SPORTS

# MEN'S BASKETBALL:

## KHAMENIA LEADS THE CHARGE IN EAST LANSING AS HUSKIES WIN ON THE ROAD

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It was a rocking environment inside the Breslin Center as the No. 4 UConn men's basketball team faced off against the No. 6 Michigan State Spartans. Tuesday marked the Huskies' second trip to East Lansing, the last in 2000, when the eventual national champion Spartans trounced them 85-66.

"This is great," Head Coach Dan Hurley said. "This feels like a conference game. The physicality — it's heavyweight sparring."

Nik Khamenia led the way for UConn with 19 points, 5 rebounds and 2 assists in 34 minutes in the 78-70 victory.

"We're resilient. They made their run, but we made ours too," the Duke transfer said postgame. "I'm extremely blessed and I'm super happy to be a husky."

Silas Demary Jr., who struggled in the first exhibition game, found his rhythm Tuesday night as he scored 16 points on 3-for-6 from beyond the arc.

For the Spartans, Jeremy Fears led the team in scoring with 23 points and eight assists after a slow start. High-flying guard Coen Carr was not much of a factor as he finished the night with eight points on just 2-for-7 shooting.

It was a tale of two halves, shooting-wise, for the Huskies as they broke it open in the second half, shooting an impressive 16-for-28 from the field and 6-for-12 from three-point range. Freshman Colben Landrew scored 11 of his 13 points in the second half.

The Huskies led by as many as 15 points in the second half before the Spartans trimmed the deficit to 7 with 1:37 remaining. Khamenia dashed any hopes of a late comeback by sinking a floater to push the lead back to 9 with 70 seconds to play, though Michigan St. answered again to make it a 7-point game with 45 seconds left.

Khamenia and Na'jai Hines picked up right where they left off in their first preseason matchup as they scored the first pair of buckets for the Huskies.

After taking an 8-3 lead, Jasiah Jervins buried a corner three that was followed by a Landrew turnover that got the crowd buzzing.

By the time the Huskies gained their lead, a brief three-minute scoring drought was stopped by a layup by Landrew. Khamenia followed that up by burying a difficult, contested triple to convert a four-point play.

At the 6:23 mark, Fears drove down the lane and elevated over a contesting Landrew and Hines, which wasn't enough as he threw it down. That jam was the lone field goal from Fears in the first half as the junior was held in check as he shot 1-for-6.

Championship teams win games at the charity stripe and UConn started out 2-for-7 from the line but finished at a more acceptable 14-for-22 clip, including two straight misses from Big East Preseason Player of the Year Silas Demary Jr. that gave the sellout Breslin Center crowd free chicken.

Looking at the box score, maybe you'd think that shooting 11-for-29 from the field and turning the ball over eight times would result in the team trailing. That wasn't the case, as UConn, in fact, had an eight-point lead going into the halftime locker room. The bright spots for UConn were Khamenia with a first half high of 9 points and Demary put up 8 points on 3-for-6 shooting, including two triples. UConn led the rebounding battle 19-17, including 8 coming on the offensive glass.

The Spartans came out of the halftime break looking like a brand-new team, immediately going on an 8-2 run with buckets from Carr, Scott and Fears. A layup and a three-pointer from Landrew quickly halted the run before the under 16-minute timeout. The 5-star freshman came out of the timeout, sticking a tough and-one finish to put him in double figures and giving the Huskies a 7-point lead.

One of the few knocks of Tuesday night was the foul trouble from the big men. Hines, who dominated in the exhibition against Syracuse, fouled out with 8 points in just 17 minutes of game time. Oskar Giltay picked up his fourth foul with 13:10 to go, a bit worrisome for UConn as he also fouled out in the first exhibition game. The coaching staff is going to rely heavily on the duo of big men, which means they need to be more disciplined if they want to stay on the floor.

Michigan St. cut a nine-point lead down to four after Jervis was fouled on a three-pointer and a layup from Fears resulted in Hurley calling a timeout. The Huskies responded diligently, as Khamenia made a tough layup down the lane and Junior County hit his first bucket of the night, coming from downtown to elevate the lead back to 7.

The three-point shooting in the second half started out great, just like in the Syracuse exhibition, as they were shooting 5-for-7 by the 8-minute mark, compared to a 4-for-13 first half.




UConn men's basketball takes on Syracuse on Oct. 13th 2026 at Mohegan Sun Arena in Uncasville, CT. The Huskies took a decisive victory in the preseason clash 72-52.

The Spartans' first turnover of the second half was a costly one, as it led to a slam from Hines to give the Huskies a double-digit lead. UConn started pulling away when Nils Machowski drained a deep ball, followed by another and-one from Landrew, who flipped in a layup over a contesting Carr to push the lead to 14.

The Spartans failed to mount any sort of comeback as the final buzzer sounded, sending the fans home in a flustered mood. This win for the Huskies completes the exhibition sweep of the Spartans as they look ahead to Oct. 27, when they host Purdue in the final exhibition game before the season begins.




**Sophomore Nik Khamenia walking on the court for the firs preseason game of the season. Khamenia transferred from Duke and joined the Huskies.**

PHOTO BY ALEX RENZULLI, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS