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COMICS



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THE UCONN BANANAS:

UNDER THE PEEL

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Anyone in attendance at the Women's Big East Championship on Monday at the Mohegan Sun Arena probably saw a yellow island amongst a sea of blue and red in the stands.

A closer look would have revealed a small group of students standing by the University of Connecticut Pep Band wearing not a common jersey or t-shirt, but yellow suits.

What started as a Halloween costume back in 2023 has become something of a Connecticut sports phenomenon, attracting the attention of UConn basketball stars, coaches and celebrities.

"It is addicting. It's so addicting," said Nolan Busalacchi, a fourth-semester economics and political science student.

Busalacchi is part of an exclusive group known as the "UConn Bananas," a small yet mighty cohort who attend UConn basketball games dressed as, you guessed it, bananas. The Bananas sit in the front of the student section, standing the entirety of the contest with the sole purpose of getting the student section more involved in the game and hyping up the players.

Though the group is now 15-plus deep, it started as a far smaller idea.

"We wanted to do something to stand out at the games and that was stupid enough," said Noah Hill, a sixth-semester sports management student. "So, we started bringing the banana costumes." Hill was amongst the group of students that originated the idea for basketball games in 2023.

Over time, the idea grew to sleeping overnight outside of Gampel Pavilion to get seats closer to the court. Hill said that he first thought of the idea as a way to avoid waking up early just to find themselves further back in line.

"If we think there's a non-zero chance that anyone...will be sleeping out, we will be sleeping out because missing out on the first spot in line makes it 10 times more stressful trying to get front row [seats]," Busalacchi said.

The longest they have ever waited outside for a game was 36 hours for the men's team's home game against Arizona in November, getting there around 8 a.m. on Tuesday for the 7 p.m. Wednesday start time, Busalacchi said.

The group's antics have left them as cult heroes in the student section, with kids and adults alike asking to try on the banana suits. The walk-around mascot version of Jonathan the Husky has sported his own banana suit at times. Beyond the attention off the court, they've been noticed from the court as well.

When Dan Hurley called out UConn fans following the atmosphere of Gampel Pavilion during the game against Georgetown University on Valentine's Day, he made sure to point out that not everyone was included in that criticism.

"The Banana gang under the basket sent me a message saying, 'Hey coach, we're really sorry. We'll do better.' The least of our problems are the Bananas. The Bananas are doing their part," Hurley said, according to Storrs Central.

The Bananas have also garnered interest from the Huskies themselves, as evidenced by the sea of signatures plastered across the fronts of their suits. Players like injured women's guard Morgan Cheli have reached out to them on social media. Even UConn alum and donor Marc D'Amelio gave the Bananas a shout out on X.

"I saw [men's team center] Tarris Reed out in public," said Bella Tomaino, a sixth-semester communications major and another member of the bananas. "I just said 'Bananas love you.' He embraced us and looked at me, put his hand out to do like a heart and was like, 'no, truly we appreciate you guys.

We love you.' He was like, 'y'all's energy is unmatched, especially in warmups,' and that helps us."

The Bananas' reach has also touched down outside of basketball, as they made appearances at both the Fenway Bowl in December 2025 and the Women's Hockey East Championship on Saturday, March 7. Hill said that the group has talked about attending baseball games in the future. Busalacchi mentioned both men's and women's hockey along with softball and football, wanting to support new head coach Jason Candle in his first season.

"We've been so wrapped up with basketball season right now that it's been hard to go anywhere else because the games have just been back-to-back to back-to-back," Busalacchi said. "So now that that's going to start freeing up, it'll give us an opportunity to go to other sports, because we do want to show support for all the athletes."

For now, however, the Bananas' focus is solely on UConn's two basketball teams, both of whom are looking to make runs lasting into April.

The Bananas hope their attendance at the Women's Big East Tournament is just the start of their travel this postseason. Looking to attend the Men's Big East Tournament and potential Final Fours for both teams, the Bananas launched a GoFundMe with a goal of raising $2,000. As of the time of writing, they are 71% of the way there, currently sitting at $1,410.

Multiple Bananas have taken creative measures in an attempt to rack up more donations. Upon hitting one of the group's goals, Busalacchi and Tomaino ran a 5K around the halls of their dorm on Friday, March 6.

Jacob Gilson, a sixth-semester elementary education and history student and fellow banana, will make his contribution by running a milk mile — running a mile around a track while stopping to drink milk every one-fourth of a mile.

Beyond the fun challenges, the Bananas say there is a deeper purpose behind the fundraising. Any extra money raised will be donated to the Husky Ticket Project, an organization that provides under-privileged members of the community with tickets to enjoy the UConn game day experience, according to its website.

Tomaino also said that the bananas would also be interested in doing future fundraisers with the Husky Ticket Project or other organizations.

"We want to give back just as much as other people have given back to us," Tomaino said.

However, under the suits and newfound relative fame, beyond the camping out and fundraisers, the Bananas remain at their core a group of students passionate about the Huskies and ready to give their all in whatever student section they may find themselves in.

"You know us, we're all 'goofy-ahhs,'" Hill said.

"That's a quote," Gilson responded.



UConn Men's Basketball plays Creighton University at Gampel Pavilion in Storrs, Conn. On Feb 18, 2026. The crowd hyped up the team throughout the entire game. PHOTO BY SYDNEY CHANDLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS