

## **Nothing But 'Net – Week #20 – 02/24/2025 – Second Half Blues**

The (#12) University of Michigan men's basketball team played one game this past week, and they lost it. [On Friday \(02/21/2025\), they lost to \(#14\) Michigan State 75-62](#) in Crisler Arena. Michigan's record is now 20-6 (12-3 in Big Ten).

### **What Happened?**

Everything was in place: Crisler Arena was sold out, and 99% full. The crowd was pumped up, and the atmosphere was electric. Both teams were ranked in the Top 15, and the winner would be all alone in first place. Michigan had it all there, ripe for the picking, then ... thud. The "second half blues" did them in.

Michigan outplayed MSU in the first half, but MSU really outplayed Michigan in the second half, and that was the difference. The second half was one of the worst halves that Michigan has played this season, right up there with the first half of the game at Purdue. The final score is a little deceptive, since MSU scored a bunch of meaningless points in the final minutes when Michigan was trying desperation plays to catch up. It was really a 4-5 point loss, not a 13 point loss. Still, a loss is a loss, and a home loss is doubly depressing. This is Michigan's first home loss of the season, after 12 straight wins.

### **Game Flow**

As they have so many times lately, Michigan got off to a poor start, falling behind 7-2 at the 17:05 mark, then 16-8 with 12:53 to go. They finally got on track, and tied the game up (16-16) with 11:02 left, and went ahead by 7 points (23-16) at the 8:02 mark. It was a very satisfying 15-0 run, and it put Michigan ahead for the rest of the half. State got as close as 3 points (26-23) with 4:44 to go, but Michigan pushed the lead back up to 8 points (33-25) with 2:20 left. State cut the lead to 4 points (38-34) at halftime.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> half was miserable. MSU started the half with two 3-pointers in a row, and suddenly Michigan's lead was gone: State led 40-38 at the 17:55 mark. Michigan fought back, and got the lead (42-40) with 16:26 left. That was Michigan's last lead. State took back the lead, and kept it in the 4-6 point range for a while, then pushed it up to the 9-11 point range. They led by 11 points (62-51) with 7:52 to go, before Michigan made one last push. UM got within 3 points (62-59) at the 5:37 mark, but that was it for Michigan. Look at the final score: 75-62. MSU outscored Michigan 13-3 in the last 5:37. During that stretch, Michigan shot 1-for-3 at the free throw line, 1-for-1 on 2-point shots, 0-for-3 on 3-point shots, and committed 4 fouls and 2 turnovers. Three points in 5:37 is really sad.

### **Stats**

[The game stats](#) were just OK. Michigan shot decently overall (23-for-50 = 46.0%), they shot 3-pointers poorly (5-for-21 = 23.8%), and they shot free throws poorly (11-for-18 = 61.1%). They lost the rebounding battle (34-25) and the turnover battle (15-11). They lost this game due to poor rebounding and too many turnovers. In particular, they gave up way too many offensive rebounds (14).

### **Who Started?**

The starters were [Nimari Burnett](#), [Tre Donaldson](#), [Vladislav Goldin](#), [Rubin Jones](#), and [Danny Wolf](#).

### **Who Looked Good?**

Goldin was the leading scorer, with 21 points. He battled in there, and did his part.

Burnett had 12 points, and only one turnover. He did his part.

Wolf had 11 points, and was the leading rebounder for Michigan with 7. He also led Michigan in assists with 8. He did his part.

[Will Tschetter](#) chipped in 5 points off the bench.

### **Who Looked Not-So-Good?**

Donaldson was the main problem in this game. He scored 3 points on terrible shooting: 1-for-5 overall, 1-for-4 from deep. This was his second-worst game of the season (0 points at Wisconsin). It was a bad time for him to have a bad game.

Jones was no help, with 2 points.

[Roddy Gayle Jr.](#) scored 5 points on terrible shooting: 1-for-6 overall, 0-for-2 from deep.

### **Who Else Played?**

[Justin Pippen](#) scored 2 points.

[L.J. Cason](#) scored 1 point.

### **Who Didn't Play?**

[Sam Walters](#) didn't play again. He's still recovering from a lower back injury.

[Phat Phat Brooks](#) and [Jace Howard](#) were the other scholarship players who didn't play.

None of the Scout Team players played: [Ian Burns](#), [Howard Eisley Jr.](#), [Harrison Hochberg](#), and [Charlie May](#).

### **What Does It Mean?**

Despite the loss, Michigan (12-3) still controls their own destiny. They are currently a half game out of first place behind MSU (13-3), but they have a game in hand over MSU. They play MSU one more time, in East Lansing, on the last day of the regular season (03/09/2025). If Michigan can win the rest of their games, they'll win the Big Ten title outright. Can they do that? Maybe. They have 5 games left:

- 02/24/2025 at Nebraska
- 02/27/2025 vs. Rutgers
- 03/02/2025 vs. Illinois
- 03/05/2025 vs. (#20) Maryland
- 03/09/2025 at (#14) Michigan State

The three games against unranked opponents look winnable, but the two games against ranked opponents will tell the story.

### **What's Next?**

This week, Michigan plays three games, which is rare. On Monday (02/24/2025, 8:00 p.m. EST, FS1), they play at Nebraska, on Thursday (02/27/2025, 9:00 p.m., Peacock), they play Rutgers in Crisler Arena, and on Sunday (03/02/2025), 3:45 p.m., CBS), they play Illinois in Crisler Arena.

[Nebraska](#) is currently 17-10 (7-9 in Big Ten), with impressive wins over (#14) Creighton, Indiana, (#15) UCLA, (#18) Illinois, and (#16) Oregon, and unimpressive losses to St. Mary's (CA), Iowa, Rutgers, USC, and Penn State. They have one noteworthy player (Brice Williams), and they have a lot of height: three 6'10" players and a 7'1" player. This will be quite a challenging game. Nebraska is 10-3 at home, and they have beaten some good teams this

season. Michigan needs to bounce back from a disappointing performance against MSU on a short turnaround. They can win this game, but they need to play with poise and control.

[Rutgers](#) is currently 14-14 (7-10 in Big Ten). Michigan has already played them, and beat them, on the road on 02/01/2025. Since then, they have gone 3-3, with a win over (#23) Illinois. This is a game that Michigan needs to win. If they can beat them on the road, they should be able to beat them at home.

[Illinois](#) is currently 17-11 (9-8 in Big Ten), with impressive wins over (#19) Arkansas, (#20) Wisconsin, (#9) Oregon, and UCLA, and unimpressive losses to Northwestern, USC, Nebraska, and Rutgers. They have one noteworthy player (Kasparas Jakucionis), and they have some height: two 6'10" players and one 7'1" player. Even though Illinois is currently unranked, they were ranked for much of the season. This will be a very challenging game for Michigan, even in Crisler Arena. Even though it's not reciprocated, Illinois thinks they have a deep rivalry with Michigan, and they are still nursing a grudge about the 2020-2021 season, when Michigan won the Big Ten. They still insist that they won the title, based on number of conference wins, not winning percentage, and they are nursing the disrespect as much as they can.

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

Go Blue!