

## **Nothing But 'Net – Week #21 – 03/02/2026 – Outright Big Ten Champions!**

The (#3) University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games this past week, and they won both of them. [On Tuesday \(02/24/2026\), they beat Minnesota 77-67](#) in Crisler Arena, then [on Friday \(02/27/2026\), they won at \(#10\) Illinois 84-70](#). Michigan's record improves to 27-2 (17-1 in Big Ten). Michigan clinched 1<sup>st</sup> place outright in the Big Ten.

### **What Happened?**

With these two wins, Michigan clinched the outright Big Ten regular season championship! When they beat Minnesota on Tuesday, they clinched at least a share of the title, but they still had to win one more game to clinch the outright title, and they did it on Friday at Illinois. This is a Big Deal: the Big Ten is loaded this season, and winning the championship is impressive. Winning it with two games left to play is very impressive.

Michigan looked good vs. Minnesota and very good vs. Illinois. They won both games convincingly, especially the Illinois game. It was very satisfying to finally beat Illinois, since Michigan had lost the last 4 games in Champaign and the last 9 games overall to Illinois.

Trivia Question: Prior to this season, when was the last time Michigan beat Michigan State in East Lansing and Purdue in West Lafayette AND Illinois in Champaign all in the same season? The answer is at the end of the article.

### **Game Flow**

The 1<sup>st</sup> half of the Minnesota game was close, with 2 ties and 10 lead changes. Michigan led for much of the half, but they had trouble pulling away from Minnesota. It looked like they were trying too hard. The few times Minnesota led, it was only by 2-4 points. Michigan was up early (5-0 at the 18:53 mark), but Minnesota went on a 13-4 run to go up by 4 points (13-9) with 13:33 left. Michigan caught them and pulled back in front (30-20) with 2:58 to go, then they let Minnesota go on an 8-2 run to end the half, with Michigan clinging to a 4-point lead, 32-28. It was a little worrying.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> half was also a little scary. Michigan led for the entire half, but let Minnesota hang around. In the first 11 minutes of the half, Michigan led by as many as 9 points, but as few as 2 points. Finally, at the 8:49 mark, Michigan got their lead back up to 10 points (57-47), and that was the game. Michigan pushed the lead as high as 18 points, but never let it get below 10 points, winning by 10.

The Illinois game was also close in the 1<sup>st</sup> half, with neither team able to get more than 9 points ahead. Illinois led by 5 points (16-11) at the 13:03 mark, and that was the high-water mark for them. Michigan went on an 11-0 run to go up 6 points (22-16) with 9:45 left, and Illinois never led again. Michigan pushed their lead up to 9 points (38-29) with 0:42 to go in the 1<sup>st</sup> half, and led by 7 points (38-31) at halftime.

It looked like Illinois might catch up early in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. They got within 5 points (42-37) at the 18:09 mark, but Michigan pushed their lead up to 10 points (51-41) with 16:11 to go. Michigan kept the lead in the 7-9 point range for a while, and finally got it over 10 points (63-52) at the 9:51 mark. Once they got it over 10 points, Illinois wilted, and Michigan pushed the lead up as high as 21 points (75-54) with 6:49 to go, and coasted home. They still had a 20 point lead (81-61) with 1:48 left, and they let Illinois bomb away from 3-point range a few times to run out the clock, winning by 14 points.

### **Stats**

[The stats for the Minnesota game](#) were solid. Michigan shot well overall (29/58 = 50.0%), they shot 3-pointers well (14/33 = 42.4%), and they were perfect shooting free throws (5/5 = 100.0%). I had to look twice at the rebounding stats: Michigan won the rebounding battle

(39-18). Minnesota only had 18 rebounds? Amazing! Of course, Michigan lost the turnover battle (14-8). Michigan won this game with good shooting and great rebounding.

[The stats for the Illinois game](#) were very good. Michigan shot very well overall (31/59 = 52.5%), they shot 3-pointers well (8/22 = 36.4%), and they shot free throws well (14/17 = 82.4%). Michigan won the rebounding battle (34-30), and tied in the turnover battle (10-10). Michigan won this game with good shooting and solid rebounding.

### **Who Started?**

The starters for both games were [Nimari Burnett](#), [Elliot Cadeau](#), [Morez Johnson Jr.](#), [Yaxel Lendeborg](#), and [Aday Mara](#).

### **Who Looked Good?**

Mara had the best week this week, with 10 and 19 points. He shot extremely well: 4/4 vs. Minnesota and 8/9 vs. Illinois. He was also 2/2 and 3/3 from the free throw line!

Cadeau had one good game (15 points vs. Minnesota) and one decent game (7 points vs. Illinois). He also had 5 assists in each game.

Lendeborg had one good game (16 points vs. Illinois) and one lousy game (3 points vs. Minnesota).

Johnson had a great game against his former team (Illinois - 19 points) and a decent game against Minnesota (6 points). He was the star in the Illinois game, with 11 rebounds, giving him a double-double. The Illinois fans were relentless in booing him, but he ignored them and let his game do the talking.

Burnett had a quiet week, with 8 and 3 points.

[L.J. Cason](#) had a good week off the bench, with 14 and 9 points. Unfortunately, he tore the ACL in his right knee in the Illinois game, and he's done for the season. This is a huge setback for Michigan, since Cason was playing a very valuable role, backing up Cadeau at point guard and shooting well from 3-point range.

[Trey McKenney](#) had one good game (12 points vs. Minnesota) and one decent game (6 points vs. Illinois) this week off the bench.

[Roddy Gayle Jr.](#) had a decent week off the bench, with 9 and 2 points.

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

[Will Tschetter](#) was almost worthless this week off the bench, with 0 and 3 points.

### **Who Else Played?**

No one else played.

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

The scholarship players who didn't play were [Oscar Goodman](#) and [Malick Kordel](#). [Winters Grady](#) is out with an injury.

None of the Scout Team players ([Howard Eisley Jr.](#), [Harrison Hochberg](#) and [Charlie May](#)) got to play this week.

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

These were two very important wins, for several reasons. The most obvious reason is that they gave Michigan an outright Big Ten regular season championship, along with the #1 seed (and the triple bye) in the Big Ten Tournament. They also should keep Michigan at #3 in the AP Poll, and in line for a #1 seed in the NCAA Tournament. They also gave Michigan 17 Big Ten wins, which is a school record, and they gave Coach May at least one win over every other Big Ten team in just his second season at Michigan.

### **This Week**

This week, Michigan plays 2 games, their last 2 games of the regular season. On Thursday (03/05/2026, 8:00 p.m. EST, Peacock), they play at Iowa, then on Sunday (03/08/2026, 4:30 p.m., CBS), they play (#13) Michigan State in Crisler Arena. The MSU game is Senior Night, and the Senior Night ceremony will be held AFTER the game, not before. Also, the team will celebrate their outright Big Ten regular season championship after the Senior Night ceremony.

[Iowa](#) is currently 20-9 (10-8 in Big Ten), with impressive wins over Xavier, UCLA, Indiana, and (#9) Nebraska, and unimpressive losses to Minnesota, Maryland, and Penn State. They don't have any noteworthy players, and they don't have much height: a 6'10" player and a 6'11" player. This is a game that Michigan should win handily, but things are always tricky on the road in the Big Ten. Carver-Hawkeye Arena has been a tough place for Michigan to win, so they will have to play a solid game to get the "W".

[Michigan State](#) is currently 24-5 (14-4 in Big Ten). Since Michigan beat them in East Lansing back on 01/30/2026, they have a couple impressive wins over (#5) Illinois and (#8) Purdue, and a couple unimpressive losses to Minnesota and Wisconsin. This game was supposed to be a battle for the Big Ten title on the last day of the regular season, but Michigan ran away with the race a few games early. It is still a very important game for both teams, as they battle for seeding in the NCAA Tournament. It is a very important game for Michigan for several other reasons: it would be great to sweep MSU in the regular season, it would be great for Michigan to have a nice winning streak and momentum going into the postseason, and it would be very nice to win the game before the Senior Night ceremony and Big Ten championship celebration.

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

Go Blue!

Trivia Answer: The last time Michigan won at MSU, Purdue, and Illinois in the same season was 1994.