Sports

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL:

A glimpse into the Huskies' nonconference opponents

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The name of the game for the UConn women's basketball this year is "perspective," head coach Geno Auriemma emphasized this past Saturday.

"The expectation is we should win every time we're there, and unfortunately, you get to realize as you get older, no, you shouldn't." Auriemma said to the media. "And then when you do, it's amazing."

The Huskies are coming off a devasting 62-48 loss over the South Carolina Gamecocks in the Final Four. The Huskies entered the Final Four in Phoenix. With a 38-0 record, many thought they would win back-to-back National Championships.

Players on the Huskies' squad, like Sarah Strong, enter this season with a chip on their shoulder as they look to earn a ticket back to the Final Four.

To get there though, they will be put through some tests in the regular season first. Unlike last season, the Huskies have a front-loaded nonconference schedule.

Here's a glimpse into some of the nonconference opponents they are set to face:

Michigan (Nov. 5)

For the second game of the season, the Huskies will travel to Ann Arbor, Mich. for the first time to take on the Michigan Wolverines at the Crisler Center.

The last time these squads faced off against one another was last November in the Hall of Fame Women's Showcase. The matchup went down to the wire, with UConn eventually taking the win, 72-69. A 31-point night for Azzi Fudd and 20-rebound night for Strong solidified the win, but it took a few hurdles to get there.

The Huskies had to fare through a second half surge from the Wolverines and only scoring four points in the third quarter. The main anchor for the Wolverines in this matchup was guard Syla Swords, who played the full 40 minutes on the hardwood, racking up 29 points. As the clock started to dwindle down, Swords cut their deficit by nailing shots from beyond the arc.

Alongside Swords, shutting down Olivia Olson was also a tough task for the Huskies. As a sophomore last season, she averaged 18.9 points per game and racked up a double-double with 18 points and 10 rebounds against Connecticut.

Lat year, Auriemma said to the media that this Michigan was one of the hardest programs he's had to face early in the season. Now, as Swords enters her junior season and the Huskies look to iron out kinks with some of their newer players, it's looking like history will repeat itself.

Iowa (Nov. 8)

After facing the Iowa Hawkeyes last December in the Women's Champions Classic, UConn will take on Jan Jensen and Iowa again in Storrs this November.

This game will mark the first time the Huskies will play in Gampel Pavilion for the regular season. Last December, when these two squads went head-to-head, the Huskies defeated the Hawkeyes 90-64.

On the Hawkeyes squad this time around, the Huskies will have to look out for junior Ava Heiden, who led the squad with an average of 18 points per game last year. As a center, standing at 6-foot-4, Heiden will be a force the Huskies will need to reckon with in the paint.

With the advantage of the home crowd in Storrs and Azzi Fudd getting inducted into the Huskies of Honor, this matchup will be one fans won't want to miss.

South Carolina (Nov. 24)

As one of the most highly anticipated matchups this season, UConn and South Carolina will face off again this November. The rivalry between these two squads will soon be renewed.

That 62-48 loss in the Final Four in Arizona took a toll on the Huskies, and now they'll have a chance for a rematch in front of a crowd in their home state.

Florida State transfer Ta'Niya Latson led the Gamecocks in this matchup with 16 points and 11 rebounds. The Gamecocks will be without Latson this year; she graduated this past spring and was drafted 20th overall by the Las Vegas Aces.

Once again, the Huskies will have to face off against Tessa Johnson and Chloe Kitts, who are entering their senior and graduate years, respectively. Kitts missed her entire 2025-26 season due to an ACL tear but is cleared to go for her Graduate year.

With the Gamecock's size and skill, especially down low, defeating them will be a tall task to complete before the Huskies enter their Thanksgiving break.

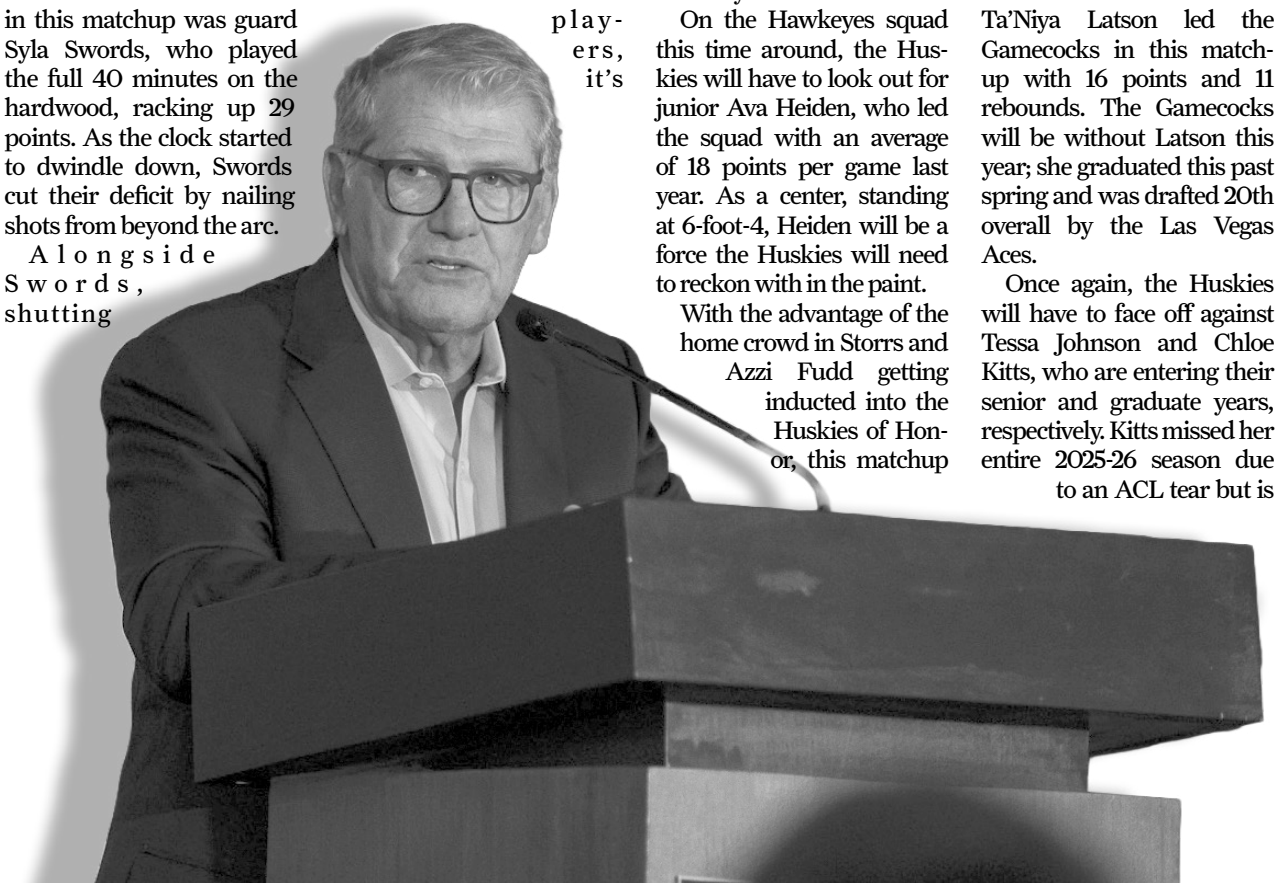
LSU (Dec. 20)

The Huskies will return to Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, Tenn. this December -- a familiar location for UConn. Connecticut will touch the court at Bridgestone for the first time since they defeated Notre Dame, taking their ninth National Championship back to Storrs in 2014. Now, 12 years later, they will take on Kim Mulkey and the LSU Tigers for the ESPNW Invitational.

UConn holds an 8-1 record against the Tigers; the last time these two squads faced off was in 2016. On LSU's squad, the Huskies should look out for senior guard MiLaysia Fulwiley, who transferred to the Tigers from South Carolina.

In her three years as a Gamecock, Fulwiley averaged 12.6 points and 3.1 rebounds a game off the bench. As the last nonconference game of 2026, LSU's high-octane backcourt, especially around the perimeter, will be a good test for UConn before they start their Christmas break.

Kicking off the season with these star-studded matchups will make for a great test for Auriemma's Huskies as they begin their quest for their 13th National Championship.



UConn Women's Basketball Head Coach Geno Auriemma at Big East Media Day on Oct. 1, 2026. UConn faced off against Syracuse on Monday Oct. 12, 2026.

PHOTO BY MADISON HENDRICKS, ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

MEN'S BASKETBALL: A BREAKDOWN OF UCONN'S NONCONFERENCE GAUNTLET

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The UConn men's basketball team's nonconference schedule is a doozy. It features four top-25 rematches from last season, all of which went down to the final few minutes. Andy Katz ranks UConn as having the toughest nonconference schedule in the country. Let's break it down game-by-game:

Nov. 2 vs. Gardner-Webb, 9 p.m. (PBA)

The season opener against Gardner-Webb is a late one, the second leg of a PBA doubleheader as the women open their season at 5 p.m. Expect the Huskies to shake off any early-season rust and set an aggressive tone right out of the gate in front of the home crowd. The Runnin' Bulldogs feature Seth Brown, a sophomore transfer from Fresno Pacific University who averaged 13.6 points per game and was named to the All-PacWest Second Team.

As the rust gets knocked off, the opener can be a good starting point for the coaching staff to see what rotations work, who gels with one another, etc. The returners in Braylon Mullins, Jayden Ross and Silas Demary Jr. need to set the standard to the newcomers.

Nov. 6 vs. Michigan*, 8 p.m. (TD Garden)

There's no question that the Huskies head to Boston for a marquee championship rematch. Nov. 6 marks exactly seven months since these two teams faced off in Indianapolis, where UConn suffered a tough 63-69 loss and left Lucas Oil Stadium feeling like they let a golden opportunity slip away.

Michigan is without three of their starters in Yaxel Lendeborg, Morez Johnson Jr. and Aday Mara, all of whom were lottery selections in the 2026 NBA Draft. However, the Wolverines retained their starting point guard, Elliot Cadeau, who put up 19 points in the championship game.

Key portal pickup J.P. Estrella from Tennessee is another towering forward that can pick up where the Wolverines left off. The senior averaged 10 points on nearly 60% from the field and 5.4 rebounds per night.

Michigan also features a new coach in charge; with Dusty May taking a job with the Dallas Mavericks, Mike Boynton Jr. steps in to attempt to repeat as national champions.

"The second game [of the season] is definitely on my mind," said Jayden Ross.

Nov. 9 vs. Wagner, 7 p.m. (Gampel Pavilion)

Dan Hurley will face a familiar foe when the Huskies take on Wagner, squaring off against the program that gave him his first career head coaching job. From 2010-12, Hurley had an overall record of 38-23, with an impressive 14-2 record in the NEC in 2012. Fifteen years later, Hurley will now be on the other side of the court coaching against the team that gave him his first head coaching job.

The Seahawks lost their leading scorer in Nick Jones (14.9 PPG) to the University of New Orleans but gained former Husky Youssouf Singarè, who played for UConn from 2023-2025, appeared in 39 games but didn't see much action. Singarè played last season for High Point, as the Panthers upset No. 5 Wisconsin in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

Nov. 13 vs. Ohio State, 7:30 p.m. (PBA)

Ohio State features Preseason All-Big Ten Team honor John Mobley Jr. As a sophomore, he averaged 15.7 points per game with his highlight contest being a 26-point clinic against UCLA where he shot 6-for-12 from downtown. The Buckeyes also added Justin Pippen, a California transfer guard. Pippen is the son of NBA Hall of Famer, Scottie Pippen. The 6-foot-4 junior averaged 14.2 points per game last season. Expect Pippen and Mobley Jr. to lead the charge as the Buckeyes look to test UConn's backcourt.

This marks the eighth matchup between the Buckeyes and the Huskies; the last went in favor of the Buckeyes in 2016 by a score of 64-60.

Nov. 18 @ Arizona, 9 p.m.

It's the second leg of the home-and-home between the Wildcats and the Huskies. Last season's top 5 matchup saw the No. 4 Wildcats go into a hostile Gampel Pavilion taking down the No. 3 Huskies 71-67. Arizona comes in at No. 5 overall in the preseason KenPom ratings, led by returners Ivan Kharchenkov and Motiejus Krivas. Both averaged 10.4 points per game last season and will lead the Wildcats this season. Newcomers include Derek Dixon from UNC and freshman Caleb Holt, 247Sports' No. 2 recruit and projected top five pick in the 2027 Draft, who will come out firing against the Huskies.

Nov. 25 vs. Duke*, 7 p.m. (T-Mobile Arena)

Just one week after a must-see game, it's another heavyweight matchup: the rematch of all rematches. The 2026 Elite Eight game between Duke and UConn featured one of, if not the craziest moments in March Madness history. We all saw it hundreds of times by now: the Mullins miracle shot to send UConn to the Final Four.

"I think I've moved past [the tournament] because ultimately, we didn't win [the championship]," said Mullins.

One of the Blue Devils who was on the receiving end of the defeat will now be going up against Duke. Sophomore Nik Khamenia, the 6-foot-8-inch transfer, averaged 5.7 points in 19.8 minutes last season with Duke. He now takes on an expanded role under Hurley, serving up a high-stakes appetizer on Thanksgiving Eve.

Nov. 30 vs. Rider, 6:30 p.m. (Gampel)

The lone matchup between the Broncs and the Huskies came in the first round of the 1994 NCAA Tournament, where the No. 2 seed Huskies knocked down the No. 15 seed Broncs 64-46. Last season, Rider finished 4-25, not the best, to say the least. This season's roster features a handful of transfers, including highlight transfer Mark Butler from Lafayette. The 5-foot-10 guard averaged 10.7 points per game and had a season high of 21 points on Feb. 28 against Army.

Dec. 4 vs. Illinois*, 7 p.m. (United Center)

Last season these two teams squared off twice; both times the Huskies came out on top, with the most recent being the national semifinal game by a score of 71-62. Illinois returns David Mirkovic, who averaged 13.3 points and 8 rebounds per game last year, though he was held in check by the Huskies with just 6 points and 5 rebounds on 2-for-7 shooting in April. The Illini also bring back senior guard Andrej Stojakovic, who averaged 13.5 points per contest and contributed 9 points on 4-for-10 shooting in that semifinal clash. A new face for Illinois is former Providence guard Stefan Vaaks, who scored 11 points in the overtime thriller where UConn climbed back from an 11-point deficit to win.

Dec. 8 vs. Mississippi Valley State, 7 p.m. (Gampel)

The Delta Devils put themselves into a real gauntlet this season. They start the year playing 14 straight nonconference games on the road and none of which are considered easy. They face teams like Michigan, Arkansas and Texas Tech, to name a few. The Delta Devils' leading scorer last season was Michael James. His 21.4 points per game ranked second in the SWAC.

Dec. 12 vs. Kansas, 8 p.m. (Gampel)

The highlight Gampel Pavilion game of the nonconference slate is leg two of the home-and-home between the Jayhawks and the Huskies. Round one went in favor of UConn, as they won 61-56 in what was Mullins' second career game after he missed the first six games due to injury and he did not disappoint. In a rocking Allen Fieldhouse, Mullins broke out and put up a game-high 17 points on 6-for-12 shooting.

Fast-forward 378 days and Mullins is now the focal point of the offense and will get a soon-to-be sellout crowd on its feet in no time. 2026's No. 1 recruit Tyran Stokes will come to town. Stokes is a 6-foot-7-inch forward and will be the face of the Jayhawk offense on day one. The defense from Husky big men down low better hold strong because Stokes can attack the basket like nobody's business.

Dec. 15 vs. Delaware State, 7 p.m. (PBA)

The Hornets have 14 players on the roster and nine of whom are newcomers. Their most experienced, Dean Shepherd, has come off the bench in all but four of the 72 games he's played for the program. No other player on the roster has put on a Delaware State jersey for more than 25 games. The team is without its leading scorer, Ponce James, who averaged 13.6 points and transferred to North Carolina A&T this past offseason.

This will be the fourth matchup all time between UConn and Delaware State. The last match was in 2022, when the Huskies won 95-60. Jordan Hawkins and Joey Calcaterra both scored 11 points in the win.

Dec. 20 vs. Virginia*, 3 p.m. (Madison Square Garden)

The Huskies wrap up their nonconference slate at Madison Square Garden as they face the Cavaliers. Virginia features 2026–27 Preseason ACC Player of the Year Thijs De Ridder, a 6-foot-9-inch sophomore forward who averaged 15.6 points per game last season. A newcomer to the Cavaliers is guard Jurian Dixon, a UC Irvine transfer who averaged nearly 16 points last season and will be a big help for De Ridder.

This is their first matchup of the century, with their last being a UConn win back in 1997. It's a late-December trip to MSG that will provide a nice holiday gift for hoops fans, giving everyone a marquee matchup to unwrap just days before Christmas.