WOMEN'S BASKETBALL:

No. 2 UConn opens regular season with Cornell as part of Hartford doubleheader

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STORRS — Geno Auriemma remembers the yellow specs scattered throughout the stands of a cavernous Hartford Civic Center.

The security guards, donning yellow jackets with their backs to the court, were the only people in attendance during the early days of UConn basketball doubleheaders, which always featured the women first followed by the men later. Auriemma's voice, the only other audible noise outside of the squeaking of players' shoes on the court, echoed through the concourse and up to the upper deck.

"There were no tickets to buy," Auriemma said, recalling the doubleheaders of the mid-1980s. "If you bought a ticket to the men's game and you wanted to come a little bit earlier, you got to watch a little bit of the women's game. So, you think back to that in those early years, now you might have two sold-out games in one night."

The last UConn basketball doubleheader was in Nov. 2022, when the women played NC State, and the men played Delaware State. But note Auriemma's language: Monday's "doubleheader" at PeoplesBank Arena — where the second-ranked women will play Cornell at 5 p.m. and the No. 4 men will play Gardner-Webb at 9 p.m. — isn't a doubleheader like the ones of the program's infancy.

The games will operate independently, with separate admission and a clearing out of the arena taking place between the end of the women's game and start of the men's game. That's by design, though.

UConn is trying to max out its revenue to stay competitive in the Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) era; selling separate tickets to see two top-five-ranked programs on opening night is a nice opportunity to bring in some cash.

The chance to see Sarah Strong, the reigning Big East and national player of the year and assumed leader of the team, is also enticing.

"If what I've seen (this off-season) is any indication, there is a different look to her," Auriemma said. "It's different. You can see it already, it's different. And, you know, she's going to need some help from the rest of the team to make sure that it's not all about Sarah all the time."

Strong will certainly get some help from Blanca Quiñonez (shoulder), Morgan Cheli (undisclosed) and Marine Dursus (foot), all of whom will be available for Monday's opener, according to Auriemma.

"Not 100%, but they were all there and they all did something," Auriemma said of his injured players. "Some did more than others, but I'm expecting everyone to be available Monday night for at least something."

Getting Quiñonez back in the rotation could kick steely freshman Jovana Popovic, who started and starred in all three of UConn's preseason exhibitions, to the bench. Auriemma will have his hands full delegating minutes throughout what could be a 10-deep rotation.

"You have to play your best players, right?" Auriemma said. "You have to play your best players 40 minutes. But it can't be your five best players for 40 minutes. So you have to determine how many of those players can you play for 40 minutes during that 40 minute period."

Ask the players about minutes and lineups and they'll give a less-than-colorful answer.

"It's been a tough preseason," Strong said. "We are all really excited to play."

Ask them how they're feeling — why they're nervous and/or excited — and they'll give a different response, though.

"My freshman year, I'd be a little nervous," KK Arnold quipped. "Now, I'm just excited to just get it rolling."

Arnold, Shade and Strong, along with seven others, all return from last season, but Monday's regular-season opener will be the first official game for freshmen Popovic, Dursus and Olivia Vukosa — an official indoctrination into the Basketball Capital of the World.

"It's hard to gauge vibes," Auriemma said. "People are so vanilla a lot. I think one of things that I want to see is what the identity of the team is early on — how we approach the game, what it looks like, what it feels like. You don't know those things until you play your first regular season game."



University of Connecticut's Sarah Strong holds the ball against the Army Black Knights at M&T Bank Center at Gampel Pavilion on Oct. 25, 2026. The Huskies won 86-50 against Army.

PHOTO BY MADISON HENDRICKS, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

WOMEN'S SOCCER:

Huskies keep postseason hopes alive



The University of Connecticut women's soccer team lines up under the lights against Butler on Wednesday. The game ended in a 0-0 draw.

PHOTO BY PANAGIOTIS TROUGAKOS, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

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The University of Connecticut women's soccer team (4-4-9, 2-2-5 Big East) snapped a six-game winless streak on Saturday, taking a late lead over Georgetown University (2-5-3, 5-7-5 Big East) to escape with a narrow 1-0 victory.

With the contest knotted at zero heading into the 76th minute, senior midfielder Anaya Johnson took a trip to the penalty mark after being pushed down by Hoyas midfielder Maya Wiese on a Chloe Shimkin free kick into the box.

With five Hoyas defenders ready to charge the goal in case of a deflected shot, Johnson instead sent a line drive past diving goalkeeper Reiley Fitzpatrick and into the left side of the net, putting the Huskies up one and giving them a definitive lead at 75:37.

With her third goal of the season, the Preseason All-Big East honoree tied freshman midfielder Maeve Staunton as the team's leading scorer. Staunton has not scored since Sept. 13 against West Virginia. All three of Johnson's goals have come during Big East play, which began on Sept. 30 against St. John's.

Johnson is also now tied with Staunton with a team-leading seven points.

Johnson's goal was one of just three shots the Huskies placed on goal in the contest, tied with their 2-0 loss to Harvard on Sept. 20 for their second-lowest mark of the season. Senior defender Alayna Taylor and sophomore midfielder Maree-Anne Van Doesburg also notched a shot on goal apiece, both of which were saved by Fitzpatrick.

Junior midfielder Gabby Miller also saw an apparent goal get disallowed after video review in the 12th minute.

UConn goalkeeper Ava Yamas posted her fifth shutout of the season and second-straight after also holding Butler scoreless on Wednesday in a 0-0 draw. The sophomore made three stops.

The home victory was the Huskies' first in Storrs over the Hoyas since 2009. UConn is now 4-1-4 at Joseph J. Morrone Stadium this season, compared to 0-3-5 on the road.

With the win, the Huskies move back to .500 both overall and in Big East play for the first time since their 0-2 loss against Creighton (7-7-3, 3-4-2 Big East) on Oct. 21.

The Huskies now sit in sixth place in the Big East with 11 points, tied with the Bluejays. Xavier (12-2-3, 6-0-3 Big East) and Villanova (11-1-5, 6-1-2 Big East) have already clinched a top two seed in the Big East postseason tournament. Seton Hall (3-2-4, 7-2-6 Big East) and Marquette (7-3-8, 3-2-4 Big East) are tied for third with 13 points.

Providence (5-4-9, 3-3-3 Big East) also sits in front of UConn in the standings by one point.

DePaul (2-4-3, 5-6-6), Georgetown and St. John's (0-6-3, 3-10-4) are eliminated. The Hoyas' season is over.

UConn can reach as high as the No. 3 seed but will need a multitude of scenarios to occur to even earn a postseason berth.

In addition to winning their final game of the season, the Huskies will need DePaul to either win or draw against Creighton. Additionally, UConn will need St. John's to win or draw against Seton Hall. If Seton Hall wins, the Huskies would then need the Providence and Marquette matchup to end in a draw.

None of that will matter if the Huskies don't take care of business against Villanova, as UConn will travel to Pa. on Saturday looking for their first road win of the year and a chance at keeping their season alive.

The Huskies have not won on the road against Villanova since a 2-0 double overtime victory in 2012, tying three times since.

Kickoff at the Higgins Soccer Complex is scheduled for 3 p.m. The game will stream live on ESPN+.