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WOMEN'S BASKETBALL: NO. 7 UCONN TO OPEN BIG EAST SLATE FRIDAY

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Before facing No. 1 South Carolina on Tuesday, the No. 7-ranked UConn women's basketball program will have one final chance to tie up any loose ends.

On Friday evening, it will open its Big East conference slate and take on the 2-3 Seton Hall Pirates.

The Huskies are coming off one of the program's worst losses in the past two decades against Louisville. The Cardinals defeated the Huskies 69-51 last Sunday, marking their second loss of the season.

While a myriad of mistakes contributed to this loss, like hesitancy in their shots, miscommunicated passes and more, Head Coach Geno Auriemma narrowed it down to one thing: communication.

"We're a bad-communicating team. We don't communicate very well, so that's on me. I don't think I'm getting my point across the way I normally do," Auriemma said postgame last Sunday in a video from Storrs Central. "It's been really aggravating and frustrating for the coaching staff."

On Thursday afternoon, though, Auriemma met with the media again and offered a way he's taking solace during this time. As he's said at the beginning of the season, it's all about perspective now for his team.

And, luckily for Husky fans, it's only November.

"We've won big games in November and didn't turn out to be anything in March, and we lost big games and didn't matter when we got to March," Auriemma said. "I think the thing is you have to try to keep it in perspective."

Auriemma emphasized that in those games where his roster wasn't performing to the best of its abilities, sometimes tough losses could serve as a reminder that it needed to play a certain way to win.

When asked about the communication between his players, Auriemma mentioned junior Sarah Strong is the loudest voice out on the court.

Over the last five games, Strong has been the catalyst for the squad's offense, contributing immensely to ranked wins against Iowa and Ohio State.

"I think Sarah is the voice of our team," Auriemma said. "It's a quiet, strong kind of voice. It's not a scream and yell kind of thing. But she's the one that I think when she speaks, the rest of the team listens."

While a majority of the current roster went undefeated last season, Auriemma says that players change and coaches have to adapt to that.

"If we lose a game, we come in, we watch film, and we practice," Auriemma said. "This is November, and what you're trying to do in November is trying to create good habits and create some chemistry."

Even though November is early to host conference matchups, Auriemma wants his roster to treat it just like any other game.

"It's another game, and if you make the mistake of looking at it and go, 'We got an easy one,' then that one becomes a pain in the ass," Auriemma said.

The Pirates currently sit at No. 5 in the Big East preseason rankings and are led by senior Savannah Catalon, who has been averaging 17.2 points per game this season.

Tip-off between these two conference foes is scheduled for 8 p.m. from PeoplesBank Arena in Hartford. Husky fans can tune in to the matchup on Peacock.



The Huskies are coming off one of the program's worst losses in the past two decades against Louisville. The Cardinals defeated the Huskies 69-51 on Nov. 15, marking their second loss of the season.

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FIELD HOCKEY: HUSKIES FACE NO. 1 NORTHWESTERN IN FINAL FOUR

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Two wins shy of the program's sixth national title and first since 2017, UConn field hockey is due for its toughest test yet as Northwestern, the reigning back-to-back national champion, stands in its way.

The top-seeded Wildcats (20-2) have appeared in five consecutive title games dating back to 2021 and are looking to become the fourth program ever to win three straight championships.

North Carolina was the last team to three-peat, winning from 2018 to 2020. Over the past nine years, only the Tarheels and Northwestern have won titles, trading championships since UConn's undefeated run in 2017.

Nearly a decade later, the No. 4 Huskies (17-2) are trying to get back to the title game and will have to knock off a familiar face roaming the sidelines to do so.

Northwestern is coached by Tracy Fuchs, an all-time great at UConn and a member of the second national championship team in 1985. Fuchs was a three-time All-American in a Husky uniform and was named the national player of the year in 1987.

Fuchs took over Northwestern in 2009 and has led the program to its only three national championships (2021, 2024 and 2025). She is one of just three people to win a Division I title as a player and a coach.

Her squad started the season 13-0 before falling to then-No. 10 Princeton in overtime on the road. The Wildcats lost once more at then-No. 14 Penn State in the final game of the regular season but have rattled off four straight postseason victories on their way to the national semifinal.

Northwestern accomplished what UConn could not, claiming both the conference regular season and tournament championships. The Wildcats have beaten No. 2 Maryland twice this year, most recently earning an impressive 3-0 shutout victory in the Big Ten Tournament Championship.

Northwestern handled Saint Joseph's 5-0 in the first round of the NCAA Tournament, and, much like Connecticut, the Wildcats advanced to the Final Four via a penalty shootout on their home turf. Fuch's squad narrowly outlasted No. 8 North Carolina in the shootout, winning 4-3, after being locked in a scoreless stalemate for 75 minutes.

The Huskies' meeting with the Wildcats features a matchup between the nation's two premiere goalkeepers, UConn's Natalie McKenna and Northwestern's Julia Boon.

Boon leads the nation in goals against average (.595) and McKenna trails right behind her in second (.656). Both goalkeepers have conceded just 15 scores this season, while Boon has the edge in shutouts (12-8).

This is the first time all year that UConn's opponent can essentially neutralize McKenna's play in goal with an elite keeper of their own, not to mention Northwestern's offense ranks far better statistically.

The Wildcats are 10th in the nation in goals per game (3.05), while UConn ranks 36th (2.21). Northwestern's attack is led by senior forward Ashley Sessa, the Big Ten Offensive Player of the Year, who is tied for eighth in the country in goals per game (0.85). Senior defender Isle Tromp, the Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year, also chips in offensively and is top 31 in goals per game (0.63).

The Huskies can counter that offensive firepower on paper with freshman forward Lucy Zich, who is right in the mix nationally with 0.68 goals per game, ranking 22nd. However, UConn has struggled to find any sort of offensive rhythm in the past couple weeks, especially as opponents have been taking away the penalty corner.

Connecticut has 32 penalty corner goals on the year and 42 goals overall, meaning the penalty corner accounts for 78% of the Huskies' scores this season.

It has been quite some time since UConn scored a goal in the open field. The Huskies' last non-penalty corner goal came on Oct. 23 against Old Dominion. Since then, UConn has scored exclusively off penalty corners in its last five games, accounting for its last seven goals.

Opponents have seemingly taken note. UConn has scored just three goals in its four postseason games, a large part due to a decrease in penalty corners from its season average of 6.53 per game. Lafayette held the Huskies to three penalty corners in regulation forcing overtime, and Princeton allowed just one penalty corner to UConn in the first quarter. When the Huskies fell to Old Dominion in the Big East Championship, the Monarchs held UConn to four corners.

An uptick in penalty corners should put UConn in position to score at least a goal, but if the game were to reach overtime or a penalty shootout, the Huskies have the experience that could give them the edge.

UConn is 6-0 in games that have reached overtime, winning five penalty shootouts in the process. Northwestern, meanwhile, went 1-1 in its overtime matches in the regular season and just competed in its first shootout of the year last Sunday against North Carolina.

The Huskies have been one for late-game drama all season and can rest assured history is on their side. UConn has a 5-1 record over Northwestern all time, although the programs have not played since Fuchs won her first title at Northwestern in 2021.

UConn will start its chase for the national championship as it takes on Northwestern in the semifinal today at 2:30 p.m. No. 2 Maryland and No. 3 Harvard will play in the other semifinal beforehand at noon. Shall UConn advance, the championship is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. on Sunday. All games will be played at Trager Stadium on the campus of the University of Louisville and will be televised on ESPNU.



Midfielder Emma Larit high-fives her teammate Olivia McKenna during UConn field hockey's game against Fairfield on Oct. 30. The Huskies won 3-1 and sealed an undefeated regular season record while playing at home.

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