



Kirthmon F. Dozier Detroit Free Press

Chris Perry and the Wolverines retain high hopes for a bowl game despite two losses.

Michigan still alive despite two losses

Even after the losses, Michigan is confident it will go to a BCS bowl game

By Michael Rosenberg
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — The Michigan Wolverines aren't at the top of the Big Ten standings, but they are as high as they need to be.

"We control our own destiny," Michigan cornerback Jeremy LeSueur said Monday. "Everything comes through us."

Most of it comes through in the next two weeks. Purdue and then Michigan State, the only unbeaten teams in the Big Ten, are next on Michigan's docket. No. 10 Purdue plays Saturday at Ann Arbor, and the Wolverines go to East Lansing next week.

As LeSueur said, Michigan controls its Big Ten championship hopes; if the Wolverines sweep their last four games, they will get the conference's automatic Bowl Championship Series bid.

Some Wolverines have acknowledged that a 10-2 record and a BCS berth would be a success and 9-3 a disappointment. If the Wolverines win their next two, they will be on top of the conference with three weeks of buildup before the season-ender against Ohio State. If they lose either one, they must deal with the bitter disappointment of a season that be-

gan with lots of promise.

So this is it. Who are the Wolverines? "You'll define them whether they're ready to be defined or not," head coach Lloyd Carr said. "That's the way it is. I tell our guys don't get excited because you had a good game because the deal is, you're marked. You're judged every week."

"And that's fine. That's fair. But if you want to be considered one of those special teams ... you have to be willing to do it day in, day out, week after week."

This week, No. 13 Michigan faces one of the Big Ten's stingiest defenses. Purdue allows only 14.4 points a game. If the Wolverines are determined to run the ball or die trying, they likely will die trying. Purdue allows only 66 rushing yards a game, third best in the country.

And if Michigan looks past Purdue to Michigan State — which is hard to imagine, given Purdue's stature — then the Wolverines are in big trouble. The Michigan-Michigan State hype machine is already in gear, which is to say that fans of each team have begun trading insults over e-mail.

"You start thinking about other things, you start to get yourself into trouble," Carr said. "We're going to have to play our best game of the year."

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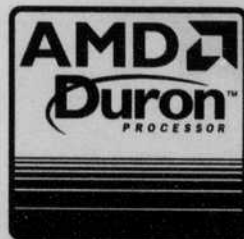


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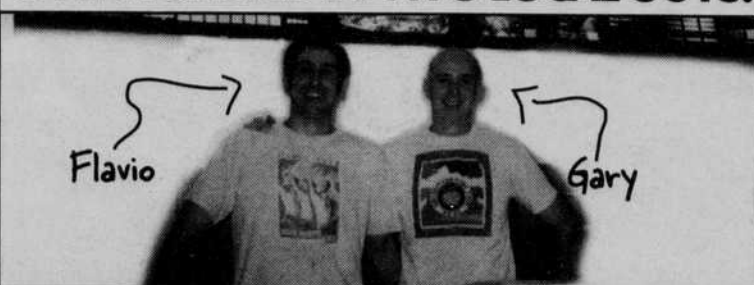
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