

Photo of the Day |



UConn softball plays against Hofstra University at Burrill Family Field on April 22, 2026. This is one of four home games left for the Huskies' regular season. PHOTO BY MORGAN BLANCHARD, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

SPORTS SPECTRUM:

NBA WESTERN CONFERENCE PLAYOFFS UPDATE

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Between play-in breakouts and playoff surprises, the NBA Western Conference has consistently been held as the better of the two all year. The playoffs serve as a testament to the statement, seeing favorites swing out of balance and dominance to show itself again.

Play-In Recap: Closing out the old guard

Both the Clippers and Warriors are veteran teams with their fair share of issues— stars that have been at the center of increasingly difficult conversation regarding both their legacy and the teams they are on.

Kawhi Leonard has been on a tear for the last part of the regular season, playing some of the best basketball that he has been playing.

The Warriors' play-in victory over the Clippers served as a resurgence of sorts, as Stephen Curry is a flame that refuses to extinguish. With his 35 points, Al Horford hitting all of his 3s in the fourth quarter, alongside Draymond Green limiting Kawhi Leonard, the Warriors won their play-in game against the Clippers.

The glory was short-lived, though. The Warriors eventually fell to the Phoenix Suns, who did to Curry what Green did to Leonard—limited him defensively until the engine ran out of gas. It felt similarly finite for both franchises; the “Old West” didn’t just lose; they looked exhausted.

Spurs vs. Trailblazers – a possible shift in balance

Most-Improved Player final-

ist Deni Avdija dropped 41 in the Blazers win over the Suns – in his first playoff game to secure the ticket to the matchup with the Spurs. San Antonio has faced an upward resurgence ever since they drafted Victor Wembanyama, making their first playoff appearance since 2019.

The Spurs dominated Game 1 and were cruising in Game 2 until an untimely injury to Wembanyama caused him to exit the game, in which they could not sustain the lead. With the series split, Portland can pull off an upset, with leaders like Avdija and Robert Williams III, but the rest of the Spurs players, notably De'Aaron Fox and Devin Vassell are not to be cast aside.

Nuggets vs. Timberwolves – Evenly matched

Did you know the Nuggets are responsible for both of the Timberwolves' greatest comebacks in franchise history?

The first time this happened was 2024, where they blew that lead in Game 7 of the Western Conference Semifinals to allow Minnesota to advance to the Western Conference Finals. The second time was in Game 2.

Even with Anthony Edwards playing through injury, he dropped 30 points in game 2, alongside Julius Randle, Naz Reid and Rudy Gobert limiting the offense, especially on the two-man game of Nikola Jokic and Jamal Murray.

For Jokic and Murray, it served as a “back down to earth” moment. The series will come down to how well they can shoot the ball when they need to—and for Minnesota, the key to victory is limiting that as much as possible.

Thunder vs. Suns – Happy to be here

Phoenix overachieved by making it to the first round after trading Kevin Durant—with their depth chart looking a little more than questionable in the offseason, but they’ve managed to show sparks, especially with Dillion Brooks and Jalen Green behind Devin Booker.

However, the Thunder started this season 24-1, with the last win of that run being to the Phoenix Suns—before they lost to the San Antonio Spurs. Being the same team that, this time last year, they had swept the Grizzlies.

The pressure is on for the Thunder to dispose of the Suns—and quickly. To re-affirm their dominance and to rest for the challenges ahead.

Lakers v. Rockets – Houston, We Have Problems

With the Lakers lacking their two primary playmakers in Doncic and Austin Reaves, many had the Rockets winning this series. However, when it was announced that Kevin Durant would be missing Game 1, the odds tipped in the Lakers' favor.

What was not expected, was for the Rockets to struggle to score less than 100 points. When Durant came back, they struggled to score 100 points, again.

Being unable to score 100 points in the modern NBA is something that usually happens when there are great defenses and less-than-stellar offenses. It's equal to a systemic failure by Houston because the Lak-

ers' big men, Jaxson Hayes and Deandre Ayton are situational in any other team contexts. Despite that, they’ve held Alperen Sengun to a combined 15 of 39 (38%) over two games. Houston took more shots than the Lakers in Game 1, won the offensive rebounding battle in both games and in Game 2, Durant coughed up nine turnovers alongside his 23 points.

Being outexecuted by Marcus Smart (the X factor for the Lakers) and Luke Kennard (who went 5-5 from three-point range in Game 1) usually deems reflection at a certain point.

Even with Durant, their offense clearly hurts without Fred Van Fleet, but at this point, it's not certain that he could save them, even into next season coming off of his ACL injury.



Steph Curry of the Golden State Warriors dribbles down the court during their Play-In game against the Los Angeles Clippers. Curry's offensive firepower helped the Warriors beat the Clippers, before falling to the Phoenix Suns. PHOTO COURTESY OF @CARLOSAVILAGONZALEZ ON INSTAGRAM.

Track and Field:

Huskies set to compete in the 130th Penn Relays

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The UConn men's and women's track and field teams are headed to Philadelphia this weekend to compete in the 130th running of the Penn Relays at Franklin Field, starting Thursday and running through Saturday.

The Penn Relays have been held at Franklin Field, the nation's oldest flip-out stadium, since 1895. A wheel (a wooden plaque awarded to relay champions) is a career-defining accomplishment for a track ath-

lete. The atmosphere, which attracts more than 100,000 spectators, turns the event from a typical invitational into a high-stakes international platform.

After a strong performance at the UConn Northeast Challenge, UConn heads into the weekend. Josh Mooney and Maresa Hense, who both won Big East Field Athlete of the Week, were two of the Huskies' record-breaking performances that helped them defend their home field. The multi-event units are excelling at a national level thanks to Mooney's exceptional decathlon score of 8,033 points and Hense's school-re-

cord heptathlon.

Orenthal Singletary will compete in the championship class 400-meter hurdles for the men on Thursday. Luke DeCrescenzo, Marshall Potter and Alex Krause will compete in the hammer throw.

Sascha Letica and Chloe Trudel, both in the championship level, will compete in the 5,000 and 10,000 meters on Thursday.

Sarah Trainor in the 3,000-meter steeplechase and Jessica Starr and Kiley Shatzel in the 400-meter hurdles are also competing in the championship category of events. Gabriela DeFelice will compete in

the hammer throw on the track.

William Watson and Mohamed Wahdan will compete in the 100-meter hurdles on Friday, along with the track's 4x100, 4x400 and distance medley relays. Potter and Nicholas Connolly will compete in the shot put, Krause and Connolly in the discus, Wyatt Martin in the pole vault, Emi Erekosima in the triple jump. as Derek Shimer in the high jump.

Brooklyn Taylor and teams competing in the 4x100, 4x400, spring medley and distance medley relays will compete in the women's 100-meter hurdles on Friday. Kaylee Meyer will

compete in the high jump, followed by Rachel Mason, Piper Linn, Abigail Bernas and Katie Floering in the pole vault; Maresa Hense and Jaidah in the long jump. Matilda Brockley in the triple jump in the field events. Caitlin Dumouchel will compete in the javelin, DeFelice in the discus and Sinclair Fryer, Ella Karp and Brooklynn Roberts in the shot put.

Enaji Muhammad will compete in the men's high jump final division as the competition comes to a close on Saturday. Connor Hayford and Thomas Bannon will compete in the Javelin championship class.