well, controlled the tempo, and led for most of the half. They got their lead as high as 11 points (16-5, at the 13:23 mark), and kept it around 7-9 points for most of the half. They were still up 9 points (28-19) with 6:35 to go, when Northwestern went on an 11-2 run to tie the game up, 30-30, with 3:40 left. It was still tied up (34-34) with 2 seconds left, but Northwestern hit a 3-pointer to lead 37-34 at halftime. Bummer. As I said above, this game was a tale of two halves, and Northwestern owned the 2nd half. Michigan did put up a little fight early in the 2nd half, but once Northwestern got rolling, it was over. Northwestern built their halftime lead of 3 points up to 7 points (41-34) with 17:48 to go, then let Michigan creep back into it. UM got their only lead of the 2nd half, 44-43, at the 15:36 mark, then Northwestern went on a 14-3 run to go up 10 points (57-47) with 10:27 left. Northwestern pushed their lead as high as 20 points, winning by 14.

Against Purdue, Michigan actually played pretty well for the first 14 minutes. They led for the first 10 minutes, by as many as 7 points, and with 16:30 to go in the half, Michigan still led by one point, 30-29. That was their last lead. Purdue suddenly woke up, and pulled away with an 18-6 run to end the half, up 11 points (47-36). In the 2nd half, Purdue kept the lead in the 9-11 point range the whole time, never letting Michigan get closer than 7 points, winning by 8 points.

Stats

[The game stats for the Northwestern game](#) were surprisingly good. Michigan shot well overall (22-for-44 = 50.0%), they shot 3-pointers extremely well (8-for-11 = 72.7%), but they shot free throws poorly (10-for-18 = 55.6%). They lost the rebounding battle (36-27) and the turnover battle (11-5). They lost this game with poor rebounding and too many turnovers, with a dash of poor free-throw shooting thrown in.

[The game stats for the Purdue game](#) were better than expected. Michigan shot well overall (29-for-60 = 48.3%), they shot 3-pointers very well (9-for-21 = 42.9%), and they shot free throws decently (9-for-13 = 69.2%). They lost the rebounding battle badly (41-28) and the turnover battle (10-8). They lost this game with terrible rebounding and too many fouls. Actually, they lost this game because of too much Zach Edey, Purdue's 7'4" center. Michigan didn't have anyone who could stop him, or really even slow him down. He ended up with 35 points on 14-for-18 shooting, along with 15 rebounds. He was awesome.

Who Started?

Here's where things get interesting. Remember last week when [Terrance Williams II](#) didn't play in the MSU game? It turns out that there has been some bug (flu? Not COVID-19) running through the team, and that's what he had. Well, it struck again this week: [Will Tschetter](#) didn't travel with the team to Northwestern, due to the unspecified team bug. No big deal, right? Tschetter is an important sub, but Michigan can work around his absence, right? Wrong. Tschetter would have started and played a lot in the Northwestern game

because (drumroll) [Olivier Nkamhoua](#) is out for the rest of the season with a wrist injury. It turns out that Nkamhoua has been playing with an injured left (non-shooting) wrist injury he suffered in practice back in early January, before the Minnesota game on 01/04/2024. It finally got to the point where he needed surgery, so now he's done for the season.

The starters for the Northwestern game were [Nimari Burnett](#), [Tray Jackson](#), [Jaelin Llewellyn](#), [Tarris Reed, Jr.](#), and [Terrance Williams II](#). [Dug McDaniel](#) didn't travel with the team for the Northwestern game (indefinite "road suspension"), so Llewellyn started in his place. Nkamhoua is out for the season, and Tschetter would have started in his place, but he didn't travel to Northwestern due to the team flu bug. So, Michigan was missing their two best players (McDaniel and Nkamhoua) and their best sub (Tschetter). Great.

The starters for the Purdue game were Burnett, McDaniel, Reed, Tschetter, and Williams.

Who Looked Good?

Burnett had a good week, with 15 points (team high) vs. Northwestern, and 12 points vs. Purdue. He shot well in both games: 6-for-8 overall (3-for-5 from deep) vs. Northwestern, and 5-for-9 overall (2-for-4 from deep) vs. Purdue.

Williams had a good week, with 13 and 11 points. He was Michigan's leading rebounder vs. Northwestern, with 7 boards.

Jackson also had a good week, with 10 points in each game, one as a starter (Northwestern) and one off the bench (Purdue). Michigan had lots of foul trouble vs. Purdue, trying to guard Edey, so Jackson ended up playing some center.

Reed had one good game (13 points vs. Northwestern) and one lousy game (2 points vs. Purdue). Edey smothered him, and he only played 18 minutes against him, due to early foul trouble. He couldn't contain Edey, and he couldn't get a shot off against him. He shot 1-for-2 vs. Purdue.

McDaniel was Michigan's leading scorer in the one game he played in (Purdue), with 19 points. On the downside, he shot poorly: 7-for-20 overall, 2-for-7 from deep.

Tschetter played pretty well in the one game he played in (Purdue), with 10 points. With Nkamhoua out and Reed on the bench with early foul trouble, he played center vs. Edey. What fun!

[Jace Howard](#) played well off the bench, with 5 and 8 points.

Who Looked Not-So-Good?

Llewellyn only played in one game this week (Northwestern), and he only scored 3 points. He missed the Purdue game, probably with the team flu bug.

Who Else Played?

[Ian Burns](#) played the last minute of the Northwestern game, but didn't attempt a shot.

[Harrison Hochberg](#) played the last minute of the Northwestern game, but didn't attempt a shot.

[Youssef Khayat](#) played in both games, and scored 3 and 0 points.

[Jackson Selvala](#) played the last minute of the Northwestern game, but didn't attempt a shot.

[Cooper Smith](#) played the last minute of the Northwestern game, but didn't attempt a shot.

[George Washington III](#) played in both games, and scored 0 and 4 points.

Who Didn't Play?

Everyone played in at least one game this week.

What Does It Mean?

Michigan has 3 regular season games left, along with at least one game in the Big Ten Tournament. They need to win 2 of those 4 games to get up to 10 wins. It probably won't happen. Also, at 3-14 in the Big Ten, they are guaranteed to finish last in the Big Ten, although they could end up tied with Ohio State (currently 6-11 in Big Ten) or Rutgers (currently 6-10 in Big Ten) if they win their last 3 and OSU loses their last 3 or Rutgers loses their last 4. Also unlikely. So, they probably won't win 10 games this season, and they will probably finish all alone in last place in the Big Ten. Sigh.

What's Next?

The season drones on. This week, Michigan plays two games. On Thursday (02/29/2024, 8:30 p.m., FS1), they play at Rutgers, then on Sunday (03/03/2024, 4:00 p.m., CBS) they play at Ohio State.

[Rutgers](#) is currently 14-13 (6-10 in Big Ten). Michigan played Rutgers in Ann Arbor back on 02/03/2024, and Rutgers beat them easily, 69-59. If Michigan can't beat Rutgers in Ann Arbor with Nkamhoua, they probably won't be able to beat them on the road without him. I expect a 15-20 point loss.

[Ohio State](#) is currently 16-12 (6-11 in Big Ten). Michigan played OSU in Ann Arbor back on 01/15/2024, and Michigan won 73-65. Since then, OSU has fired their head coach (Chris Holtmann) on 02/14/2024, and won 2 out of 3 games since then for interim coach Jake Diebler, beating (#2) Purdue and Michigan State (in East Lansing). Even though Michigan won the first meeting, I expect them to have a much harder time down in Columbus. I'm expecting a 10-15 point OSU win.

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

Go Blue!