Sports

Photo of the Day |



UConn women's basketball faces off against Cornell University on Nov. 2 at PeoplesBank Arena. UConn dominated the first half with a score of 46-13.
PHOTO BY NORA MARIANO, ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

FOOTBALL: BILL BELICHICK RETURNS TO NEW ENGLAND FOR A SHOWDOWN WITH THE

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Bill Belichick walked off a snowy Gilette Stadium field on Jan. 7, 2024, for the last time as the head coach of the New England Patriots. On Saturday, he returns to New England as the coach of the University of North Carolina Tar Heels.

The Tar Heels and the University of Connecticut Huskies are both 4-4 on the season, coming off different losses. North Carolina lost a heartbreaker to Miami 38-35 despite a ferocious comeback attempt.

Connecticut had a hard-fought 35-26 loss against Air Force on Halloween. The Huskies had no turnovers but a missed extra point, a fake punt allowed and 366 rushing yards conceded are things they would like to forget.

"Obviously we got to clean some things up from this past game but there's a lot of good things we can take away from it and we're looking to fix whatever we can and go onto this next game," UConn receiver Ryder Treadway said.

Treadway grabbed his first touchdown of the year against Air Force and leads the team this season with 20 receptions.

The rest of the offense is powered by quarterback Kalieb Osborne and the rushing attack. Osborne has 21 total touchdowns on the season, and the Toledo transfer threw for 263 yards and two touchdowns against Air Force last week.

It was a slow week for the UConn rushing attack as the team combined for just 105 yards on the ground. Kenji Christian and Trey Cornist both scored touchdowns, but the pair along with Cyncir Bowers will try and gain more yardage against UNC on Saturday.

"They are a very good defense, but we feel like we can attack some places, and we are just excited for the challenge," Treadway said.

The Tar Heels defense is anchored by linebacker Derek McDonald, whose 82 tackles ranks as one of the best in the nation. North Carolina also has Greg Smith III in the secondary, who has three interceptions and a forced fumble on the season.

Since their rainy Week 1 win in Ireland, North Carolina has scored 20 or more points every game.

"They are good at getting the ball out, I feel like with our D-line and our pass rush and our back end, it's not a big problem for us," UConn defensive lineman Tahjae Mullix said.

UNC quarterback Billy Edwards Jr. throws to a two-headed monster of Jordan Shipp and Jelani Thurman. Shipp has 45 catches for 587 yards in the year while the 6-foot-6 245-pound Thurman has 461 yards and six touchdowns. He scored twice in North Carolina's narrow loss against No. 1 Miami.

"They do a good job of making sure their best players get the football," UConn head coach Jason Candle said.

Despite a more pass-focused offense, running back Demon June has found the endzone eight times this season for the Heels. The sophomore has scored in the last four UNC games and will look to make it five straight in East Hartford.

Someone who will be trying to stop the North Carolina offense is UConn linebacker John Lista. The UPenn transfer had 15 tackles last week, his second double-digit tackle game of the season.

"He's (Lista) like our juice. He comes in here every single time and he's firing us up with his energy," Mullix said. "I feel like his leadership is really big."

Belichick coming to town brings joy to some Husky fans and players, while others have had to relive nightmares of New England's success.

"I am a Seahawks fan," Mullix said with a smile. "I was mad we lost (Super Bowl 49) but I'm glad we won this recent one (Super Bowl 60)."

Despite the buzz around the eight-time Super Bowl winning coach, all eyes will be on the field once the ball is kicked in the air.

"We are not playing the New England Patriots from 15 years ago, we are playing the North Carolina Tar Heels and thank god Tom Brady is not walking out of that locker room on Saturday," Candle said.

This will be the fifth meeting ever between the two squads, with the most memorable game being the 2024 Fenway Bowl. The Huskies shipped up to Boston for a program defining 27-14 victory over the Tar Heels, their ninth in a historic season.

This year, the Huskies have their sights set on more than just a win this Saturday.

"We're not looking just to make a bowl game," Treadway said. "We're trying to win out and have an 8-4 season."

UConn will have a chance to move to 5-4 on Saturday. Kickoff is set for noon at The Rent, and fans can watch the game on CBS Sports Network or listen to the Huskies play on Fox Sports 97.9 FM.



UConn goes up against Maryland at Pratt & Whitney Stadium in East Hartford, Conn., on Saturday, September 12, 2026. The nice weather brought out a large crowd to support the Huskies.
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