It was a week of separation at the top of the NBA standings. In the East, the race became Cleveland's to lose, as a combination of a great Cavaliers week and a lousy Celtics one gave the Wine & Gold a relatively commanding lead over Boston. In the West the Lake Show maintained its dominance, sweeping the state of Texas and keeping pace with the Cavaliers in the hunt for the top overall seed. As the regular season swings into its final month, the four-team race shows definite signs of being reduced to two. But a lot can change in a few weeks, or just one.

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1.) Los Angeles: 53-13: --

Streak: Won 3

Last 10: 7-3

Last Week: 3-1

Last Game: Sunday, Mar. 15: Beat Dallas 107-100

Tuesday, Mar. 17: Philadelphia
Thursday, Mar. 19: Golden State
Saturday, Mar. 21: @ Chicago

The Lake Show started the week off on an ugly note, losing in Portland for the sixth straight time dating back to April of 2005 and looking bad doing it. But they came back strong with back-to-back wins in Houston and San Antonio and survived a second-half collapse to defeat Dallas, their likely first-round playoff opponent. After manageable games against the 76ers and Warriors in the Staples Center- where they've won six in a row- the Lake Show starts a seven-game road trip on Saturday in Chicago.

2.) Cleveland: 53-13: --

Streak: Won 5

Last 10: 9-1

Last Week: 4-0

Last Game: Sunday, Mar. 15: Beat New York 98-93

Tuesday, Mar. 17: Orlando
Thursday, Mar. 19: Portland
Saturday, Mar. 21: Atlanta
Sunday, Mar. 22: @ New Jersey

Well, *that* was a pretty good week. The Cavaliers swept their three-game West Coast trip- including huge comebacks to avoid embarrassing defeats to the Clippers and Kings- and finished their eight-road-game-in-ten stretch with a neat 8-2 record. They clinched their first Central Division Championship since 1976 and their best road record ever, and are forty games above .500 for the first time in franchise history. They were the only team in the top four to roll through the week without a loss. Best of all, they increased their advantage over Boston by two-and-a-half games and now lead the Celtics by four in the loss column with sixteen to play- eleven of which are at Quicken Loans Arena, where the Cavaliers are 29-1.

That's not to say it's going to be smooth sailing to the finish. Three formidable opponents- the Magic, Blazers, and Hawks- come to town this week, and the lone road game in New Jersey is on the second half of a back-to-back. The Cavaliers are in a good position- very good- but there are still miles to go before they sleep.

3.) Boston: 50-17: 3.5

Streak: Lost 1

Last 10: 5-5

Last Week: 1-2

Last Game: Sunday, Mar. 15: Lost @ Milwaukee 86-77

Tuesday, Mar. 17: @ Chicago
Wednesday, Mar. 18: Miami

Friday, Mar. 20: @ San Antonio
Saturday, Mar. 21: @ Memphis

The Celtics are reeling a bit. They've lost three of their last four; they're 9-8 since the first week of February and 23-15 since starting the season 27-2. They got Rajon Rondo back after sitting out two games with injury, but the Boston floor leader is 4-of-17 from the field with eight turnovers since coming back, and the offense has struggled, scoring a season-low 77 points in the loss to Milwaukee. Kevin Garnett won't be back until Friday in San Antonio at the earliest, and a match-up with Tim Duncan isn't exactly the best way for the Big Ticket to ease back into playing shape. The Celtics will have to negotiate three road games and a pair of back-to-backs this week, and only the Grizzlies figure to roll over for them. All of a sudden, they're in danger not only of falling hopelessly behind the Cavaliers in the race for the top seed in the East, but of slipping into the third spot behind Orlando. Does your heart bleed for them? Neither does mine.

4.) Orlando: 49-17: 4

Streak: Won 3

Last 10: 8-2

Last Week: 3-1

Last Game: Sunday, Mar. 15: Beat Utah 105-87

Tuesday, Mar. 17: @ Cleveland
Wednesday, Mar. 18: @ Milwaukee
Saturday, Mar. 21: New York

Aside from their third loss to Detroit this season, the week went very well for the Magic. They're now a half-game behind Boston in the race for the East's second seed, and if they can handle business in their next four- including perhaps stealing one in Cleveland on Tuesday night- they might be in a position to overtake the C's when they host Boston in the Edifice Formerly Known as the O-Rena a week from Wednesday. Of course, the most important thing is avoiding the Pistons in the first round of the Playoffs.

Power Ranking for the Week of Mar. 16

1. Los Angeles
2. Cleveland
3. Orlando
4. Boston

Player of the Week- LeBron James, Cleveland: LeBron racked up two more triple-doubles, his fifth and sixth of the season, dropped 51 points on the Kings, and averaged 34 points, 11 assists, nine rebounds, three steals, and three blocks in four games. Despite their perfect record, the Cavaliers didn't play particularly well last week, getting inconsistent effort on defense and inconsistent scoring from the supporting cast. But LeBron simply would not let them lose.

Half of the Week- Kobe Bryant @ Houston, Mar. 11- Memo to the world: don't piss off the Mamba. After scoring six points on 3-of-6 shooting and seeing his team fall behind the Rockets 51-40 at halftime, Kobe, angered by some loose talk on the part of Ron Artest, hit 11-of-17 in the second half and scored 31 points- 18 in the fourth quarter- to lead the Lake Show to a 102-96 comeback victory. "I kicked his ass tonight," he said of Artest afterward, and that was the truth.

Finishers of the Week- Cleveland: In their four victories last week, the Cavaliers outscored their opponents in the fourth quarter 35-14, 30-18, 32-18 and 24-21. They came from 19 down in the fourth quarter to beat the Clip Show, and from 14 down to beat Sacramento. Relying on eleventh-hour rallies from double-digit deficits isn't exactly the optimum strategy, but it paid off last week at least.

Tough Week of the Week- Delonte West, Cleveland: Bro' Redz shot 7-of-23 from the field last week (30.4 percent), committed seven turnovers in the win at Phoenix, and suffered a back contusion against the Suns that forced him out of the following night's game at Sacramento.

Coach that needs to be saved from himself of the Week- Doc Rivers, Boston: You'd think a guy who spent thirteen years in the NBA as a point guard might know how to handle the position as a coach. Think again. After last Sunday's loss to Orlando, Rivers acknowledged that he might have made a mistake starting Stephon Marbury, who managed to play twenty minutes against the Magic without recording a single assist. So what did Doc do three nights later in Miami? He started Marbury again, and Stephon rewarded his coach's faith by going 0-of-6 from the field in Boston's 107-99 loss.

Spoiler of the Upcoming week- Chicago: The Bulls host the Lakers and the Celtics this week and can throw a stick in the spokes of those two heavyweights, as well as bolster their own chances of grabbing the final playoff spot in the East.

Game of the Upcoming Week- Orlando @ Cleveland, Mar. 17: There will be plenty on the line when the Magic come to town on Tuesday night. The Cavaliers can put a near-insurmountable five games between them and Orlando, avenge their embarrassing loss in Florida on Jan. 29, and improve their record against the rest of the top four to 2-5. The Magic can take another step toward controlling the second seed and home-court in at least the first two rounds of the Playoffs and clinch the head-to-head tiebreaker against the Cavaliers in the process.