Daily SPORTS

# WOMEN'S BASKETBALL:

## FIVE TAKEAWAYS FROM NO. 4 UCONN'S 87–55 WIN OVER NO. 17 OHIO STATE

**by Jake McCreven**
POSITION
HE/HIM/HIS
jpm23012@uconn.edu

Geno Auriemma momentarily let a smile slip as Kelis Fisher drained the first 3-pointer of her young career in front of the UConn bench Thursday. It was the first time the grizzled head coach had smiled all night on the sidelines of No. 4 UConn's game against No. 17 Ohio State.

To Auriemma's credit, there wasn't much to smile about in the first half; with Sarah Strong off the floor, Connecticut was struggling to stay afloat against the opportunistic Buckeyes, who cut UConn's opening-frame 13-point lead down to one possession.

Strong returned, emphatically, and willed UConn (3-1) to an 87-55 win over Ohio State (3-1) to give the Huskies their second consecutive ranked win over a Big 10 team.

A fast start was exactly what UConn needed

UConn bolted out to a 10-2 lead in the first four minutes and got eight combined points from Ashlynn Shade and Jana El Alfy before Ohio State burnt its first timeout.

Not even three minutes later, the lead ballooned to 23-10 after a Kayleigh Heckel two-dribble middy swished in.

Even if the lead quickly dissipated thereafter, and Strong again found herself in foul trouble, UConn's ability to build a quick lead — something it wasn't able to do against Michigan last week — gave it a cushion when both Strong and Quiñonez weren't on the court.

Starting fast away from home against a ranked team not only bodes well in the present but will also benefit the Huskies when big games are played on neutral floors later in the season.

The "other players" willed UConn through the first half

Shade's eight-point first quarter blitz, which set a season-high for the 5-foot-9 senior, was for a time the only offense working for the Huskies. Shade finished with 15 points on six of 10 shooting, recording a plus-20 plus/minus.

El Alfy, while only scoring four points total, grabbed three crucial rebounds to stymie the Buckeyes' offensive momentum.

In her homecoming, KK Arnold operated the offense without Strong and Quiñonez on the floor for most of the first half, recording seven points, two assists and two steals in 15 minutes.

Olivia Vukosa, meanwhile, grabbed 10 first half rebounds (three offensive) and dished two assists while scoring twice.




**Olivia Vukosa, freshman center for the UConn women's basketball team. Vukosa finished with eight points and 12 rebounds in her 29 minutes against Ohio State on Nov. 12.**

PHOTO BY NORA MARIANO, ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Auriemma spent most of last week imploring the "other players" to step up, particularly offensively, when Strong and freshman guard Jovana Popovic aren't on the floor. They did just that on Thursday, even if the offense was still far from the "UConn Standard," combining for 33 of UConn's 35 first half points while keeping the Buckeyes at bay defensively.




**Junior forward for the UConn Huskies, Sarah Strong. Strong led the game against Ohio State on Nov. 12 with 25 points and nine rebounds, while also recording five assists and three steals.**

PHOTO BY NORA MARIANO, ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

UConn will need that consistency to translate, though, with Strong's foul trouble now permeating and a trip to No. 7 Louisville looming on Sunday.

Foul trouble again an issue

Strong was whistled for two fouls in the first quarter and sat for a large remainder of the first half. Quiñonez joined her with three of her own minutes later and didn't return to the game until the 1:21 mark of the third period.

Strong, who notably missed most of the first half while UConn sunk against Michigan last week, promptly came back to start the second half and swished three consecutive 3-pointers, building UConn's lead back to 10 after Arnold threw a loose ball to the perimeter, which Strong gathered and swished.

The foul trouble was a non-issue in the second half, when UConn stretched and pried its lead to 30-plus. But a team-wide slow shooting start compounded with Strong and/or Quiñonez getting in foul trouble against South Carolina, Duke, LSU or Louisville could be catastrophic.

Vukosa, El Alfy much improved

If Vukosa's flagrant foul in the third quarter was any indication, UConn's pair of post players were playing with a noticeable urgency Thursday — perhaps the product of the coaching staff getting in their ears.

Vukosa had already corralled 10 rebounds by the end of the second period and finished with eight points and 12 boards in 29 minutes.

The 6-foot-4 freshman extended multiple Connecticut possessions in the first half and presented the requisite intensity — and on-court intuitiveness — of a starting center.

El Alfy, who only played 11 minutes, finished with four points and three rebounds. UConn was plus-17 with El Alfy on the floor and minus-three with Vukosa on the floor.

Sarah Strong is inevitable

Strong, saddled with two fouls, didn't play in the second quarter after recording five points in eight first quarter minutes.

Strong finished with 25 points, nine rebounds, five assists and three steals and UConn was plus-35 with her on the floor. She also set a career-high in 3-pointers made (seven).

For as cliché and simple as it is, Connecticut just looked different with Strong, the reigning national player of the year, on the court. That's an easy thing to say, but it's true.

It's becoming more and more obvious that the only player who can stop Sarah Strong is... Sarah Strong. When she isn't on the bench, Strong is swishing contested 3s in the corner, swatting shots and snaring rebounds over two defenders.

Most importantly, though, Strong's presence takes the burden off secondary scorers like Quiñonez and Popovic and gives Auriemma a de facto on-court coach.

# MEN'S BASKETBALL:

## UCONN SET TO HOST STRIPE OUT AGAINST OHIO STATE

**by James Badeau**
STAFF WRITER
HE/HIM/HIS
james.badeau@uconn.edu

"Know your section. Wear your color," is what UConn men's basketball posted on social media ahead of Friday night's matchup against Ohio State. PeoplesBank Arena will be a stripe out as the No. 4 UConn men's basketball team looks to improve its record to 4-0.

The Huskies (3-0) are coming off a dominant 83-41 win over Dan Hurley's former team, the Wagner Seahawks. The big story from Monday's win was the injury of Nik Khamenia. Khamenia came up hobbling after going for a rebound at the halfway point of the first half. Khamenia limped back to the locker room and was ruled out less than 20 minutes later.

The Huskies turned to their veteran guard Silas Demary Jr., who led the team in scoring with 18 points. Demary was among all five starters who reached double figures, which has not happened for Connecticut since Jan. 7 in the 103-98 overtime thriller against Providence.




**UConn forward Nik Khamenia high-fives head coach Dan Hurley. Khamenia was injured during the game against Wagner on Mon, Nov. 9 and will undergo surgery on his left foot, expecting to be sidelined for six to eight weeks.**

PHOTO BY NORA MARIANO, ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Although he eclipsed 10 points, Braylon Mullins had an off shooting night on Monday, going 2-for-12 overall. Mullins was seen getting shots up over an hour after the game. The sophomore looks to get back into the swing of things on Friday.

Ohio State (2-1) is coming off an 84-74 victory over Marshall. John Mobley Jr., who led the team in scoring last season, played 35 minutes, scoring a team-high 19 points. The Buckeyes also feature Justin Pippen, son of NBA Hall of Famer Scottie Pippen. The California transfer chipped in nine points in Monday's win over Marshall.

Ohio State's lone loss came in the season opener against then-No. 25 BYU. The Buckeyes held the Cougars in check, being down by just three points at the half. However, the second half was much the opposite, as they allowed 60 points, losing the game 94-83.

Second-half defense has been the kryptonite for Ohio State in its first three games, allowing an average of 52.6 points in the final 20 minutes. The Huskies must take advantage of those defensive lapses and blow the game wide open once they reach the second half.

With the injury of Khamenia, UConn can expect more faces to see the floor. Nils Machowski and Egor Amosov saw the floor more on Monday than they did in the first two games. Machowski played 18 minutes, scoring three points on four shot attempts. Those were the first points from the Wofford transfer this season. Splitting time across sparse minutes early in the season makes it difficult for players to catch their rhythm or get fully up to speed. Now that he is expected to have a bigger role, Machowski looks to break out during these next several weeks.

For Amosov, the Russian played 13 minutes, 12 of which came in the second half. He filled the stat sheet with a point, four rebounds, a steal and a block. Hurley has spoken highly of Amosov and now he may get an increased role along with Machowski.

Tipoff is set for 7:30 p.m. and can be watched on TNT.