

The Honor Roll:

UConn plummets, Michigan-Duke headline massive Saturday slate

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Ranked teams have lost a bunch lately, but no loss is more gut-wrenching than UConn's to Creighton on Wednesday night. Quad 1 opportunities are plentiful this weekend, including my No. 1 team against my No. 2 team.

Michigan (25-1, 15-1 Big Ten) remained No. 1 after a dominant 91-80 win at Purdue on Tuesday. The Wolverines take on No. 2 Duke in the Edward Jones Capital Showcase on Saturday at 6:30 p.m. on ESPN.

Duke (24-2, 13-1 ACC) moved up to No. 2 with dominant wins at home against Clemson and Syracuse. The Blue Devils take on No. 1 Michigan in Washington, D.C., on Saturday at 6:30 p.m. on ESPN.

Iowa State (23-3, 10-3 Big 12) moved up to No. 3 after a huge win at home against Houston. The Cyclones visit BYU, now without Richie Saunders for the year, on Saturday at 10:30 p.m. on ESPN.

Arizona (24-2, 11-2 Big 12) dropped to No. 4 after bouncing back from an overtime loss at home to Texas Tech with a 75-68 win over BYU on Wednesday. The Wildcats visit No. 5 Houston in a massive Big 12 showdown on Saturday at 3 p.m. on ABC.

Houston (23-3, 11-2 Big 12) fell to No. 5 after a close loss at Iowa State on Big Monday. The Cougars host No. 4 Arizona on Saturday at 3 p.m. on ABC.

Florida (20-6, 11-2 SEC) moved up to No. 6 after extending its win streak to six games with a 76-62 win over South Carolina. The Gators visit Ole Miss on Saturday at noon on ESPN.

Kansas (20-6, 10-3 Big 12) moved up to No. 7 after a domi-

nant win at Oklahoma State, despite concerns remaining around Darryn Peterson. The Jayhawks host Cincinnati on Saturday at 1 p.m. on CBS.

Illinois (22-5, 13-3 Big Ten) moved up to No. 8 following back-to-back dominant wins over Indiana and USC, two tournament-caliber teams. The Fighting Illini visit UCLA on Saturday at 8 p.m. on FOX.

St. John's (21-5, 14-1 Big East) skyrockets to No. 9 after extending its win streak to 12 games with wins at Providence and Marquette. The Red Storm return home to host Creighton on Saturday at noon on FOX.

Purdue (21-5, 11-4 Big Ten) fell to No. 10 after a stunning 91-80 loss at home to top-ranked Michigan. The Boiler-makers aim for a bounce-back win against arch-rival Indiana at 8 p.m. on FOX.

Michigan State (21-5, 11-4 Big Ten) improved to No. 11 following a dominant 82-59 win over UCLA at home. The Spartans stay at home to host Ohio State on Sunday at 1 p.m. on CBS.

UConn (24-3, 14-2 Big East) plummeted to No. 12 after a gut-wrenching Quad 3 loss to Creighton in a rocking Gampel Pavilion. The Huskies visit No. 20 Villanova in a massive game on Saturday at 5:30 p.m. on TNT and truTV.

Nebraska (22-4, 11-4 Big Ten) fell to No. 13 after a stunning, momentum-halting loss at Iowa on Tuesday. The Cornhuskers host Penn State on Saturday at 2 p.m. on Big Ten Network.

Virginia (23-3, 11-2 ACC) comes in at No. 14 after back-to-back wins over Ohio State and Georgia Tech, extending its win streak to seven games. The Cavaliers host Miami (Fla.) on Saturday at 2 p.m. on ESPN2.

Gonzaga (26-2, 14-1 WCC)



UConn men's basketball plays Creighton University at Gampel Pavilion in Storrs, Conn. on Feb 18, 2026. The crowd hyped up the team throughout the entire game PHOTO BY SYDNEY CHANDLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

improved to No. 15 after back-to-back convincing wins over Santa Clara and San Francisco. The Bulldogs return home to host Pacific on Saturday at 9 p.m. on ESPN+.

North Carolina (20-6, 8-5 ACC) dropped to No. 16 after a blowout loss at N.C. State on Tuesday and do not have Caleb Wilson for the time being. The Tar Heels visit Syracuse on Saturday at 1 p.m. on ABC.

Miami (Ohio) (26-0, 13-0 MAC) moved up to No. 17 after a huge win at UMass on Tuesday to remain undefeated. The RedHawks return home to host Bowling Green at 8:30 p.m. on CBS Sports Network.

Alabama (19-7, 9-4 SEC) comes in at No. 18 after extending its win streak to five games with a double-overtime thriller over Arkansas. The Crimson Tide visit LSU on Saturday

at 6 p.m. on SEC Network.

Villanova (21-5, 12-4 Big East) moved up to No. 19 after surviving an overtime thriller at Xavier, extending its win streak to six games. The Wildcats host No. 12 UConn in a massive Big East showdown on Saturday at 5:30 p.m. on TNT and truTV.

Arkansas (19-7, 9-4 SEC) fell to No. 20 after a double-overtime loss at Alabama. The Razorbacks return home to host Missouri on Saturday at 4 p.m. on ESPN.

Vanderbilt (21-5, 8-5 SEC) dropped to No. 21 after losing at Missouri in the final seconds. The Commodores host rival No. 23 Tennessee on Saturday at 2 p.m. on ESPN.

Texas Tech (19-7, 9-4 Big 12) dropped to No. 22, losing JT Toppin for the year in a loss at Arizona State. The Red

Raiders return home to host a struggling Kansas State on Saturday at 2:30 p.m. on FOX.

Tennessee (19-7, 9-4 SEC) comes in at No. 23 after rattling off three-straight wins, all of which were by nine points or more. The Volunteers visit rival No. 21 Vanderbilt on Saturday at 2 p.m. on ESPN.

Utah State (23-3, 13-2 Mountain West) comes in at No. 24 after extending its win streak to 10 games with wins over Memphis and Boise State. The Aggies now visit Nevada on Saturday at 10 p.m. on FS1.

N.C. State (19-8, 10-4 ACC) comes in at No. 25 after bouncing back from back-to-back losses with a blowout home win against rival North Carolina. The Wolfpack are on a week-long break before visiting No. 14 Virginia on Tuesday at 7 p.m. on ACC Network.

The Big Apple: Who are the contenders in the Eastern Conference?

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We have entered the final third of the NBA season, which means teams are ramping up for a playoff push while others look ahead to the draft. If there is a time for the New York Knicks to push for a championship run, this is the biggest chance they have.

The Eastern Conference is wide open this season; there are usually one or two teams at this point in the year that will make the Finals, but this year, there are far more teams competing with the Knicks to make the Finals.

Detroit Pistons:

Detroit has achieved one of the most significant turn-arounds in NBA history. Just two seasons ago, they finished last in the NBA with a record of 14-68. This season, they are 40-13, making them the No. 1 seed and 5.5 games ahead of second place. None of their matchups against the Knicks were remotely close. They battered New York by 31 points in early January and again by 38 earlier this month. They've held the Knicks to an average of 85 points per game, while scoring 120 points per contest.

New York has been phenomenal on the defensive end since last month, holding eight opponents under 101 points, yet the Pistons have exposed them.

Boston Celtics:

I can't say I expected this at all. Without Jayson Tatum, Boston is No. 2 in the East with a record of 35-19, half a game ahead of the Knicks. New York leads the season series 2-1, with their most recent game being a dominant 111-89 win for the Knicks just under two weeks ago.

In a season where everyone thought they'd take a step back, they stayed right at the top. Head

Coach Joe Mazzulla deserves all the credit for their success this season. Losing your superstar for most likely the entire season yet performing at the same level is no easy feat.

Jaylen Brown has been putting up MVP-level numbers this season as the number one option for the Celtics. Brown averages 29.4 points per game, which puts him fourth in scoring. His defensive presence this season has been remarkable, and he has even declared himself the best 2-way player in the

game.

We might see a playoff rematch this spring if the Celtics continue to play at this level. If Jayson Tatum comes back, it will be interesting to see if he returns to being the number one option or if he goes to the second option before getting back to full strength.

Cleveland Cavaliers:

It's safe to say that Cleveland took a step back this year. The Cavs are 34-21, putting them as the No. 4 seed in the East. New York leads the season series

2-0, with their last game being a Christmas Day thriller.

Although they're seven games out of first, Cleveland has won 10 of their last 11 games. And with the acquisition of James Harden, they have played like a top team in the league. Harden has fit right into his role in Cleveland and pairing up with Donovan Mitchell has made the team fire on all cylinders. Is this just the usual honeymoon phase the 36-year-old goes through when he makes his debut for a new team? Or is this chemistry

he's developing going to follow through into the playoffs?

Looking ahead for the Knicks, they take on the Pistons on Thursday night, host Houston on Saturday night and head on a three-game road trip against Chicago, Cleveland and Milwaukee. These next few weeks are pivotal, facing potential playoff opponents as well as surging teams in the west. After the road-trip they come home to play San Antonio and reigning champion Oklahoma City Thunder.



Karl Towns and Jalen Brunson of the New York Knicks on the court. The Knicks played the Detroit Pistons on Feb. 19. PHOTO COURTESY OF @NYKNICKS ON INSTAGRAM