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The top team in the country enters Crisler Arena tonight to enter battle with our Michigan Wolverines. The Illinois Fighting Illini have won 23 consecutive games to kick off 2004-05 and they've won 37 of their last 39 dating back to a matchup with Michigan on January 31, 2004. One could say they're a little hot right now. The mighty men of Michigan, meanwhile, are on a six-game losing streak, having lost by an average of 17.167 points per game in that stretch. They have something that the Illini lack, however: The Maize Rage. We can provide a lot of support for our team tonight and put a little scare into the Illini. No one expects Michigan to even compete in tonight's contest, but there's a reason they hash it out on the hardwood. The Win of the Year comes this evening!

Here is the starting lineup for the Illinois Fighting Illini (23-0, 9-0 Big Ten Conference):

4	Luther Head	6'3"	G	Formerly known as the Oscar Robertson of Illinois high school basketball, he shows little respect for traffic law; see below
5	Deron Williams	6'3"	G	Amy Young's boyfriend is coming off his worst scoring total of the season, a one-point effort on 0-for-7 shooting from the field
11	Dee Brown	6'0"	G	Can't drive; crashed a golf cart over the summer with Illini QB Jon Beutjer
40	James Augustine	6'10"	C	"Augie", a former high school QB, scored just 5 against Michigan in last year's regular season contest
43	Roger Powell, Jr.	6'6"	F	Rog was the homecoming king and starred in the school musical at Joliet High School, also the alma mater of Andy Dick
Coach	Bruce Weber			Regularly provides sandwiches and drinks for his players

He fought the law, and the law won: Last April, Luther Head was ordered to perform 150 hours of community service and pay a \$501 fine after pleading guilty to driving under suspension and driving without proof of insurance. His original suspension stemmed from a failure to pay \$1,079 in fines from five other traffic cases, including running a stop sign. It's the red octagon, Luth.

Selfish freshman: Shaun Pruitt (#55), a freshman forward, hasn't been too happy with Coach Weber's recent decisions. "I'm frustrated with not playing more," said the rookie. "S-Dot", who averages a paltry 1.5 points per game, considers himself a great rap freestyler. It's amazing he can play basketball and rap so successfully while being such a hothead. "A lot of people have been hating on me, and I'm the type that will confront you in a second," Pruitt stated in a recruiting journal entry that highlighted his anger problems. Additionally, in a high school all star game, young Shaun was benched, and as he retreated to the bench, he took off his shoes and pouted. It sounds like he should consider himself lucky to average 4 minutes on the top team in the country.

Enjoy your ride: Redshirt senior big man Jack Ingram (#50), the owner of a pretty red mustache, formerly operated roller coasters at Six Flags.

Call me: "We're the geeks of college basketball," said Nick Smith (#45), a 7'2" senior about himself and Jack Ingram. "Hell, I don't even own a cell phone, which is the biggest sin imaginable." Offer Nick some help to find his cell.

And for your birthday, your first loss: Brian Randle (#42), a sophomore forward, turns 20 years old today. Let's blow out his victory candles.

Can't beat 'em, join 'em!: Marcus Arnold (#44), a junior forward, is sitting out this season after transferring from Illinois State, an 80-73 loser to the Fighting Illini on January 3, 2004.

Is he back?: He's got that #34 jersey. It must certainly be former All-Big Ten player Brian Cook back to haunt the Crisler faithful. Wait, this guy's only scored 8 points in 20 career games? Worry not. It's just Morton Junior College transfer Fred Nkemdi, a 6'5" senior forward. Chances are his mom won't be shown on TV every five seconds during game broadcasts.

The rest of the roster: 15 – Calvin Brock, 33 – Rich McBride, 41 – Warren Carter

WATCH THE BAND: The Victors is the greatest fight song in the history of the world, and we should treat it that way by all being in sync with each other and especially with the band while singing it. When the band stops playing the music and it's time to sing a cappella, watch them and their fist pumping to make sure you keep the time.

Great basketball photos: The Maize Rage and UM Photo Services have worked together to create a database of photos from this season of Michigan Basketball. It's a great place to order pictures of a Petway dunk, the menacing look of Graham Brown, or maybe even a shot of yourself in the Maize Rage! Go to the UM Photo Services website at <http://www.umich.edu/~photos>, and click on the basketball image under Special Event Photos. The case-sensitive password is UMaizeRage05. Thanks to Photo Services!

Sing it: When the band breaks out in Bon Jovi's "Livin' on a Prayer", be ready to sing with this Maize Rage Lyrics Guide:

Tommy used to work on the docks
 Union's been on strike
 He's down on his luck...it's tough, so tough
 Gina works the diner all day
 Working for her man, she brings home her pay
 For love - for love

She says we've got to hold on to what we've got
 'cause it doesn't make a difference
 If we make it or not
 We've got each other and that's a lot
 For love - we'll give it a shot

Chorus:
 Whooh, we're half way there
 Livin' on a prayer
 Take my hand and we'll make it - I swear
 Livin' on a prayer

Tommy's got his six string in hock
 Now he's holding in what he used
 To make it talk - so tough, it's tough
 Gina dreams of running away
 When she cries in the night
 Tommy whispers baby it's okay, someday

Stick around tonight: Ragers, this game is on ESPN and a huge national crowd will be tuned in to watch the #1 team in the country. Not only will they be seeing thousands of "Remaining Games" graphics to tout Illinois's undefeated season, but they'll also be seeing the Rage. We can cement a spot as one of the top student sections in the nation with a good showing tonight. Our team's on a six-game losing streak heading into a game where the odds are stacked against us, but so what? There's a reason the games are played on the hardwood and not on paper. Stay around until the final buzzer and keep making noise.

Upcoming Home Games:	February 12	Michigan State	4:00	Gates open at 2:30
	February 20	Indiana*	3:30	Gates open at 2:00
	February 23	Penn State	8:00	Gates open at 6:30

* - Glen Rice's #41 jersey will be retired at halftime of the Indiana game.

Check out our website: After the game, make sure you check out MaizeRage.org for all of the latest Maize Rage news about upcoming meetings and the Rager of the Game. Check out new Maize Rage pictures and archived issues of the Full Court Press. MaizeRage.org...it's just a click away!

Chants: Not only is our team playing for a national audience tonight, but we are too. Look sharp. Act sharp. Be sharp.

Turnovers: You! You! You! (while pointing finger)
Fouls: It's all your fault! It's all your fault! It's all your fault! (while pointing finger)

Our Free Throws:
 -Wave fingers in the air and upon a made shot, throw your hands down with force and say "BLUUUE!"

Illinois's Free Throws:
 -Listen in to the center of the Rage where the chant will be started, and follow along with one of these:
 -You Will Miss! You Will Miss! You Will Miss! (And upon a miss, yell "Thank you!")
 -General noise
 -Chanting a player's name
 -Singing "The Victors"
 -Upon a made free throw, listen for the "It doesn't matter!" prompt and yell "You still suck!"

Histo's Corner: Michigan has won its last 5 games on February 8, dating back to 1990. Additionally, the Wolverines have faced the Illini on this date at home just once, winning 88-81 in 1958.

Michigan is 2-0 this season against teams celebrating their centennial year of college basketball competition, having beaten Notre Dame on December 4 and Northwestern on January 12.

Michigan last suffered a six-game losing streak during the 2002-03 season. That streak was followed by a 13-game winning streak. This means that there should be no doubt that the Maize and Blue is ready to reel off 13 consecutive wins starting tonight. By this logic, Michigan will finish the Big Ten season 10-6, and then win three or four games in the Big Ten Tournament, depending on seeding. This leaves two or three wins for the NCAA Tournament, so Michigan fans, get ready: We're going to the Sweet Sixteen!

Michigan is 291-278 (.511) all-time against teams with exactly four vowels in their name, and 27-9 at home against Illinois on even-numbered days.

(Considering all of these things, there is absolutely no way Illinois walks out of here tonight without their first loss.)