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"Any time you have a chance to wear a Michigan jersey, that means a lot to us. I don't think other people see it that way because everybody views making the NCAA tournament as the end-all-be-all, but we feel like any time we have the chance to represent this school and this university out there on the basketball court we are going to do it to the best of our abilities and we're going to be happy doing it." –Daniel Horton, Sunday night

Ah, Selection Sunday. For the first time in years, Michigan found itself in the group of a dozen or so teams on the bubble, waiting to erupt upon hearing the news of inclusion in the NCAA Tournament. Unfortunately for the Wolverines, that news never came, and the reality of an NIT destiny set in. And so, here we are – a #1 seed in the newly-reformed National Invitation Tournament, playing on the friendly floor of Crisler Arena. As disappointed as everyone in the U-M circle is at this time, the players (especially the seniors) won't go out as quitters. As Daniel Horton described, these are his final chances to don the maize and blue, and there's no doubt that this team can add another banner to the rafters. UTEP is the first obstacle. Let's show the Miners, and our own players, that it's still great to be a Michigan Wolverine, and we still have pride in our team. Notre Dame is waiting next... Go Blue!

Here is the projected starting lineup for the Texas-El Paso Miners (21-9, 11-3 Conference USA):

12	Stefon Jackson	6'5"	G	This freshman goes by "D.J." (for "Draining Jumpers") and claims that an interesting fact few know about him is that he's "the best player ever"
11	Kevin Henderson	6'3"	G	"Smoke" says that his role model growing up was none other than <i>himself</i>
4	Edgar Moreno	6'2"	G	Senior transfer from Texas played for the Colombian national team
1	Jason Williams	6'6"	F	Interesting fact that few people know about him is that he "keeps it real"; ten years from now, hopes to be "still in the NBA" (how real is that?)
52	Will Kimble	6'10"	C	Big senior loves to fish; ask him about the 80 lb. tuna he once caught
Coach	Doc Sadler			Has recruited the likes of "Dunkin' Darwin" Ham and Eddie House

Fast times at Redford High: For UTEP sophomore guard Vernon Carr (#23), tonight's game takes on added significance. Why? Go back three years. Our own Dion Harris, a senior at Detroit Redford, was on his way to winning Michigan's Mr. Basketball award, while Carr, a junior at Redford, was part of Dion's supporting cast as a swingman for the Huskies. However, in UTEP's media guide, Carr mentions Detroit Renaissance's Joe Crawford (now at Kentucky) as a friend, but doesn't mention Harris. Jealousy, perhaps?

What's in a name?: The Miners love their nicknames. In addition to "D.J." and "Smoke", UTEP's roster includes "Murph" (#2 Brent Murphy), a big-time ping pong player and Star Wars fan, "Boo Boo" (#3 Kelvin Davis), an aspiring clothing designer, and "Greese" (#31 Maurice Thomas), a jokester from Philadelphia.

REST OF THE UTEP ROSTER: #10 Miguel Ayala, #0 Tremaine Fuqua, #25 Josh Gutierrez, #33 Riley Lambert, #40 John Tofi

Thanks, seniors: These unexpected postseason home games, no matter how disappointing they may be compared to a neutral-site NCAA game, do present an opportunity for the senior class to leave Crisler on a winning note. These departing seniors include Daniel Horton, Chris Hunter, Graham Brown, Sherrod Harrell, Hayes Grooms, Troy Sanchez, and Amadou Ba. Whether or not you were here for the Indiana game two weeks ago, be sure to show our seniors the appreciation they deserve tonight!

H-BOMB: If Daniel Horton hits a three, drop back in your seats as if a bomb has violently shaken Crisler Arena. It's the H-BOMB!

Eye of the 5th year senior: If Michigan senior guard Hayes Grooms (#10) enters the game, greet him by singing "Hayes! Hayes, Hayes, Hayes! Hayes, Hayes, Hayes, Hayes! Hayes, Hayes, Haaayeeess" to the intro tune of Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger".

Potential upcoming NIT home games:

Monday, March 20	vs. Notre Dame	**if Michigan beats UTEP tonight
Wednesday, March 22	(NIT quarterfinal)	

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STUDENTS! E-MAIL LIST: To sign up for weekly newsletters and important Rage tidbits, go to MaizeRage.org and click the link on the left side of the page, or send an email to tsuchi@umich.edu requesting that your name be added.

Histo's Corner: Michigan is 2-1 all-time against UTEP, including a 1-0 record against the Miners in the NIT. In 1980, U-M defeated UTEP 74-65 in the NIT second round here in Crisler Arena.

The last time U-M played on March 16 was two years ago, also in the NIT first round; the Wolverines beat Missouri, 65-64, thanks to late Daniel Horton heroics.

Michigan is 3-0 this year in games with one-sided issues of the Full Court Press.

HISTO'S "BY THE NUMBERS":

.800: Michigan's all-time winning percentage in the Postseason NIT (20-5), which includes three NIT championships (1984, 1997, and 2004).