Daily Sports

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL: NO. 1 UCONN GEARS TO FACE LONG-TIME RIVAL SYRACUSE FOR ROUND OF 32 MATCHUP

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UConn women's basketball plays University of Texas San Antonio in the first round of the NCAA tournament in Storrs, Conn. on March 21, 2026. The Huskies defeated the Roadrunners with a final score of 90-52. PHOTOS BY SYDNEY CHANDLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS.

Every young girl who plays basketball dreams about playing at Gampel Pavilion; some are even lucky enough to call it their home arena for their entire collegiate career.

On Monday evening, as the UConn women's basketball team plays against Syracuse, it will be the last time Azzi Fudd will ever step foot on the court of the beloved Connecticut arena.

"Gampel has been home for the last five years, and the environment is second to none. The fans, the students, everything about this place, it's the best place to play," Fudd said to the media on Sunday afternoon. "I'm super excited, happy to have the students back on campus, happy to just be able to have one last game here with my teammates."

After defeating the UTSA Roadrunners in the round of 64 of the NCAA tournaments 90-52, the Huskies advanced to the round of 32 to take on the Orange.

Despite Fudd and junior guard KK Arnold finding themselves in foul trouble early in the game, UConn's persistent defense on the Roadrunners and the depth of their bench helped solidify the win.

"That's been an emphasis all year," Fudd said postgame on Saturday on the teams' communication on the defensive end. "You can never communicate enough."

To solidify their matchup against the Huskies on Monday, the No. 9-seeded Syracuse Orange defeated the No. 8-seeded Iowa State Cyclones, 72-63, despite Iowa States' Audi Crooks racking up 37 points, shooting 17-25 from the field.

On Syracuse's squad, the Huskies will need to look out for the Orange's height and depth in the front court, especially freshman Uche Izoje, who averaged 15.7 points per game in the regular season and totaled 23 points against the Cyclones.

"It's definitely going to be a team defense kind of day." Fudd said Sunday to the media. "They have a lot of talented players, so just to know our scout, the ins and outs and their tendencies."

The last time these two long-time rivals faced one another was in the Round of 32 for the 2024 NCAA Tournament on March 25, 2024, where the Huskies defeated the Orange 72-64 in Gampel Pavilion.

In this matchup, former Husky Paige Bueckers tied a 2023-2024 season high of 32 points, and current Husky Ashlynn Shade put up 19 points as a freshman.

"We're a little bit different than we were two years ago. But our style of play is the same. Theirs is not that that much different; ours is not that much different," head coach Geno Auriemma said on Sunday. "I watched them yesterday, and when you see people on film it's one thing, but when you see them up close, they're physical. They're aggressive. Yeah, it's not an easy one. Not an easy one tomorrow."

Tip-off is scheduled for 6 p.m. from Gampel Pavilion. If Husky fans can't make it to Storrs, they can tune in to the matchup on ESPN.

Should the Huskies win, they will advance to their 32nd consecutive Sweet 16/Elite 8 in Fort Worth, Texas. They will take on the No. 4-seeded North Carolina Tar Heels.

