Daily

Life



The UConn Pep Band: The Huskies' secret weapon

UConn Pep Band cheers on the Huskies at Xfinity Mobile Arena on March 20, 2026. The band kept the energy up for the entire game vs Furman.
PHOTO BY MADISON HENDRICKS/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

by Thaddeus Sawyer
STAFF WRITER
HE/HIM/HIS
thaddeus.sawyer@uconn.edu

Some things in college sports just go together.

The Ohio State Marching Band navigating into formation to spell out the state's name in script, finished by "dotting the 'i.'" Toilet paper and the trees at Toomer's Corner near Auburn University. "One Shining Moment" bringing the extended month of March to a close, moments after crowning an NCAA tournament champion.

For the University of Connecticut, besides cutting down nets, few things are as synonymous with attending a game at the "Basketball Capital of the World" as watching one of the two world class basketball programs run onto the court to the sound of the school fight song. That score is provided by, of course, the UConn Pep Band.

"I think they don't get talked about enough," said Alex Karaban, the captain of the men's basketball team and a two-time national champion. "I mean, they travel with us. They really invest so much of their time."

With March Madness upon us, the travel has kicked into another gear.

After spending last weekend in Philadelphia with the men's team, eighth-semester bass player Peter Sansanelli is back on the road this weekend, this time following the women's team to Fort Worth, Texas.

Sansanelli, who returned from Philadelphia with the rest of the band by bus and arrived in Storrs at 6 a.m. on Monday, hopped on a plane midday Tuesday for the next round of games.

"I think more than other pep bands, we have a bigger sense of, 'we can impact the game.'" Sansanelli said.

Joining Sansanelli in Texas will be sixth-semester drummer Ben Robinson, who is in his first year of postseason travel and his third year as a member of the band.

"My first two years, I didn't get to travel because there's two [drum] set players to a travel band and so those guys got to travel," Robinson said. "Luckily, this year I get the chance to leave Storrs." As Robinson pointed out, there are multiple bands to allow both teams to be covered, as well as a band for the men's hockey team that forms later in the year.

Robinson was also with the band in Philadelphia, joining in on what was a rigorous schedule for the group. Sansanelli said that, after a four-hour bus ride to the Xfinity Mobile Arena and a quick detour to their hotel, they went immediately to the open practice held on Thursday, March 26, for what would be their first chance to place in the new environment.

"Just like the team's getting their chance to play on the court for the first time, we're getting our chance to set up and figure out what works for us best," Robinson said.

The next day, UConn's first gameday of the trip, the pep band started the afternoon by playing at the team hotel as the players and coaches got on the bus to the stadium. Directly following, the band headed to the arena to get ready for game time. By the end of the contest, a win over Furman University, Sansanelli said the band didn't leave the arena until around 1 a.m.

With no game Saturday, the band had a day to explore the city. Both Sansanelli and Robinson lauded the city's famous cheesesteaks.

Sunday was much like Friday, both in routine and in UConn picking up another win, this time against UCLA. Add two-hour practices before lunch nearly every day, and you're looking at a nonstop schedule. Even in their free time, Robinson said the band looks for unique ways to prepare for the game.

"We put a lot of face paint on," said Robinson, who has dyed blue hair to match. "We do a lot of face painting."

Sansanelli added that he and many other members of the band hold in-game superstitions that they believe help the Huskies.

"For each player, I have a different way I wiggle my fingers [on free throws]," Sansanelli said. "...I feel like a lot of people in the band have really strong superstitions that help the team win, and I haven't seen anything to prove otherwise."

The heavy commitment doesn't go unnoticed, both by fans who clap along to the fight song and by members of both the team and administration.

"They just bring energy to the environment, whether it's here or whether it's at home," UConn Athletic Director David Benedict said after Friday's game. "I think those kids put in a lot of time and effort into their craft and support these guys all over New England. It's great to have them here and it's a reward for all their time and effort."

The band's presence was especially evident on Friday night, as a combination of a large contingency of Furman fans and the leftover crowd of University of Central Florida and UCLA fans from the prior game made it a less-than-friendly environment for the Huskies.

Still, the sound of the pep band radiated from beneath the boos.

"I think having them by our bench, it definitely just gives a little bit of the home spirit," freshman guard Braylon Mullins said after the Furman game. "Hearing that every home game and being able to hear that here in Philly, it just kind of gives the feel of where you're at and they definitely help. Just hearing that band play whatever song that they're playing, especially in the huddles, [I'm] definitely happy that they're here."

Though Sansanelli said that the men's team is less vocal in their appreciation and support of the band compared to the women's squad, the men still made sure to show their appreciation after the game against UCLA.

"[UConn center Tarris Reed Jr.] came over afterwards, he gave us all high-fives and signed a few posters," Robinson said. "He plays saxophone, so that was cool."

Robinson also added that, towards the end of the game when the band played "Welcome to the Doghouse," members of the UConn bench began singing along.

"It's just nice seeing all them smile and we get to start that for them," Robinson said.

As the bands follow both the men to Washington D.C. and the women to Texas this weekend, the players are happy to have them along for the ride.

"Right now, we're on spring break," Karaban said after the win against Furman. "They could be anywhere right now and they chose to support us in Philadelphia. So they mean a lot to us."

Duffer Brothers find redemption with horror miniseries 'Something Very Bad Is Going to Happen'



Rating: 4.25/5



CLIPART COURTESY OF CREATIVE COMMONS

Billboard advertising for Netflix's "Something Very Bad Is Going To Happen." It's the Duffer Brothers' newest Netflix series.
PHOTO COURTESY OF @NETFLIX ON INSTAGRAM

by Juliana Assis
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
SHE/HER/HERS
kmm24006@uconn.edu

Following the underwhelming and widely disappointing conclusion of "Stranger Things" in January, the Duffer Brothers have returned with "Something Very Bad Is Going to Happen," a gory miniseries that trades the supernatural for a quieter, more animalistic horror.

The series follows Rachel and Nicky, a young couple, in the week leading up to their wedding. Their seemingly ideal relationship is disrupted when, as the title promises, something very bad happens.

Nicky is played by Adam DiMarco, known for his roles as Gavin in the Disney Channel Original Movie "Radio Rebel" and Albie Di Grasso in "The White Lotus." Rachel is portrayed by Camila Morrone, who starred in the Emmy-nominated series "Daisy Jones & The Six."

The dynamic between Rachel and Nicky masterfully captures the lightness and enthusiasm of young love, establishing a mildly unsettling "calm before the storm" feeling and leaving the audience waiting for something bad to happen.

In an interview with Netflix, showrunner Haley Z. Boston said she drew inspiration from her own life, grounding the show in a level of emotional realism even as tension escalates.

Visually, the series creates a sense of constant unease, similar to that of "Carrie" and "Rosemary's Baby," favoring a well-built atmosphere over the sensationalism of gore and spectacle.

Unlike many modern TV shows that rely heavily on desaturated color grading, this series adopts a more intentional color palette. It was a very pleasant break from the overly muted style most modern movies have adopted.

The show's sound design played a large role in creating a tense and uneasy atmosphere. The score consisted mostly of a slow, plucky-sounding guitar in conjunction with a kick drum beat reminiscent of a heartbeat. This careful, deliberate pairing of audio and visual components enhances feelings of anxiety for the audience.

Where the series particularly excels is in its use of space. Empty rooms, lingering shots and negative space are recurring motifs throughout the series. These spaces create a palpable sense of seclusion, reflecting the isolation of the main characters and making the audience feel as though they're in the world with them.

The tension builds gradually but effectively, echoing the strongest elements of early "Stranger Things" while shifting away from overt supernatural elements toward something more psychological. The result is a slow-burning narrative that prioritizes mood, character and emotional stakes.

"Something Very Bad Is Going to Happen" is just the redemption the Duffers need to prove they haven't completely lost their touch.