

Final Four Profile: Michigan Wolverines

Dominant, athletic, and versatile. Dusty May's Wolverines have all of the pieces to win and the attitude to go with it. Now, they need to finish the job.

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After Michigan went into Mackey Arena this past February and won by 11 points, Michigan star Yaxel Lendeborg had a message for the rest of America in his postgame interview. When speaking with The Field of 68's Jeff Goodman, he proclaimed that he believes they are "...the best team ever assembled."

While you may be able to argue with the specific verbiage, it is hard to argue with the sentiment. This Michigan team has been straight up demolishing teams the entire year. They have just three losses to Wisconsin, Duke, and Purdue in the Big Ten title game. They have beaten 20 teams in Quad 1, including Gonzaga, Nebraska, Michigan State, Purdue, Iowa, Wisconsin, Alabama, and Tennessee. Their average margin of victory in the NCAA tournament sits at a modest 25 points. They approach the Final Four on an absolute tear.

If there is a person on the roster who has the most juice to make such a comment postgame, it would be Yaxel Lendeborg (15.2 ppg, 7 rpg, 3.3 apg, 1.2 steals per game 1.3 bpg). Lendeborg is a true Swiss army knife. He is powerful and athletic, can shoot the three, and defends every team's best player— even if that player is a point guard. The 6'9" Lendeborg is one of the most versatile players in America.

He is part of a massive frontcourt trio that has developed into America's strongest. Morez Johnson Jr. (13.2 ppg, 7.3 rpg, 1.2 apg, 1.1 bpg) partners with Lendeborg and seven foot UCLA transfer Aday Mara (11.8 ppg, 6.8 rpg, 2.6 bpg) to make opponents turn away from the paint. Mara affects shot selection purely by his size and stature alone, and Johnson has developed into such a massive defensive weapon for Dusty May.

When you turn elsewhere on the roster, it just doesn't stop. Elliot Cadeau (10.2 ppg, 5.8 apg), the North Carolina transfer, has developed his game remarkably since coming to Ann Arbor. His three point shooting has improved massively, and his assist numbers show how good he is at playmaking with this talented squad. Trey McKenney might be the most promising freshmen on 90% of other teams in America, but he has to

settle for scoring nearly 10 points per game off the bench. Nimari Burnett shoots 38% from three and is also good for a good 20 minute spell on a game to game basis. Besides missing their backup point guard LJ Cason, Michigan seems to be potent from every angle.

There is also Dusty May, who is now in his second Final Four. He first made it in 2023 when coaching eighth seeded Florida Atlantic. May has put together quite a roster this year, and nobody will argue that he has a much stronger shot at winning it all on this trip to the Final Four compared to his first one. This Michigan team ranks fifth in offensive efficiency, first in defensive efficiency, and they also play very fast (22nd in adjusted tempo). They get lots of possessions and have been battle tested all season long. While Arizona may be the best *team* left in America, Michigan is likely the most talented and has the highest ceiling.

Michigan's attitude and charisma must be noted. They aren't just simply a great team; they tell you about it. Yaxel Lendeborg has a habit of some odd post game pressers where he laughs off younger talent being assigned to guard him. Morez Johnson's "stare-at-the-camera" gimmick after games and Dusty May's confidence in interviews are evidence of their comfort in this role. They play on court with a swagger somewhat similar to a former Michigan cultural phenomenon, the Fab Five.

With an insanely strong frontcourt, a capable and steady frontcourt, a wonderfully bright coach, and a deep bench to support, is there anything holding Michigan back? Arizona is going to be the best team that Michigan has faced all season. While it is unfair to call this semifinal the "de facto" national title game that some have been doing, it is definitely fair to acknowledge how strong this matchup is.

They have been the two best teams all season long. They are both deep, they are both immensely talented, and they are both coached very well. Yaxel Lendeborg is perhaps the best player left in the field, and Michigan is the odds on title favorite. It seems laid out for them, but their two toughest tests will remain.

Michigan ran through their non-conference slate, their conference slate, and the first four games of their NCAA tournament slate. They have all of the firepower, all of the attitude, and all of the talent. They are the betting favorites in year two under Dusty May, and the players themselves would be the most disappointed if they did not win both of their remaining games by double digits.

If they win, this Michigan team will be amongst the best in modern college hoops history. If they don't win, it would be one of the most talented teams ever to fall short of glory.