

# 2013-14 Big Ten men's basketball previews: Michigan (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

With the 2013-14 men's college basketball season kicking off Nov. 8, *HawkeyeDrive.com* will give you rundowns this week on all 12 Big Ten teams. Here, we'll showcase Michigan. The Wolverines enter this season ranked seventh nationally and will play Iowa twice this season – Jan. 22 at Crisler Center in Ann Arbor, Mich., and Feb. 8 at Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

Last season went about as well as one could've expected for Michigan. Yes, the Wolverines finished tied for fourth place in the Big Ten, but were literally one basket late against Indiana away from forming a 4-way tie for first place in the conference. Then as a No. 4 seed in the NCAA Tournament, Michigan stormed its way to a Final Four appearance and reached the national title game, where it lost to the No. 1 overall seed in Louisville.

Expectations remain high in Ann Arbor, but this Wolverine squad is going to have a slightly different look after seeing two of its best players from a year ago become NBA first-round draft picks. Michigan no longer has Trey Burke or Tim Hardaway, Jr. Burke was the Big Ten's Player of the Year last season after finishing second in the league in scoring with 18.6 points per game and leading the Big Ten with an average of 6.7 assists per contest. Hardaway, Jr., averaged 14.5 points per game and shot 37.4 percent from behind the 3-point arc in 2012-13.

These are huge absences, but everyone else of note returns in

2013-14. The sophomore trio of Mitch McGary, Glenn Robinson III and Nik Stauskas will get the most recognition and rightfully so.

Those first two players were named preseason first team all-Big Ten after finishing second and third in the league respectively in field goal percentage. McGary broke out during the Big Ten Tournament and his play carried over into the NCAA Tournament, as he finished the season making 59.8 percent of his buckets. Robinson made 57.2 percent of his shots. Then there's Stauskas, who was third in the Big Ten in 3-point field goal percentage after draining 44 percent of his shots from behind the arc. If these three post similar numbers again in 2013-14, Michigan's going to right in the thick of things yet again.

The Wolverines are going to be a very young team this season, as there are only two upperclassmen on the entire roster. One of those players is the lone senior – forward Jordan Morgan. As a junior, Morgan started 27 games for Michigan, but became the odd man out in favor of McGary late in the season. Now, Morgan will likely start alongside McGary to form the Wolverines' front-court.

Among the six freshmen on Michigan's roster, there are two that will likely stand out and fill the voids left by Burke and Hardaway, Jr. Listed at 6-1, Derrick Walton, Jr., was a four-year starter in high school and was "Mr. Basketball" in the state of Michigan after averaging 26.1 points, 7.3 rebounds, seven assists and 7.3 steals per game as a high-school senior. Then there's Zak Irvin, who was "Mr. Basketball" in the state of Indiana last year after averaging 26.4 points, 7.3 rebounds and 3.3 assists per game as a high-school senior. Irvin is listed at 6-6.

Looking at Michigan's schedule, the non-conference slate has plenty of intrigue. It features a trip to Hilton Coliseum in Ames to play Iowa State, a trip to Cameron Indoor Stadium to

face No. 4 Duke as part of the Big Ten/ACC Challenge, and a home game against No. 6 Arizona. The Wolverines will also play in the Puerto Rico Tip-Off this season (which it should be favored to win) and play Stanford at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn as part of the Brooklyn Hoops Holiday Invitational.

In Big Ten play, the single-plays include road trips to No. 11 Ohio State and Illinois, which won't come easy. That road contest against the Buckeyes comes during a daunting month of February for the Wolverines, which starts with a road trip to Indiana on Super Bowl Sunday (Feb. 2) and concludes with a road trip to Purdue on Feb. 26. This month also features a road game at Iowa and home contests against Nebraska, No. 20 Wisconsin and No. 7 Michigan State.

This team is fully capable of winning the Big Ten and fully capable of making another deep NCAA tourney run. It might not end with a second consecutive trip to the national championship game like the "Fab Five" had back in the 1990s, but John Beliein has the coaching staff and the players all in place to sustain this current run of success at Michigan and a trip to Arlington, Texas for the Final Four next April isn't entirely far-fetched.