MEN'S SOCCER:

Connecticut shuts out Villanova, records season-high in shots

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UConn Men's Soccer plays against Siena at Morrone Stadium on Tuesday, Sept. 22, 2026. The matchup left the Huskies victorious, though they fell to the Villanova Wildcats this weekend. PHOTO BY MORGAN BLANCHARD, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS.

The UConn men's soccer team has officially secured their first conference win of the season.

On Friday night, Connecticut improved their record to 1-1 in the Big East, defeating the Villanova Wildcats 1-0.

"I thought we played pretty well," Head Coach Chris Gbandi said in an interview from the program's X page. "Getting three points on the road in the Big East is never easy. So, [I'm] certainly excited for the guys, they put in the work today getting their first shutout."

Early on in the matchup, the Huskies set the tone by applying continuous pressure on both sides of the pitch. Villanova finished the match with only two shots on goal for the entire 90 minutes, earning UConn goalkeeper Kyle Durham his first clean sheet of the season.

Throughout the match, the Huskies outshot the Wildcats with 11 shots on goal and 24 shots, recording a new season-high in shots and shots on goal. Just in the first 20 minutes of the matchup, the Huskies were peppering Villanova's goalkeeper, Alex Yagudayev, with shots in the box.

Yagudayev was forced to make four saves in those 20 minutes, with both Evan Pickering and Elijah Langford getting shots in the box. While UConn was generating offense in the beginning moments of the matchup, it wasn't until the 36th minute when the Huskies struck first.

Rashid Nacif Joffre scored his first goal of the season, off a dish from Steve Delacour. Nacif Joffre kicked the ball from the left of the box and notched it in the top right corner of the net to give the Huskies the lead in the first half. Along with their lead, the Huskies also had the upper hand in shots, having 12, compared to Villanova's 5.

While UConn kept their lead for the rest of the match, the physicality for both programs picked up once the second half commenced. Throughout the game, UConn and Villanova racked up 18 and 16 fouls, respectively.

In the 59th minute of the match, the Wildcats picked up a red card, giving the Huskies a man advantage for the rest of the game. This man advantage proved to be integral for the Huskies as it aided them to rack 10 shots. In addition to those 10 shots, the Huskies also produced five shots on goal, but Yagudayev saved each of them to keep the Wildcat's deficit still at one.

As the clock started getting closer and closer to the 90th minute, Villanova kept making efforts to knot up the score 1-1. While the Wildcats generated various opportunities for shots on goal in the final moments of the matchup, UConn's assertive defense prevented them from forcing extra minutes.

"Certainly Villanova is a tough team to play at home and I thought the guys did a great job," Gbandi said in a post-game interview. "[They] fought for each other, worked hard for each other and, at the end of the day, we got three points."

Next up, the Huskies will return back to Storrs on Tuesday, Oct. 6 to take on the Bryant Bulldogs. Kickoff is scheduled for 6 p.m. and Husky fans can tune in to the matchup on UConn+.

UCONN WOMEN'S HOCKEY STORMS BACK, SWEEPS CLARKSON IN HOME-OPENING WEEKEND

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The University of Connecticut women's hockey team entered the weekend looking to turn a difficult start into a response against one of the country's top teams. By Saturday afternoon, the Huskies had done more than answer the challenge — they had swept No. 9 Clarkson and completely changed the tone of their season.

No. 12 UConn defeated Clarkson 3-2 Friday night at the Toscano Family Ice Forum before blanking the Golden Knights 4-0 Saturday, improving to 2-2 on the season. The two wins came in very different ways: the Huskies erased a two-goal deficit in the opener, then overwhelmed Clarkson's penalty kill in the rematch by scoring four power-play goals.

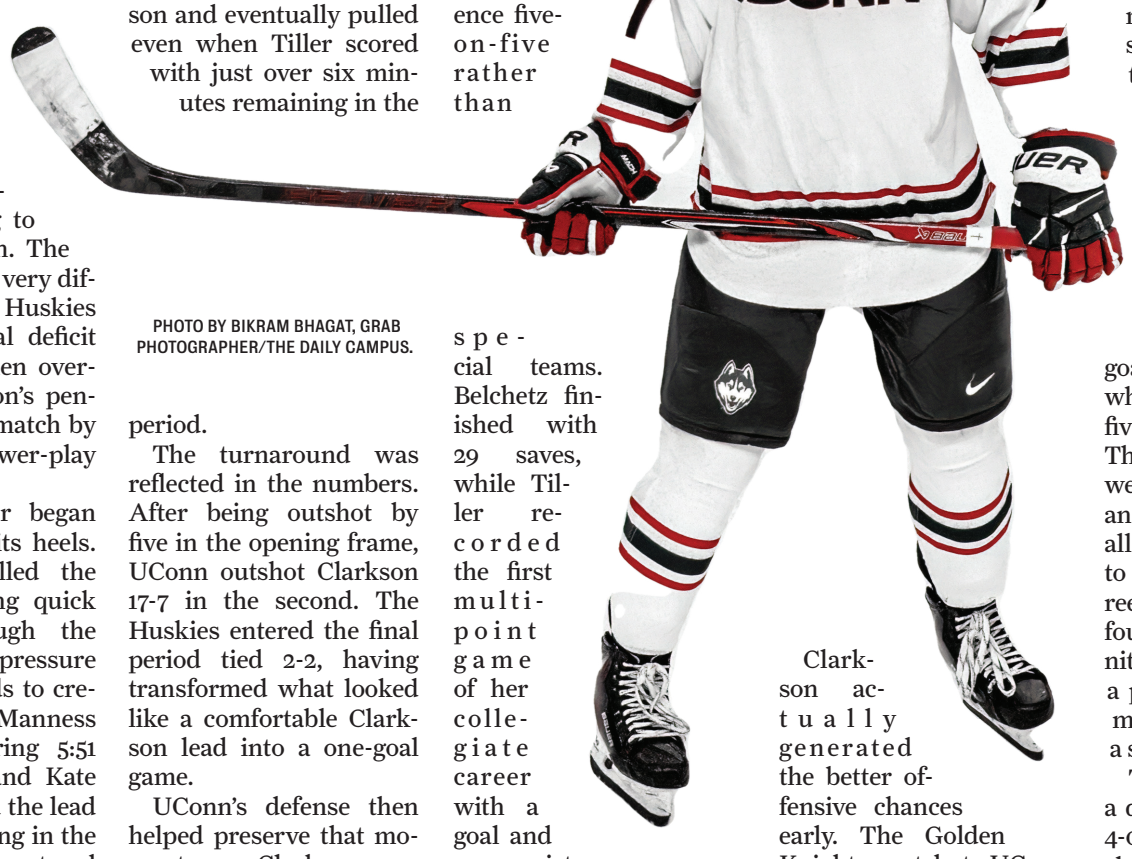


PHOTO BY BIKRAM BHAGAT, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS.

Friday's opener began with UConn on its heels. Clarkson controlled the first period, using quick movement through the neutral zone and pressure around the boards to create chances. Sara Manness opened the scoring 5:51 into the game, and Kate Manness doubled the lead with 5:55 remaining in the period. Clarkson entered the first intermission ahead 2-0 and held an 11-6 advantage in shots.

Goaltender Taylor Belchetz kept the deficit from growing. The sophomore stopped nine shots in the opening period and continued to give the Huskies an opportunity to find their game. That opportunity arrived in the second period, when UConn completely flipped the momentum.

Junior forward Claire Murdoch put the Huskies on the board 6:54 into the second, finishing a play created by Sadie Hotles and Caileigh Tiller. The goal was Murdoch's first of the season and extended her point streak to three games. UConn continued to pressure Clarkson and eventually pulled even when Tiller scored with just over six minutes remaining in the period.

The turnaround was reflected in the numbers. After being outshot by five in the opening frame, UConn outshot Clarkson 17-7 in the second. The Huskies entered the final period tied 2-2, having transformed what looked like a comfortable Clarkson lead into a one-goal game.

UConn's defense then helped preserve that momentum. Clarkson regained some offensive pressure in the third, but Belchetz and the Huskies' shot-blocking effort kept the Golden Knights from finding another answer. With just under seven minutes remaining, senior forward Julia Pellerin scored the go-ahead goal, giving UConn its first lead of the night and its first lead of the season.

Clarkson finished with a 31-30 edge in shots, but UConn won 29 of 52 faceoffs and blocked 20 shots, a season high. Both teams went 0-for-1 on the power play, making the difference five-on-five rather than special teams. Belchetz finished with 29 saves, while Tiller recorded the first multi-point game of her collegiate career with a goal and an assist. Murdoch also finished with two points.

The Huskies returned Saturday afternoon with a chance to do something they had not done through their first two games against Clarkson: finish the weekend series on top. Instead of another comeback, UConn produced its most complete special-teams performance of the season.

Clarkson actually generated the better offensive chances early. The Golden Knights outshot UConn 13-7 in the opening period, but the Huskies made their limited opportunities count. After Clarkson was assessed its first penalty, Murdoch scored on the power play to give UConn a 1-0 lead.

That lead became much more comfortable in the second period. Sadie Hotles scored just seconds into a UConn power play to make it 2-0, then Ellie Markakis added her first career goal on another man advantage to extend the lead to three. Markakis finished the afternoon with a goal and an assist, recording the first multi-point game of her collegiate career.

The Golden Knights continued to generate chances, but they could not solve Belchetz. She stopped 13 shots in both the first and second periods before making 17 saves in the third. Clarkson finished the game with 43 shots on goal, yet none found the back of the net.

UConn added one more power-play goal in the third period when Tiller scored with five minutes remaining. The freshman finished the weekend with three goals and recorded a point in all four of UConn's games to begin her collegiate career. With four goals on four power-play opportunities, the Huskies also set a program record for the most power-play goals in a single game.

The final stat line told a different story from the 4-0 score. Clarkson outshot UConn 43-28 and held a 30-31 disadvantage in faceoffs, but UConn's ability to capitalize on special teams and protect the crease proved decisive. The Huskies blocked 14 shots and never gave Clarkson a power-play opportunity of its own, finishing the game 4-for-4 with the extra skater.

Belchetz's performance was the final piece of the sweep. Her 43 saves marked a career high and delivered the first shutout of her career. After helping UConn survive Clarkson's first-period pressure on Friday, she followed it by turning away every chance the Golden Knights created Saturday.

The weekend also established several early-season storylines for the Huskies. Murdoch recorded at least one point in each of UConn's first four games, Tiller scored in both games against Clarkson and leads the team with three goals, and the Huskies showed they could win both in a comeback situation and in a game dictated by special teams.

Across the two games, UConn outscored Clarkson 7-2 while facing a different kind of test each afternoon. Friday demanded patience after an early deficit, while Saturday demanded discipline and execution on special teams. The Huskies answered both, turning a pair of one-goal and four-goal wins into an important early-season sweep.

After opening the season with consecutive losses at St. Cloud State, UConn entered the Clarkson series at 0-2 and facing another nationally ranked opponent. Two days later, the Huskies walked away with a sweep and a 2-2 record. The next challenge will come Oct. 16-17, when UConn travels to Princeton for another two-game series.