SPORTS

FOOTBALL:

Air Force run game proves to be too much for the Huskies

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The United States Air Force Academy Falcons rushed for 366 yards in Saturday's 35-26 win over the University of Connecticut Huskies.

The loss drops UConn to 4-4 and breaks their two-game win streak.

"The goal is to play clean football in all three phases, and we weren't able to today," head coach Jason Candle said.

The Huskies started with the football, but an early three-and-out gave it right to Air Force. The Falcons established the run game right away, putting together a 10-play, 55-yard drive ending in Kemper Hodges' first touchdown of the game.

Connecticut got some momentum on the next drive but faced a fourth-and-six a little bit outside of field goal range. Kalieb Osborne's pass was incomplete on fourth down, and the Falcons took over.

A pair of punts led to Air Force getting the ball back, and Hodges was on the loose again. The senior broke free for a 62-yard touchdown, and Air Force was up 14-0 in the first quarter.

UConn answered with a big catch from Flash Wilson to get them into the red zone. Osborne then hit Xavier Watson for what was ruled a touchdown, but was overturned after referees said that Watson stepped out of bounds at the one. UConn handed it off to Trey Cornist, who punched in the touchdown to make it 14-7.

The Falcons chewed the clock with the rush attack and found themselves near the goal line once again. Hodges took the triple option keeper for himself and scored his third touchdown of the day before halftime.

The Huskies would not go quietly into halftime as a healthy dose of passes and runs set up third-and-goal from the two-yard line. Osborne connected with Ryder Treadway, who made a diving grab for his first touchdown of the year.

Hayden Pegg recorded a sack during Air Force's two-minute drill, and that would be it as the teams headed to the locker room in a 21-14 game.

UConn looked to have momentum after the late score and a defensive three-and-out to start the third, but they punted right away, and it was rushing time again for the Falcons.

The Huskies looked to have stopped Air Force as they sent the punting team out. Hodges took a direct snap from the long snapper and had a back-breaking 19-yard run for a first down to continue the drive. The 16-play drive culminated in Gage LaDue running in a four-yard score.

Down two scores late in the third quarter, Osborne fired over the middle to Alex Godavitarne, and the Wheeling transfer did the rest. Godavitarne broke a tackle at the 35 and went untouched the rest of the way to the end zone for a 55-yard score. It was the tight end's first catch since Week 3, but it came when the Huskies needed it the most. Unfortunately for UConn, Jack O'Connor's extra point attempt was no good, leaving the score at 28-20.

This would prove costly as UConn got the ball right back and scored four plays later on a Kenji Christian 46-yard scamper. Having to go for two because of the missed extra point, Osborne was sacked by Isaac Hubert, and Air Force got the ball back up two points.

The Falcons continued to show why they are one of the best rushing attacks in the nation. A 19-play drive found both teams in a fourth-and-goal situation at the one-yard line. Like it was all afternoon in Colorado Springs, it was Hodges time. He kept the snap and scored his third touchdown of the game.

Hodges had 35 carries for 200 yards and four touchdowns; the Huskies had no answer. Air Force's time of possession was a whopping 41:54, something UConn had not seen yet this season.

UConn could not muster up any more points and took home the loss to go back to .500. For the second time this season, Air Force won a game without completing a forward pass.

"When you play a team that's whole heartedly committed to one style of football, they don't know any other way and it's really hard to get them off the field," Candle said.

Their next game is on Saturday at The Rent against Bill Belichick and North Carolina. Kickoff is at noon.



The University of Connecticut football team battles against the University of Massachusetts Minutemen at Rentschler Field in East Hartford on Friday, Oct. 23, 2026. The Huskies took a decisive 35-16 victory in the historic New England Rivalry.

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER RENZULLI, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

MEN'S BASKETBALL:

Huskies kick off season in Hartford against Gardner–Webb

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HARTFORD — Less than a week ago, the University of Connecticut men's basketball team took down Purdue by 23 points in a 2024 National Championship rematch in front of a sellout crowd of 15,495 at PeoplesBank Arena.

A week before that, the Huskies gutted out a road victory over Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame coach Tom Izzo and No. 6 Michigan State, 78-70.

Even earlier, UConn renewed one of the most iconic rivalries in Big East history for the first time since 2018, when they took down Syracuse at the Mohegan Sun Arena, 72-52, in the team's first live action against another program of the season.

The Huskies returning to Hartford on Monday to host Gardner-Webb, who won just four games last season, may seem mellow in comparison to the first three contests of the season. However, the game has one thing going for it that the three exhibitions did not: it counts.

"One of the benefits of having played the exhibitions and playing some real opponents is you probably get a chance to just avoid those opening night jitters because you've already kind of dealt with that as a team," UConn Head Coach Dan Hurley said Sunday during media availability. "But now, from here on out, obviously, there's consequences to these games."

The Huskies will look to open the 2026-27 campaign 1-0 for the 10th consecutive season as they open their regular season against the Runnin' Bulldogs, game No. 2 of a doubleheader in Hartford led off by the No. 2 UConn women's basketball team facing Cornell.

Though a date with No. 16 Michigan on Friday is creeping ever closer, Hurley said the team scouts and prepares at the same intensity regardless of what opponent it is facing.

"You are dealing with human nature with college-age kids, but we treat every preparation the same," Hurley said. "We treat every opponent with the utmost respect and preparation. Gardner-Webb or Michigan or Wagner [on Nov. 9] or whoever we're playing, they have our full attention."

Regardless of the level of competition, the Huskies have to tie up a few loose ends before facing the meat of their gauntlet-like nonconference slate.

That starts with making sure both Na'jai Hines and Oskar Giltay are ready to perform while staying out of foul trouble. Both sophomore centers fouled out in a game this preseason, with Giltay being a foul away from being disqualified from a second.

However, it was Giltay who held up to his end of the bargain against Purdue. The Stanford transfer tied with preseason standout Nik Khamenia for a team best plus-26 rating while only picking up two personal fouls. The 6-foot-11 center held up well against 7-foot-4 Purdue big man Daniel Jacobsen, producing 12 points and hauling in four rebounds.

Hines somewhat found his groove in the second half and only accrued three fouls, outrebounding Giltay by one when all was said and done. Still, his net-zero rating was a far cry from the dominant 17-point, eight-rebound performance against Syracuse.

While both centers have shown they are capable of starting options, both will need to be playing close to their demonstrated peaks by the time Friday rolls around.

A decision will also have to be made on who will officially fill the final starting spot in the Huskies' lineup to start the season. Though forwards Jayden Ross and Colben Landrew each started the Huskies' first two exhibition games, it was Ross who stayed in the starting lineup upon Braylon Mullins' return on Tuesday.

Ross made the most of the opportunity, providing 13 points in a perfect shooting performance.

However, Landrew too shined, exploding for 11 points during a stretch lasting just three minutes and 31 seconds in the second half to keep his name in the conversation.

"We've got six starters," Hurley said after the Purdue win. "Colben [Landrew], Braylon [Mullins], Nik [Khamenia], [Jayden] Ross. One of those guys is going to have to come off the bench, but all of them will play starter minutes."

That's a good problem to have, as it means Mullins is healthy enough to remain in the lineup after missing the first two preseason games with an undisclosed injury before playing in the final exhibition contest against the Boilermakers.

Mullins is expected to make his opening day debut after missing last year's opener against New Haven, a 79-55 victory, with an ankle injury.

In his first game action since the 2026 National Championship, Mullins went just 3-for-9 from the field and 1-for-6 from behind the three-point line. While the Huskies will surely be hoping for more out of the shooting guard in his second collegiate season, getting him on the court is a good start. So were his four assists, second on the team behind only Silas Demary Jr.

"I'm just happy to be healthy enough to play and just to start the year right and kind of take it one step at a time, one game at a time," Mullins said Sunday.

Speaking of Demary Jr., the Big East Preseason Player of the Year reached double-digit points in each exhibition game.

The point guard's backup, Junior County, also posted a strong preseason. Playing around 17 minutes in each contest, the freshman shot 44% from deep on four makes. County also notched six assists on just two turnovers.

"I think the biggest thing with Junior is just being ready," Demary Jr. said Sunday. "I think always be ready when your numbers called, because there was a bunch of times where [former UConn guard Malachi Smith] had to be ready [last season] because I was in foul trouble. Just telling him to just go in there, play his game, be confident in what he's doing."

The Runnin' Bulldogs lost four of their top five scorers from last season to the transfer portal but returned junior guard Jacob Hudson, who was second on last year's team with 10.7 points per game.

Senior guard Ace Talbert (6.7 ppg, second on the team with 37 steals) also returns from last year's starting lineup, while sophomore guard Jamias Ferere (6.3 ppg) moved into the starting lineup toward the end of the season.

6-foot-11 junior college transfer Brave Rutsindura will provide some competition for the Huskies' centers in the paint after pulling down 4.7 rebounds per game last season for Navarro College.

Tipoff in Hartford is scheduled for 9 p.m. The contest will be broadcast live on Peacock.