Sports

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL: NO. 1 UCONN SLAMS CREIGHTON, ADVANCES TO BIG EAST CHAMPIONSHIP

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



The UConn Huskies play against Creighton at Mohegan Sun Arena in Uncasville, Conn. The Huskies dominated the game, winning 100-51. PHOTO BY CONNOR SHARP, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Uncasville, Conn. – Some may know her as KK Arnold, but some may also know her as the masked menace.

On Sunday afternoon, as the top-ranked UConn women's basketball program defeated Creighton, 100-51, in the semifinals of the Big East tournament, Arnold and sophomore Sarah Strong were catalysts for their squads on both sides of the ball.

Throughout her junior year campaign, Arnold has made it her goal to sharpen her skills as a leader and defender, eventually earning Big East All-Defensive Team honors just this past week.

Against the Bluejays, Arnold propelled her squad to their sixth consecutive Big East Tournament Championship. The guard finished the afternoon with 18 points, four assists and a rebound, shooting 8-9 from the field and 2-3 from three.

With this stat line, Arnold recorded a new season-high in points, which she previously set with 13 against Villanova on Jan. 15.

"We all had that confidence in her before, but to see her on the floor, being that floor general, leading us, taking shots, whether it's a three, a pull up, see how she uses the rim, getting in the paint, making space for everyone," Azzi Fudd said to the media postgame when asked about Arnold. "You feel that presence, offensively and defensively."

Strong dominated in every aspect of the box score for her squad, drawing up 23 points, seven rebounds, six steals, and four blocks in 25 minutes of work.

Head coach Geno Auriemma described Strong's basketball IQ to the media as a "rare combination."

"I think she has a really good idea of where the ball is going, and she has tremendous confidence in herself, and it's not something that anyone's taught her how to do all this stuff, you know [...] she's just really, really smart, really intuitive."

Right off the bat, the Huskies proved why they were the juggernaut of the Big East for the 2025-26 season.

With their persistent full-court pressure, the Huskies racked up four steals within the first five minutes of the game, put 29 points up on the board in the first frame alone, shooting 80% from beyond the arc.

At the end of the first frame, the Huskies made 12 out of 19 field goals, which was more than the Bluejays even attempted in the first quarter, with 10.

While Creighton started to work their way up to the Huskies to cut their deficit, including freshman Ava Zediker 2-3 from the field, the Huskies still maintained a comfortable lead of 57-22.

"The way the game started, the defensive pressure that KK [Arnold] was able to put on Ava [Zediker] their point guard, I thought was really a big part of why we had all such quick start defensively and everyone else just kind of, you know, filled in, and we did a phenomenal job of taking all of their best actions that they want to use away from them." Auriemma said in his opening statement.

In the second half, the bench was integral for the Huskies to maintain their lead. Redshirt sophomore Jana El Alfy was a force at the boards for the Huskies, grabbing seven rebounds, five of them on the defensive end.

Sophomores Allie Ziebell and Kayleigh Heckel were also assertive for their squad off the bench in the second half. Heckel's ball movement was imperative to solidify her program's win, dishing out seven assists.

"I'm not of the opinion that we're better, we're different, you know," Auriemma said to the media when asked how he feels this year's roster's dominance compares to last year with Paige Bueckers. "We play a different style of play that we played last year, the results seem to be kind of sort of the same as they were last year, just a different way of going about it."

Connecticut will now shift their focus the Big East Championship where they will take on the No. 2 seeded Villanova Wildcats.

The last time these two foes faced one another was on Feb. 18, where the Huskies defeated the Wildcats 83-69. Despite Connecticut's eventual 14-point win, things were down to the wire in the beginning of the game with the Wildcats having the lead at the half.

On Villanova's squad, the Huskies will need to look out for sophomore guard Jasmine Bascoe, who led the league with points per game with 18.7 points per game and led the Big East in assists with 146.

Tip-off is scheduled for 7 p.m. Husky fans can tune in to the game on NBC Sports Network or through streaming on Peacock.

MEN'S BASKETBALL: NO. 4 UCONN UPSET BY MARQUETTE, DROPS BIG EAST REGULAR SEASON CHAMPIONSHIP SHARE

by Matt Dimech
STAFF WRITER
HE/HIM/HIS
rwq24001@uconn.edu

The final chapter of No. 4 UThe final chapter of No. 4 UConn's regular season did not read how Huskies' fans had hoped, when the team fell 68-62 to Marquette on Saturday afternoon.

The Huskies (27-4, 17-3) squandered a chance to share its 12th Big East regular season title with St. John's, which secured its stake with a win over Seton Hall on Friday. The loss also snapped the Huskies' six-game winning streak over the Golden Eagles (12-19, 7-13).

Silas Demary Jr. nearly pulled UConn back from the 12-point second-half deficit. The junior guard scored 17 points while dishing out eight assists, which helped spark the Huskies' late push down the stretch.

Demary drove to the lane in the final seconds of the game with a chance to tie it, but the attempt fell off the side of the rim with the rebound being recovered by Marquette. UConn head coach Dan Hurley thought that there should have been a foul called on the play.

The enraged two-time national champion head coach got in the face of one of the referees, causing him to be ejected from the game with less than a second to go. The Big East could not confirm that there was physical contact made, according to an official release from the conference.

"We hold our coaches to high standards of sportsmanlike conduct during game competition, and inappropriate interactions with our officials will not be tolerated," Big East Commissioner Val Ackerman wrote.

Hurley was fined $25,000 with no suspension.

UConn's offense never found its rhythm. The Huskies posted their worst perimeter shooting performance of the season. They shot 3-for-24 from three-point range, both their lowest number of threes made, and efficiency in a game all year.

Braylon Mullins struggled from deep, finishing 1-for-10 from beyond the arc. He did not make his first until there were five minutes left to play in the game. Alex Karaban played all 40 minutes yet was held without a single field goal.

UConn shot 39% from the field in the first half but still maintained a two-point lead going into the break. The Golden Eagles' offense was red hot, shooting nearly 55% from the floor.

The Huskies led 45-41 with 15:03 left in the second half after a basket from Eric Reibe. This was followed by a seven-minute-and-50-second field goal drought for UConn. Marquette was able to pull off a 14-4 run during that stretch to take control of the game.

Nigel James Jr. orchestrated the Golden Eagles offense. He led all scorers with 19 points and assisted on seven Marquette baskets. Chase Ross, Royce Parhm and Adrien Stevens all knocked down multiple three-pointers.

Despite the loss, UConn dominated the paint.

The Huskies outscored Marquette in the paint 34-26 and had a +15 advantage on the glass. Saturday was the first time this season that UConn was defeated when outrebounding its opponent.

Tarris Reed Jr. was at the forefront of the interior performance. 16 points and 10 rebounds marked Reed's third straight double-double, and ninth of the season. He shot 5-for-5 from the free throw line, which was just his second time this season doing so on that many attempts.

UConn shot 17-for-18 from the stripe. It was by far the Huskies' best free throw performance of the season. Their next best? 85% against New Haven on Nov. 3, the team's season opener.

The Big East Tournament will tip off on Wednesday with the conclusion of the regular season. The Huskies finished No. 2 in the tournament seeding, which earned them a first-round bye. UConn may get a chance at revenge against Marquette in New York City, as they will play the winner of Xavier and the Golden Eagles in the quarterfinals on Thursday.

The game is scheduled for 7 p.m. and will be available on FS1.



UConn men's basketball celebrates their seniors in Storrs, Conn. on Feb. 28, 2026. The Huskies defeated the Pirates as they played their last game in Gampel of the 2025-2026 season. PHOTOS BY SYDNEY CHANDLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS.