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Men's Basketball: Tarris Reed Jr. faces former team in Championship



UConn men's basketball playing against Illinois in the Final Four during the 2026 March Madness tournament. The Huskies won the game, advancing to the championship match on Monday.
PHOTO BY EMMA MEIDINGER, ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR

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Forty minutes away from another national championship, UConn will lean on its center, with the road to championship No. 7 running through his past.

Tarris Reed Jr. started his career at Michigan before transferring ahead of his junior season. Now a senior, he will anchor the Huskies when they take on the Wolverines on Monday night in Indianapolis, with a national championship on the line.

"I started my career at Michigan and now I'm about to play them in my final game... I never would have thought that would happen in a million years," Reed said.

UConn head coach Dan Hurley has preached all season that the team will "go as far as Tarris takes [it]." Reed has delivered on that responsibility, with Hurley now knocking on the door of his third championship in four years. He would be the first coach to accomplish the feat in more than 50 years.

Reed has been the Huskies' leading scorer in four of their five tournament games, including a historic 31-point 27-rebound performance in the first round. He is averaging 20.8 points per game during that span on a 58% clip, while pulling down 13 rebounds per game.

The Huskies advanced to the title game with a 71-62 win over Illinois. Reed logged his third double-double of the tournament, finishing with a team-high 17 points.

His presence inside created openings on the perimeter that UConn capitalized on. Braylon Mullins, riding the momentum of his game-winning buzzer-beater three in the Elite Eight, buried four of the Huskies' 12 three-pointers on the night.

Solo Ball trailed Mullins with three of his own from deep. It was a glimpse of what Ball can do at his best, as his shooting has fluctuated all season. Though he is shooting under 30% from three this season, his ability to space the floor is vital to UConn's offense when he gets into rhythm.

"When we're able to hit shots and spread the defense, it makes it easier on everyone else," Mullins said.

Ball played just one minute as a freshman during the Huskies' 2024 title run. With an opportunity to play a larger role in another championship, his availability is uncertain after Hurley announced Sunday that Ball suffered a foot sprain during the National Semifinal the night before.

Ball said that the injury is just "a bump in the road" and that he is focused on preparing for the championship. His involvement will be a game time decision and did not practice on Sunday.

Even the smallest bumps could prove fatal against this Michigan squad. The Wolverines have looked unstoppable, dismantling Arizona in the Final Four after the Wildcats entered as the No. 1 team in KenPom's net rating. Michigan won 91-73 over Arizona, though the 18-point win hardly demonstrated its control. The Wolverines led by as many as 30.

Michigan has waltzed through its tournament slate. Alabama gave the Wolverines their toughest test during the Sweet 16. The Crimson Tide led by as much as nine but still found themselves on the wrong side of a 13-point margin, Michigan's closest score in the tournament.

Reed will now face what is likely to be the toughest test of his career against the Wolverines' frontcourt, a unit that has powered Michigan to the championship game.

Aday Mara will be the primary matchup for Reed at center. The 2026 Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year stands at 7-foot-3 with a near 7-foot-7 wingspan. He posted 26 points and nine rebounds during the Final Four victory on Saturday and is averaging 2.6 blocks per game.

"They play with a lot of tremendous size, especially in the frontcourt. It's going to be a great challenge," Reed said.

Alongside him are Yaxel Lendeborg and Morez Johnson Jr. filling out the two forward spots. Lendeborg was named the Big Ten Player of the Year after averaging nearly 15 points per game. He has been the engine of this Michigan team, making impact plays on both ends of the floor.

"The size obviously jumps out at you... just how big they are at the 3, 4 and 5. They've just been dominant, scary with the size, scary with the rebounding," Hurley said.

Lendeborg went to the locker room during the National Semifinal, after suffering an MCL sprain as well as a separate ankle injury. He returned in the second half and continued to play through the pain. Lendeborg told Tracy Wolfson on the TNT Sports broadcast that he is going to play in the championship "unless [he] can't walk."

"All imaging has come back clean, and he's getting treatment and doing rehab all day today. I'm sure he'll give it a go tomorrow, but that will be entirely up to him and the medical staff," Michigan head coach Dusty May said.

Michigan's size in the frontcourt will force UConn to find answers from the outside. The twelve threes on Saturday marked UConn's best shooting performance of the tournament, an area they have otherwise struggled this March.

"The way they defend, the size they have in the paint... we've been laying bricks at different times," Hurley said. "We're not going to get away with that on Monday night."

With questions surrounding Ball's availability, the Huskies' need for production from beyond the arc only grows.

This puts added pressure on Alex Karaban. He was the Huskies' most reliable shooter at the start of the tournament but has since cooled off to 2-for-13 over the past two games. Hurley's confidence in his captain is unshaken; he said that Karaban is "due."

Karaban captain will play in the final collegiate game of his career Monday, looking to become the first three-time national champion since 1975.

"I've been thinking about Michigan a lot more than that," Karaban said. "I think the emotions are going to hit when [I am] in that locker room and [I am] are putting on that jersey and realizing, like, this is the last 40 minutes in it."

Tipoff is set for 8:50 p.m. and will be broadcast on TBS.

Future USG president and vice president promise "quality of life, affordability and accessibility" for students

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Venice Montanaro and Kiera Conrad were elected as the president and vice president of the University of Connecticut's Undergraduate Student Government (USG) on March 24. The two spoke to The Daily Campus about the cornerstones of their campaign: quality of life, affordability and accessibility.

Conrad, a fourth-semester political science and economics major, said the administration is looking to work on reforming the bus system and app, issues with lighting on campus after dark and snow clearing.

"We want to make the little things less annoying," Montanaro said.

Montanaro, a sixth-semester political science and sociology major with a minor in Latino studies, talked about the recent success of the parking initiative to donate food for unpaid parking tickets and the PeriodBox giveaways.

"We really want to continue these initiatives. Students loved them — PeriodBox had 123 people in 15 minutes," Montanaro said. "These initiatives make student's lives easier."

Conrad spoke about the expansion of the dining plan, mentioning potential expansion of flex passes to accommodate more students with dietary restrictions.

"This potential expansion will allow students to take better advantage of their dining plan," Conrad said.

Montanaro mentioned the legal services initiative that USG has been working on, which provides legal help on issues, such as immigration, and housing assistance to students. She also spoke about students not being able to use amplifications, like megaphones, during protests.

"We want to keep these initiatives going and work on expanding student rights," Montanaro said.

The two decided to run together after making a list of their positions and seeing they were aligned on most of them, Montanaro said.

The pair intend to hit the ground running with the hiring of their staff and team, Montanaro said.

"We want a good team with similar and different ideas," she said. "The office has been disconnected in the past, so we want to emphasize bringing people together as everyone has student interests at heart."

The team will work over the summer, Conrad said.

"We want to meet with the staff and directors to touch base on the expectations and culture of the office," she said. "My job is more internal; a good office culture will make the transition phase smoother."

Conrad said the administration has a large emphasis on internal affairs.

"We want all our members to feel included, from paid positions to senators, with deputies and directors having good relationships," she said. "This will allow better completion of our initiatives with everyone on the same page."

The new administration ran with the slogan "Your Concerns. Our Actions."

"Everyone is paying to be here, and all deserve the best experience," Conrad said. "The student body elected us, so we have the responsibility to use our position in the right way for the right reasons on behalf of the students."

Montanaro said they went to clubs and organizations to find out what was most important to students.

"Even small things, like potentially putting shovels in parking lots to shovel out cars, have a big impact," Montaro said. "This is a great position to connect with administration to make this happen."

Montanaro was excited to receive news of the election results earlier than she expected.

"We got the email early — I didn't expect it for another day," Montanaro said. "I was on the phone with my mom and sister at the time which made it more special."

Conrad felt "relief and accomplishment" at the results.

"At the end of the day we wouldn't have run if we didn't think that we were capable," Conrad said.

According to Montanaro, both her and Conrad have served as senators and joined committees without previous experience on them. Being in these different roles has allowed them to understand "the full circle of life of the USG," which she said will help bridge relationships and form connections.

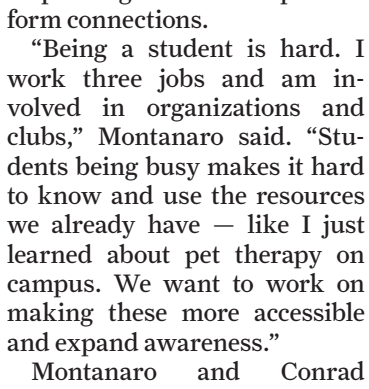
"Being a student is hard. I work three jobs and am involved in organizations and clubs," Montanaro said. "Students being busy makes it hard to know and use the resources we already have — like I just learned about pet therapy on campus. We want to work on making these more accessible and expand awareness."

Montanaro and Conrad stressed the importance of providing feedback on their administration and getting involved in student government.

"Reach out," Conrad said. "We are open to hearing anything. We care about the UConn student and want feedback on how to best do our jobs for you."

"Anyone thinking about joining the student government, you are more than welcome to, Montanaro said. "Some of my best college experiences and greatest friends have come from this organization. If you're thinking about it, 1,000 percent do it."

The new administration will be sworn in on April 8 during the last USG Senate meeting of the semester.



Venice Montanaro and Kiera Conrad, the upcoming president and vice president respectively for Undergraduate Student Government (USG). Montanaro and Conrad recently spoke with The Daily Campus about their campaign goals. PHOTO COURTESY OF @VENICE.KEIRA.2026 ON INSTAGRAM

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