



Sports

Big East Baller Update No. 7: St. John's takes first place into Hartford on Wednesday

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The Big East regular-season title is likely on the line on Wednesday as No. 15 St. John's visits No. 6 UConn. Expect a preview of that bout on the day of the game.

The Red Storm are red-hot at the right time, with one more week left in February. Madness awaits as we get closer to the Big East Tournament.

Weekly Awards

Player of the Week: Bryce Hopkins, forward, St. John's (19 ppg, 10 rpg, 1.5 apg, 1.5 spg, 58.3 FG%, 33.3 3P%, 90 FT% in two games)

Despite more impressive scoring efforts around the league, including 26 points on average last week from Xavier's Tre Carroll, Hopkins averaged a double-double while his Red Storm went 2-0 last week. On Feb. 18, the former Providence Friar had 23 points and 10 rebounds at Marquette. Days after Creighton beat UConn in Storrs, St. John's routed the Bluejays behind an impressive stat line from Hopkins: 15 points, 10 rebounds, two assists and two steals. It was the first time that Hopkins had back-to-back double-doubles since the 2022-23 season.

Freshman of the Week: Braylon Mullins, guard, UConn (17.5 ppg, 4.5 rpg, 1 spg, 44.8 FG%, 50 3P%, 100 FT% in two games)

Nigel James Jr. gave Mullins a run for his money for this week's award, but Marquette did not win their lone game against St. John's. The only reason UConn kept up with Creighton (a bad loss, by the way) last week was because Mullins put up a career-high 25 points to go with six rebounds, two steals and a blocked shot. No one stood out in the Huskies' win at Villanova, but the team as a whole distributed the offensive production evenly. Mullins was part of that, despite fouling out, tallying an efficient 10 points on 4-of-7 shooting.

Best game last week: Lewis, Villanova outlast Xavier, 92-89, in overtime

A trap game before hosting UConn on Saturday, Villanova went to war with Xavier at the Cintas Center in Cincinnati on Tuesday night. Lewis led the way for the Wildcats with 21 points (11 in the first half) on nine made baskets, but he was not the only player on the team to reach double-figures in scoring. All five starters for Villanova scored double-figures, including Tyler Perkins (17) and Bryce Lindsay (15), who hit a huge 3-pointer in overtime that snapped an 83-83 tie. Despite the Wildcats starting the second half hot from the perimeter, Xavier went on an 8-2 run to cut the deficit at the 12:25 mark. Both teams went back-and-forth for the rest of regulation, including a game-tying basket from Carroll with 4.1 seconds left to play. Carroll's 28-point, 10-rebound performance led Xavier, and they also got 20 points, nine rebounds, five assists and three blocks from Jovan Milicevic. Malik Moore also had 15 points and seven assists in the thriller.

Best game this week (minus both UConn games this week): Villanova at No. 15 St. John's (Saturday, 8 p.m., FOX)

This is a massive contest between two NCAA Tournament locks in the Big East. St. John's is red-hot in terms of momentum and will be coming off a huge battle in Hartford. Villanova is in search of an incredible upset, and they have a team that can achieve it. Lewis may be the star for the Wildcats, but it is Duke Brennan who will have the spotlight as he goes against Zubby Ejiofor, the likely Big East Player of the Year. Meanwhile, two of the league's best coaches face off in Kevin Willard against Rick Pitino. The Red Storm bested Villanova in the last matchup, in Philadelphia, 86-79. Lewis was a no-show in that game, only scoring 3 points. Expect more fire from him on Saturday.



The UConn Huskies take on the St John's Red Storm at Madison Square Garden in New York City on Feb. 6, 2026. Despite a close game, the Huskies lost 72-81. PHOTOS BY EMMA MEIDINGER, ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS