

MONEYBALL WEEKLY:

WILL THE PHILLIES' STRUGGLES CONTINUE?

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The 2020s have been incredibly kind to Philadelphia sports fans. The Eagles have made two Super Bowls, winning one; the Flyers just made their return to the playoffs and sit one win away from a round two appearance; and though the 76ers' success hasn't amounted to more than a first-round victory, they have been an overall consistent playoff team in the east.

The first real taste of a championship in the decade came from the Phillies of the MLB, who entered the 2022 playoffs as a six-seed following an 11-year playoff drought where they'd manage to cruise to a World Series appearance before falling in a hard fought six games to the Houston Astros. The next three years brought three more play-off appearances, which all fell short of the finals.

Coming into the 2026 season, there were lingering concerns about the core's sustainability. Both LHP Ranger Suarez and DH Kyle Schwarber required contract extensions, with 1B Bryce Harper, SS Trea Turner and RHP Zack Wheeler on the wrong side of 30 and all three also on long-term and lucrative deals. With so much money already locked up and Schwarber coming off a career-high 56 home runs, the question was shifting away from whether Philly would retain both to a question of if they'd even keep one.

They'd end up picking Schwarber, giving him a five-year \$150 million contract to keep him through his age 37

season, in addition to re-signing catcher JT Realmuto. Suarez would sign with the Boston Red Sox in the offseason.

Coming into the season, the roster certainly looked like one that would remain competitive even if questions about the future were still present. The rotation still looked strong, with Wheeler set to return from injury not long into the year and top prospect Andrew Painter now set to arrive in the show.

As of Sunday afternoon, the Phillies sit at a 9-18 record, the worst in the entirety of the MLB. This comes off the heels of a 10-game losing streak they finally ended Saturday.

The offense has been borderline anemic to begin the year, a bottom-five ranking in OPS thus far. Notably, their .576 OPS against left-handed pitching is dead last in the MLB, and their .310 OBP against righties is last in the league as well. Metrics suggest bad luck to an extent but also that they are still bottom ten in advanced stats.

Schwarber's on-base skills have been nonexistent thus far, sitting at a sub-.200 average and an OBP that fell .030 since last year. While his power remains and his metrics do suggest bad luck, he has still struggled mightily on the on-base side no matter what way it's spun.

Outfielder Brandon Marsh has been strong, and newly signed Adolis Garcia has been average so far. Harper has also been himself in terms of his performance.

Second baseman Bryson Stott hasn't had the benefit of luck on his side thus far, as his .548 OPS pales in comparison to a .700 xOPS. Stott is intended as a bottom-of-the-order fielding tool, so if his actual numbers matched his peripherals, he would be doing his job.

Where the real problem lies is the left side of the infield. Turner has an average that sits around a .220 and an OBP just above .300, which is a far cry

from what is expected as him for a player who often leads off. The metrics only support that he is truly playing poor. Turner will be 33 this year and has seven more seasons on his deal, so the hope remains that he is having a poor start.

Third baseman Alec Bohm's .428 OPS ranks last of all qualified hitters across the league. An xOPS of .608 only moves his performance so far from unplayable to awful. With a pending UFA following the season, the writing is likely on the wall for Bohm's time in Philly once the season ends.

Top prospect Aidan Miller is currently out with a back injury, ruling out a callup anytime soon.

The pitching has been incredibly unlucky, metrics say. Though their 5.08 ERA is the third-worst leaguewide, a 3.76 xFIP (expected fielding independent pitching) trails only the New York Yankees and Toronto Blue Jays. What this means is that the pitching, specifically the starters, will likely see these numbers return to the mean as the season progresses and luck flattens out.

The question of whether the struggle is sustainable is not a simple answer of yes or no as a whole, but the fact that the pitching has been unlucky provides hope that this poor start will not continue much longer. The concern comes down to if the bats can get back on track, specifically those who are playing bad as opposed to being unlucky. With finite time on the clock for this group, any lost season is a huge miss as the core only grows older.



The Philadelphia Eagles in action. The Eagles have made it to two Super Bowls this past decade, winning one. PHOTO COURTESY OF @PHILADELPHIAEAGLES ON INSTAGRAM.

SOFTBALL:

HUSKIES TAKE SERIES AGAINST CREIGHTON IN A HIGH SCORING WEEKEND

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The UConn softball team finished their 2026 home slate with an electric series against the Creighton Blue Jays. The teams scored a combined 41 runs in three games, with both teams vying for positioning in the Big East standings.

Friday's game was a thriller that saw a run scored in every inning, and there was only one half-inning where no runs were scored.

Creighton got one run in the top half of the inning before UConn exploded for four runs in the bottom half. The Huskies got RBI knocks from Cat Petteys, Kaitlyn Breslin and Emma Willers as the top of the lineup continued to produce.

The Blue Jays got one more in the second before Petteys had an RBI double, and Willers had an RBI groundout to make it 6-2. Creighton cut the lead in half with a two-run double from Keegan Mayhue.

Savannah Ring got in on the action with an RBI single to score Bella Cruz and make it a 7-4 game. Petteys added her fourth RBI of the game in just the third inning for the eighth UConn run of the afternoon.

Creighton continued to chip away. Zoey Greenwood ripped a two-run double to right to make it 8-6 Huskies. The Blue Jays prevented UConn from scoring in the bottom of the fourth and then tied it up in the fifth on an Ella Dalton double.

Connecticut was the beneficiary of a Creighton error, and Haley Coupal took full advantage. The senior laced a three-run double to right field, clearing the bases and making it 11-8 Huskies.

The Blue Jays got two more in the sixth to make it a one-run ballgame before the bottom of

the order stepped up for Connecticut. With runners on first and second, Cruz singled up the middle to score Caylee De Meo.

Amber Bretton was on the mound for UConn to start the seventh when Creighton loaded the bases with zero outs. She got a sacrifice fly from Avery Barnard which made it a 12-11 game with runners on the corners. Bretton was removed for Jessica Walter in a tough situation. Greenwood stole second base to put the winning run in scoring position.

Lily West hit a ground ball to first and Ashten Pierson scampered home to try and score the game tying run. Coupal fielded the groundball and fired it home where Heidi Barber applied the tag on Pierson to preserve the one-run lead.

Walter got Kaelan Schultz to ground out to third, sealing a monumental 12-11 win for the Huskies. It was Walter's ninth save of the season the day before her Senior Day for the Huskies.

Senior Day Saturday did not start out as planned for Connecticut as Creighton tagged the UConn pitching staff for seven runs in the second inning. A few UConn errors did not help starting pitcher Sydnee Koosh's case as she was removed after 1.1 innings.

The Huskies got one run back in the second on a Willers solo home run off the scoreboard in centerfield to make it 7-1. Breslin smacked a three-run homer in the third to cut it to 7-4. The junior hit another home run in her next at bat to make it a two-run game.

Walter was brilliant after taking over in the fourth. She allowed just one hit and struck out five batters while keeping the Huskies in it on Senior Day.

Unfortunately for the Huskies, Audrey Gilman was unphased by the three homers she gave up and went the distance

for the Blue Jays. She struck out seven over the same number of innings for the 7-5 Creighton victory, evening the weekend series before the rubber match on Sunday.

In a lower scoring series finale, UConn broke through first in the second inning when De Meo doubled in Coupal.

After three scoreless innings, Creighton got on the board with a West solo home run. The Blue Jays scored 18 runs in the first two games, but West's homer was their first of the weekend.

Connecticut got the run right back with an Ava Calciano RBI single. That run was quickly answered by Creighton when Chiqui Vazquez drew a bases loaded walk to chase in Tara Vandewater and tie the game at two.

UConn got runners on second and third with just one out in the

sixth before Creighton got Calciano to ground out to second and keep the runners at bay. De Meo drew a walk and Barber stepped up to the plate with the bases loaded. The nine hitter broke the tie with a two-run single to give the Huskies a 4-2 lead.

Walter shut the door in the seventh and pitched seven straight scoreless innings in the final two games of the weekend.

With the series win, UConn moves back to .500 for the first time this season. They ended the home season at Burrill Family Field with a record of 14-3. Connecticut has also tied Creighton for second in the Big East.

Their final series of the season will be at Georgetown next weekend before the Big East tournament starts on May 7.



The UConn softball team vs. the Creighton Blue Jays this past weekend. The two teams scored a total of 41 runs across three games. PHOTO BY ALEXANDER RENZULLI, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS.