SPORTS

UCONN FANS REACT TO GAMPEL RENOVATIONS

say they are the "crowning jewel" to UConn's basketball programs

by Avery Becker
SPORTS EDITOR
SHE/HER/HERS
avery.becker@uconn.edu

STORRS – Geno Auriemma recalled to the media a moment from one of his trips to Rome.

The Head Coach of the University of Connecticut women's basketball team said he was waiting in line to visit the Sistine Chapel and happened to see two people in line with him wearing UConn hats.

"I was like, 'Wow, this didn't happen 'X' number of years ago'" Auriemma said to the media regarding his reaction to UConn going worldwide.

Since this occurred before the pandemic, UConn has won three National Championships within the last six years, hanging three banners in their respective home arenas.

"You see it around the world," Auriemma said to the media on Saturday on the UConn logo. "You hear it when you talk to agents from other countries, and they'll talk to you about a player that they have over there who is going to be drafted, is going to be a first-round draft pick. But if they have a chance to go to UConn, they would rather go to UConn."

UConn, often deemed the Basketball Capital of the World, has captured the hearts of many UConn and basketball fans alike in Connecticut.

Since being named head coach in 1985, Auriemma has seen the evolution of both the men's and women's programs.

Now, UConn's on-campus arena in Storrs, with the addition to its name, M&T Bank Center at Gampel Pavilion, got a makeover over the spring and summer months that will finish in at least the next 12 months.

The new renovations feature a new state-of-the-art locker room for both the men's and women's programs, new concession areas and more.

A fan of the women's program and senior studying Psychological Sciences at UConn, Julia Cahoon, describes these renovations as the "crowning jewel" to the programs.

"I think it's reflective of our success," Cahoon said on the renovations. "I see the locker room video, and it's just like a crowning jewel, like [the] type of thing where it's just so fitting for a team that's done so much for the state and for women's sports."

Cahoon also emphasized that these new additions to the arena will be a selling point for future recruits and success. As a native of New Hampshire, Cahoon grew up watching the program with her dad, who is a college basketball fan, seeing players like Breanna Stewart on the hardwood.

"I'm a big sports fan, so obviously there's no better place to watch sports," Cahoon said. "I've always been at the basketball games. I've always felt passion behind the brand. I think the students get really engaged."

Just like Cahoon, Maryann Stradczuk, a Connecticut resident and women's basketball season ticket holder for the last six years, has fallen in love with the program and its players.

"We watch the [WNBA] in part because there's someone we know everywhere, and so even if it's a team we're not fond of, we can't ever root against UConn," M. Stradczuk said. [It's] great for UConn being in Connecticut because we don't have [professional] teams."



University of Connecticut's Allie Ziebell shoots the ball against the Army Black Knights at M&T Bank Center at Gampel Pavilion on Sunday. The Huskies defeated Army 86-50. PHOTO BY MADISON HENDRICKS, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

M. Stradczuk and her husband, Stan, recalled watching the Huskies win their 12th National Championship. They said they were both so emotional watching the hug Auriemma and Paige Bueckers shared, as she checked out for her last time as a Husky.

"It was so emotional, and it was just wonderful to see," M. Stradczuk said, "They love him, but he loves them first, and so he chooses them."

With these special relationships Auriemma shares with his players, M. Stradczuk said that is what attracts so many fans to the program. She emphasized that when you come to play at UConn, you leave ready to take on the world. Whether that be preparing them to deal with the media, large crowds or high-pressure situations, Auriemma and his Associate Head Coach Chris Dailey prepare them for anything.

"When they get to the out in life, they're ready. They're prepared," M. Stradczuk said. "So, they just get all those things, which is really great for them."

As the sun is officially starting to rise on the regular season for the UConn women's basketball program, fans and players will now have the chance to experience these memories, but with revolutionized facilities.

"It's called the Basketball Capital of the World for a reason, right?" S. Stradsczuk said with a grin.

FIELD HOCKEY: HUSKIES CLINCH REGULAR SEASON BIG EAST TITLE

by Name Name
POSITION
PRONOUNS
savannah.wallen@uconn.edu

No. 3 University of Connecticut shut out Old Dominion 3-0 on Friday in Norfolk, Virginia, leaning on a clinical second-half surge and a stalwart defense to move to 14-1 overall and finish Big East conference play 5-0.

UConn's attack controlled tempo in the opening period, generating immediate chances off a penalty corner inserted by Milou Heuker at the 10-minute mark. Monarch goalkeeper Suus Broers kept the match level early, denying consecutive on-target attempts from Faith Everett and Lucy Zich.

Old Dominion (11-5, 2-4 Big East) answered with heavy pressure in the second frame, outshooting the Huskies 6-0 and earning two penalty corners. Huskies' goalkeeper Natalie McKenna stood tall in the cage, turning away strikes from Sofia Marciano and Serena Langendoen to keep the Monarchs off the board and entered halftime locked in a scoreless draw.

UConn flipped the momentum immediately out of the break. The Huskies, who have scored 24 of their 42 goals this season in the second and third frames, capitalized quickly with two strikes in six minutes to take control.

At 32:39, midfielder Olivia McKenna broke the scoreless tie, burying a feed from Zich for her seventh goal of the season. Zich quickly shifted from playmaker to finisher less than six minutes later, burying a pass from Charlotte Ritter at 38:23 to double the advantage. The assist marked Ritter's team-leading ninth of the year.

Early in the fourth period, UConn put the contest out of reach off another corner opportunity. After Broers stopped an initial blast from Olivia McKenna, midfielder Lene Reiche cleaned up the loose rebound at 49:19 to net an unassisted goal.

Old Dominion pushed aggressively to break the shutout, earning three corners in the final frame. However, back Marlijn Swaan provided vital goal-line insurance by recording a defensive save against Stella Houghton in the 51st minute, and Natalie McKenna made a final stop with 19 seconds remaining.

Although Old Dominion held a slight 9-8 edge in total shots, UConn was far more efficient, placing seven of its eight attempts on frame. Zich paced the offense with three points, bringing her season totals to 11 goals, six assists and 28 points. She leads the team in all three categories.

The victory pushed UConn's win streak to 10 games and marked their third consecutive shutout. Natalie McKenna lowered her 0.69 goals-against average by securing her seventh clean sheet of the fall.

With a flawless 5-0 record in conference play, UConn has clinched the regular-season Big East title and secured the No. 1 overall seed for the Big East Field Hockey Championship, set for November. UConn steps out of conference play next, returning to Connecticut to host in-state foe Fairfield for their final game on Friday.



The University of Connecticut Huskies defeat the Temple Owls on Friday, Oct. 9th, 2026 on the Nancy Stevens Field in Storrs. The game wrapped at a strong 4-0 with an exciting win for the Huskies. EMMA RODRIGUEZ, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS



The University of Connecticut Huskies defeat the Temple Owls on Friday, Oct. 9, 2026, on the Nancy Stevens Field in Storrs. The game wrapped with a strong 4-0 blowout win for the Huskies. PHOTO BY EMMA RODRIGUEZ, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/ THE DAILY CAMPUS