Sports

Photo of the Day |



UConn women's ice hockey faces Clarkson on Friday, Oct. 2 at the Toscano Family Ice Forum in Storrs. The Huskies defeated the Golden Knights 3-2 to earn their first win of the season. PHOTO BY PARKER MEYERS, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

FOOTBALL: THE ORANGE SQUEEZE PAST HUSKIES IN OVERTIME THRILLER 42–41

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EAST HARTFORD — For the second straight year, Syracuse survived UConn in an overtime matchup that ended with fans on the edge of their seats.

The Orange arrived with a six-game winning streak over UConn, including last season's 27-20 overtime finish. This time, the rivalry delivered all that drama and more with UConn debuting its new red uniforms.

Syracuse won the toss and elected to kick off, eager to get back on the field after a bye week. A quick defensive stop gave quarterback Amari Odom the ball. After a fumbled snap, he found Umari Hatcher in the end zone to put the Orange up 6-0. A missed extra point prevented the full seven-point drive and kicking trouble would haunt both sides all afternoon.

Kalieb Osborne and the Huskies responded with a seven-play, 75-yard drive capped by a nine-yard touchdown pass to Cam Abshire. Syracuse's penalties, a recurring problem for the Orange this season, kept the drive alive several times. The extra point gave UConn their first lead of the game.

The Huskies' following possession put them within field goal range, but an intentional grounding penalty on Osborne pushed them back, and Jack O'Connor's 40-yard attempt clanged off the left upright.

The ACC program responded, covering 78 yards in four minutes after Odom linked up with wide receiver Cole Weaver and eventually tight end Noah Myers for a four-yard receiving touchdown.

Flags kept piling up against the Huskies. A pass interference call had set up that Syracuse score, and a holding penalty on the return pinned UConn at its own nine-yard line. The Huskies finished with 11 penalties to Syracuse's eight.

"Some of the discipline things that we have to continue to clean up, and we got to get to work on that," Head Coach Jason Candle said after the game. "No college football game ever should have 19 penalties with two teams. We got to do our part, that we don't put ourselves in some of these situations."

The miscues continued and an illegal forward pass forced UConn to punt back to a rolling Syracuse offense. The Orange needed just two minutes to go 47 yards with big gains to wide receiver Darius Johnson setting the table. Odom then faked the handoff and took it in himself, putting Syracuse ahead 20-7.

UConn's fifth drive got a lift from a roughing the passer penalty. However, on third-and-10, Osborne was sacked and fumbled the ball, which Syracuse's Keyshawn Johnson recovered. The Orange cashed in with a 41-yard strike to Hatcher, his second touchdown of the game.

Running back Cyncir Bowers fumbled on the first play of UConn's next drive, and Antoine Deslauriers recovered for Syracuse. Orange kicker Shay Baker missed a field goal following the turnover though, and the Huskies got new life.

Osborne fired three straight completions to wide receiver Javon Brown for 49 yards. A few penalties crept in late in the drive but UConn still punched in a score when running back Trey Cornist ran four yards for the score— a much-needed response for the Huskies heading into the locker room trailing 27-14.

The second half started with more of the same from Syracuse's offense as they went 75 yards in 14 plays, draining seven minutes off the clock. Odom finished it by hitting Daunte Bacheyie on fourth-and-23 and the extra point stretched the lead to 20. It looked like all hope was lost for the Huskies.

Then, Bowers took over. He erupted for 137 rushing yards in the second half, starting with UConn's opening drive when he carried five times for 34 yards, including a 10-yard touchdown.

The score brought fans back into the game and restored hope for the home team. That hope surged again when Renick Dorilas jumped a route on Syracuse's first pass of the next drive and came down with an interception, sending a roar through Pratt & Whitney Stadium.

The Huskies looked poised to reach the end zone, but Brown landed awkwardly and stayed down while medical personnel tended to him before he was carried off on a stretcher. There was no update on his condition after the game.

The momentum faded as both teams took a knee at midfield out of respect for the injured player.

"We got third down and 10 and we got guys in tears in the huddle," Candle said. "They're worried about their brother and worried about him being okay."

UConn turned the ball over on downs, leaving the Huskies with their backs against the wall, forced to fight.

A bold Syracuse offense tested their luck on fourth-and-two from their own 43-yard line but the Husky defense stood their ground and took over on downs.

Osborne then hit tight end Xavier Watson for a seven-yard touchdown on a drive that lasted just 25 seconds. UConn was within seven and still swinging.

Syracuse tried to stretch the lead but Dorilas broke up another deep pass. Two plays later, John Lista and Anas Luqman teamed up to stuff the Orange and forced another punt.

For the first time since the opening quarter, the Huskies had a chance to even the score and they delivered when it mattered most.

Bowers delivered a house call with a 71-yard rushing touchdown tying the game and putting all momentum in favor of UConn.

"I was mad I turned over the ball, so I knew I had to come out and be physical and get it back for my team," Bowers said.

Syracuse answered by driving to UConn's 7-yard line, powered by running back Tylik Hill, who finished with 140 rushing yards. With the Orange on the doorstep, Jayden Price leaped for an interception at the goal-line and sent the Huskies the other way. UConn drove to Syracuse's 33 but a false start pushed them back and out of field goal range.

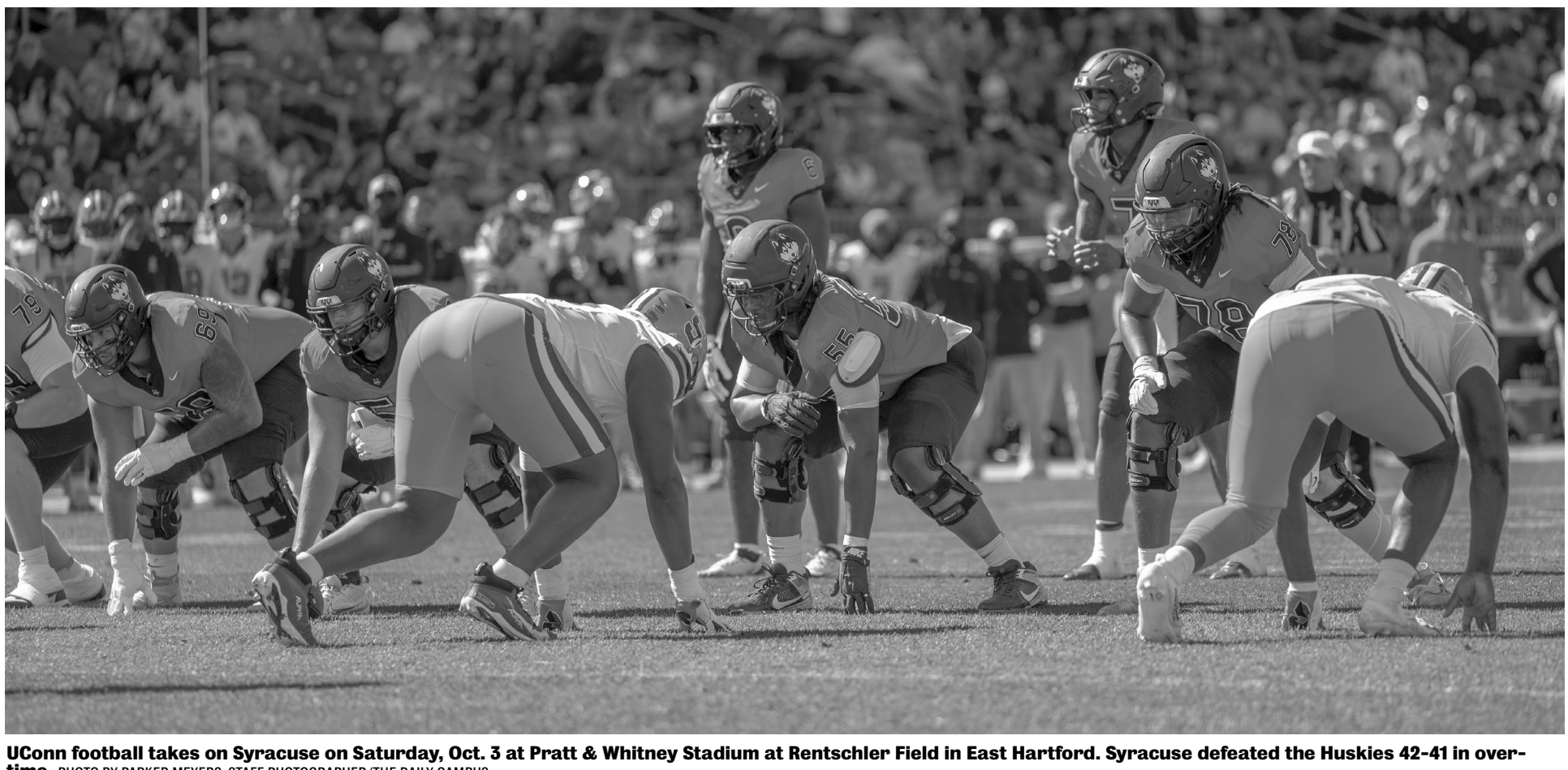
Syracuse took over with 1:36 to play and reached UConn's 36-yard line, setting up a game-winning kick for Baker. As time expired, he sent the ball into the air and wide right. Pandemonium broke out at The Rent as the game headed to overtime.

Syracuse won the toss again and deferred, giving Osborne the first possession. On his second pass attempt, he found Cornist for a touchdown and the extra point put UConn up 41-34.

The Orange needed a miracle and got some help. Another UConn penalty moved them inside the 10-yard line, but K'Von Sherman blitzed Odom and forced a fumble that rolled out of bounds for a 10-yard loss. Facing fourth-and-17, Odom launched a desperate heave and connected with Hatcher for his third touchdown of the day. A penalty for roughing the passer moved Syracuse half the distance to the goal for a two-point try, and Odom ran it in to seal the victory for the Orange.

It was a heartbreaking ending for the Huskies but one that showed grit and heart from the white and blue.

UConn travels to Philadelphia next week to take on Temple. Kickoff is set for 3:45 p.m. and can be streamed on ESPNU.



UConn football takes on Syracuse on Saturday, Oct. 3 at Pratt & Whitney Stadium at Rentschler Field in East Hartford. Syracuse defeated the Huskies 42-41 in overtime. PHOTO BY PARKER MEYERS, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS.