



TYLER’S TAKE: BREAKING DOWN THE NFC CHAMPIONSHIP RIVALRY BATTLE

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In yesterday’s rendition of Tyler’s Take, I dissected the New England Patriots and the Denver Broncos ahead of the AFC Championship matchup on Sunday.

Now, it’s time to turn to the highly competitive NFC Conference.

Unlike the AFC, where only two franchises looked like Super Bowl contenders, nearly every NFC playoff team played their hearts out.

When it came to deciding the postseason seeding for the NFC, it was no easy job. Until Week 18, nothing was set in stone, as six games determined where squads would play.

Not to mention, fans witnessed the injured San Francisco 49ers, the Los Angeles Rams and the Seattle Seahawks fight to the end for a first-round bye week.

As for the NFC North, the Chicago Bears returned to the top of the mountain with quarterback Caleb Williams and first-year Head Coach Ben Johnson paving the way. For the first time since 2018, the Bears clinched the division.

With that being said, in part two of Tyler’s Take, I discuss everything fans need to know before watching the NFC Conference Championship.

No. 5 Seed Rams (12-5) vs. No. 1 Seed Seahawks (14-3):

Similar to the Patriots and Broncos, neither team performed flawlessly the entire

year.

In the first half of the campaign, it seemed like nothing was stopping the Rams from returning to the promised land.

With shot-caller Matthew Stafford throwing to trusted wide receivers Puka Nacua and Davante Adams, moving the chains was not a problem. Collectively, the wideout duo combined for a total of 2,504 receiving yards.

In the back field, running back Kyren Williams racked up 1,252 rushing and punched in 10 touchdowns. Compared to backup running back Blake Corum, the former Michigan Wolverine rushed for 746 yards and crossed the goal line six times.

Despite the dominating offense, finding wins took a turn for the worse. On the back half of the 2025-2026 stretch, three meetings cost them the No. 1 seed.

In their three losses, Stafford threw a total of five interceptions, while the offensive line conceded five sacks for a loss of 37 yards.

Turning to the Seahawks, other than falling in three one-score contests, not much has stopped the franchise from steamrolling through the league. It is worth mentioning that the squad ranks No. 22 in strength of schedule.

Outside of a weaker schedule than other opponents, gunslinger Sam Darnold has been nothing but stellar.

For the first time in NFL history, the 28-year-old became the first quarterback to post back-to-back 14-3 records on two dif-

ferent teams. To end the 2025-2026 regular season, Darnold registered 4,048 yards, the fifth-most in the league, for 25 touchdowns and 14 interceptions.

In the air, receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba turned into a true No. 1 wideout. Through 17 outings, the league crowned the former Ohio State Buckeye the receiving yards leader with 1,793 yards. Additionally, the 23-year-old tied for sixth with 10 endzone appearances.

Defensively, the Seahawks landed at No. 6, giving up slightly under 286 yards and ranking No. 1 in fewest points allowed with just over 17 points.

Scouting the Rams:

In the regular season, the two

franchises split their pair of division games. In the Rams’ victory, the squad won defensively, forcing Darnold to throw four picks.

In all four botched plays, not one of them was intended for a deep pass. If the Rams can pressure the pocket quickly, the franchise could pull off the upset.

Injury-wise, cornerback Emmanuel Forbes Jr. is questionable with a shoulder injury, linebacker Byron Young is questionable with a knee injury and safety Quentin Lake is questionable with an illness.

Scouting the Seahawks:

In the last week, Seahawk fans almost received gut-

wrenching news that Darnold was out versus the 49ers with an oblique injury.

However, the former USC Trojan proved to be fine after blowing out the NFC West rivals 41-6 in the divisional round last Saturday.

As of now, the veteran is expected to play, but this is something to keep an eye on during the NFC Championship.

In the running back room, the squad lost running back Zach Charbonnet. While facing the 49ers, the powerful runner suffered a season-ending ACL tear. Over the 2025-2026 stretch, Charbonnet contributed 730 rushing yards for 12 touchdowns.



LOGO BY LILLIAN LAFEMINA, ASSOCIATE ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

WOMENS BASKETBALL: STRONG AND FUDD OUTSCORE GEORGETOWN IN NO. 1 UCONN'S 83-42 WIN

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The last time the University of Connecticut women’s basketball team played Georgetown at CareFirst Arena, the Paige Bueckers-less Huskies took over 15 minutes to shake off the upset-minded Hoyas.

Azzi Fudd and Sarah Strong, forced by Bueckers’ injury into lead scoring roles, combined for over half of Connecticut’s points in the eventual 18-point win – the second closest Big East win of the season for the eventual national champions.

The Huskies (20-0, 10-0) were without Bueckers Thursday (this time for different reasons, of course), but once again leaned on the duo of Fudd and Strong in an 83-42 rout of Georgetown (11-8, 4-6).

The Big East’s two leading scorers combined for 44

points, 18 made field goals and 14 rebounds, which included the first 14 points of the night to put the game out of reach by the first media timeout.

Fudd’s 0-for-2 start from the field, both 3-pointers launched from the wing that caromed off the side of the rim, was remedied by six straight from the paint, including a signature elbow jumper to put the Huskies up 8-0.

The graduate wing, supported by over 125 family members and friends, finished with 19 points on 8-of-19 shooting, six rebounds (two offensive) and five assists in her final DMV homecoming game.

But it was Strong, the front-runner for National Player of the Year according to ESPN, that catalyzed the Huskies’ dominant first half.

In 18 first half minutes, Strong recorded 21 points on 8-of-9 shooting, drilled 3-of-4 3-pointers, grabbed four re-

bounds, dished three assists and swiped a trio of steals.

Her four-point second half was punctuated by the fourth “kill shot” (or 10-0 run) for the Huskies; a transition lay-in off a KK Arnold steal.

Connecticut converted seven Hoya turnovers into 10 points before the first break, held Georgetown to a 0-for-5 start from the field and built a two possession lead within the first minute of the game – which it never surrendered.

By the time Strong hit the Huskies’ first 3-pointer of the night – snapping a 0-for-11 start from behind the line – Connecticut had already built a 14-point lead, relying on a slew of transition lay-ins and pull-up jumpers.

Outside of Strong and Fudd, who combined for 35 first half points, only Serah Williams (6 points) and Ashlynn Shade (4) scored more than one basket.

Still, Connecticut went to

the half time break up 51-20, holding Georgetown to zero second chance points and only a single basket in transition.

The second half wasn’t as sterling; both teams combined to hit 2-of-16 field goals in the first five minutes of the third quarter and took nearly seven minutes to score on consecutive possessions.

Georgetown switched back to the same zone coverage that was sliced apart by Connecticut’s first quarter blitz and held the Huskies to a 1-of-10 start from the field.

That’s when Blanca Quiñonez, the six-time Big East Freshman of the Week, started carving out spots at the top of the key, hitting two consecutive jumpers to quench the Huskies’ dry spell from the field and space out the Hoya zone.

Then Allie Ziebell drained a 3-pointer from the left corner to stretch the lead and the Hoyas even further. Ayanna

Patterson dropped one in from under the rim less than a minute later before Ziebell hit again from the corner.

Connecticut’s near 40-point margin of victory (38, to be precise) coming into the day was maintained by a fourth quarter kill shot that featured a slew of baskets topped off by a Strong lay-in at the six minute mark.

UConn doubled the Hoyas by the final media timeout and emptied the bench soon after, notching its 20th victory of the season and ninth by 40-plus.

On Deck:

Connecticut’s next game, originally scheduled for Sunday, Jan. 25, was moved to Saturday, Jan. 24 on Thursday due to inclement weather. The Huskies will travel to South Orange to take on Seton Hall in Walsh Gymnasium at 12 p.m. The game will air on Peacock and NBC Sports Network.