Sports

Photo of the Day |



The University of Connecticut women's volleyball team laughs before competing against Seton Hall at the UConn Volleyball Center in Storrs on Saturday, Oct. 10, 2026. The Huskies defeated the Pirates 3-1 PHOTO BY BIKRAM BHAGAT, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL:

UConn relishing challenge, respecting circumstances ahead of Texas exhibition

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HARTFORD — There's no way to quantify the University of Connecticut women's basketball team's preseason exhibition against Texas in PeoplesBank Arena on Monday.

The NCAA's NET rankings won't change. Bart Torvik won't alter his database. The AP Top 25 poll won't reflect the result. The win-loss column will still read 0-0, regardless of which team wins and by how much.

As Geno Auriemma wryly put it before UConn's preseason opener against Syracuse last week, Monday is nothing but a glorified practice in front of 15,000 fans — a way to raise money for the program amid the Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) arms race.

But welcoming a team of the Longhorns' caliber, who've played in the last two Final Fours, into Hartford two weeks before the season starts will help Auriemma and the staff put a finger on their team's pulse.

"You just want to get on the court, like we did the other day, and get a feel for if what we see in practice every day, is that real?" Auriemma said. "Is it pretend? Are we better than that — what I see in practice — are we worse than that? What things do we struggle with?"

Connecticut struggled mightily in 3-pointers last week against Syracuse, hitting on a ghastly 3-of-22 attempts from behind the line and going 2-for-21 across its final 73 possessions. UConn was operating without wing Allie Ziebell (ankle) and forward Blanca Quiñonez (shoulder), though, who'll certainly remedy those woes once healthy.

Auriemma said that Ziebell, who rolled her ankle during practice in September, will return to the lineup after practicing all week, while Quiñonez and freshman Marine Dursus will remain unavailable Monday.

With Quiñonez still out but Ziebell back, Auriemma has a choice to make in the starting lineup: Does he keep freshman Jovana Popovic, who started and shot 5-of-7 from the field in her debut last week, in or plug Ziebell in at the two?

Whatever his decision is, he won't be eager to share it.

"Maybe mix some lineups around, you know?" Auriemma said of his goals for Monday. "Leave the starting lineup as a 'Guess Who.' Maybe auction off the starting lineup. We're all in the money-making business, anyway."

Regardless of who starts alongside KK Arnold and Ashlynn Shade in the backcourt, UConn's frontcourt trio of Sarah Strong, Jana El Alfy and freshman Olivia Vukosa will be tested against the uber-physical front line of Texas, which features one of the best players in America in senior forward Madison Booker.

"You want to try to, most times anyway, get a team to play against that can challenge you in a lot of different areas," Auriemma said of Texas.

"I'm sure they're thinking the same thing: Let's go play a team that can challenge us in a non-threatening situation. Then you go to practice the following week, and you have a much clearer picture of what you want to work on."

The Strong-Booker matchup will rightfully draw the most attention, but the play of El Alfy and Vukosa at center against Texas' quartet of 6-foot-2 or taller forwards could offer insight into determining who starts down low to open the season against Cornell.



UConn women's basketball player Sarah Strong runs out against Syracuse in an exhibition game Monday, Oct. 12, 2026, at Mohegan Sun Arena in Uncasville. The Huskies squished the Orange 88-60 in their first action of the season as part of the Hall of Fame Series Exhibition. PHOTO BY PARKER MEYERS, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER THE DAILY CAMPUS

"I'm thinking that the players that may not have been used to that (the pace of the game) will feel a little bit better going into the game," Auriemma said of the youth in the rotation. "Certain things that we, I thought, struggled with, we had a chance to address them."

Above all else, Auriemma views Monday's exhibition as a litmus test for his team to "figure it out," both on and off the court.

"Even in practice, we're giving them more opportunities to problem-solve for themselves," Auriemma said. "Because how else are we going to find out? Whose voice is the voice? Who's talking and who's listening? There's got to be more of them finding out who their voice is."

WOMEN'S SWIM AND DIVE: UCONN DEFEATS VILLANOVA FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A DECADE

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The University of Connecticut Huskies started off their swim and dive season with a bang, defeating the Villanova Wildcats 174-126. The Huskies have historically had a rough time against the Wildcats, losing every matchup since 2015, but Saturday was finally their time to shine and come out on top.

The Huskies started out strong with a first-place and third-place finish in the 200-yard medley relay. The first-place team consisted of sophomore Kiersten O'Connor, junior Sydney Perkins, freshman Grier Gordon and junior Jessica Sheng, who helped UConn get 11 points early and set a great tone for the rest of the meet.

The Huskies continued to dominate, placing first in the next four events and racking up 45 points between all their placements. O'Connor and Perkins continued to excel, this time individually. O'Connor placed first in the 100-yard backstroke with an impressive time of 56.37, and Perkins placed first in the 100-yard breaststroke, finishing with a time of 1:03.05, almost two whole seconds ahead of the Wildcats sophomore Emily Herr, who finished with a time of 1:04.50.

The Wildcats didn't give up easily, winning events five, six and seven. Villanova sophomore Anna Kilponen placed first in the 200-yard butterfly, finishing three seconds before teammate senior Anna Farley and just about five seconds before UConn freshman Cara McDonald, who was still able to get three points for the Huskies by placing third with a time of 2:05.42.

UConn senior Kate Cooper had an astounding meet today, placing first in both diving events. She scored 252.08 in the 1-meter diving event, a whopping 29.18 points higher than Villanova senior Michelle Kasulka, who finished with 222.90. Cooper then finished the 3-meter diving event with a score of 240.08. That event was much closer though, as Villanova senior Katie Vaughan finished with a score of 239.55. All in all, Cooper was able to contribute 18 points to her team's final score today, even though she only competed in two events.

UConn freshman Kate Van Ryn also had a great Big East debut, placing first in the 100-yard freestyle with a time of 51.21, 4.09 seconds faster than her teammate Sheng, who finished with a time of 55.30. These podium finishes gave UConn another 13 points to add to their lead.

The meet concluded with another relay, this time a 400-yard freestyle relay. The group that helped the Huskies finish strong once again included Gordon, McDonald, senior Maggie Rhodes and junior Zoe Griffin, finishing 3.33 seconds before the Wildcats.

The Huskies were able to get a Big East win early in the season and their first win in a dual meet. The Huskies now look forward to their first home meet of the season on Oct. 31 against the University of Rhode Island Rams.