Midweek 1 Mash Up

Checking in on results around the country every Wednesday of the season.

Written by Sean Murawski // SM Sports
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It is hard to capture excitement for the men's college basketball season in the middle of yet another monstrous NFL season. Despite this, week one of the college hoops season has given us plenty to talk about, thanks to a major upset, some lopsided scores, and the Pope.

Track One: The top four soar.

The AP rankings and SM 25 Hard rarely ever match, but to begin the 2026-2027 season, the top four of both rankings are identical. Florida made a statement win over Miami (FL), 77-67. Thomas Haugh (19 pts, 10 rebs, 4-8 3PT) led the Gators to a steady victory in Tampa, kicking off his NPOY campaign and solidifying Florida's first marquee win over a tough Hurricane squad.

Duke brought Coach K's alma mater into Cameron Indoor before promptly blowing them out of it. The Blue Devils defeated Army 84-50, boosted by Dame Sarr's 16 points on perfect 5-5 shooting. Joaquim Boumtje Boumtje (7 pts, 7 rebs) begins his stretch as one of Duke's most talented prospects with a victory.

Illinois turned in one of the more shocking scorelines in a long time, dismantling FDU 120-45. That is a 75 point margin, for the mathematically challenged. Stefan Vaaks and Andrej Stojakovic both turned in 20 point performances as the Illini burned some offseason fuel on FDU, who was clearly in the wrong place at the wrong time.

UConn defeated Gardner-Webb in Hartford, 86-46. Braylon Mullins (20 pts, 7/12 FG) led the scoring for the Huskies, while Duke transfer Nik Khamenia brought 14 points and six rebounds to the table in his debut. Dan Hurley won't have to wait long for the first of many big tests in the non-conference slate: they take on Michigan in Boston this Friday night.

Track Two: East Texas A&M flies high; Oklahoma flies straight to the bubble

There is always one power conference team who cuts it close with a mid-major on opening night, but not every team lets it slip out of their fingertips by the final buzzer. Porter Moser's Oklahoma Sooners have torpedoed down to the bubble on night one, losing to East Texas A&M 68-64. The Lions went 11-21 last season and finished 288th at KenPom. Oklahoma plummeted down to 54th after the loss. There will be plenty of ground to make up in the loaded SEC this season, but not many power five teams will have a loss as stinging as this one on their team sheet come March.

Bo Aldridge (22 pts, 5 ast, 8-12 FG) led the Lions in scoring. Two of their starters failed to record a bucket, with Mohamed Diakite and Alonzo Dodd getting 15 points each to complement the cause. It is early, but it is hard to avoid right now: KenPom has East Texas A&M as a projected number one seed through two days. Let's pretend it won't change, and that the Big Dance runs through Commerce, Texas.

Track Three: Las Vegas delivers two great games, and a Mick Cronin smile!

The Hall of Fame Series gave us two fantastic opening night matchups. A less powerful Purdue team fell to Gonzaga, 78-72. Davis Fogle (22 pts, 5 rebs) commanded the Zags' offense, with Florida transfer Xaivian Lee cashing in 18 points and 3 assists. Daniel Jacobsen was Purdue's best weapon, scoring 22 on 9-11 shooting down low. CJ Cox delivered four three pointers, with Princeton transfer Caden Pierce playing 29 minutes and scoring 7 points.

Arizona and UCLA battled in the premier game of the event, with UCLA coming out on top, 84-75. Trent Perry (21 pts, 5 ast) was the star for UCLA, with Serbian freshman Nikola Kusturica showing some early promise as well. Ivan Kharchenkov put in one of the more impressive performances in a loss of recent memory, dropping 38 points and grabbing 10 rebounds. He was by far Arizona's best player, as the losses of Koa Peat, Brayden Burries, and Jaden Bradley showed early. Mick Cronin even gave a smile in the post game interview— it is indeed a brand new season.

Track Four: Notre Dame defeats Villanova in the Pope's Pageant

Rome saw two of America's most historically Catholic universities battle on the hardwood. Villanova was a tournament team last year, and picked third in the Big East preseason poll. Notre Dame was picked to finish 16th out of an 18 team ACC. Guess who won?

The Irish have Braeden Smith (no, not that one) and Brady Koehler to thank. Both dropped 16 points, with Koehler also picking up eight boards. Braeden Shrewsberry (15 pts, 6 rebs) contributed mightily to the cause, helping his dad start out 1-0 for the fourth year of his coaching career at Notre Dame.

Tyler Perkins (18 pts, 6-12 FG) and Elijah Crawford (12 pts, 3 rebs) were the main stars for Nova, who looked disjointed down the stretch. It is a weak start for Kevin Willard's second year at the helm, especially in a year with lots of promise for the Big East as a conference.

Sean Murawski is a writer for his own personal sports website, smsports.net. He publishes weekly columns and rankings on men's college basketball, as well as coverage columns for the MLB.