

CONCERNS REGARDING BUDGET PROPOSAL FOR CONNECTICUT RESIDENTS

by **Hallie LeTendre**
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During Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont's most recent budget address for the state of Connecticut, he proposed a substantial cut to cancer prevention programs.

Many of these programs provide life saving treatments, as 23,550 people in Connecticut have been diagnosed with cancer this year, a press release said.

One of the major cuts that Lamont proposed was the suspension of tobacco control programs.

"Knowing that smoking causes 27.1% of cancer deaths and that 4,100 people in Connecticut lose their lives to smoking each year, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network is appalled that Gov. Lamont would propose suspending funding for tobacco control programs," Connecticut Government Relations Director for the American Cancer Society

Cancer Action Network Bryte Johnson said.

Johnson expressed how he and his colleagues believe that the proposed cut in tobacco control will result in the loss of human lives.

Specifically, the proposed cut would result in the loss of \$12 million. If enacted, this could cause current young children to be the another generation to fall victim to nicotine, the press release indicated.

"Big Tobacco continues to spend \$60 million annually in CT alone on marketing these addictive, deadly products, frequently targeting youth who are particularly vulnerable to their harms and addictive potential," Johnson said. "We know that over 90% of tobacco or nicotine users start before age 18, and that 56,000 kids alive today will die prematurely due to tobacco use."

With the state of Connecticut having many universities located within it, including the University of Connecticut,

the government's possible enactment of the proposed budget cut could cause harm for the future of college aged students.

"It is terribly frustrating because all of the damage caused by tobacco use is entirely preventable," Johnson said. "We need to continue to invest in proven CDC best practices to ensure people have the help they need to quit and to never start using these deadly products."

For students and or residents who want to have their voices heard, action can be taken by using the Connecticut Cancer Action Center page.

"Tobacco related diseases are the single most preventable cause of death in our society, yet according to Department of Public Health statistics, tobacco use continues to kill more people in Connecticut each year than alcohol, AIDS, car crashes, illegal drugs, accidents, murders and suicides combined," Johnson said.



The Connecticut State Capitol is located in Hartford, Conn. In Governor Ned Lamont's most recent delivery of the state budget, he addressed budget proposals that concerned many Connecticut residents.

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Online Social Work Master's Program coming to UConn in the fall



The University of Connecticut School of Social Work will offer an online Social work Master's program in the upcoming fall semester. They will accept applications for the program through the spring.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @UCONN_SOCIALWORK ON INSTAGRAM

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A new online part-time Social Work Master's program is coming to the University of Connecticut this fall with hopes of providing a more accessible way to obtain a degree.

The three-year program, according to Dean of the School of Social Work Laura Curran, will include a mixture of synchronous and

asynchronous classes that will allow students to focus on their internships, work and family responsibilities while working towards a master's degree. She explained that the program is very similar to the in-person master's program UConn offers, as it has the same number of required credits, the same curriculum and the same faculty. However, the pacing of the curriculum is different, as it is a part-time program compared

to the in-person full-time program. This may be subject to change.

"We're offering the online option right now, on a part-time basis to start, and if we see demand, we will move to a full-time option as well," Curran said.

Curran explained that talks for the project have been in the works for a while and that plans took off after the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The pandemic taught us

that we can teach online. We've been offering online classes in our regular master's program for a while now, and they've grown increasingly popular," Curran said.

Over the years, students have increasingly expressed interest in a more flexible program and Curran remarked that this interest drove the program forward.

For the first semester, class sizes will start small. According to Curran, this will allow

students to get to know their classmates better while ensuring the program's ability to support all its students. However, depending on the demand, things are subject to change.

Curran believes the program will also help UConn's Social Work Master's program stretch its outreach and impact. She recognized the fact that UConn is the top social work master's program in the state, as well as ranked 36th nationally, and that it has done a "wonderful job serving the community at Hartford and around." However, she feels that the current master's program hasn't been able to serve students in other parts of the state.

"We want to be able to reach out to everybody, and this allows us a further reach and impact. There's a shortage of social workers right now, and we're in the middle of a strong mental health crisis. We have lots of social welfare issues that we're attempting to address, from child well-being issues, to issues around aging and health equity issues. All these issues demand a strong social work labor force, so this is our attempt to grow the capacity of our Masters of Social Work programs so that we can offer it to more students," Curran said.

The online program is set to start in the fall of 2024, and the Masters of Social Work program is accepting applications through the spring.

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 **THE DAILY CAMPUS NEWSLETTER**

Greece becomes first Orthodox Christian country to legalize same-sex civil marriage

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Greece on Thursday became the first Orthodox Christian country to legalize same-sex civil marriage, despite opposition from the influential, socially conservative Greek Church.

A cross-party majority of 176 lawmakers in the 300-seat parliament voted late Thursday in favor of the landmark bill drafted by Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis' center-right government. Another 76 rejected the reform while two abstained from the vote and 46 were not present in the house.

Mitsotakis tweeted after the vote that Greece "is proud to become the 16th (European Union) country to legislate marriage equality."

"This is a milestone for human rights, reflecting today's Greece — a progressive, and democratic country, passionately committed to European values," he wrote.

Scores of supporters of the reform who had gathered outside parliament and were watching the debate on a screen cheered loudly and hugged as the vote result was announced.

Earlier, people opposed to the bill had also protested nearby, holding prayer books and religious icons.

Opinion polls suggest that

most Greeks support the reform by a narrow margin, and the issue has failed to trigger deep divisions in a country more worried about the high cost of living.

The bill was backed by four left-wing parties, including the main opposition Syriza.

"This law doesn't solve every problem, but it is a beginning," said Spiros Bibilas, a lawmaker from the small left-wing Passage to Freedom party, who is openly gay.

It was approved despite several majority and left-wing lawmakers abstaining or voting against the reform. Three small far-right parties and the Stalinist-rooted Communist Party rejected the draft law from the start of the two-day debate.

"People who have been invisible will finally be made visible around us. And with them, many children (will) finally find their rightful place," Mitsotakis told lawmakers ahead of the evening vote.

"Both parents of same-sex couples do not yet have the same legal opportunities to provide their children with what they need," he added. "To be able to pick them up from school, to be able to travel, to go to the doctor, or take them to the hospital. ... That is what we are fixing."



Supporters of same-sex marriage bill take part in a rally, at central Syntagma Square, in Athens, Greece, Thursday, Feb. 15, 2024. Greece's parliament voted Thursday to legalize same-sex civil marriage in a first for an Orthodox Christian country and despite opposition from the influential Greek Church.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL VARAKLAS/AP

The bill confers full parental rights on married same-sex partners with children. But it precludes gay couples from parenthood through surrogate mothers in Greece

— an option currently available to women who can't have children for health reasons.

Maria Syrengela, a lawmaker from the governing New Democracy, or ND, said the reform redresses a longstanding injustice for same-sex couples and their children.

"And let's reflect on what these people have been through, spending so many years in the shadows, entangled in bureaucratic procedures," she said.

Dissidents among the governing party included former Prime Minister Antonis Samaras, from ND's conservative wing.

"Same-sex marriage is not a human right ... and it's not an international obligation for our country," he told parliament. "Children have a right to have parents from both sexes."

Polls show that while most Greeks agree to same-sex weddings they also reject extending parenthood through surrogacy to male couples. Same-sex civil partnerships have been allowed in Greece since 2015. But that only conferred legal guardianship to the biological parents of children in those relationships, leaving their partners in a bureaucratic limbo.

The main opposition to the new bill has come from the tra-

ditionalist Church of Greece — which also disapproves of heterosexual civil marriage.

Church officials have centered their criticism on the bill's implications for traditional family values, and argue that potential legal challenges could lead to a future extension of surrogacy rights to gay couples.

Church supporters and conservative organizations have staged small protests against the proposed law.

Far-right lawmaker Vassilis Stigas, head of the small Spartans party, described the legislation Thursday as "sick" and claimed that its adoption would "open the gates of Hell and perversion."

Politically, the same-sex marriage law is not expected to harm Mitsotakis' government, which won easy re-election last year after capturing much of the centrist vote.

A stronger challenge comes from ongoing protests by farmers angry at high production costs, and intense opposition from many students to the planned scrapping of a state monopoly on university education.

Nevertheless, parliament is expected to approve the university bill later this month, and opinion polls indicate that most Greeks support it.



Greece's Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis speaks during a debate in parliament on same-sex marriage in Athens, Greece, Thursday, Feb. 15, 2024. Mitsotakis' center-right government is poised to make Greece the first Orthodox Christian-majority country to approve marriage equality legislation.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL VARAKLAS/AP

The Daily Campus

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Study Break

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THE VINCE STAPLES SHOW:

HE'S MORE THAN JUST A RAPPER

by James Fitzpatrick
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“The Vince Staples Show,” a new Netflix series released yesterday, is exactly what listeners of the rapper can expect from him. Criticism of the police force, the permanent ties to street life regardless of one’s success and the dynamics of Black families are topics explored in the first three episodes. Portrayals of superfans and celebrity cameos also enforce Vince’s standing as someone worthy of having a Netflix show made about him.

In the show and on Staples’ albums, much of the setting is located in Southern California, either in Compton, where he was born, or in Long Beach, where he has spent the majority of his life. While he has affiliated with gangs in the past, he actively denounces it these days, going as far as satirizing the lifestyle in realistic and absurd ways in this show.

“Pink House,” the first episode, begins with the satisfying process of baking donuts from scratch. Of course, they are soon purchased by a cop, who gets into his car to read “Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix” before pur-

suing Staples for making an illegal U-turn. Surprisingly, the squadron turns out to be “fans” of his music, albeit only knowing his most popular song, “Norf Norf.” Ironically, the song’s refrain, “I ain’t never ran from nothin’ but the police,” is used by an officer, as another officer exclaims: “That’s us!” By presenting the cops as both ignorant and double-sided, as they admire Vince as an artist, not as a person, it sheds light on the superficial levels that fans know their idols.

While in jail, he is locked up with multiple fans who try to impress him by singing, but to no avail, echoing the sentiment that his public figure is not as desirable as it is chalked up to be. In real life, Staples is fairly known and acclaimed in the rap scene, although he has yet to achieve any pop stardom outside of his feature on Billie Eilish’s “&burn.”

However, this amount of fame is not his goal in life, as shown in this series. A later episode sees Staples conversing with his Uncle James, played by anime voice-over artist Beau Billingslea, about

everyone wanting to leech off him, including his family. Uncle James, a retired sports announcer, provides the insight that he misses the job, not the fiscal responsibility associated with it. Staples feels the same way, but it is evident he is excited to act and not rap for once.

The idea of being an artist who is never good enough is explored in “Black Business,” where Staples tries to acquire a bank loan for a business startup, but his proposal is rejected based on the color of his skin and the pessimistic outlook the bank has on so-called “entertainers.” The bank manager, Mr. Hightower, holds the stance that music artists have a finite amount of financial prosperity since they often do not diversify their assets, even though Staples is actively trying to make money outside of music. Rick Ross makes a fitting appearance to talk about the thousands of chickens he sells to keep a steady income outside of the rap game, acting as a financial guru.

“I ain’t never ran from nothin’ but the police.”

The archetypal know-it-all Hightower is brought down to size when he soils himself in the robbery that takes up the majority of the episode. Staples happens to know the robbers, making him a middleman between Hightower and the robbers, as well as a barista during the robbery, funnily enough. Along with admitting that he has bosses, Hightower’s deconstruction is heightened when he listens to others only after he is in zip ties, becoming subservient to Vince instead of the other way around. The unlikeable character would have been fine if he handled Vince as a serious client.

Additionally, the sense of complacency that Hightower imagines that Staples has with his career is unrealistic for multiple reasons. For one, he has made revolutionary albums such as “Big Fish Theory” with exorbitant use of electronic beats, which is fair to mention, given the linkage between Staples’ persona in this show that is connected to his celebrity status. Despite going above and beyond throughout his discography, he humbly compares his rapping to a job where he is only putting in sufficient effort to

keep listeners engaged. Furthermore, the very existence of this show exemplifies he is not like the other rappers who will fade into obscurity in the upcoming future.

“Brown Family” features a questionable B-plot about two mothers in the family reunion making macaroni and cheese, interspersed with fist fights. The displays of aggression may be over the top, except that is the fun of it. Families in violent areas can still find drama in the trivial things that society often criticizes upscale people for dramatizing. The first three episodes are never out of touch with reality, as every occurrence could have been experienced by Vince in an alternate parallel universe, but in this universe, he is parodied in his show.

This is a must-see for listeners of Staples, who has been releasing projects for over a decade now, and it is a great way for new people to find out about him. Ignoring its name, a mix of social commentary and lessons applicable to many celebrities makes this series about more than its narrow yet poignant scope of the life of Vince Staples. There are five episodes currently out on Netflix; go watch!

Rating:



ILLUSTRATION BY VAN NGUYEN, ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS





LOGO BY KRISTA MITCHELL, STAFF ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

TALES FROM THE TURNTABLE:

A deep-dive into the lizard wizards of Melbourne

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Welcome back to Tales from the Turntable! Usually, I would be here explaining something from a time gone by — rarely ever going past the year 2000, with some exceptions. This week, I'll be covering something ongoing. Since starting this column, I've always wanted this to be something more than just music history. Every so often, I'd like to highlight an artist, not only to plug the music I enjoy, but to offer recommendations to whoever happens to be reading along each Friday. To start off, I'll be covering one of my favorite bands of all time, one that I've seen live numerous times and have been following for years now.

Out of Melbourne, Australia spawned a surf-punk band in mid-2010. At their genesis, members quickly clashed over their name, with one wanting the band to be named "Lizard Wizard," while another wanted "Gizzard Gizzard." The compromise? "King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard."

Right off the bat, the seven-piece band began recording their own music, featuring a bluesy, blown-out brand of psychedelic surf rock. Just a year later, after hours of unreleased demos and recording, the band put out their first EP, "Willoughby's Beach," a name that pays homage to a local hangout spot outside Melbourne. King Gizzard quickly ascended the rungs of underground popularity, navigating the Aussie circuit with their outlandish name and sound.

2012 would see the group put out their debut record, "12 Bar Bruise," featuring a slightly more polished sound. 2013 would see two albums, the spaghetti-western audiobook "Eyes Like the Sky," and the reverberated "Float Along — Fill Your Lungs." The latter would prove to be a seminal turn for their sound, featuring the 16-minute opener "Head On/Pill," showcasing their ability to create longer-formed songs with ease while keeping things interesting during the entire cut.

Around this time, the rest of the world became privy to King

Gizzard. While Australian psychedelic rock wasn't unknown (entirely thanks to the bafflingly popular Tame Impala), more and more began to take notice of all the innovations coming from all across the nation. With each forthcoming record, the group's popularity ballooned. 2014 saw the release of "I'm In Your Mind Fuzz," featuring a side-long pop medley and much more accessible rock than what they had been doing previously.

Up to this point, the band was seen mostly as a novelty to those outside Australia — a band that could only mimic the sounds of long-forgotten 60s psychedelic rock or dated surf punk. 2015 saw this narrative change when the band put out back-to-back concept records showcasing their untapped virtuosity and sonic variety. "Quarters!" sported four tracks, each ten minutes and ten seconds long, blending their retro sound with jazz fusion and slow jams. The lead single "The River" quickly became a hit in underground circles, partly due to its mesmerizing hand-animated music video.

"Paper Mache Dream Bal-

loon" had a much more defined concept, and feature a completely acoustic folk sound. The opener "Sense" became their biggest hit at the time, amassing over 32 million plays as of writing this article. 2016's "Nonagon Infinity" was an infinite loop of blown-out, energetic punk, with each song flowing seamlessly into the next for a non-stop barrage on the ear. The record established many antics that band would become known for later on, like their creative use of two drum sets, a harmonica featured in almost every song and constant ad-libbed "woo!" and "yup!" from lead singer Stu Mackenzie.

2017 was a pivotal year for the group; originally when I planned to write this article I wanted to just cover their output in 2017, as King Gizzard would go on their most ambitious endeavor to date, releasing five original studio albums in one year. Announcing their plan in November of 2016, reactions were seemingly mixed. While diehard fans (or "gizzheads," as they've affectionately named themselves), welcomed the idea, many listeners feared the quality of music to

come out of such a daunting task.

2017 came and went, and the group managed to follow through with their promise, releasing five unique albums, still touring between releases. Genres covered included microtonal desert rock, sci-fi audiobook, laid-back jazz fusion (featuring fellow Aussie songwriter Mild High Club), complex progressive rock and an album of leftovers that didn't quite make the cut. While quality and popularity definitely varied between records, many still praised the group for following through.

In the years following, the group continued to tour and release new music, playing with genres like thrash metal, boogie rock, synth-pop and hip-hop, just to name a few. In a strange case of nominative determinism, King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard are just as outlandish as the name they proudly brand themselves as. While this article hasn't featured much death, drama or turbulence, hopefully, I've been able to pique the interests of a few of you out there to explore more music.

Tech and Teaching in the

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As tech and AI programs infiltrate systems of learning, educators struggle to acclimate to ever-changing standards of academic integrity and interpersonal connection.

Through a roundtable discussion hosting professors and instructors from universities globally, a conversation arises addressing how simply acknowledging the imminent nature of tech in education is insufficient.

Given that as educators, teachers must function as hosts of multiple skills aside from traditional instruction, moving to a heavily online system of learning exacerbates the unaccounted for efforts of teachers in their practice.

This includes existing as the facilitators of online classrooms, often multitasking beyond what is expected of teachers in a relatively new class setting. Additionally, educators serve as innovators tasked with observing the effectiveness of a new and radical approach to education, tasks which — more often than not — demand skills more common in social work.

Then, when an educator is presented with an in-person instruction model years after the pandemic, how do they grapple with receiving a class of students with significantly reduced social capabilities due to long-term isolation during COVID-19?

Amy Below, teacher of international relations at California State University, East Bay, highlights the evolving functionality of working effectively with different people for a student's career, stating "Someone can have a very vibrant career sitting on a computer, is this a career to prepare them for? You can work remotely your entire life."

Still, Below pushes for the fostering of group work and social skills, proposing teach-

ers must be aware of the changing of industries with tech tools to best prepare their students, though how exactly to prepare a class

seems ever-changing and challenging in nature.

At the university level, some schools have been more receptive than others in dealing with new AI technology.

Completing her third year teaching online, Mary Jane Parmentier, clinical associate professor in the School for the Future of Innovation and Society at Arizona State University speaks of the accessibility and infrastructure established at ASU to adapt to AI.

At ASU, teachers are encouraged to take courses to learn about their tech, embracing a teacher's responsibility to learn the basics of generative AI so they can implement it in their classrooms. The university has also hired an AI strategist (ASU Enterprise Technology) to work on how to incorporate AI into teaching.

Parmentier mentions, "As professors we have a responsibility to understand AI

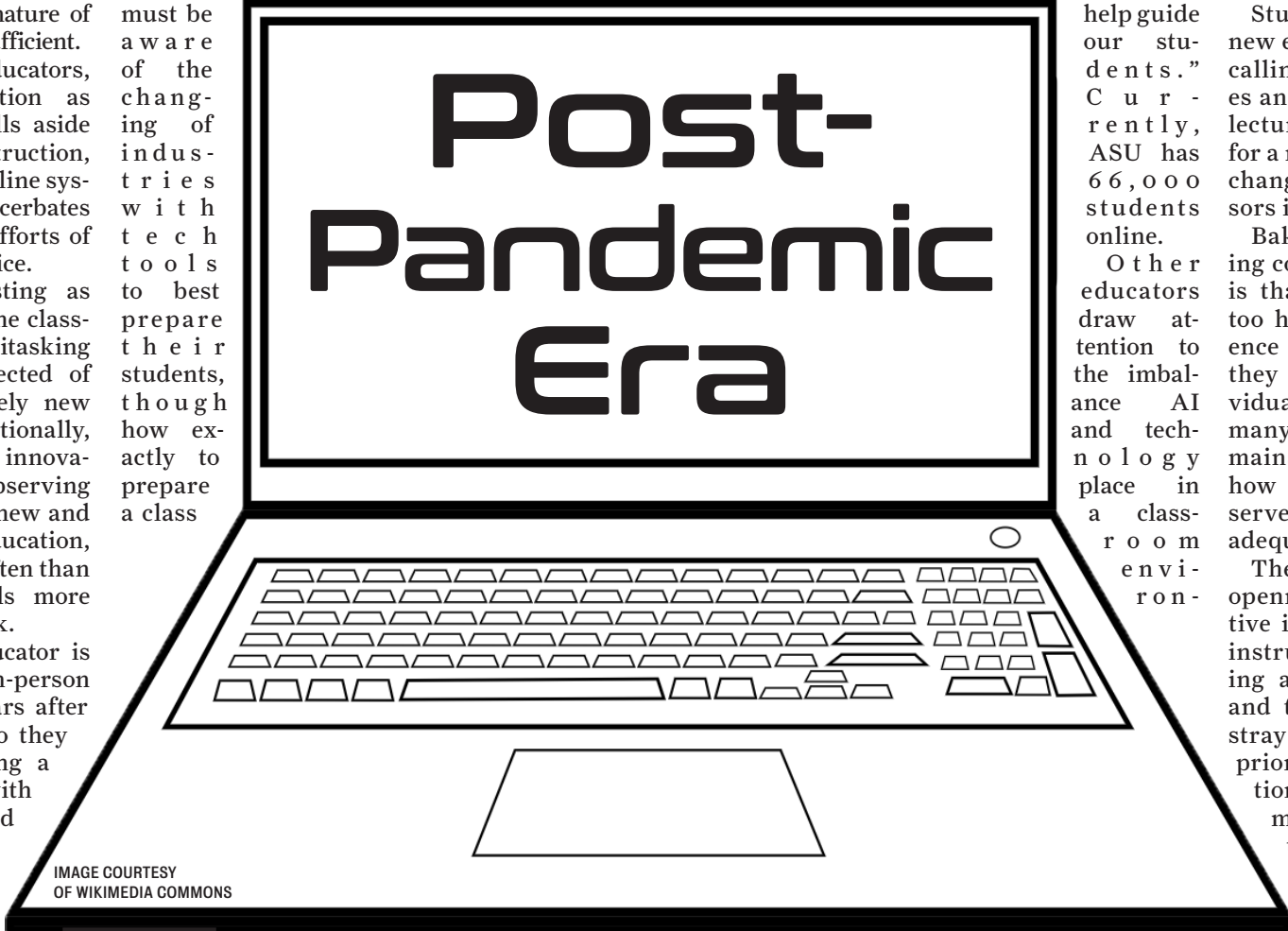
enough to help guide our students."

Currently, ASU has 66,000 students online. Other educators draw attention to the imbalance AI and technology place in a classroom environment, as they require a mix of all sorts of teaching styles.

Douglas Baker, Associate Professor of Political Science, International Relations, and Environmental Studies at the University of Southern California states the immense vulnerability in teaching currently, as expectations of instruction are vastly different. "The problem is the way in which technology disempowers workers, as faculty they are potentially disempowered," Baker said.

Students hold professors to new expectations of teaching, calling for online based classes and conveniently recorded lectures. Generally, this calls for a revamping of syllabi and changing the goals of professors in presenting material. Baker claims that the looming concern within education is that in a way these tools too harshly alter the experience of teaching. Likewise, they are presenting individual educators with their many pitfalls. The focus remains on each teacher and how and when they will be served more effectively and adequately in new tech.

The roundtable expressed openness as a tool most effective in response to changing instruction. While embracing a new era of education and tech, teachers must not stray too far from upholding priorities of human connection. Ultimately, teachers must seek opportunities to work with, not around the post-pandemic world.



The queen of sadness and despair: LIZZY McALPINE AND ‘OLDER’

by Thaomy Phung | CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT | SHE/HER/HERS | thaomy.phung@uconn.edu

Ruler of lovely heartbreak rhythms and scream-along songs, alternative indie-pop singer-songwriter, Lizzy McAlpine, has delivered a surprise that fans have been anticipating. She also announced the release of her junior album for April 5 named after her song, “Older,” which she dropped on Feb. 13.

Building her fame on TikTok and Instagram, she is so much more than just a TikTok star. Her first album, “Indigo,” was released on Feb. 9, 2018, but was later deleted across all platforms except for SoundCloud because she believed her earlier projects weren’t representative of who she was as an artist. While studying abroad in Spain during her time at Berklee College of Music, she wrote and released another album, “Give Me A Minute,” on Aug. 13, 2020. And two years after that, on April 8, 2022, she released her sophomore album and film, “five seconds flat,” which consists of her current — and some of her most popular — songs, like “ceilings” and “all my ghosts.” With “five seconds flat,” McAlpine’s narrative single-handedly redefined what a breakup album truly was.

It seems with each album, McAlpine rediscovers herself emotionally through her music, whether that be happiness, emptiness or loneliness. She recalls on her Instagram post that “this album took [her] three years to get right.” According to The Washington Post, this is “a project she hopes will be a more raw reflection. Mistakes in the recording studio may end up on the final cut,” and in an interview with Rolling Stone, she stated that this album was what she “actually sounds like as an artist” in comparison to her other albums or projects.

On Jan. 23, McAlpine deleted all of her Instagram posts and changed her profile picture to a solid forest green color on all social media platforms, implying that a new era of music and image of who “Lizzy McAlpine” was to be was beginning. “I learned who I was as a person, who I want to be as an artist and what kind of art I want to make. This album is a culmination of that growth, showcasing the rawest and most honest version of me,” McAlpine said about the changes.

Now, after two years, fans

have been gifted with a teaser for her soon-to-be released album: A song called “Older.”

“Older” opens with a solemn chord progression played on the piano, signifying the desolation she must have felt in writing this album. McAlpine takes a deep breath and sings heavenly, but the meaning behind her words isn’t as serene.

“Over and over, a carousel ride / Pay for your ticket, watch the red moon climb / Sick to my stomach, can’t find the ground / Stuck in a loop, watch the curtain come down.”

The sadness that eludes from the slowly played piano in conjunction with the symbolic nature of a carousel reveals her perspective on life: A monotonous loop, a cycle and predictable fate of being born then unborn. “Sick to my stomach,” she sings, “can’t find the ground,” represent the reality that some things are simply out of reach, perhaps alluding to fate and death. “Stuck in a loop, watch the curtain come down,” is described like a theater. With no one to help her get down from the carousel — without a support system — the curtains

close, the show ends and she is stuck there, alone, as people in the audience leave her stranded.

“Over and over, watch it all pass / Mom’s getting older, I’m wanting it back / Where no one is dying, and no one is hurt / And I have been good to you instead of making it worse.”

It’s truly unfortunate to watch life gradually start to meet the greatest enemy: time. Here, McAlpine reminisces about the past and her childhood, singing of the many sunny days where she was taken care of and everything in her life was utopic.

“Wish I was stronger somehow / Wish it was easy / Somewhere I lost all my senses / I wish I knew what the end is.”

She emphasizes the debilitating, inescapable feeling of not being able to do anything to help someone else or her own self. These last lines are a plea for help. But, the song ends just as softly and solemnly as it started.

After having named her newest album after this song, listeners must be inclined to believe that her album will be just as brutally honest and wistful as “Older.” But, fans won’t know until April 5, 2024. Stay tuned.

RATING:



IMAGE COURTESY OF @LIZZYMALPINE ON X

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COMIC BY SARAH CHANTRES, STAFF ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

The death knell of American democracy

by **Tomas Hinckley**
WEEKLY COLUMNIST
HE/HIM/HIS
tomas.hinckley@uconn.edu

As the 2024 presidential election grows closer by the day and polls predict a hotly contested race, more Americans are beginning to wonder what another four years of Donald Trump would look like for America. For those worrying about the worst-case scenario to come from this next election, fear not, for it has been revealed to the world. What I'm casually referring to is entitled Project 2025, a comprehensive policy plan which leading Republican think-tank The Heritage Foundation has created for a Trump presidency. This is the most dangerous threat to American democracy packaged neatly in one 940-page book.

Where does Project 2025 come from, and who and what is The Heritage Foundation? They are without a doubt, one of the strongest forces in national politics that most people have never heard of. The masterminds behind many of

Ronald Reagan's policy decisions, The Heritage Foundation has been a powerhouse for conservative strategy for the past 50 years. In both the Reagan and Trump administrations, they proudly claim the adoption of around two-thirds of their policy recommendations and the installation of many of their experts in high government positions. Although in previous years they stood for a perhaps traditional brand of principled fiscal conservatism, they have now felt the changing tides of the GOP under Trump and are seeking to institutionalize his authoritarian brand in the federal government for decades to come.

This is where Project 2025 comes into play. Project 2025's main goal of greatly empowering a Trump presidency begins with a plan to replace a large portion of the current bureaucracy with single-minded Trump loyalists, who are screened to have no reservations about doing whatever it takes to move his policy forward. This plan would also exponentially increase the amount of positions which are subject to

his whims, a combination which would allow him more control over the federal bureaucracy than previous presidents could dream of. In terms of direct control, the plan seeks to give Trump direct control over many governmental agencies, such as the Federal Communications Commission and (much more frighteningly) the Department of Justice. Those that have harmed him in the past will be drastically defunded, such as the FBI. When these examples are taken into consideration with his vow to invoke the Insurrection Act and broader efforts to replace Department of Defense and other high military ranking officials with his sycophants, it paints a dangerous picture of a future in which the military forces are no longer able to resist his anti-democratic designs and all the forces made to create accountability are dead in the water.

All of what I'm describing is not a secret, although it seems like only political junkies really know or care about it; what's happening here is out in the open and very serious. This is also not at all an exhaustive list of the goals of Project 2025, as it truly encompasses every area of conservative policy and seeks to give Trump unfettered control over as much as possible. Maybe in the past we assumed that this man was a lot of hot air, spouting off whatever got him attention without the intention or ability to carry it through. The reality is, though, he has the will,

the ability, the support and clearly outlined plans to take over the government and transform it into something this nation has never seen before. Any hope for progress in this country over the course of the next few decades is going to become that much more difficult in the face of an extreme authoritarian regime.

Young people especially stand at the precipice of a brand new era for America. If you're my age, Trump has already been the preeminent political figure for most of your adult life, but these next four years could take that to a new extreme. Is it still possible to work for reform in this new era from within the

federal government? Will civil service still be a viable career choice for those who aren't entirely devoted to serving Donald Trump? Is it still possible to join the military without signing up to go against your own people and constitution? For my fellow political science students interested in the intelligence community or becoming "progressive prosecutors," is this really possible anymore without becoming an arm of an authoritarian regime? My answer to all these questions is, if Project 2025 is carried out to its full potential (which is very likely), no.

Pay attention, because this is our future and it is coming much faster and much more quietly than people are seeing right now.

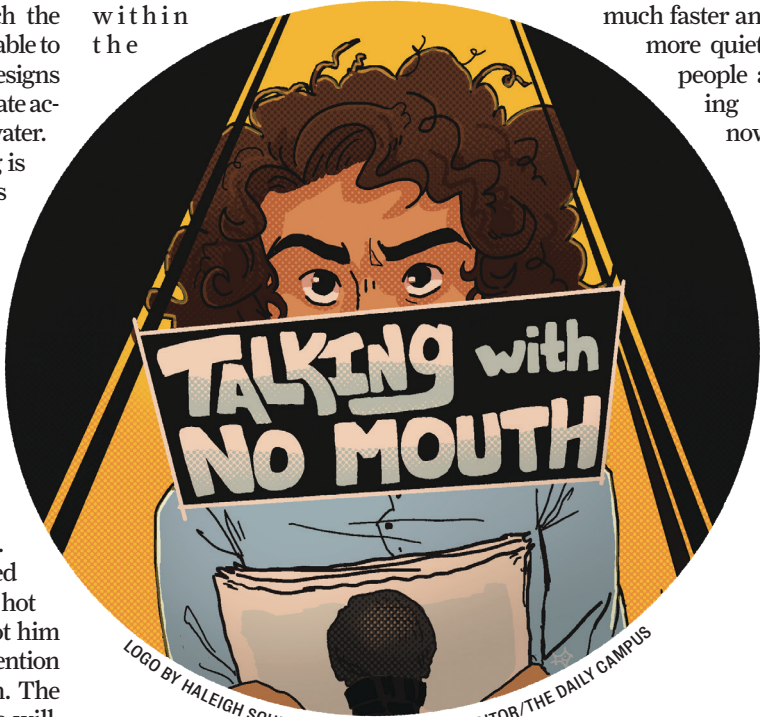


ILLUSTRATION BY SARAH CHANTRES, STAFF ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

USG CAMPAIGN PROMISES

The University of Connecticut has opened the process to run for elections for student leadership positions, including Undergraduate Student Government at UConn Storrs, Student Government Association at UConn Stamford and the Student Trustee role on the board of trustees. Zealous candidates have already begun launching campaigns for different offices, making promises to bring student voices to the halls of power. But in distinguishing themselves as the best people for the job, candidates also risk blending into the annual chorus of lofty, ill-defined promises

that students may easily dismiss as superficial.

This week, Opinion writers answer: What can aspiring student leaders do to meaningfully reach their constituents?

NELL SRINATH,
OPINION EDITOR:

I hate to be cynic (lie), but running for USG or Student Trustee can easily look more like politician practice than genuine student advocacy. And while I don't doubt that there are students with genuine intentions of sparking

institutional change by working with the administration and board of trustees, I also think it's true that we've seldom seen examples of meaningful opposition to tuition hikes, bureaucratic bloat or excessive construction projects that make this university more exclusive. What I would like to see from more student candidates for elected office is legitimate promises to stand up to the people in high positions and call them out for a decade of policies that erode the "public" in this public flagship university. I want a representative who is willing to bring shock and

awe to Wilbur Cross North Reading Room once a month or make those administrators have to rethink if their six-figure salaries are worth it. "Student voices" are dead, long live student fury!

DAN STARK,
ASSOCIATE OPINION EDITOR

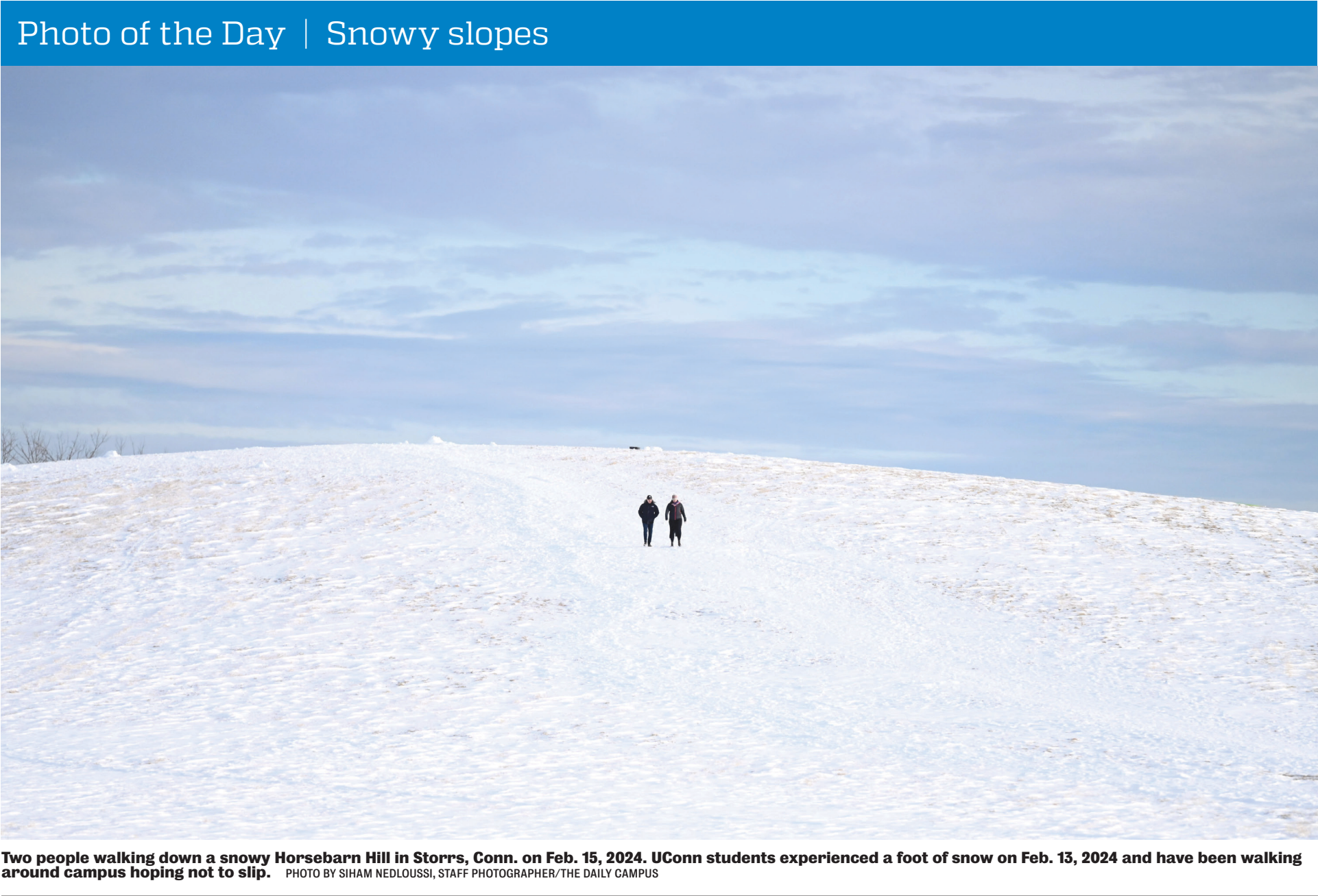
My biggest problem with student candidates is how corporate and bland their social media and marketing are. Whenever I see an Instagram page for student candidates, especially those for USG, it feels like they copy and pasted the first Canva template they saw and pasted the most generic message possible about "representing the students." This cookie-cutter approach actively discourages students from voting for them, as who would want to vote for the same old status quo? Candidates need to make their messaging and social media more personal and unique if they want to rally students to turn out to vote. A perfect example of this is the social media page for student trustee candidate Eric Meade. Unlike most other student candidates, Meade has promoted accountability in a way that feels genuine and has relied on memes to rally his base of support.

TOMAS HINCKLEY,
WEEKLY COLUMNIST:

One thing I want more of from political candidates is realistic expectations based on an understanding of what USG is capable of. How many students who aren't involved in USG actually know about its inner workings or real capabilities? I think it'd be helpful for candidates to explain more of their powers, the abilities of these powers to actually make things happen within USG and the overall capabilities of USG to actually carry out their policy. To give a personal example, I honestly have no idea what a Comptroller is. To put simply, making USG more transparent to students is what I want. Then, once you start with that base of being on the same page, all your promises can actually be examined by the public and seen to be either way too big or way too small. As students our individual powers within this system are inherently small, even in these elected positions. If someone tells you they're actually trying to make change or take action as the UConn Foundation's undergrad representative, they're lying to you, they have no power. I think acknowledging that lack of power and answering the question of what you plan to do in spite of it is important.

ROUND TABLE

Study Break



COMIC BY VAN NGUYEN, ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

2024 IS GONNA BE MY YEAR!

COVID.

WTF

RECEIVES TEXT NOTIF:

OH! MY BESTIE SENT ME A PHOTO, I WONDER WHAT IT IS!

YAY! I'M SICK SO I GET TO STAY HOME ALL THE TIME!

THE VOICES. THE FUCKING VOICES.

COMIC BY SARAH CHANTRES, STAFF ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

THE DAILY CAMPUS SUDOKU

FLIP THE PAGE UPSIDE-DOWN FOR THE SOLUTION

3	4	2	6	7	5	8	6	1
6	5	8	1	4	9	7	3	2
9	7	1	3	8	2	6	5	4
8	1	4	9	3	6	2	7	8
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Women’s Lacrosse:

Huskies fall just short of Fairfield in season opener

by **Bridget Bronsdon**
STAFF WRITER
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Despite an unfavorable outcome, the UConn women’s lacrosse team fought hard against long-time rival Fairfield.

For the past three years now, the Huskies have begun their season against the Stags and have historically been challenged year in and year out. This season was no different, as the No. 22 Huskies traveled to the Fairfield turf to take on the No. 1 ranked team in the MAAC preseason poll.

The first quarter started UConn off on the right foot as sophomore Rayea Davis fired off the first goal with just 10 minutes remaining. Davis has been a standout attacker since her rookie year, as she was in the top five team leaders in scoring last season with 28 goals to her name. She is already leading the team this season in goals after scoring four against Fairfield.

UConn’s second goal came just 30 seconds later as senior attacker Susan Lafountain plowed through the Fairfield defense to find the back of the net.

With a 2-0 lead, the Stags were prepared to answer as they earned three in a row with just five minutes left in the quarter.

Despite the sudden 3-2 fall, UConn responded. Lafountain led the team to the net for her second goal of the day, assisted by Jenna Giardina. Lafountain has earned her place as a team leader with a



The UConn women’s lacrosse team practicing indoors on Feb. 15, 2024. Number 25 Madelyn George took two shots on goal in her last game against Fairfield on Feb. 14, 2024. PHOTO COURTESY OF @UCONNWLAX ON INSTAGRAM

near-perfect consistent shots on goal percentage.

The UConn-Fairfield duel quickly established a call-and-response dynamic as the Stags earned their fourth goal to once again overtake the Huskies. However, the duo of Davis and Lafountain rallied the group to charge the net and fire off two more goals.

The third quarter then upped the ante to the highest level of intensity. With the Huskies in the lead 6-5, Davis scored a hat trick

to push the Huskies into a two-point margin. Davis proved to be a dominant force on the turf as she once again found the back of the net for her fourth goal of the day. Despite these efforts, UConn was outscored 4-2 in the third.

Despite being down by one, the fourth and final quarter was make or break as the Huskies laid it all out on the field. Junior attacker Grace Slater led the Stags as she earned her fourth goal of the contest.

Even with a final effort from

Lafountain and graduate student Kate Shaffer, the Huskies ultimately fell 9-11 as the Stags nailed three closing goals in the last quarter.

A highlight of the matchup was goalkeeper Landyn White’s performance who earned her 600th career save during the match. Although the Huskies fell short, the season is only just beginning. With about three months left to fine-tune their skills and grow cohesively, the team has

gained several newcomers and will look to veteran leaders.

Shaffer, who has been named Big East Preseason Offensive Player of the Year and ended last season with a team-high of 55 goals and 28 assists, will most likely be an athlete the group looks to throughout the season. The veteran standout has routinely demonstrated exemplary strategic gameplay and will most likely continue to do so this season.

From the underclassmen, sophomore breakout star Grace Winkler followed in Shaffer’s footsteps as she had a phenomenal freshman year with a consistently near-perfect shots on goal percentage. In last year’s game against Fairfieldw, she had a career-high of five goals in her very first collegiate contest. As for the newcomers, nine freshmen were added to the pack, making it the biggest class on the team. With two defenders, three midfielders and attackers and one goalkeeper, the Huskies gained new talent from all angles of the field.

Looking ahead, the Huskies will be on the road again to take on JMU in Maryland. The Dukes had an explosive start to the season and were named No. 3 in the nation in the first ILWomen/IWLCA Division I Poll. Just recently, they beat UNC in an electrifying overtime 19-18 victory. In last year’s matchup, Tai Jankowski was the player to beat, but since graduating, the Dukes will need to fill her shoes.

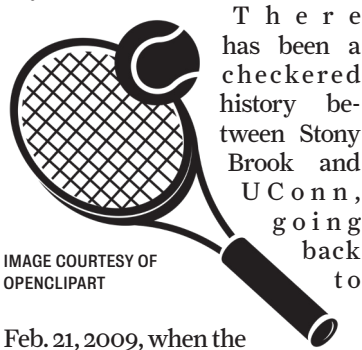
The matchup will take place on Saturday and is set to begin at 12 p.m.

Women’s Tennis:

Huskies stay at home this weekend with matches against Stony Brook and Rutgers

by **Avery Becker**
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After their tough loss last week against the Xavier Musketeers, the UConn women’s tennis team looks to switch things around as they face the Stony Brook Seawolves on Friday, followed by the Rutgers Scarlet Knights on Sunday at home.



Feb. 21, 2009, when the Seawolves swept the Huskies 7-0. After that, Stony Brook won every single match up until 2016, when Connecticut took the win 5-2. Since then, the Huskies have won five out of the seven matches played against them.

One of these wins was a 6-1 victory last year. At this match, Olivia Wright led the way for the Huskies in first singles, winning 6-3, 6-4, taking the first singles point for the Huskies. Connecticut completely dominated the doubles matchups as well, with Wright and her doubles partner Marie Constantinou taking the win 6-2, notching the two doubles points for the Huskies.

When you look at the history between UConn and Rutgers, it has been in the favor of the Scarlet Knights. Dating back to 2009, Rutgers has won every match, except in 2018 when Connecticut took the victory 5-2.

The last time these two teams played against each other was on Feb. 13, 2022. Even though they

were able to gain momentum at various opportunities, they were swept 7-0. At that match, Coach Glen Marshall stressed on matching Rutgers’ energy and focus.

“We fought hard all the way but need to break through on some of the crucial points to finish out sets and matches. Overall, I was pleased with



the fight and effort, and playing tough matches early in the season will make us stronger down the road,” Marshall remarked.

The key to UConn winning these two matches is playing with a more commanding force, especially in their longer rallies. The longer stretch between matches than they had last week when they had just one day in between Quinnipiac and Xavier gave them more time to enhance their skills for these matchups. They also need to maintain their focus and hard work that they have proved in past matchups to win against Rutgers.

On Friday, the first serve is scheduled for 6 p.m. Then, Sunday’s match is scheduled for a 10:30 a.m. start. For Husky fans who wish to stay updated during the match, they can do so with iOnCourtLive scoring.

Track & Field:

Big Weekend Ahead for Huskies

by **Jackson Crainich**
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The University of Connecticut track & field team goes into this weekend knowing how important it is. Next weekend is the Big East Indoor Championships, and if the Huskies can have a strong performance in their next two meets, then they will have the elevated confidence that’s needed to win another Big East Championship.

The Huskies will be performing in two separate meets on two separate days this weekend, with the first being on Friday, the Terrier DMR Challenge in Boston, and the second on Saturday, the Alex Wilson Invitational.

The Terrier DMR Challenge is hosted by Boston University and will be located at the Boston University Track and Tennis Center. This meet is shorter than the Huskies are used to. Kicking off at 7:15 p.m., the race is only expected to last a little over an hour and a half, with the estimated completion time at 8:50 p.m. The first event of the meet is the men’s 800-meter, where senior Mahamed Sharif finds himself seeded third, 0.22 seconds behind first. The meet then con-

“The Huskies will be performing in two separate meets on two separate days this weekend.”

cludes with the women’s DMR. Notably, the Terrier DMR Challenge will host many schools, including Stanford,

Washington, Virginia Tech, BYU, Duke, North Carolina and Penn State.

The second meet of the weekend is the Alex Wilson Invitational, located in South Bend and hosted by the Notre Dame Fighting Irish. This meet, similar to the Terrier DMR Challenge, is a one day event. The competition is being held at Mayo Field, inside the Loftus

“The track that the athletes will be competing on is the nation’s largest NCAA legal indoor track in the country.”

Sports Center. The track that the athletes will be competing on is the nation’s largest NCAA legal indoor track in the country. The meet starts at 11 a.m. with the women’s weight throw, which will be immediately followed by the men’s weight throw, before concluding with the final event at 3:45 p.m., the 4x400 men’s relay. The meet will play host to TCU, Northern Arizona, Indiana, Brown and other universities from around the country.

The Huskies are looking to bring their momentum into this weekend and have a strong performance. With the Big East Championship only being a week away, this is a weekend where big results would make a massive impact on their confidence heading into next weekend, where they will look to bring home their sixth straight indoor or outdoor Big East Championship.

Photo of the Day | UConn!!!



UConn women's basketball defeats Seton Hall at the XL Center on Wednesday, Feb 7. UConn won the game with a final score of 67-34.

PHOTO BY CONNOR SHARP, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Softball:

UConn set for 2nd weekend of season at NC State Tournament

by Ava Inesta
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The UConn softball team is set for a second weekend of action this season, this time they are heading down to Raleigh, North Carolina for the NC State Tournament.

The Huskies will open on Friday, Feb. 16 for a double header against Elon and Campbell. Game one against Elon starts at 12:00 p.m., and first pitch for game two against Campbell is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. UConn will continue the tournament on Saturday, Feb. 17 for another double header against the host school of North Carolina State and Campbell. Their day starts at 2:20 p.m. against the NC State Wolfpack and will close with another matchup against Campbell at 7:30 p.m. Then the Huskies will wrap up the tournament on Sunday, Feb. 18 for a single matchup against North Dakota State with first pitch scheduled for 9:30 a.m.

Elon is coming into this matchup with a 3-1 overall record. On opening weekend, they hosted a tournament of their own at Hunt Softball Park. They won both games against Kent State, they lost against Miami (Ohio) and they defeated Evansville before their Sunday afternoon matchup got canceled against Appalachian State. The Phoenix's game against Evansville ended in a thriller. Junior Allee Seering stepped up to the plate down a run and a runner in scoring position. She came in clutch and hit a homerun over the fence to give Elon their first

walk-off victory of the season with a final score of 5-4.

Campbell is entering this tournament with a 0-5 record. The Fighting Camels have yet to put all the pieces together to get in the win column this season. Campbell almost had a late rally comeback against Buckenell on Saturday of the Kickin' Chicken Classic in Conway, South Carolina. They struggled offensively until the seventh inning, when junior Tristin Doster hit a two run RBI, scoring junior Alyssa Henault and sophomore MaKayla McClain. Then freshman Lindsay Lumsden hit an RBI single which advanced Doster and brought home sophomore Stacey Deputy. However, the game ended on a fly out with two runners stranded on base, resulting in Campbell coming up short 4-3, once again.

NC State has had a little bit of a better start to the season with a 2-3 overall record. The Wolfpack did not find any luck against Iowa, Missouri or Western Kentucky but they found wins against Missouri State and St. John's. They finished off the first weekend of the season at the NFCA Leadoff Classic with a 9-1 win over St. John's. Sophomore right-handed pitcher Madison Inscow threw a career-high nine strikeouts while in the circle for seven innings. Inscow struck out six consecutive batters between the third and fifth innings. The offense backed up the strong pitching performance by scoring nine runs in the Wolfpack's last game of the opening weekend.

For more of the story visit DAILYCAMPUS.COM



The Huskies take on the URI Rams on Friday, Oct. 6, 2023 at Burrill Family Field at 5 p.m. At the bottom of the 5, the Rams lead 2-0. PHOTO BY SHELAGH LAVERTY, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Women's Ice Hockey:

No. 11 Huskies continue road trip at Merrimack, Vermont

by Sam Calhoun
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In the middle of a crucial road trip, the No. 11 UConn women's ice hockey team (19-6-5, 16-3-4 Hockey East) looks to stay in front in the Hockey East standings as they are hosted by Merrimack (10-17-3, 7-13-3 Hockey East) and Vermont (11-15-4, 9-11-3 Hockey East).

The beginning of the road trip did not start as hot as the Huskies would've liked. UConn tied with Northeastern on Friday, losing in the shootout 1-0. However, Connecticut added another game to the win column on Saturday with a 5-1 win over the Holy Cross.

UConn saw three of its players named to the Hockey East Top Performers list: forwards Coryn Tormala and Ashley Allard, along with defenseman Ainsley Svetek. Tormala posted three points last weekend for the Huskies with one goal and two assists. Allard increased her point streak to three games with two goals and one assist. Svetek registered a point in both games this weekend.

The two-goalie trend seems to continue with juniors Megan Warrenner and Tia Chan. Warrenner had 20 saves and allowed one goal in the Huskies' win over Holy Cross, while Chan put up 31 saves in 65 minutes, allowing two goals in regulation and overtime.

Tonight's game against Merrimack will be the third of four games in Massachusetts during the Huskies' road trip. It is the first meeting between the two teams since Dec. 1, when graduate student Camryn Wong knocked in the game-winning goal in a 2-1 overtime victory at home.

UConn will be up against the Pro Ambitions Hockey East Rookie of the Week in forward Maria Lindberg. The Stockholm, Sweden native was second nationally in points out of all freshmen with three points during the Warriors' home-and-home series against the University of New Hampshire last weekend. Lindberg leads the team in goals and is tied for second in points behind forward Celine Tedenby. The redshirt fifth-year has 21 points with 14 assists.

Vermont will take on Boston University before the battle with Connecticut on Saturday afternoon. It hasn't been long since the two schools met, with a win and scoreless tie in late January. It will be Senior Day for the Catamounts.

It will be a tall task for the Huskies to take on forward Natálie Mlýnková, the Hockey East Player of the Week. She played a factor in all four of the Catamounts' goals last weekend in a pair of 2-2 draws at Boston College and Providence College, with a goal and an assist in each game. With her goal on Friday, the senior became the third all-time leading scorer in Vermont history with 47 career goals. She added her 48th career goal on a game-tying goal with 4.6 seconds left in the third period on Saturday.

Mlýnková wasn't the only Catamount to be recognized by the Hockey East. Goalender Jessie McPherson made the Hockey East Top Performers list. The senior from Chatham, Ontario had 64 combined saves in the two games in addition to four stops in a shootout on Saturday to earn Vermont an extra point.

Defenseman Krista Parkkonen and forward Lily Humphrey are tied for Vermont's lead in assists with 14. One of the main differences between the two is that Parkkonen has one more goal than Humphrey.

After this weekend, UConn will wrap up their regular season with a home-and-home against Boston University as the Huskies control their destiny to a Hockey East regular season championship.

Merrimack will host Boston University on Saturday before finishing their regular season with a home-and-home against Providence.

Vermont will be on the road for their last two games of the regular season, both at Northeastern.

The puck drop against Merrimack is set for 4 p.m. at Lawlor Rink in North Andover, Massachusetts. Tomorrow's game at Vermont is scheduled for 1 p.m. at Gutterson Fieldhouse in Burlington, Vermont. Both games will be available to watch on ESPN+.

Ava's Angle: Edwin Díaz is back, what does that mean for the Mets?

by **Ava Inesta**
STAFF WRITER
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Imagine hearing “Narco” by Timmy Trumpet start to fill the Citi Field stadium in the top of the ninth inning, you look at the doors of the bullpen and see one of the best closers in the league run out to close out the game for the New York Mets. Thats right folks, Edwin Díaz is back.

Back at the Mets spring training complex, Díaz had no issues with throwing his bullpen session on Monday. Pitchers and catchers are slowly getting back into the swing of things down in Port St. Lucie, Florida. The Mets will have their first spring training game on Saturday, Feb. 24, against the St. Louis Cardinals.

“Finally back,” Díaz said. “We are here and ready to go.”

Díaz was sidelined for the entire 2023 season, after he tore the patellar tendon in his right knee while celebrating on the field for Team Puerto Rico in the World Baseball Classic in March of last year. He appears to be fully recovered and ready to resume his role as the Mets’ closer.

“He can’t wait to get going,” Mets manager Carlos Mendoza said in Monday. “I spoke with him a couple of weeks ago. Fully healthy, he’s going through his off-season routines and preparation. He’s excited.”

“That’s another guy that has been going back and forth, home and Puerto Rico and New York, getting checked out,” explained Mendoza on Díaz’s recovery. “He’s one of those where we can’t wait to have him in spring training and get him going.”

Díaz has yet to begin fielding bunts or covering bases during defensive drills, but as spring training ramps up, those milestones will come for the 29-year old. He said that he felt prepared and ready to return late last season if the Mets were in playoff contention. But now, he is happy that he did not have to push himself harder back in September, and that he

had an extra six months to become even stronger for this season.

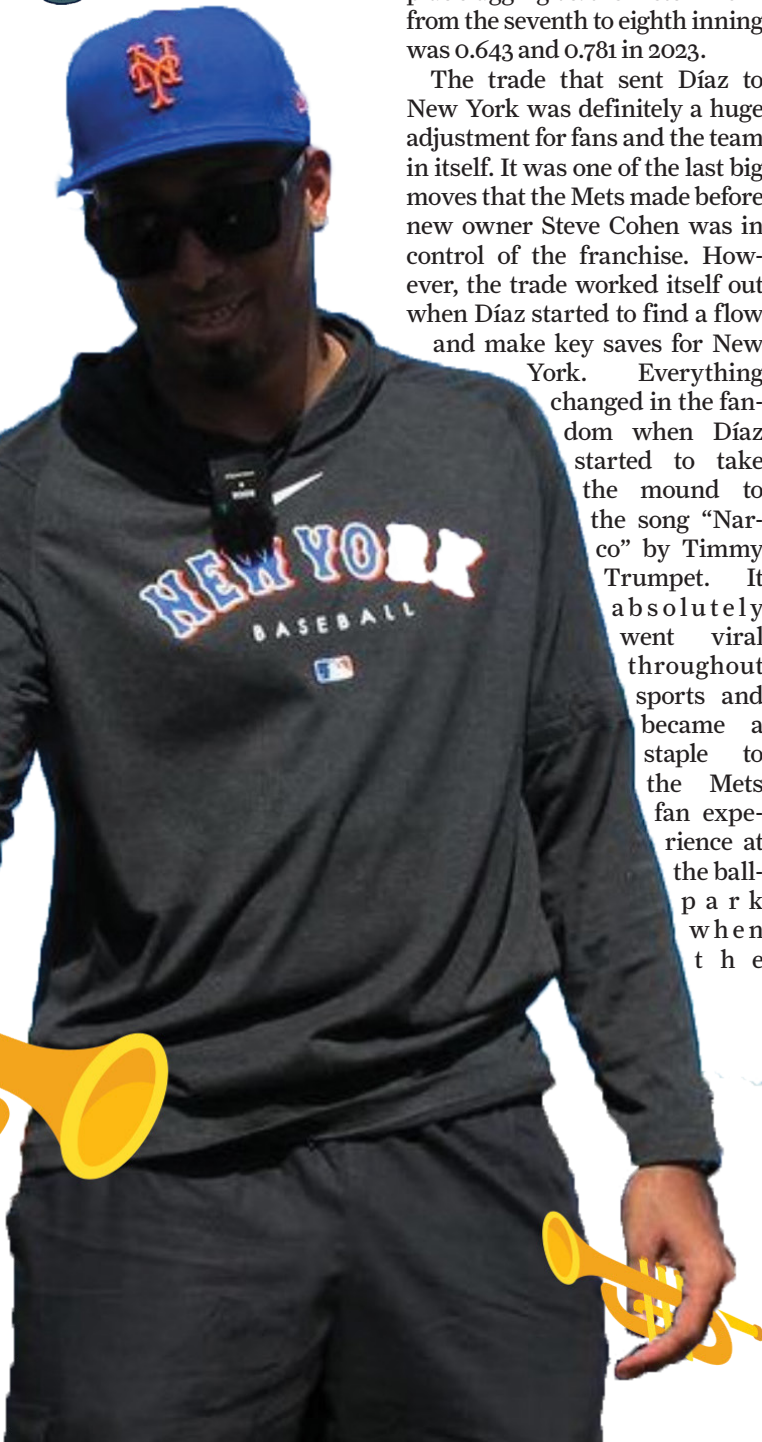
Before getting injured, Díaz was coming off one of the best seasons of his career as one of the best relievers in the league in 2022. He collected both Cy Young and MVP votes after saving 32 games and having a 1.31 ERA. Going into the season last year, Díaz was supposed to be the Mets weapon and the anchor to the back end of their bullpen as the team was looking to be a playoff, or even a World Series contender. In November of 2022, the Mets finalized a 5-year, \$102 million deal with Díaz. It broke records for the largest contract ever given to a reliever in terms of both total guarantee (\$102 million) and average annual value (\$20.4 million). However, instead things took a turn as Díaz’s season-ending injury was the first of the many things that went wrong for New York last year. His loss caused shifting roles to the Mets bullpen and it affected the entire pitching staff, which resulted the front office to taking an entirely different approach to get the franchise in a winning direction.

It is no secret that the New York

Mets struggled last year.

Starting off the pre-season with losing Díaz

for the year definitely took some life out of the Mets, and they seemingly they never fully recovered from the loss. Last year, the Mets bullpen ranked 22nd in ERA. In the process of the Mets’ front office dismantling the team at the trade deadline last July, they traded away closer David Robertson to league-opponent the Miami Marlins. Díaz’s



TRUMPET CARTOON COURTESY OF CREAZILLA
IMAGE COURTESY OF @SUGARDIAZ39 ON INSTAGRAM
DESIGNED BY CONNOR LAFFERTY
LOGO BY HALEIGH SCHMIDT,
ASSOCIATE ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

absence was definitely seen later in the game the seventh and eight innings of last year. The Mets allowed 23 more runs in the seventh inning in 2023 than in 2022 and 20 more runs in the eighth inning. The opponents on-base plus slugging vs. the Mets in 2022 from the seventh to eighth inning was 0.643 and 0.781 in 2023.

The trade that sent Díaz to New York was definitely a huge adjustment for fans and the team in itself. It was one of the last big moves that the Mets made before new owner Steve Cohen was in control of the franchise. However, the trade worked itself out when Díaz started to find a flow and make key saves for New York.

Everything changed in the fandom when Díaz started to take the mound to the song “Narco” by Timmy Trumpet. It absolutely went viral throughout sports and became a staple to the Mets fan experience at the ballpark when the

trumpets sounded in game-saving situations. Over the four years he has been in New York, Díaz has definitely won over Mets fans and the team would be different without him.

Díaz was asked if he would be using “Narco” as his walk-up song for the 2024 season on Monday, as the anticipation to hear the sound of the trumpets is higher than ever.

“Yeah, yeah 100%,” said Díaz. “If I changed ‘Narco’ I think I would get in trouble with the fans, I will keep using ‘Narco’.”

Over the offseason, the Mets got a new president of baseball operations, David Stearns, and he is in the beginning stages of rebuilding the team. However, having Díaz back is like an automatic huge free agency signing for New York. Having him back for the ninth inning of games played a large role into the way Stearns built the team this past winter.

“It makes everything so much easier,” said Stearns on having an elite closer back. “It makes building the rest of your pen and allowing those guys to feel comfortable in their roles a heck of a lot easier. If Edwin continues on his progression and he’s able to anchor the backend of the pen, that certainly makes the rest of the puzzle fit a little bit more neatly.”

Díaz had a 2.93 ERA over seven seasons in his career and 205 saves. Díaz recorded 32 saves in both 2021 and 2022 for New York, and he’s looking to deliver similar numbers going into this season completely healthy.

“I think we would have been better last year if I were pitching,” Díaz said. “If I was there, I would have been able to help them win more games. I hope this year I will be there with them and make the playoffs. That’s our goal.”

“I think it will be crazy,” Díaz said on the first time he will come out to “Narco” at Citi Field this season. “The fans are waiting for that, that moment with the trumpets. When I come out to pitch, I can’t wait to see the moment and feel it.”

Baseball Preview: Hook C opens season in Florida at USF Baseball Tournament

by **Evan Rodriguez**
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Away from the snowy lands of Connecticut, it’s baseball season for the UConn baseball team as they take on a slate of three teams in the USF Baseball Tournament to kick off their season. The Huskies will face off against the Bulls themselves on Friday, followed by a noon matchup with Indiana State and then ending the weekend with a faceoff against Louisville.

While this team ended their 2023 season with a devastating loss to No. 2 Florida in the Gainesville Regional, the Hook C is looking for more in 2024 and they’ve certainly got the tools to do just that.

Although the team lost some valuable pieces going into this season like Dominic Freeberger and Ben Huber, the Huskies certainly have reteoled for the year.

While infielder Bryan Padilla is still aiming to get healthy

for the season, Luke Broadhurst is aiming to get in some game action over the weekend. The graduate infielder is coming off an All-Big East Second Team finish in 2023 and was a key part of this team after batting .312 with 14 home runs and 51 RBI’s. Don’t forget about Paul Tammaro either, who had a fiery end to last year and has reportedly looked great over the winter season.

One of the biggest things to look forward to is the outfield with players like Jake Studley leading the unit. The former transfer from Wheaton College was a massive leader for this squad last year, grabbing an All-Big East First Team spot after hitting .325 with 57 RBI’s. He heads into the season as the Preseason Big East Player of the Year and will have massive expectations going into 2024.

But, what will the competition look like over the weekend? USF is looking to move in a new direction after a dismal

finish last season that saw the program secure a 21-39 record. While the program does have multiple pre-season AAC selections like

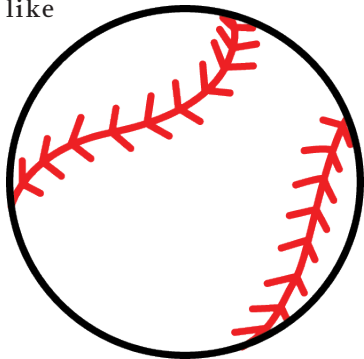


IMAGE COURTESY OF CREAZILLA

pitcher Jack Ceibert and second baseman Bobby Boser, they’ll certainly have quite the challenge in game one of the tournament with a tough Hook C lineup.

Of course, UConn won’t just face the Bulls, as they’ll take on Indiana State on Saturday, a 2023 Super Regional participant. Unlike USF, the

Sycamores are a much tougher challenge after coming off a 45-17 season in 2023. They’re also the favorites to win the MVC and have five players on the conference preseason team. On top of that, they’ve got their mark all over the D1 Baseball player positional rankings with players like Jared Spencer being named eighth best relief pitcher in the country and Randal Diaz being named the 21st best shortstop in the nation. With accolades like that heading into this matchup, it’s no secret that Connecticut is going to have their hands full with Indiana State, especially in the latter half of ballgames.

Lastly, there’s Louisville. While the program didn’t have the best season in 2023 after going 31-24, they’ll look to return back to their winning ways in 2024. They may have some talent at the plate like JT Benson and Isaac Humphrey, but the real danger with this roster comes from the pitching mound.

Talented manager Dan McDonnell’s group features a group of pitchers like Spencer Gonzorga, Carson Liggett and Evan Webster. They may be picked to finish just fifth in the ACC this season, but this program can really give the Huskies some trouble over the weekend.

Overall, the Huskies have a real opportunity to take advantage of some great opportunities to start their season off on the right foot. They may not have players like Padilla in the lineup, but youngsters like sophomore Ryan Daniels and Maddix Dalena also will have the opportunity to have an increased role going into their second season in Storrs. That just shows how much depth this unit has and how dangerous it can be if everyone plays their role throughout the season.

Hook C fans can catch Friday’s game on ESPN+, while Saturday and Sunday’s game can be viewed on the UConn Baseball Instagram account @uconnbsb.



Sports

Women's Basketball: No. 15 Huskies host Hoyas on senior night at Gampel

by Cole Stefan
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Only once in their first 26 games did the No. 15 UConn women's basketball team play twice in three days. That occurred during the inaugural Cayman Islands Classic in late November, when they battled the then-No. 2 UCLA Bruins and Kansas Jayhawks on consecutive days.

Connecticut has typically had 3-4 days off between Big East battles this season. However, the upcoming schedule is where things get a little funky.

Playing in Cincinnati two days ago, the Huskies begin another two-game homestand tonight against the Georgetown Hoyas. Despite it being their third conference contest at Gampel Pavilion, UConn will be celebrating their seniors.

Unlike years past, tonight's senior night ceremonies will happen after the game. That is because the Huskies are recognizing four players: Paige Bueckers, Aaliyah Edwards, Aubrey Griffin and Nika Mühl — their most since the 2019-20 season when they honored five. Each senior has impacted the team in their own way.

Bueckers' overall game has been at another level. During her National Player of the Year freshman campaign, the Minnesota native averaged 20 points and 4.6 rebounds. She averages around those numbers as a redshirt junior, but has added more shots to her game at a rate of 1.1 a night and limited mistakes with the ball at 1.4 turnovers per game.

Edwards deserves as much of

the spotlight for what she does on the glass. The senior forward has not had a game this season where she grabbed fewer than four rebounds, and she has 13 double-doubles to go with it. Even if the opposition decides to close up the interior, Edwards can, more often than not, land the floater from near the free-throw line.

Mühl runs the floor as well as any point guard in the country. Her passing and stealing have always been there, but the senior guard has significantly developed her scoring and rebounding over her four-year career. At seven points and four rebounds per game, Mühl can help the team break away from their foes early.

Griffin, meanwhile, has not played since Jan. 3 and will miss the rest of the year because of her torn ACL. In her 14 games, the graduate forward provided a spark on more than one occasion and regularly disrupted opposing offenses. Griffin has one year of eligibility remaining after this season.

Connecticut's longest-tenured player helped the team find their new identity when their junior guards went down. First-year guard Qadence Samuels and red-shirt freshman Ice Brady have been the primary players off the bench in this new system. Both had their most effective performances on Wednesday. Samuels twice buried the three-point shot and finished two rebounds shy of a double-double. Brady accumulated her first-career double-double with 11 points and 14 rebounds at a perfect 5-5 clip. Do not be surprised if either player has another huge performance if the Huskies go up big early.



IMAGE COURTESY OF @UCONNWBB ON INSTAGRAM

UConn has run the same starting lineup since they played the Ball State Cardinals on Dec. 6. All three healthy seniors already start the game on the court, but while most of the attention might go toward them, first-year guards KK Arnold and Ashlynn Shade could catch opponents off-guard.

Shade has heated up from downtown in her last three games. No player on the team has made more than her nine threes in those contests, a nice recovery following a three-game cold stretch where she buried just one. Arnold, meanwhile, uses her blazing speed everywhere on the court, whether that is zipping through the lane for a bucket or pickpocketing the ball in a burst of lightning.

Georgetown enters with the league's second-worst scoring offense at 58.3 points per game. But if there is any Big East team that can make the Huskies struggle, it could be them. The Hoyas lead the conference in scoring defense by over three points per game and allow their opponents to make just 37.1% of their shots from the field (second behind Connecticut).

Forwards Graceann Bennett and Brianna Scott play a massive role in that regard. Bennett gets it done on the boards with a team-leading 7.4 rebounds per game and is one of two players with 15 blocks. The graduate forward has not had a double-digit game since grabbing a double-double against the DePaul Blue Demons on Feb. 4, but she has collected no fewer than five boards in that span.

Scott brings more of the oomph off the bench; she has not started

a game all season. When playing significant minutes, the junior forward can be a problem down low with 5.9 rebounds per game. Getting a shot off against Scott is even harder as her 33 blocks rank fourth in the Big East.

Graduate forward Mya Bembry could be a critical X-factor to watch out for. Despite starting just seven of the team's 25 games, Bembry is very good at creating second chances for Georgetown with 46 offensive rebounds. She can also disrupt opposing offensive sequences behind her 29 steals and set up several buckets for the Hoyas behind her 34 assists.

Fellow graduate student Alex Cowan plays that same role in the backcourt. Cowan was shut out in Georgetown's loss against the Villanova Wildcats, but she affected several other aspects of the game with two rebounds, two steals and two assists. The Wagner transfer does a very efficient job of getting the ball to her teammates for an open look with her 70 assists and she can set up multiple breakaway opportunities.

The Hoyas offense flows through senior guard Kelsey Ransom, the only player on the team averaging double figures at 13.8 points per game. Ransom also makes sure that her teammates get involved as proven by her team-high 100 assists. If the Huskies want to stop Georgetown again, they will first need to limit the senior guard.

Tip-off is at 7 p.m. on SNY, which will also provide post-game coverage of the senior night festivities.

Men's Basketball: No. 1 UConn set for biggest clash of the year against No. 4 Marquette

by Connor Sargeant
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The No. 1 UConn men's basketball team will have their hands full this Saturday hosting the No. 4 Marquette Golden Eagles at the XL Center in Hartford. Both teams are playing at an incredibly high level and this is a matchup sure to excite. The Huskies are fresh off of a 101-65 blowout win over the DePaul Blue Demons, while the Golden Eagles recently squeaked by Butler 78-72. This matchup is all the more crucial when considering its long-term implications.

As it stands, Connecticut owns a 2.5-game lead over Marquette in the Big East standings, and a win in Hartford would almost guarantee a top-seed finish in conference. Of course, a Golden Eagles victory would inch the program ever closer to overtak-

ing the Huskies. These teams will also play again on March 6 in Milwaukee. A triumph for either side would be huge for the rest of their seasons, especially for UConn's status as the No. 1 team in college basketball.

In order to stave off Marquette, the Huskies will need to keep doing what they're doing: dominating. Alex Karaban, must stay hot offensively. The 6-foot-8 forward has returned from his ankle injury and is shooting the ball better than ever, scoring 46 points across his last two games. As an added bonus, the Massachusetts native has played the center position extremely well in times when centers Donovan Clingan and Samson Johnson are sitting on the bench with foul trouble.

If Connecticut wishes to improve to 24-2, they will need their 1-2 punch of Clingan and Johnson to play their game without hearing whistles from the

refs. While both have performed well at times, they struggled to find their footing in their squad's last matchup at DePaul. The duo played a combined 11 minutes in the first half. However, an encouraging sign for Husky fans was how Clingan turned his night around. The Bristol native finished with 10 points and five rebounds in 17 minutes of work, although he accumulated four fouls. How disciplined the Connecticut big men stay is perhaps the most significant question mark heading into this game. Both have had nights sitting on the bench with foul trouble and UConn needs them both to beat the best teams in the country.

The player UConn fans will want to keep an eye on is Golden Eagles senior Tyler Kolek. The 2023 All-American is amidst his best campaign yet, averaging 16 points, seven assists and five boards per game. Not to

mention, he is highly efficient offensively, shooting nearly 50% from the field and over 40% from downtown. As his stats indicate, Kolek is one of the most prolific scorers in the entire country. Whether it is Tristen Newton, Stephon Castle or someone else tasked with stopping Kolek, that matchup will be a game-changer and could define how it plays out.

Another question on all viewers' minds is whether Castle can sustain the strong offensive presence that he has had up to this point. Early on in the season, the Georgia native suffered a knee injury and missed extended time. However, it seems as though Castle has put that behind him and is on a tear, scoring 15 or more points in four of his last five appearances. It's also impossible to deny Castle's athleticism. With every additional game played, he's quicker, more

explosive, and most importantly, looks as confident in his abilities as ever. How the freshman guard performs in a nationally televised game against the No. 4 team in the country has more significant implications beyond Saturday. With many NBA scouts likely to be in attendance, a huge showing from Castle could skyrocket his draft stock. He's certainly going to be focused on the task at hand, but these are important considerations to go along with the in-game storylines.

UConn has played in some big-time games this season, such as the Empire Classic, the Jimmy V Classic and the Seattle Tipoff. However, Saturday will be their biggest test yet. How Connecticut handles themselves against a top-five team in the country will give the college basketball community an insight into how this squad will look in March and what they're made of.

WHAT TO KEEP AN EYE ON THIS WEEK

UConn SCOREBOARD



vs.

8640

Women's Basketball
Wednesday

Upcoming Games



vs.

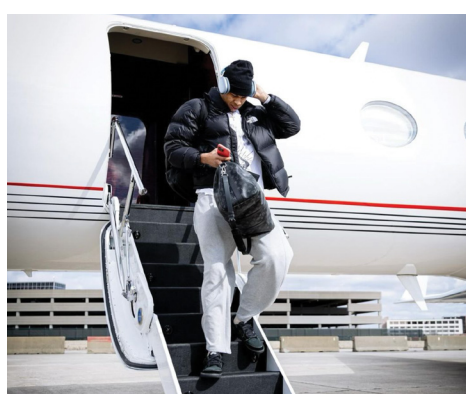
Men's Basketball,
3 p.m. Saturday
Hartford, Conn.



vs.

Women's Basketball,
7 p.m. Friday
Storrs, Conn.

INSTAGRAM OF THE DAY



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The Hawk has landed in Indy for Rising Stars

TWEETS OF THE DAY



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