

## **Nothing But 'Net – Week #21 – 03/03/2025 – 3 Ugly Games, 2 Of Them Wins**

The (#15) University of Michigan men's basketball team played three games this past week, and they won two and lost one. [On Monday \(02/24/2025\), they beat Nebraska 49-46](#) in Lincoln, [on Thursday \(02/27/2025\), then beat Rutgers 84-82](#) in Crisler Arena, and [on Sunday \(03/02/2025\), they lost to Illinois 93-73](#) in Crisler Arena. Michigan's record is now 22-7 (14-4 in Big Ten).

### **What Happened?**

All three games this week were ugly, in three different ways. The Nebraska game was a lousy game for both teams, with terrible shooting percentages and plenty of errors, but Michigan was just a little less lousy than Nebraska, and came away with the win. The Rutgers game was a lousy game for Michigan, but they woke up just in time to sneak past Rutgers in the final seconds for the win. The Illinois game was a terrible game for Michigan, certainly the ugliest of the three, and it was a decisive loss for Michigan.

Here's the depressing part: Michigan has looked pretty bad in most of their games since their West Coast trip in early January. They managed to win most of those games, but they "played down" to lesser competition in many of them, and they just snuck by against teams they should have beaten soundly. The layups and dunks that they were making early in the season were rolling off, and their 3-point shooting has been trending downward steadily in the last month. This is a team that depends on shooting a reasonable percentage from 3-point range, and they have struggled in games where they haven't shot 3-pointers well. They look tired, and their confidence appears to be shaken.

### **Game Flow**

The Nebraska game was slow and low-scoring, and it was close most of the time. Neither team was able to get more than 5 points ahead, and there were 5 ties and 9 lead changes. Michigan scratched out a 25-21 lead at halftime, but Nebraska tied it up in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, and it was more of the same: slow, low-scoring, neither team able to pull away. It wasn't even good defense, it was just matching bad offenses. With 1:36 left in the game, Michigan was ahead 45-44, and they managed to hold on for a 49-46 win. It was truly ugly.

The Rutgers game was a little less ugly, but not much. At least it was faster-paced and had more scoring. Michigan was favored by 11.5 points, but no one told Rutgers. Michigan opened a nice 14-7 lead at the 14:16 mark, and they managed to keep the lead in the 4-6 point range for a few minutes, but Rutgers kept creeping closer and closer. They caught up to Michigan, and went ahead 25-23 with 9:52 left in the half. The lead went back and forth for a few minutes, with Michigan leading 35-34 with 6:26 to go. At this point, Rutgers took over, and pulled out to a 13-point lead (57-44) at the 1:13 mark. Michigan managed to score the last 5 points of the half to pull within 8 points (57-49) at halftime.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> half was more of the same, as Rutgers kept the lead in the 8-10 point range for the first 9 minutes of the half. They were up 12 points (74-62) at the 11:14 mark, and the game was looking pretty bad for Michigan, when things suddenly turned around. After being hot for the first 29 minutes, Rutgers suddenly lost their touch, and Michigan finally woke up. UM started a slow, steady comeback, and the sell-out crowd got back into it. Michigan went on a 10-0 run over the next 5 minutes, and got within 2 points (74-72) with 5:54 left. They finally tied it up (76-76) with 4:33 to go, and again 78-78 with 2:34 left. The lead went back and forth, and Rutgers was ahead by a single point (82-81) with 12 seconds left. Michigan held for the last shot, and [Nimari Burnett](#) was the hero, swishing a 30-footer at the buzzer for the win. It was very exciting.

The Illinois game was close and tense for the first 8+ minutes, with lots of ties and lead changes, and neither team able to pull ahead by more than 3-4 points. At the 11:31 mark, Michigan was up 13-12, when Illinois opened up a 7-point lead (24-17) with 6:49 to go. It

was still a 6-point lead (31-25) with 2:06 left, but Michigan closed the half with a 5-0 run to get within 1 point at halftime, 31-30.

The start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half was still close and tense. Michigan actually reclaimed the lead (32-31) in the opening seconds, and still led 39-38 at the 16:59 mark. It was all tied up (41-41) with 16:05 to go, and Illinois was up by 2 points (43-41) with 15:27 left. With 14:32 to go, Michigan missed a 3-pointer that would have put them back out front, and that was the game. Suddenly, Illinois couldn't miss, Michigan couldn't buy a point, and the rout was on. Illinois pushed their lead to 9 points (52-43) at the 12:39 mark, then 11 points (59-48) with 10:26 to go. Every time Michigan made a little run at the lead, Illinois responded with a couple 3-pointers to push the lead even further. When they weren't hitting their first shots, they were getting offensive rebounds for second-chance points. It was very demoralizing. When they pushed the lead up to 15 points (67-52) with 8:42 left, the game was over. Michigan never got closer than 13 points the rest of the way, and Illinois cruised to an easy win.

## Stats

[The stats for the Nebraska game](#) were horrible, just horrible. Michigan shot terribly overall (18-for-61 = 29.5%), they shot 3-pointers horribly (5-for-27 = 18.5%), and they shot free throws poorly (8-for-13 = 61.5%). They won the rebounding battle (50-43), but lost the turnover battle (14-11). I don't know how they managed to win this game. Rebounding, maybe?

[The stats for the Rutgers game](#) were only slightly better than the Nebraska game. Michigan shot well overall (29-for-54 = 53.7%), they shot 3-pointers poorly (5-for-21 = 23.8%), and they shot free throws poorly (21-for-32 = 65.6%). They won the rebounding battle (38-27), but they lost the turnover battle (14-8). They won this game (barely) with good overall shooting and solid rebounding.

[The stats for the Illinois game](#) were pretty weak. Michigan shot decently overall (28-for-61 = 45.9%), they shot 3-pointers poorly (4-for-18 = 22.2%), and they shot free throws decently (13-for-19 = 68.4%). They lost the rebounding battle badly (43-32) and the turnover battle as well (11-9). They lost this game with poor 3-point shooting and terrible rebounding. They gave up 19 offensive rebounds! 19!

## Who Started?

The starters for all 3 games were [Nimari Burnett](#), [Tre Donaldson](#), [Roddy Gayle Jr.](#), [Vladislav Goldin](#), and [Danny Wolf](#).

## Who Looked Good?

Goldin had two good games and one decent game. He was the high scorer for Michigan in the Rutgers (24) and Illinois (22) games, and he almost hit double figures in the low-scoring Nebraska game (8). He had 10, 11, and 7 rebounds, giving him a double-double in the Rutgers game.

As mentioned above, Burnett was the hero of the Rutgers game, with the game-winning 30-footer at the buzzer. He had 20 points in that game, on decent shooting. The other two games? Not so much: he had 2 points in the Nebraska game, on terrible shooting (1-for-7 overall, 0-for-4 from deep), and 6 points in the Illinois game, on decent shooting.

Gayle had one good game (12 points vs. Nebraska) and two mediocre games (5 points vs. Rutgers and 4 points vs. Illinois). He was the high scorer for Michigan in the Nebraska game. He didn't shoot very well in any of the games, and he has had a lousy time shooting 3-pointers in 2025: he's 1-for-25 since the Western Kentucky game on 12/29/2024, including 0-for-15 since the away Purdue game on 01/24/2025. The team needs him to break out of this slump.

[Will Tschetter](#) had one good game (16 points vs. Rutgers), one decent game (9 points vs. Illinois), and one mediocre game (3 points vs. Nebraska).

Wolf had three decent games: 10 points vs. Nebraska, 8 points vs. Rutgers, and 9 points vs. Illinois. He didn't shoot very well in any of them. He had 10 rebounds vs. Nebraska, giving him another double-double.

Donaldson had a good game vs. Nebraska (11 points), a sad game vs. Rutgers (5 points), and a decent game vs. Illinois (9 points). He didn't shoot very well in any of them.

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

[Rubin Jones](#) only played in one game this week (Illinois) due to illness, and he missed his only shot attempt.

### **Who Else Played?**

[Justin Pippen](#) scored 0, 1, and 6 points.

[L.J. Cason](#) scored 3, 5, and 5 points.

[Phat Phat Brooks](#) finally got in a game! He played for 3 minutes in the Illinois game, making his only shot attempt, a 3-pointer.

[Ian Burns](#) played for the last 32 seconds of the (doomed) Illinois game, since it was Senior Day. He missed his only shot attempt, a 3-pointer.

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

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

[Jace Howard](#) didn't play this week. Jace was honored for Senior Day, with Juwan in the house. Since Ian Burns got in for the last 32 seconds of the Illinois game but Jace didn't, I'm wondering if Jace is sick or injured.

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

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

Well, it was a fun pennant race, but Michigan blinked first, and Michigan State looks like they're going to win it. With two games left, MSU has a one-game lead. Of course, if Michigan wins their last two games, they can still tie with MSU for 1<sup>st</sup> place. It could happen, but not if Michigan plays like they have for the last couple weeks. They need to get back to the way they were playing in early January.

Regardless of whether Michigan wins or loses their next two games, they are guaranteed at least a tie for 2<sup>nd</sup> place, which will earn them a double bye in the Big Ten Tournament. They are also looking good for a nice seed (#4 or #5) in the NCAA Tournament.

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

This week, Michigan plays two games. On Wednesday (03/05/2025, 6:30 p.m., BTN), they play (#16) Maryland in Crisler Arena, and on Sunday (03/09/2025), 12:00 p.m., CBS), they play at (#8) Michigan State.

[Maryland](#) is currently 22-7 (12-6 in Big Ten), with impressive wins over Villanova, Syracuse, (#22) UCLA, (#17) Illinois, and (#17) Wisconsin, and unimpressive losses to Washington, Northwestern, and Ohio State. They have one noteworthy player (Derik Queen), and decent

height: a 6'10" player (Derik Queen) and a 7-footer. They've been hot lately, and this will be a very challenging game. If Michigan can get back to their mid-season swagger, they can beat Maryland, but if they play the way they've been playing lately, this could be another blowout loss.

[MSU](#) is currently 24-5 (15-3 in Big Ten). Michigan has already played (and lost to) MSU this season, so we know what to expect. MSU has been hot lately, and they are very tough to beat in Breslin. This game could be for all the marbles, and Michigan can beat MSU, but they need to play their best game of the season.

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

Go Blue!