Baseball: Hook C looks to sink East Tennessee State Buccaneers

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It's been almost two weeks since the UConn baseball program (26-20, 10-5) played at its home stadium. Now, UConn students will have the chance to see the squad in action ahead of finals week.

For a three-game series this weekend, the Hook C will take on the East Tennessee State Buccaneers (27-15, 9-6).

The Huskies came off a dominant series against Georgetown last weekend and then a 5-4 win against Rutgers on Tuesday.

Against Rutgers, redshirt junior and outfielder Chris Polemeni dominated, bringing in his seventh home run of the season. With this home run, he brought three Huskies to the plate, giving his squad a 3-0 lead in the fourth inning.

Despite Rutgers racking up two runs, Chris Cancel hit his first homer of the season in the seventh inning to give his squad the 4-2 win.

Pitcher Paxton Meyers saved his squad on the mound in the ninth, his fifth this season in his graduate campaign. This save would solidify the 5-4 win for the Huskies.

As for the matchup against the Buccaneers, this marks the first time these two programs have gone head-to-head.

On the Buccaneer's squad, the Huskies' fielding should look out for Tristan Curless and Henry Ferguson, who are each drilling a .399 and .359 batting average, respectively.

As for their pitching squad, UConn's hitters should keep an eye out for Michael Harpster, who has thrown a 3.07 ERA so far this season.

East Tennessee State is also coming off a 10-7 win from Tuesday against UNC Asheville. Both squads will look to stay in the win column as they head into this weekend's series.

On the Hook C's Instagram page, the team announced that out of its pitching staff, Charlie West will start on the mound on Friday. Then, Cayden Suchy on Saturday and Oliver Pudvar on Sunday, matching the rotation they chose last weekend against Georgetown.

West has been a consistent thrower on the Huskies' staff this season, striking out 83 and pitching an ERA of 3.68 over a total of 63.2 innings.

As for Suchy and Pudvar, each have an ERA of 3.55 and 2.92, respectively, over their 2025-26 campaign.

First pitch for Friday's game is scheduled for 3:05 p.m., followed by Saturday's game, which will start at 2:05 p.m. Then, finally, the squads will close out the series Sunday, commencing at 11:05 a.m.

Husky fans can tune in to each matchup on UConn+.



The UConn baseball team competes in a doubleheader at Elliot Ballpark on Saturday, April 18, 2026. The Huskies lost the first game 6-5 before bouncing back with a 10-0 shutout victory in the second matchup. PHOTO BY PARKER MEYERS, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Ava's Angle: Did the Bills land potential steal of the NFL Draft with UConn's Skyler Bell?

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Skyler Bell on the field ready for a play during a UConn football game. Bell was the 125th pick in the 2026 NFL Draft. PHOTO COURTESY OF @JU1CEBELL ON INSTAGRAM

There's something different about watching one of your own hear their name called on draft night. For UConn fans, that moment carried a little more weight when Skyler Bell was selected No. 125 overall by the Buffalo Bills in the fourth round of the 2026 NFL Draft.

It wasn't just another pick – it felt personal, as Bell is the Huskies' first skill player to be drafted in 11 years. A reminder that players developed in Storrs can step onto the biggest stage in football. The Jim Mora era played a large role in putting Connecticut Football on the map which is now left in the hands of Jason Candle.

Now comes the question that's already building momentum in national news and NFL scouting reports: Did the Buffalo Bills just find the steal of the draft?

If you watched UConn over the past couple of seasons, Bell's rise was never a doubt. In 26 games over two seasons, he put up 151 receptions for 2,138 yards and 18 touchdowns, averaging 14.2 yards per catch. Those numbers stand on their own, but they don't fully capture what made him special. Bell had a way of turning routine plays into explosive moments. A short route could suddenly become a breakaway touchdown, and tight coverage rarely seemed to matter; specifically in the 2025 season where he put up 101 receptions for 1,278 yards and 13 touchdowns, almost earning him the offensive triple crown in NCAA college football. When the Huskies needed a play, the ball consistently found Bell and more often than not, he delivered.

That reliability could've been one of Bell's primary strengths that caught the attention of Buffalo's front office. General manager Brandon Beane didn't just mention Bell in passing, he emphasized how intentional the selection was. Buffalo's new head coach Joe Brady spoke with clear excitement about Bell's versatility and how seamlessly his skill set can fit into the offense, reinforcing the idea that this wasn't just a depth pick, but more a calculated addition with immediate upside. In a league built on versatility, Bell fits the mold of a receiver who can quickly become essential.

"He's a guy that we think can play inside, can play outside, has enough speed," said Beane. "Good with contested catches, you saw some run after the catch with him. If you just want to watch his highlight tape, go watch the Syracuse game; they just kept throwing him the ball."

Of course, fit also depends on who's throwing the football. Stepping into an offense led by Josh Allen changes the equation. Allen's style demands trust, timing, awareness and the ability to adjust on the fly. Bell made a college career out of being exactly where his quarterback needed him to be, specifically with his connection to newly signed Baltimore Ravens quarterback Joe Fagnano. If that translates quickly, his role in Buffalo's offense could grow faster than most fourth-round picks ever do.

Beane mentioned the Bills looking into Bell's film specifically from the Huskies game against Syracuse; however, the UConn wideout had multiple defining performances in just last season alone. In about every game, target after target, Bell created separation, made tough catches and became impossible to ignore. Some other highlighted moments are against Duke, Boston College, FIU, Rice, UAB and more. Bell continuously had the types of performances that force NFL scouts to look twice, and clearly the Bills did.

Still, labeling any Day 3 pick as a "steal" comes with some projection. Bell wasn't surrounded by the same spotlight as receivers from powerhouse programs, and that likely played a role in where he landed. But sometimes, that's exactly how value is found. Players who produce, adapt and compete without the hype often carry an edge. Those are the players who tend to outperform expectations.

Bell checks a lot of the boxes that translate to the next level: strong hands, spatial awareness, the ability to extend plays after the catch and the flexibility to move across formations. What he didn't have was first-round attention. What he does have now is an opportunity in Buffalo.

"He has a unique skill set and those are the type of guys that sometimes you don't think are going to be there and they're there and you've got to take advantage of that," said Brady.

For UConn, this moment is bigger than just one player. Bell's path reinforces something the program continues to build – credibility. Sending a receiver into an NFL offense with real expectations proves that development in Storrs is producing pro-ready talent, especially with fellow UConn alumni Chase Lundt and Ryan Van Demark currently and formerly on the Bills roster.

So, is he the steal of the NFL Draft?

It's early. But if Bell earns Allen's and the rest of the team's trust, even in flashes – this conversation won't last long. Because what looks like a fourth-round receiver snag today could quickly become one of the smartest moves of the draft. With the potential to be a legitimate problem for opposing defenses, Bill's Mafia is in for a treat with Bell on their roster.

And for those who watched him at UConn, it wouldn't feel surprising at all.