COLETTE'S COMMENTARY:
WOMEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL IS ALREADY KEEPING FANS ON THEIR TOES

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Women's college basketball is only a few games into the season, but it has already given fans plenty to talk about. From unexpected upsets to the return of some of the sport's biggest stars, the opening weeks have brought a level of excitement and unpredictability that has made the championship picture even more interesting. With Michigan taking down reigning powerhouse UConn, JuJu Watkins returning to the court and programs across the country navigating revamped rosters, one thing is clear: The season has barely tipped off, but the shake-up has already begun.

The season's first major shake-up came when Michigan handed UConn its first regular-season loss in 39 games, defeating the Huskies 77-66. The result was more than just an early season upset. It immediately changed expectations surrounding one of the sport's most dominant programs and established Michigan as a team to watch this season. After finishing last regular season undefeated and reaching the Final Four, the expectations were high for the Huskies, who entered the season ranked No. 2 behind South Carolina, the team that eliminated them from last season's NCAA Tournament.

For Michigan, the victory was historic, marking the highest-ranked opponent the program has ever defeated. The Wolverines established control early, outscoring the Huskies 18-8 in the second quarter while UConn's star guard Sarah Strong was sidelined with foul trouble. As the Huskies struggled to find their rhythm, Michigan continued to build momentum, closing out the game with a 20-9 run to secure the historic 77-66 win.

While some teams are making statements through unexpected victories, USC is welcoming back a familiar face. After over a year recovering from an ACL injury, JuJu Watkins has returned to the court, bringing another exiting storyline to an already competitive season. Watkins was sidelined for nineteen months after tearing her ACL in the second round of the 2025 NCAA tournament. Before the injury, she had put together an outstanding season, earning AP Women's College Basketball Player of the Year honors along with several other national accolades. She made an impressive return, scoring 21 points in her first game back and reminding fans of the impact she can have on the court.

If there were any questions about LSU's offensive firepower entering the season, the Tigers quickly answered it. LSU made history in its 131-22 victory over Texas Southern, setting the Division I women's basketball record for the largest margin of victory with a 109-point difference. The Tigers went on a 50-0 run during the second and third quarters. Freshman forward Anna Minaeva led with 21 points, joining a group of seven players that all scored in double figures.

Among the early-season surprises, one thing has remained relatively consistent: South Carolina is still a force to be reckoned with. The Gamecocks opened their season with a 101-93 victory over No. 20 Maryland before following it up with a dominant 84-39 victory over No. 12 North Carolina. With two statement victories already under their belt, South Carolina has established itself as a team to watch as the season unfolds. The Gamecocks have several exciting matchups ahead, including a showdown against USC on Sunday, Nov. 15, followed by a highly anticipated rematch against UConn on Tuesday, Nov. 24.

Although the season is still in its early stages, women's college basketball has already delivered plenty of excitement and shown just how unpredictable the road to a national championship can be. Michigan has proven that even the sport's most dominant programs are vulnerable; Watkin's return has added another superstar to the championship conversation; LSU has made history and South Carolina continued to establish itself as the team to beat. With several highly anticipated matchups still ahead, the competition is only expected to intensify. If the opening weeks are any indication, fans are in for a season full of surprises and the race for the national championship is far from decided.



The UConn Women's basketball goes up against Texas at Peoplesbank Arena in Hartford, CT on Nov. 19, 2026. The Huskies took the win 83-61.

PHOTO BY MORGAN BLANCHARD, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS



The University of South Carolina Women's basketball team plays against the University of Maryland. The number one ranked Gamecocks won against the Terrapins 101-93.

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UCONN WIFFLEBALL CLUB: BACK TO THE BACKYARD

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Wiffleball was born right here in Connecticut, evolving from a backyard pastime into a cultural phenomenon featured everywhere from ESPN to the e-trade baby 2024 Super Bowl commercial, which insisted pickleball "should be called wiffle tennis."

For third semester marketing major Jack Yadlon, it started as a game he and Joseph "Joey" Kaiser played behind their residence hall, much like how wiffleball originally started in 1954.

"Well, [Kaiser] and I were roommates last year," Yadlon, vice president of the wiffleball club, said. "We had a field behind our hall, Northwest, where we would play wiffleball for fun."

The two had thought about turning their pastimes into something more than a way to pass the time. An Instagram account created in April of last year quickly gained traction as the Fall 2026 semester rolled around.

Initially, Kaiser preferred to grow the club gradually through word of mouth, relying on the roughly 15 people already in their group chat. However, Yadlon advocated for participating in the Involvement Fair, recognizing that building a full league would require recruiting significantly more members.

Kaiser, the president, completed the steps required to register UConn Wiffleball as a student organization and eventually represented the group at the fall involvement fair. Held during the second week of the semester, the fair gives incoming and returning students the opportunity to explore student organization tables across campus and find ways to get involved beyond simply passing by.

The response at the involvement fair was overwhelming, with nearly 100 students joining the GroupMe chat on that day alone — an outcome neither of them had anticipated.

Since then, membership has surpassed 100 students, allowing them to establish a full league and even compete against another university.

Along with planning outreach, Kaiser and Yadlon needed to determine where the team could hold its games. Because there is no centralized public schedule for recreational and practice fields on campus, they looked for a location that would meet the group's needs. They found that the North Recreational field worked well.

"We had no idea what we were doing," Yadlon admitted. "I have a little bit of experience with clubs, but never at [the administrative] level."

The rosters of the club are built with flexibility in mind, starting with six players and expanding to seven to handle student schedules. On the field, there are five players — four fielders and a pitcher, though teams can scrape by with four if someone is missing.

"We kind of have a yin and yang thing going on, me and [Kaiser]," Yadlon said.

The club is split into two, much like Yadlon and Kaiser's attitudes, to represent the club. While Kaiser represents the competitive side, Yadlon represents the more casual aspect of the backyard sport, bringing both together to make the club more accessible to anyone who wants to join and compete in the future.

Pitches are capped at no faster than 68 miles per hour on a member's radar gun — often forgiving balls that are too fast for a person to reasonably hit. They run the bases, as Yadlon acknowledges both the competitiveness and casualness of players on opposing teams talking to each other on the basepaths.

There are six teams and each plays a three-game series against each other. Each game has three innings, and the series is completed in one session. While the regular season has concluded, playoffs are being worked out as play continues, with Yadlon stating it's "a little on the fly."

"We always want to keep the elements of wiffle ball intact," Yadlon said. "We're going to use the yellow bats even if they [are] taped up, because [we] want to keep it pure."

Despite the structure, members of the GroupMe can still organize casual sessions to play without affecting the competitive standings. With over 100 people in the GroupMe, Yadlon is considering expanding the club further. He mentioned that while there are currently six teams, they anticipate expanding to eight next season and hope to reach 10 or 12 eventually.

For Yadlon, a New Jersey native, seeing so many students from diverse academic majors and different walks of college life come together for something he and Kaiser created has been incredible.

While he recognizes familiar faces from other campus organizations, such as UCTV, The Daily Campus and WHUS, he also enjoys connecting with students who are entirely new to his circle.

Ultimately, he finds it fulfilling to see how the club has united people around a shared passion and become a central part of the college experience for many of its members.

Yadlon recalls someone coming up to him earlier this semester and admitting they wouldn't know where they'd be without the club — easily the most rewarding thing anyone has ever told him.

"I didn't expect this to happen," Yadlon admitted.

What started as two roommates tossing a yellow plastic bat around behind Northwest Hall has become an anchor for over a hundred students trying to find their footing on campus, all starting from a text message and an Instagram post just days before the semester started.

It's similar to how wiffleball originally started; sometimes traditions that stick around are the ones you build yourself.



The UConn Wiffle Ball Club meets on Nov. 10, 2026 to scrimmage and play pickup on the North Campus field. The club has played casually and competitively.

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER RENZULLI, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS



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