

HUSKIES IN THE PROS:

BREAKING DOWN THE HUSKIES’ MID-SEASON UNRIVALED PERFORMANCES

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Paige Bueckers:
Midway through her first year playing for the Breeze in the Unrivaled league, Bueckers continues to perform outstandingly. Through 10 games of the 2026 campaign, the former Husky tops the team with 25 points, nearly seven assists and just under a steal per meeting. Not to mention, the guard snags almost 6.5 rebounds per contest, which is the third most amongst the squad. Currently, the Minnesota native is on a seven-game streak of scoring 20-plus points. In recent weeks, Bueckers participated in the one-on-one tournament. In the First Round, the rookie defeated Kate Martin 12-5 and went on to beat Arike Ogunbowale 12-4 in the Second Round. Heading into the Quarterfinals, the 24-year-old hit the end of the road as she fell to Chelsea Gray 11-2. In upcoming events, it was announced on Wednesday that Bueckers will represent the United States at the 2026 FIBA Women’s World Cup Qualifying Tournament in San Juan. The Breeze faced the Lunar Owls last night and will take on the Vinyl on Saturday, Feb. 21, at 8 p.m. Fans can watch the clash on truTV. **Breanna Stewart:** Similar to Bueckers, Stewart has produced incredible performances. In the Mist’s most recent 90-64 victory over the Rose, the veteran notched a double-double. Within about 17 minutes, the forward dropped 16 points,

grabbed 11 boards and dished out four assists. From the field, the former Husky banked four of seven (57.1%) shots, buried one of three (33.3%) three-pointers and went three-for-three from the free-throw line. In the one-on-one tournament, the 31-year-old escaped the First Round with an 11-6 win versus Li Yueru. However, Stewart’s momentum was cut short by Aliyah Boston. In the Second Round, Boston handed the New York native an 11-7 loss. With three bouts remaining in the 2026 regular season, the Mist will battle the Lunar Owls on Saturday, Feb 21, on truTV. Tipoff is scheduled for 9:15 p.m. Outside of Stewart’s Unrivaled success, it was announced yesterday that she will rejoin the Fenerbahce ahead of the EuroLeague Final Six between April 15-19. The last time “Stewie” played in the Euros was in 2023. **Aaliyah Edwards:** In Edwards’ first contest back since missing two outings due to UConn inducting her into the Huskies of Honor on Jan. 28, the former Husky did not disappoint. Paving the way, the forward posted a double-double against the Laces. Within 21 minutes, the Canadian native recorded 28 points, 18 rebounds and an assist. The 23-year-old thrived from the floor, splashing 11 of 17 (64.7%) shots and connecting on three of four (75%) free throws. It is worth noting that this is her best performance since accumulating 38 points and 13 rebounds while facing the Laces on Jan. 12. Alongside Bueckers and Stewart, Edwards also participated in

the 2026 one-on-one tournament. In the First Round, Dominique Malonga fell to the second-year player 11-8. To end the Second Round, Edwards secured a close 11-9 triumph over Shakira Austin. In the Quarterfinals, things took a turn for the worse as Boston shut out Edwards 12-0. After a two-week break, the Lunar Owls faced the Breeze last night and will clash with the Mist on Saturday, Feb. 21. Tipoff is scheduled for 9:15 on truTV. **Azurà Stevens:** After starting hot, averaging slightly over 15 points in the Hive’s first four matches, Stevens has not only declined in points but also in minutes. The last time the forward took the court was against the Lunar Owls on Jan. 30. By the end of the meeting, the veteran registered just a point within a little more than three minutes. The 30-year-old struggled from all ranges, botching a pair of field goals and a shot from beyond the arc. Her lone point came from the free-throw line. The Hive took on the Laces last night and will play the Rose on Friday, Feb. 20, on truTV, at 8:45 p.m. **Tiffany Hayes:** To begin February, Hayes has experienced a cold phase as she only posted a combined total of 10 points in the Phantom’s previous two games. Compared to the last four matchups of January, the guard averaged just under 15 points per outing. The Phantom will face the Laces on Friday, Feb. 20, on truTV, at 7:30 p.m.



Paige Bueckers, a former UConn athlete who is now currently playing for the Breeze Basketball Club. Paige has been dominating the pro leagues, continuing her legacy from UConn.
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SAM’S SECTION:

EMEKA OKAFOR BECOMES THIRD HUSKY TO HAVE JERSEY NUMBER RETIRED

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Just days after Hasheem Thabeet was inducted into the Huskies of Honor, another all-time great will be honored. Emeka Okafor, one of the greatest players in program history, will have his jersey number (No. 50) retired, joining Ray Allen (No. 34) and Richard “Rip” Hamilton (No. 32) as the only players in UConn men’s basketball history to have their jersey number retired. “It shows that he’s one of the foundations on which the program was built,” Joe D’Ambrosio, the former radio voice of the team from 1992 to 2018, said. “With Emeka having his jersey retired, I think it’s proof of his legacy and the fact that he was among the greatest UConn players of all time.” What Okafor did in his three seasons at UConn remains unmatched. He holds career records for most blocked shots (441, 4.3 per game). He averaged a double-double for his career with 13.8 points and 10.8 rebounds per game. Only five other Huskies have averaged a double-double for their career, all of which came before 1971. One of his most impressive efforts came at Villanova, when he blocked Randy Foye’s shot to seal a victory in overtime. He is the only player to be named a National Player of the Year, sharing the 2004 NABC Player of the Year honor with Saint Joseph’s Jameer Nelson. During that season, Okafor averaged 17.6 points, 11.5 rebounds and 4.1 blocks

per game on 59.9% shooting, all while dealing with back spasms throughout the season. That season still holds program records to this day, including most double-doubles (24), most blocked shots in a single game (10, tied with Thabeet and Donyell Marshall) and the most rebounds in Big East play (22, also most rebounds in a Hartford game). “He was such a complete player,” UConn general manager Tom Moore, an assistant coach at the time, said. “He kept the shot blocking; he kept the defensive rebounding. He was good in transition with running, but now he added a very reliable low-post game too, and he could get fouled now. He was a monster as a junior.” Okafor’s All-American season helped the Huskies win the Big East Tournament and eventually the program’s second national championship. He was named the 2004 Final Four Most Outstanding Player, with a career performance against Duke in the national semifinal. “He picks up the two fouls early, and he’s like apoplectic,” Moore said. “We were up about eight or nine when he got the fouls, and then we were down about nine or so at halftime. So, it was close to a 20-point swing with him out of there. But he was so dominant in the second half on both ends. I think he fouled out their whole frontcourt and then just sort of took over the game.” Okafor is arguably the greatest defensive player in program history. Like Thabeet, Okafor was also named

the NABC Defensive Player of the Year in back-to-back seasons (2002-03, 2003-04). His 156 blocks in the 2002-03 season still stand as a program record, as well as averaging 4.7 blocks per game. “He had an amazing sense of timing,” said D’Ambrosio, who will emcee the ceremony. “His timing to block shots was terrific on the college level. I would put it equivalent to what Bill Russell’s shot blocking was like in the pros.” The Bellaire, Texas native made an instant impact once arriving in Storrs, starting on the 2001-02 team that ended up winning the Big East regular season title and the Big East Tournament. Despite being named to the All-Big East Third Team, Okafor was not the star of the team then; that title belonged to Caron Butler. That team ended up making the Elite Eight, losing to eventual champion Maryland. “[He] never looked out of place,” D’Ambrosio said. “He always looked like he understood what was expected of him, and he did that to the best of his ability every time he stepped on the floor.” The next season saw him named to the All-Big East First Team while also having one of the best defensive seasons in program history. The Huskies won their division in the Big East and made it to the Sweet Sixteen, falling to Texas. However, his presence on the court is not the only impact he had at UConn. He is considered the most academically gifted player the program has ever seen. He was a two-time CoSIDA Academic



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All-American and was the Academic All-American of the Year during the 2003-04 season. Shamon Tooles, who will be in attendance for the ceremony, said, “He’s probably the smartest player we ever played with. After practices, he would essentially be in the study hall for the remainder of the evening.” In April, Okafor will be inducted into the UConn Business Hall of Fame. He graduated from the University of Connecticut in two and a half years and finished with a 3.8 GPA. “If he had 15 minutes with a bus getting delayed a little bit, he might go finish an academic assignment,” Moore said. “He was as locked in and regimented as any great young player that I’ve ever

been around with his time management skills.” He became the highest NBA draft selection in program history (later matched by Thabeet), being taken by the Charlotte Bobcats with the No. 2 pick in the 2004 NBA Draft. That rookie season was stellar for him, as he was named the 2005 NBA Rookie of the Year. He had a 10-year career in the league, also playing for the New Orleans Hornets and Pelicans as well as the Washington Wizards. Now, Okafor is an analyst in college basketball, appearing on ESPN, Fox Sports and CBS Sports already. Okafor will see his jersey number hang from the rafters as the Huskies host Creighton on Wednesday night at the Harry A. Gampel Pavilion in Storrs, Conn.