SPORTS

MEN'S BASKETBALL:

Huskies end exhibition slate with 76–53 victory over Purdue

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HARTFORD — Throughout the preseason, there have been whispers that Jayden Ross and Colben Landrew may be battling for one spot in the Huskies' starting lineup.

Returning for a fourth season, Ross was expected to move into a starting role after a breakout postseason. However, nothing is given in a program that preaches players earning their spot based on merit.

Landrew, voted Big East Preseason Freshman of the Year at Big East Media Day on Oct. 1, only added fuel to the fire.

Though both found themselves in the Huskies' starting lineup in UConn's first preseason game against Syracuse and again against Michigan State, Braylon Mullins' return to the lineup Tuesday in the Huskies' final exhibition contest against Purdue forced the team's hand on deciding which forward to keep in the starting lineup for the time being.

It was Ross who got the nod and the senior made the most of it.

Scoring the Huskies' first six points on a pair of corner threes, Ross jumpstarted UConn's offense after an early deficit in a game the Huskies never again trailed.

Landrew, though, didn't miss a step. After a quiet first half, the freshman exploded in the second, finishing with a team-high 15 points.

The pair of forwards helped the No. 4 Huskies keep Purdue at arm's length, ending the preseason with a comfortable 76-53 victory.

Though Purdue held a lead for a total of just under four minutes during the contest, the Boilermakers struck first 12 seconds into the game on an uncontested floater from junior guard C.J. Cox.

A minute later, junior center Daniel Jacobsen sent a hook shot over the head of UConn center Na'jai Hines to take an early two possession lead.

Hines struggled early offensively, failing to connect with senior point guard Silas Demary Jr. on an alley-oop opportunity and seeing a shot attempt from the paint forcefully blocked out of bounds by the 7-foot-4 Jacobsen.

Ross quickly picked up his underclassman teammate, nailing his first three of the evening off a fast break at 17:55, spurred by a defensive rebound from Hines and assisted by Mullins.

Though Jacobsen made one of two free throw attempts during Purdue's next offensive possession, that only temporarily extended the Boilermaker's lead.

A minute and a half later, Ross put away his second corner three, with Mullins again assisting. That shot sent UConn into the first media timeout with a one-point lead, one they would not relinquish for the remainder of the game.

Subbing in for Hines, sophomore center Oskar Giltay fared much better against Purdue backup Raleigh Burgess. Dumping in back-to-back hook shots from the paint, Giltay put UConn into the double digits with 13:50 left to play in the first.

Giltay would go on to finish the evening with a plus-26 rating, tied with Nik Khamenia for the highest on the team.

Minutes later, Ross again sent the Huskies into the next media timeout with a bang. Using some help from Landrew, Ross emphatically buried a give-and-go alley-oop. The loud slam sent the pair jogging toward midcourt, high fiving and chest bumping multiple times.

Ross also added a trio of successful free throw attempts after being fouled by Purdue guard Antione West Jr. from behind the three-point arc.

Three more of UConn's starters got on the scoreboard in the latter half of the first quarter. Khamenia and Demary Jr. each notched a layup with 6:17 and 4:14 to play, respectively. Mullins added a jumper from the paint inside of four minutes.

Khamenia tied with Hines with the team-leading four rebounds in the first half, while Mullins led the way with four assists.



UConn men's basketball battles Purdue University on Oct. 27 at PeoplesBank Arena. The Huskies were up 35-20 at the half.

PHOTO BY NORA MARIANO, ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

UConn came out hot in the second half, with Ross picking up where he left off with a dunk off a Purdue turnover.

However, the Boilermakers started heating up soon after. After a Jacobsen layup with 18:32 to play, an Omer Mayer steal off a wild pass from Demary Jr. turned into two points from the sophomore guard. Twenty seconds later, fifth year forward Caden Pierce converted on a three-point play after Ross fouled the forward near the rim on a made basket, pulling back within 10 of the Huskies.

From there, Landrew took over. In just three minutes and 31 seconds, Landrew posted 11 points, adding a steal for good measure.

Hines also picked up some steam in the second, slamming in a second-chance tip-in dunk after a missed Mullins three at 15:17 and picking up an assist 30 seconds later after dishing Landrew a bounce pass in the paint off a Khamenia steal at midcourt.

Though Hines finished with a plus/minus mark of zero in 17 minutes on the court, he also limited his fouls to three after fouling out against Michigan State. Giltay also avoided foul trouble, picking up just two.

Mullins took off in the second half, too. Knocking off the rust in his first game action since the 2026 National Championship, Mullins made his first three-pointer of the season with 7:32 left to play. The sophomore finished the second half with five points and the game with seven.

The second-year guard finished second to only Demary Jr. in assists. The Big East Preseason Player of the Year led the Huskies with five.

Ross finished second to Landrew in points scored with 13 on a perfect shooting performance, going four-for-four from the floor, two-for-two from deep and three-for-three from the line.

Cox paced the Boilermakers with 18 points, going seven-for-14 from the floor and tying Pierce with a team-high seven rebounds.

After an undefeated preseason, the Huskies will return to PeoplesBank Arena next Monday to open the regular season against Gardner-Webb.

Tipoff is scheduled for 9 p.m. The contest will be broadcast live on Peacock.



Jayden Ross, returning for his forth season, puts up a big bucket against the Purdue Boilermakers. Ross scored 13 points helping the Huskies win the game 76-53.

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