Sports

Photo of the Day | Men's basketball



UConn Men's Basketball takes on Georgetown in Gampel Pavilion on February 14th, 2026. The Huskies won79 – 75 against the Hoyas, and celebrated Alex Karaban's program record of 116 wins.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ELLA GORHAM, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

BIG EAST BALLER UPDATE NO. 6: BRAWL ENSUES IN PROVIDENCE, POWELL SUSPENDED

by Sam Calhoun
STAFF WRITER
HE/HIM/HIS
samuel.calhoun@uconn.edu

An underrated headline going into Saturday was Bryce Hopkins's return to Providence after transferring to St. John's. A combination of an angry atmosphere at the Amica Mutual Pavilion and two physical Big East teams resulted in a brawl caused by Providence's Duncan Powell, who committed a Flagrant 2 foul on a breakaway by Hopkins. Punches were thrown, and by the final buzzer, seven players were ejected.

How can you not be romantic about the Big East? Let's dive right into our awards.

Weekly Awards

Player of the Week: Solo Ball, guard, UConn (22 ppg, 3.5 rpg, 2 apg, 48.4 FG%, 40.7 3P%, 75 FT% in two games)

This one was a difficult choice, but out of the options, Ball had the highest plus-minus rating. In the wins at Butler and at home against Georgetown, he scored at least 20 points in both games. Ball knocked down 11 3-pointers in the two games combined, the most by a player over a two-game span in Big East play this season. He had a terrific game at Butler, scoring 24 points on an efficient 8-of-14 shooting, which included a season-high six 3-pointers. On Saturday, Ball followed these games with a 20-point performance that included 16 points in the first half. In addition to that, the 2024 NCAA champion had six rebounds and four assists, as well as five 3-pointers.

Freshman of the Week: Nigel James Jr., guard, Marquette (19.5 ppg, 9 apg, 4 rpg, 1 spg, 53.1 FG%, 33.3 3P%, 60 FT% in two games)

Despite Marquette's dismal season, James has looked like a future Big East Player of the Year. It will not be this year, but it will not surprise me if he wins one if he stays at Marquette. James had one of his best games of the season on Saturday, finishing with 30 points and a career-high 12 assists at Xavier. It was the first time since Feb. 23, 2002, that a player had at least 30 points and 12 assists in a Big East game. He also became the first Big East freshman to have three 30-point performances in conference play since the 1998-99 season.

Best game last week: St. John's fends off Xavier in overtime in historic game for Rick Pitino, 87-82

Last week, Zuby Ejiofor showed why he will end up winning Big East Player of the Year. After Oziyah Sellers forced overtime on a putback tip with 16 seconds remaining, Ejiofor took over, scoring 6 of his 25 points in the extra period to help seal an 87-82 win over the Musketeers. That win was the 904th of Pitino's career, passing Roy Williams for the third-most Division I wins in college basketball history. The only coaches ahead of him are Mike Krzyzewski (1,202) and Jim Boeheim (1,116). The Johnnies have now won 11-straight, including that insane game at Providence on Saturday.

Best games this week (minus No. 5 UConn at Villanova): Villanova at Xavier (6:30 p.m., FS1) and Creighton at No. 17 St. John's (Saturday, noon, FOX)

Villanova can improve its tournament resumé with a Quad 2 opportunity at Xavier on Tuesday night. Jovan Milicevic was terrific in the Musketeers' last game, scoring 23 points in a 96-88 win over Marquette. The Cintas Center is a tough place to play, so a road win there always will go a long way, even though Xavier is 13-12 and 5-9 in conference play.

According to ESPN's Neil Paine, Creighton is a long shot to make the NCAA Tournament. The Bluejays must start winning now. They have a tall task going to Madison Square Garden to face red-hot St. John's, but there are few coaches more capable of pulling off the upset than Greg McDermott. It may be a Quad 3 game for the Red Storm, but they will need all the momentum they can get before a battle with UConn in Hartford next week.



(Right) St. Johns player jumping to take a shot during the game. During the game, a fight ensued from players after a hard foul leading to seven being ejected. PHOTO COURTESY OF @STJOHNSBBALL ON INSTAGRAM

(Left) UConn Men's Basketball takes on Georgetown in Gampel Pavilion on February 14th, 2026. The Huskies won79 – 75 against the Hoyas, and celebrated Alex Karaban's program record of 116 wins. PHOTO BY ELLA GORHAM, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS