FOOTBALL: UCONN FALLS TO BELICHICK'S UNC, 38-21, IN NEW ENGLAND REUNION

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EAST HARTFORD, Conn. — Legendary Patriots coach Bill Belichick made his return to the Northeast and walked away with a win after back-to-back heartbreaking losses for the University of North Carolina Tar Heels.

Both teams entered the matchup 4-4 on the season, continuing the quest for bowl eligibility. Roughly 37,000 fans packed Rentschler Field for the reunion, braving classic New England weather.

The two basketball blue bloods kicked off in a 63-degree, cloudy sky, embracing the ominous skies that towered over the Rent.

The University of Connecticut received the ball after UNC won the coin toss, giving quarterback Kalieb Osborne and the Huskies a chance to strike first. Cyncir Bowers opened the game with a rush before he saw two straight targets hit his hands and fall incomplete.

North Carolina's opening drive looked promising, gaining 23 yards before Tar Heels quarterback Billy Edwards Jr. aired one into double coverage and was intercepted by Hayden Pegg.

Connecticut responded the other way, sparking their own drive all the way to UNC's 27-yard line. Jack O'Conner then attempted a 45-yard field goal that sailed wide left, keeping the teams scoreless. The lackluster kicking game continues for O'Conner, dropping his field goal percentage to 57.1 this season (4-for-7), including 1-for-4 from 40 to 49 yards.

UNC continued struggling on their second drive after the Huskies forced a three-and-out, leading to a 37-yard punt by Aeron Burrell. The sun glistened out from the clouds as UConn started their third drive from their own 27-yard line. A huge opening play from Osborne scrambling from the pocket and avoiding the sack before zipping a pass downfield to Ryder Treadway for a gain of 23 yards. The Huskies then tried the running game, utilizing Kenji Christian along with Osborne's legs to gain every yard they could. The Huskies then attempted to punt, but a penalty on UNC brought them a fourth-and-three, and head coach Jason Candle kept his offense on the field.

"We go for it on fourth down a lot. And there's times where we're going to be aggressive that way, and there's other times we have to go out there and try to get points," Candle said.

Osborne stepped back and delivered one to the visitor's sideline, but North Carolina's Timir Hickman-Collins picked off the bobbled pass by Christian and took it back 70 yards for the game's opening score. It was Osborne's first thrown pick six of the season, but his memory had to be short, re-taking the field seconds later against the ACC program.

Osborne completed a quick 10-yard pass to JD Willoughby for the first down before the Tar Heel's defense stood strong again, forcing the Huskies to punt for the second time. The punt rolled down the field, giving Tommy Warner a 55-yard punt, pushing UNC deep into their own territory. UConn's defense then forced a three-and-out, putting the ball back in Osborne's hands with under two minutes left in the opening quarter.

The Huskies completed their three-minute drive at the beginning of the second quarter, ending with an 18-yard receiving touchdown for Treadway. It was UConn's first red zone appearance of the game, and they took advantage, knotting the game at seven apiece.

UNC took only three and a half minutes to respond, plowing down the field for 86 yards in seven plays. Benjamin Hall capped off the drive with a 39-yard rushing touchdown, cutting to the left and breaking tackles. The Huskies crafted a responding drive but were cut short when Osborne lunged for extra yards, putting the ball directly into Hickman-Collins' lap. Outrage erupted amongst The Rent as fans were furious with the call claiming his knee was down, but the call was upheld, and Carolina took over at UConn's 21-yard line.

Edwards Jr. wasted no time with the best field position of the game, slicing a pass to Jordan Shipp for the six-yard score.

"At times I didn't feel like we were at our best, and we gave them some things and set them up in some short fields," Candle said after the game.

UConn then assembled a one-minute drive going 75 yards in five plays. Osborne connected with Julian Allen for a gain of 33. The following play, Osborne avoided the sack and stepped up, firing a pass to Cam Abshire for the 24-yard touchdown. The Huskies were back within a score with six and a half remaining in the second quarter.



UConn offensive lineman Raphael Greene-Nyarko (73) celebrates with running back Cyncir Bowers (23) during the game against North Carolina at Pratt & Whitney Stadium at Rentschler Field in East Hartford on Saturday, Nov. 7, 2026. North Carolina won 38-21. PHOTO BY JONATHAN MORKOS, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Belichick then did what he does best and drained the clock while marching down the field for a six-minute drive. The Tar Heels went 75 yards in 16 plays, ending with a play-fake and passing touchdown to Jelani Thurman. Carolina entered the locker room up 28-14.

The second half started with UNC in possession, but UConn's defense again kept the ball out of their own territory and forced a 47-yard punt by Aeron Burrell. UConn then put together the team's longest scoring drive of the season, going 93 yards in seven plays. Bowers ended the drive with an electric 13-yard rushing touchdown, and once again the Huskies were just down a score.

Rain took over the sky in East Hartford on the ensuing drive, with many fans leaving their seats to stand and watch under the covered areas of the Rent. The downpour didn't slow down UNC, who answered with their one-and-only field goal of the game. Rece Verhoff knocked a 27-yard field goal through the uprights, stretching the Tar Heels' lead to 10. UConn's tenth drive drained the clock for the rest of the quarter after starting at their own seven-yard line following a holding penalty on kickoff. The Huskies brought the ball into UNC territory, but an incomplete pass to Willoughby on fourth-and-12 forced a turnover on downs.

UNC used this turnover to drain eight minutes before a 49-yard field goal attempt that sailed wide left. The Huskies had a chance to cut the lead to three with decent field positioning. The opening play of the drive, however, Peyton Seelmann blitzed Osborne untouched and picked up the sack and a loss of 10 for the Huskies. On a desperation pass on third-and-20, Osborne sent a deep ball that was intercepted by Jalon Thompson. The Tar Heels then punched in the final score of the game with three and a half left, securing the victory for the visitors.

It was a much-needed win for UNC, and Belichick was pleased with the performance he got from his players.

"Proud of our guys and the way they stepped up. Finished the game, and the turnovers were big for us," said Belichick.

It is now make or break for the Huskies with only three weeks left to claim two more wins and secure a bowl game.

UConn is back in action at the Rent next Saturday against JMU. Kickoff is set for noon, and the game can be streamed on CBS.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

UConn takes 2026 National Championship rematch over Michigan, 85-77

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BOSTON — On a large LED display board hanging outside TD Garden, a temporary advertisement greeted fans on Friday night.

"WELCOME TO STORRS NORTH" the sign read in bright capitalized letters next to an enlarged image of Silas Demary Jr. holding a basketball on his shoulder.

Inside, every time Michigan ran out of the tunnel and onto the court to warm up, a sea of boos rained down on the Wolverines. The same happened each time a fan sporting "Michigan Maize" or fashioning their fingers into the shape of an 'M' was displayed on the gargantuan scoreboard hanging over midcourt

When Michigan guard Trey McKenney sent the final shot of the first half off the front of the rim to send the Huskies into halftime with a 43-30 lead, the crowd rewarded UConn's defensive stand with a "Big Red" chant, drowning out the music blasting in the arena as they loudly spelled out the school's name.

"U-C-O-N-N. UConn, UConn, UConn."

Though the 2026 National Championship rematch came under the tag of the TNT Sports Hall of Fame Series Boston, that moniker merely masked its true identity: a quasi-UConn home game.

The No. 4 Huskies (2-0) took advantage of the friendly crowd and held onto that first half lead, taking down No. 16 Michigan (1-1), 85-77.

"The environment was great," UConn guard Braylon Mullins said. "I know UConn brings a crowd, so it was definitely exciting. I'm hoping many more games in the future, it's like that again."

The Wolverines sprinted out of the gates with a blink-and-you'll-miss-it score just six seconds into the contest, with senior point guard Elliot Cadeau rocketing a pass off the tip in the direction of junior Moustapha Thiam. The 7-foot-2 center corralled the pass midair and finished the play with a dunk.

That was the last time the Wolverines held a lead. Just 24 seconds later, Mullins swished a 3-pointer to put the Huskies up one.

UConn forward Nik Khamenia followed that up with a layup, and Demary Jr. added his first two points on a jumper to complete an early 7-0 Huskies run less than five minutes into the contest. While Cadeau scored five straight to tie the game — the final time Michigan would do so — Mullins sent another 3-pointer up and good to send the Huskies into the first media timeout up by three.

From there, Demary Jr. took over for the remainder of the first half. Sinking a transition three after an Oskar Giltay defensive rebound out of the break, the Big East Preseason Player of the Year went on to score 11 more points the rest of the half to finish the period with 17.

Michigan held pace early with a steady dose of layups, including a pair from fifth-year guard Roddy Gayle Jr. to keep it close at 18-14 with 10:47 to play in the half.

Cadeau also added one in that time, one which saw UConn forward Jayden Ross and Cadeau go flying to the ground after Ross was called for a shooting foul. Things got scrappy on the floor, with the pair each getting called for a technical after some minor shoving.

That was not the Huskies' last technical foul of the evening, as their bench was called for another with 4:54 to go in the first, which left Hurley on the bench staring toward the sky in seeming disbelief.

"I have no credibility because of my past behavior, so no one's gonna back me on this, but that technical was on [assistant coach] Mike Nardi," Hurley said. "I don't want to be a rat. ... That wasn't my technical.

That was Nardi. Nardi threw his papers. He had the scout, so he threw his scouting papers. I just sat back in the chair and just looked up into the sky."

Michigan failed to take advantage of the paper throwing, as freshman forward and Massachusetts native Quinn Costello missed both technical free throws before forward J.P. Estrella missed the first of his two, stemming from the Colben Landrew foul that started the ruckus.

The blare of the crowd grew stronger with each miss and seemed ready to explode through the roof had Estrella missed his second, which he instead finally sunk to somewhat salvage the trip to the charity stripe for Michigan and make it 32-28.

UConn picked up its tenth foul of the first half with 8:20 to play. Demary Jr. was the only member of the starting lineup to enter the second half with less than two fouls.

Outside of the 1-for-4 debacle, Michigan otherwise went 8-for-10 on foul shots across the rest of the first.

"It was a stunning result at halftime to be up 13, considering the amount of people that were on the bench with foul trouble," Hurley said.

That likely would've kept the contest close going into the half had the Huskies not gone on a nine-point run, led by seven points in less than two minutes from Landrew. After hitting a quartet of free throws, the freshman nailed a 3-pointer to send the crowd into a frenzy and give the Huskies that 13-point lead at the half.

"When we get to the arena the day of the game ... he can't wait for the game to start," Hurley said. "He thinks he's the best player on the court, and I think at a lot of points this year, he's going to be."

Landrew's 14 points buoyed a bench scoring advantage of 18-8 in the Huskies' favor. The forward also led the team with eight rebounds.

The Huskies came out of the locker room hot in the second half, with Ross landing a pair of 3-pointers and Mullins contributing a three-point play of his own along with a jumper. The second Ross 3 gave the Huskies their largest lead of the evening, 52-34 with 16:22 to play.

After going 0-7 from the field in the first half and entering the second without a point, McKenney dropped 22 in the second on 8-of-11 shooting from the field to help the Wolverines narrow that lead late.

That performance may have made more of a difference had the Huskies not essentially cancelled it out with foul shots. The Wolverines sent the Huskies to the line for 28 foul shots in second, which UConn made 23 of. Mullins went 10-of-11 on second-half foul shots.

The two teams combined for 48 fouls in the contest.

"Obviously, games early in the year and early nonconference, they do get reffed a little bit tighter and you do get a lot of fouls called in these early games," Hurley said. "But we clearly had some undisciplined fouling there."

Scoring 21 points, Demary Jr. finished the contest with 17 field goal attempts, 14 more than he took in UConn's 86-46 victory over Gardner-Webb Monday.

"I feel like coach has told me, 'be an All-American point guard,'" Demary Jr. said. "So that's just being able to go out there and run the offense. If it's time to score, or if it's time to get guys involved, that's what I'm going to do."

Demary Jr. also led the team with four assists and added seven rebounds, being named the Hall of Fame Boston Series MVP for the second straight season.

Mullins finished the contest with a team-high 23 points, two shy of matching his career high and marking the first time the sophomore has scored 20 points in back-to-back games.

Next up, the Huskies will return home Monday to make their season debut at the newly named M&T Bank Center at Gampel Pavilion, hosting Wagner. Tipoff in Storrs is scheduled for 7 p.m. Fans can tune in live on truTV.