Daily Sports

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL: NO. 1 UCONN DEMOLISHES NO. 15 LADY VOLS 96-66

by Avery Becker
ASSOCIATE SPORTS EDITOR
SHE/HER/HERS
avery.becker@uconn.edu



Serah Williams against the Tennessee Lady Volunteers at Peoples Bank Arena in Hartford, Conn. on Feb. 1. The Huskies won with a final score of 96-66. PHOTO BY CONNOR SHARP, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

They say revenge is a dish that is best served cold.

However, for the top-ranked UConn women's basketball team, revenge is a dish best served in front of a sold-out crowd at Peoples-Bank Arena.

This occurred Sunday afternoon for the Huskies, who handed their long-time rivals in the Tennessee Lady Vols, their fifth loss of the season, 96-66. The final score being the largest margin of victory.

Out of UConn's three losses last season, Tennessee was one of them.

On Saturday, Azzi Fudd had three words to describe how she and her teammates felt after that loss in February.

"Angry. Frustrated. Embarrassed," Fudd said. "As individuals and as a team, we all felt like no one really did their part."

If those words aren't any indication, last season's loss lit a fire underneath the Huskies. This time around, Fudd and Sarah Strong were the leaders of the pack.

Fudd finished the game shooting 11-17 from the field for a total of 27 points, seven rebounds and seven assists.

"The thing about Azzi, she makes way more shots when she's rebounding the ball [...] when she's trying to bring the ball up the floor. When she's doing all those things, the shots go in," head coach Geno Auriemma said postgame. "When she's uber focused on, 'I gotta make shots,' 'I gotta make shots.' It doesn't go as well for her. So, you know, these are the kind of games that she has in big moments."

As things kicked off in Hartford, Conn., Fudd and the Huskies came out quick, and it was not until there were 6:42 minutes left in the first frame that Tennessee made their first basket.

As the game went on, though, the Volunteers started to find their way through the Huskies' full-court pressure. On the other hand, Connecticut couldn't take their foot off the gas, playing almost too fast.

In the second frame, the Volunteers started to cut their deficit, taking advantage of self-imposed mistakes made by Connecticut. At the end of the second frame, outscoring the Huskies 23-17.

"Everything that they were getting were just mess-ups in our miscommunications, no communication like, just little things, mental lapses," Fudd said to the media postgame. "And I think at halftime, we got that time to take a deep breath, regroup and kind of talk what was going wrong."

At halftime, the Huskies were tied with Tennessee 42-42, a circumstance they have not seen much in their 2025-26 campaign.

According to Fudd, Strong and Kayleigh Heckel, the main discussion in the locker room at halftime came from their fellow teammates.

What did they discuss?

Strong emphasized that the squad harped on how they should stay disciplined and not let the Volunteers' size and length allow them to play too fast.

"I think that we respond well to each other and we take criticism for each other and that we have a lot of respect for each other." Heckel said postgame, "So, like people when Carol [Ducharme] and Sarah [Strong] like they speak up, like we're gonna listen and we're gonna take whatever they say and try to apply."

Despite Fudd and Heckel not remembering what Auriemma said at the half, only what their teammates said, they certainly took note of what to change in the second half.

Connecticut turned things around in the third quarter by slowing themselves down and staying composed.

By doing so, the Huskies racked up 29 points alone in the third quarter.

The perfect cherry on top to the quarter?

Back-to-back layups from Heckel, followed by a 3-pointer from Allie Ziebell.

Throughout the majority of the first quarter, the Huskies maintained their hefty lead, coming out with the win.

"We played three games. We played the first quarter, kind of sort of. We played the second quarter and then we played the second half," Auriemma said postgame. "But it was pretty satisfying, pretty rewarding. I know they're really, really happy."

Next, Connecticut will return to conference play. The Huskies will hit the road to take on the DePaul Blue Demons on Wednesday. Tip-off is scheduled for 8 p.m. from Wintrust Arena in Chicago, Ill. Husky fans can tune in to the game on TruTV.