



## Department heads: UConn to cut CLAS department budgets by 19.5%

by **Liliana French** | SHE/HER/HERS | STAFF WRITER | liliana.french@uconn.edu

Three department heads said the University of Connecticut's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) will cut budgets by 19.5% over the next five years, a claim which UConn denied.

UConn's chapter of the American Association of University Professors sent an email to all union members stating that some department heads had been asked to make lists of faculty members to cut, which UConn also denied.

These cuts will hit graduate programs the hardest, according to three department heads.

### Budget cuts

On March 7, AAUP President Chris Vials emailed union members about budget cuts.

"We are getting word from Department Heads across a number of schools and colleges that they have been asked to make 15% to 19% cuts over the next 4 academic years," Vials said.

A UConn Today statement from Provost Anne D'Alleva and Chief Financial Officer Jeffery Geohagan said that there would be a 4% cut to Ledger 2 accounts in FY2026 and a 3.5% cut to Ledger 2 accounts in FY2027, but no 19.5% cut.

"Beginning last year, all units at

what the provost announced in January 2024 and the announcement of initial cuts that came out in 2023.

"I'm really unclear what the provost is trying to accomplish, because there's no dispute and we understand why it is," the professor said.

The professor explained where the 19.5% came from.

"Their plan is a 15% reduction over five years in permanent two ledger," the department head said, referring to money that comes from state funds. "And in addition, a 4.5 reduction [...] which is to reflect the last wage increase that we had out of the last contract agreement, which was, the state obliged the university to agree to this, but didn't provide funding for those wage increases."

Bayulgen said that over the past summer, they provided the dean with a list of strategic priorities in departments, or things that they really couldn't cut.

"We went through an exercise of listing our priorities and maybe some revenue generating ideas, but these were all very collaboratively done," Bayulgen said.

According to Bayulgen, there

colleges had reserves, and basically just ate their reserves. CLAS partly ate their reserves, partly took some reserves from departments to give us time to plan. [...] But different colleges have different resources and different amounts of flexibility."

The department head said that there was more noise out of CLAS than other colleges because other colleges had more reserves to delay the difficult cuts.

"The whole point of it was to sort of keep for another year from having to experience the really tough pain and now we're getting the point where they're asking us for sort of permanent reductions, or plans for reductions in our budgets," the department head said.

The department head discussed the impact of the cuts.

"It's still not clear to me, it may not be clear to the provost, whether they're really trying to achieve this, or they're trying to demonstrate they can achieve it or what," the department head said. "The level of cuts that would be required to achieve that would be absolutely devastating to graduate and undergraduate education at UConn."

### Professor hiring

occasions," Bayulgen said. "I think they're more open to hiring people in residence with higher teaching loads because teaching has to happen."

A different department head said that there were rumors of a hiring freeze, but nothing was officially announced. They said that faculty hires in the CLAS had decreased significantly in recent years.

University Spokesperson Stephanie Reitz denied that there was a hiring freeze.

### Graduate programs

According to Bayulgen and the leaked email, graduate programs will be heavily impacted.

"I think in many ways, the cuts will have the biggest impact on the graduate programs," Bayulgen said. "I mean, they've already cut some of the university-wide fellowships to entice good students for recruitment."

Bayulgen said that this makes recruiting graduate students and Ph.D. students harder to do.

"We can only pay for three grad students a year," Bayulgen said. "I think that's the limit for us, which is really sad, because it's hard to sustain a program which such

### Heart attack survivor donates \$1.5 million to UConn School of Medicine

by **Pierce Colfer**  
HE/HIM/THEY/THEM  
STAFF WRITER  
pierce.colfer@uconn.edu

A heart attack survivor who was treated at University of Connecticut Health's Pat and Jim Calhoun Cardiology Center has donated \$1.5 million to the UConn School of Medicine, according to a UConn Today article. The survivor, Donald Reeve, was admitted to the center in December of 2023, where he received treatment that saved his life.

"I attribute my recovery to the hospital, of course," Reeve said in the article. "As well as the quick work of the doctors, the nurses and the support staff."

Reeve and his wife Jean left the donation in the form of a bequest called the Donald and Jean Reeve Family Fund for Cardiology.

Bruce Liang, the dean of the UConn School of Medicine and a founder of the Calhoun Cardiology center, talked about the donation with The Daily Campus.

"[The donation] comes from the gratitude that Donald and Jean felt because we saved Donald's life," Liang said. "They just want to give back and see that we continue to be successful in treating others like Donald and prolonging or saving their lives."

Liang praised the staff at the Calhoun Cardiology center for their work in treating Reeve.

"In the middle of the night, [Reeve] experienced a lot of chest discomfort and weakness. [He] came to our emergency department, and we jumped on it," Liang said. "I think it was 40-some minutes from the time he showed up in the emergency department here to when the blocked artery was opened, which is amazing. It's such a short period of time... but the staff and the faculty were ready for him, and he walked out and has been doing fine since."

Liang said that the donation will be used in many different areas at the school.

"It's for technology [and] for education to benefit the next generation of trainees, as well as to perform cutting edge research and innovation that can bring the latest therapy to benefit our patients," Liang said. "[The donation's usage is] basically at the discretion of the leaders and the faculty."

Liang also talked about the gratitude that the center receives from their patients.

"We save a lot of people like what we did to Donald and some people have the means to express their gratitude and to give back and to want to continue and sustain the life-saving efforts, and also the cutting-edge research and innovation that... benefit future patients," Liang said. "Not everybody has that means and wealth, but they express their gratitude, and we feel very rewarded by that kind of gratitude regardless of what they have to give us."



UConn CLAS students studying. The CLAS department contains 55 undergraduate majors.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @UCONNCLAS ON INSTAGRAM

Storrs and regionals - academic and otherwise - were told to prepare for a combined total potential budget reduction of 15% over five fiscal years, FY25 through FY29," D'Alleva and Geohagan said. "Departments have not been told to prepare for reductions totaling 19%, as the message states."

According to an email from a CLAS department head leaked to The Daily Campus prior to the statement, by a professor in the department who asked for anonymity, 19.5% budget cuts were requested across CLAS.

"At the CLAS Department Heads Meeting with the Dean this week, the Dean announced 19.5% cuts between now and 2029," the department head's email said. "Apparently last year's cuts did not count towards the 19.5% now being requested. We were told that it represented a transfer of one-time funds to cover the unfunded salary increases."

Political science Department Head Oksan Bayulgen confirmed that the CLAS dean had asked for 19.5% budget cuts.

A third department head, who spoke with The Daily Campus on the condition of anonymity, confirmed the 19.5% cuts. They stated that the cuts were consistent with

have been a lot of discussions about the budget cuts.

"We've had a lot of discussions, a lot of meetings about this," Bayulgen said. "The dean is, I think, sensitive to - he doesn't want to necessarily impose anything; he wants the units to come up with things based on their own priorities, their own needs - he wants us to have our own governance, our faculty governance."

According to both Bayulgen and the leaked email, departments have until the end of April to release strategies on how to cut their budgets, or the Dean's office will come up with a plan for them.

The third department head discussed the cuts.

"There is no department in the university in which payroll is even close to 80%," the department head said. "They're all north of that. So, in other words, there is no one that can cut their discretionary spending that much without dismissing people."

The department head stated that deans at different colleges were given significant control over how they'd handle it.

"Last year [...] it was kind of left up to the deans of different colleges of how they'd handle it," the department head said. "A number of

The AAUP said that some department heads had been asked to make lists of faculty to cut.

"Some Heads had been asked to provide a list of 'positions' that would need to be eliminated from Ledger 2 accounts to satisfy a 4% cut for FY26," the AAUP's email said.

Vials urged department heads not to cut staff.

"The UConn-AAUP is urging Department Heads not to comply with any demand from the administration to compile lists of faculty to be non-renewed or terminated. We also urge Department heads not to proactively create a list of positions to eliminate as well," Vials said. "Department Heads, who are AAUP members, should not be doing the administration's work for them."

The UConn Today statement denied this. According to Bayulgen, CLAS department heads were not asked by the dean or provost to cut any staff. The leaked email did not mention cuts to faculty.

Bayulgen discussed a hiring freeze with exceptions in the CLAS.

"They said they are not hiring anyone in the foreseeable future, although they did caveat it by saying there might be some special

small numbers."

The email from a department head said that graduate assistantships would make up a considerable amount of the cuts.

"For now, the College has advised us to accept the very minimum grad students we were planning on, but not to offer any contracts at this time," the email said. "I have instructed the office to put a hold on all GA contracts for next year, including for continuing student[s]. It is clear that we are going to have to reduce the number of recruits we had been planning to accept (and, in an extreme scenario, to whittle more budgetary disruption from the Federal side, it is possible that almost no GAs will be recruited next year."

According to the department head, the 19.5% cuts cannot be made with discretionary spending. They said that a 60 to 70% reduction in the number of graduate assistants in their department was possible in the future.

"[The department] cannot meet the 19.5% number out of its discretionary spending; no one in CLAS can," the email said. "What this does mean is that we are going to have to revolutionize the organization of [the department] and the conditions under which we teach."

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## News

# CGA sends proposed amendment guaranteeing right to a clean environment to senate

by **Joey Gottlieb**  
THEY/THEM/THEIRS  
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT  
jvg18001@uconn.edu

The Connecticut General Assembly sent a joint resolution ensuring the “right to clean and healthy air, water, soil, ecosystems and environment and a safe and stable climate for the benefit of public health, safety and the general welfare” to the state senate last Wednesday.

The resolution would add an amendment to the state constitution providing that “The state shall not allow, through government action or inaction, any degradation, diminution or depletion of the natural environment that is avoid-

able, contributes to significant or widespread environmental harm or results in an unhealthy or unsustainable environment.”

A similar resolution died on the senate floor last year, according to the CT Mirror. Currently, only New York, Montana and Pennsylvania have environmental rights provisions in their state constitutions.

“It’s too easy for the state to shirk responsibility especially with environmental stuff,” said eighth-semester environmental studies and political science double major Dylan Steer. Steer works as a sustainability intern at the University of Connecticut’s Office of Sustainability.

The resolution comes as the Trump administration has cut federal funding to multiple departments, including the Environmental Protection Agency, which handles grants for remediation projects of contaminated sites.

“Any grant funding specifically for remediating things environmental justice related have been cut,” said Steer.

Almost all remediation projects rely on funding from the EPA. “The federal money mostly comes from grants. If those towns applying for those grants won’t have access to those anymore, an amendment like this could suggest that the state is willing to step in in lieu of those federal options,” he said.

Connecticut has over 8,000 contaminated sites across the state that have yet to be the beneficiaries of remediation projects. More than half of the over 600 sites have environmental use restrictions, which are orders that limit uses and activities of certain locations to “minimize the risk of human exposure to pollutants and hazards to the environment” according to Connecticut’s Department of Energy and Environmental Protection — have yet to be remediated or are currently in the process of remediation, which is long and costly, according to Steer.

Despite the failure of last year’s resolution, Steer said he

is hopeful about Senate Joint Resolution 36.

“I think it could be different. I’ve heard people are a lot more optimistic for this session. There’s just more time to get it done. But I think there has been more priority put on environmental issues in the current climate,” he said.

Should SJR 36 pass the senate, the amendment will be continued to the next legislative session following elections on Nov. 3, 2026, unless it passes with a three-quarter super-majority in both chambers of Congress during the current session. Should the amendment pass the legislature, it will appear on the 2026 ballot as a referendum.

# Olympic gold medalist Gabby Douglas talks about career at UConn USG event

by **Gianni Salisbury** | SHE/HER/HERS | STAFF WRITER | gianni.salisbury@uconn.edu

The University of Connecticut Undergraduate Student Government welcomed Olympic champion Gabby Douglas to a conversation about her career and overcoming challenges on Tuesday. The event took place in the Student Union Ballroom.

Anyone was welcome to attend the event, which ran from 6 to 7 p.m. Douglas was interviewed on topics from her past accomplishments to her future plans for her career.

Douglas explained that the reason she loves gymnastics is because it challenges her.

“Gymnastics is a very hard sport, but I loved it. I loved to challenge my mind, loved to challenge my body,” Douglas said.

In making two Olympic teams, one in 2012 and the other in 2016, Douglas has won three Olympic gold medals: an individual all-around medal in 2012 and two team gold medals, one from 2012 and the other from 2016.

In looking back at her accomplishments, Douglas said that it still hasn’t really hit her.

“It’s honestly still sinking in. That process was long and grueling but also it was very enjoyable. In that moment, I just thought about all the blood, sweat, tears and everything that I put into the sport, my family put into the sport and like it finally paid off. I’m still realizing the impact I made within the sport of gymnastics,” Douglas said.

Douglas has been doing gymnastics since she was six years old, having started after watching her sister do the sport.

“I’m the youngest in my family. When I was three years old, I saw

my sister doing gymnastics. I was like, ‘Oh, this looks pretty cool. I want to try it.’ So, she was teaching me gymnastic skills, and by the end of the week, I was teaching myself cartwheels,” Douglas said.

As for her Olympic dream, it was something that was always in the back of her mind, according to Douglas. She said she was inspired by the gymnasts who came before her, including another American Olympic individual all-around champion.

“When I was nine, I watched the 2004 Olympics, and I saw a gymnast named Carly Patterson doing this skill called a giant on the bars. I was just learning how to do a giant at the time, and I was like, ‘Oh my goodness. Like I could go there, potentially do that.’ So, the Olympics was always something that was in the back of mind,” Douglas said.

Despite Douglas’ immense success, her career has not come without its challenges.

One of the hardest things she ever had to do was move away from her family at the age of 14 to go and train with another coach in order to prepare for the Olympics, according to Douglas. She moved from Virginia Beach to Iowa to train with Liang Chow, the coach of Olympian Shawn Johnson.

“I had moved away from my home to pursue my career. That was one of the biggest challenges for me because I was in a new environment, with a new coach. I had to make new friends, and I didn’t live with my family,” Douglas said. “I lived with the host family, so just getting accustomed to a new atmosphere was definitely challenging.”

When leaving the sport in

2016, Douglas found it difficult to find things she liked and realized she did not know herself. According to Douglas, by the end of her 2016 run, she was very burnt out and needed to take time to get to know herself.

“It was very hard. I had come from being in the gym six days a week, and training. My life was centered around this goal that was the Olympics, and it was very hard to just stop all of that. When I achieved my dream, I was like, what else is next? Like, what do I do now? Who am I apart from an athlete?” Douglas said.

As for the future, Douglas said she is not done yet. Over the past few years, she had been training for a bid at the 2024 Olympics but fell short after an injury at the USA Gymnastics Core Hydration Classic in May of 2024.

Soon after, Douglas announced that she does not plan on quitting and is aiming for the 2028 Olympics.

As for how her training has changed, Douglas says that as she has gotten older, she has taken more control of her training.

“I will say it’s better being an adult, because I can decide my own program, versus being a child. I didn’t know any better, and so, the coach would determine more. Now I can come with my own schedule and training program, and it’s definitely different from when I was younger,” Douglas said.

The event concluded with a Q&A section from those attending. This event is a part of USG’s celebration of women’s history month and is just one of many events apart of their HERstory in Motion series,



**U.S. Olympic champion Gabby Douglas answers questions at the Union College Speakers Forum. The event was held in Memorial Chapel in Schenectady, N.Y. on Feb. 25, 2020.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

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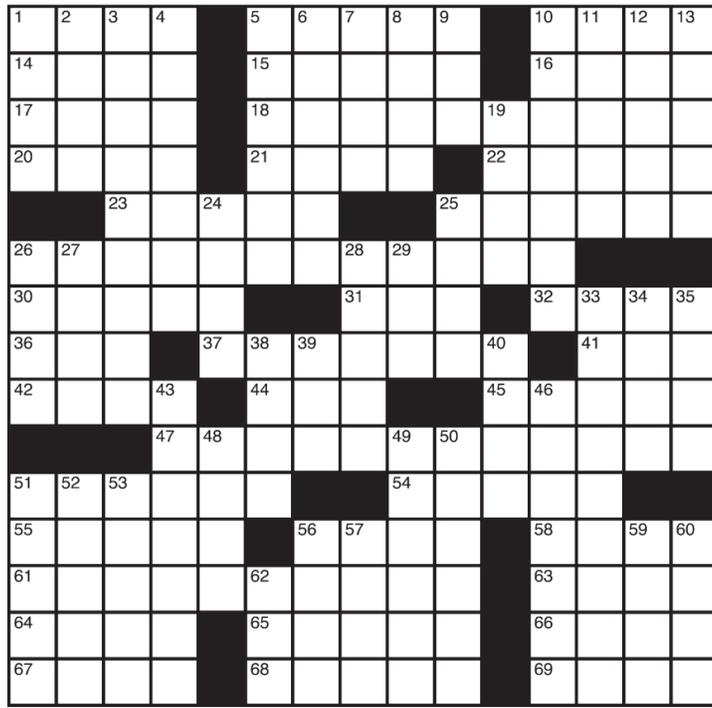
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# The Daily Campus Crossword and Sudoku

- ACROSS**
- 1 Crystal balls, e.g.
  - 5 French cap
  - 10 Greek earth goddess
  - 14 \_\_\_ out: sing with gusto
  - 15 Quartz type
  - 16 Branches
  - 17 Clever concept
  - 18 Chance to have a heart to heart?
  - 20 "Girl Crush" country singers Little Big \_\_\_
  - 21 Cat's warning sound
  - 22 "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" playwright
  - 23 Some saxes
  - 25 Rewards for a good dog
  - 26 Spot to meet face to face?
  - 30 Unfamiliar
  - 31 New prefix
  - 32 Trip around the sun
  - 36 Beast of burden
  - 37 Puts to work
  - 41 Gibbon or gorilla
  - 42 See 43-Down
  - 44 Beverage suffix
  - 45 "\_\_\_ love"
  - 47 Professional who is willing to see eye to eye?
  - 51 Cocktail party appetizer
  - 54 Dude ranch greeting
  - 55 Solo
  - 56 Sound from a fan
  - 58 Wax-wrapped Dutch cheese
  - 61 Person who will go toe to toe?
  - 63 Subterfuge
  - 64 Parted partners
  - 65 Scuffle
  - 66 Puts to work
  - 67 Result of a bug bite, perhaps
  - 68 Pot payments
  - 69 School orgs. that may sponsor fundraisers

- DOWN**
- 1 Somber bio
  - 2 Ctrl+Y action
  - 3 Expressed affection from afar
  - 4 Marvel Comics legend
  - 5 Go around for rounds
  - 6 Self-interest doctrine
  - 7 Sunbeams
  - 8 Texts from a chronically late friend
  - 9 Contact no.
  - 10 Place for portraits and prints
  - 11 Island near Venezuela
  - 12 "No more for me, thanks"
  - 13 Symbol on the first day of Lent
  - 19 Once-popular casino game
  - 24 Melody
  - 25 "Iliad" city
  - 26 Counterpart of sir
  - 27 As well
  - 28 Small bay
  - 29 \_\_\_ Speedwagon
  - 33 "You can't catch me!"
  - 34 Church recess
  - 35 \_\_\_ admiral
  - 38 Chess ending
  - 39 Cuddling in the park, for short
  - 40 Barbecue side option
  - 43 With 42-Across, hanging growth in Louisiana swamps
  - 46 Phrase often heard in a restaurant kitchen
  - 48 Oil cartel letters
  - 49 "That makes sense now"
  - 50 Strengths
  - 51 Escapade
  - 52 Word said with an Echo?
  - 53 Connection points
  - 56 Small songbird
  - 57 Sword handle
  - 59 Not on solid ground
  - 60 What a toddler might leave behind
  - 62 Actress Thurman



By Zhou Zhang

3/26/25

**Tuesday's Puzzle Solved**

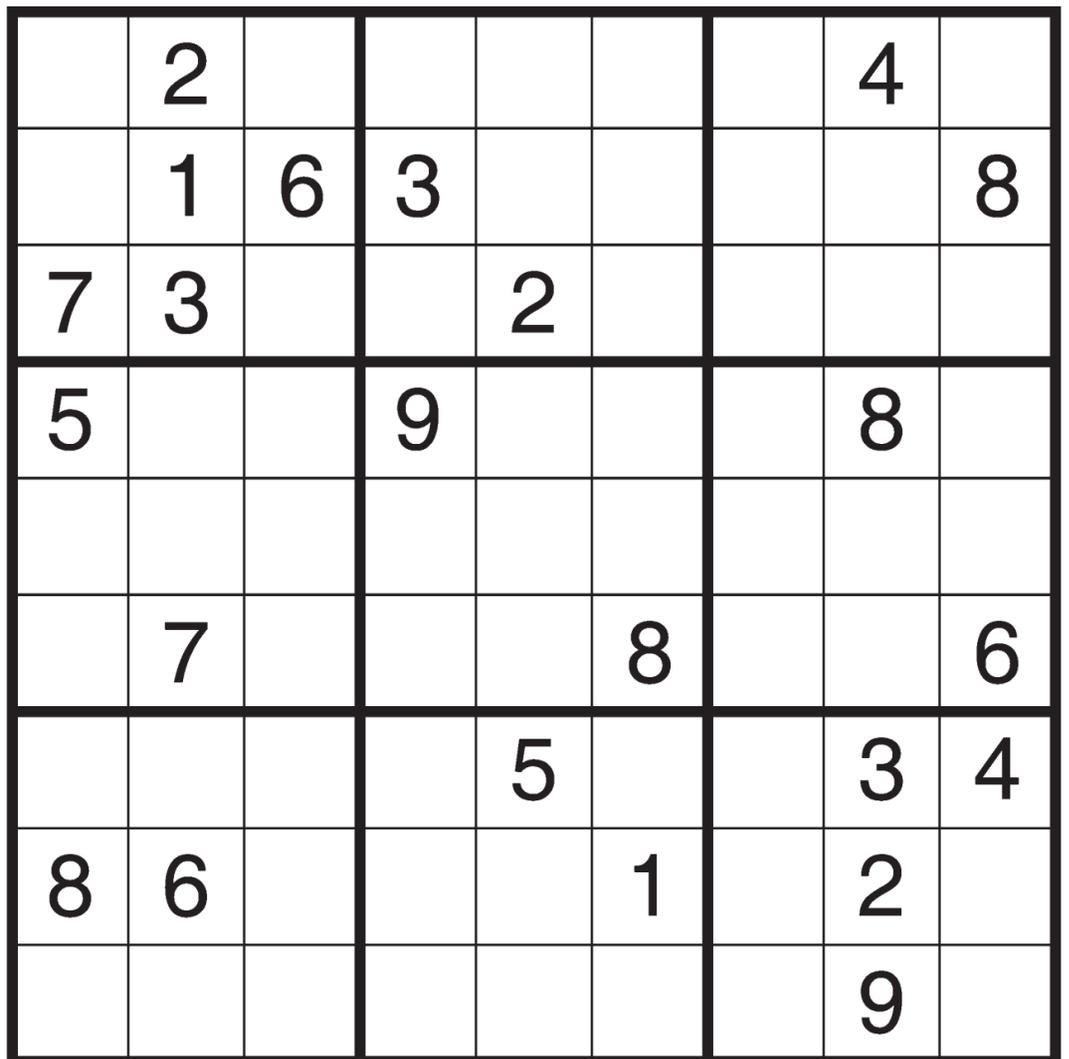


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3/26/25

## Sudoku By The Mepham Group

Level **1** **2** **3** **4**



**Solution to Tuesday's puzzle**

1	6	7	3	9	8	4	5	2
9	3	5	6	2	4	1	7	8
2	8	4	1	5	7	3	6	9
4	2	9	8	7	1	5	3	6
8	7	3	5	6	9	2	4	1
5	1	6	2	4	3	8	9	7
3	4	1	7	8	6	9	2	5
7	9	2	4	1	5	6	8	3
6	5	8	9	3	2	7	1	4

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## Life

# HEARING DOUBLE: THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

by **Justine Pearlman**  
SHE/HER/HERS  
ASSOCIATE DIGITAL EDITOR  
justine.pearlman@uconn.edu

There is something to be said about the ordinary moments in love. We're made to believe by the entertainment industry that love is all

ballad. The slow tempo and layered vocals of the group create a warm and familiar feeling that draws the listener in with its sweet simplicity. I

a very compelling case for small town romance.

Madness' "Our House," released in 1982, has the sound qualities of new wave, but the

Romanticization of simplicity is also a prominent theme in this competing title. The difference is that this rendition romanticizes family life as opposed to a romantic relationship. It's a story of a chaotic but loving home — an ode to childhood and to family:

"Our house, it always has a crowd / there's always something happening / and it's usually quite loud / our mum she's so house proud."

The lyrics indicate that the narrator's family isn't materially rich, they're rich in love. The idea, Madness vocalist and bassist Chas Smash says, sprang from his feelings of isolation on tour. Missing his family, he encouraged the group to collectively come up with lyrics to honor their families.

While the Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young song is focused on the present, Madness is looking into the past, seeking comfort in memories of home. Now that they're older, they can appreciate the small things that made their childhoods special.

Future nostalgia is foreshadowed in the line "[mother's] the one they're going to miss in lots of ways." The people, places and things that are overlooked in youth may very well be the memories cherished most in adulthood.

Both of these songs are lyrically rich and sonically unique, so it's not easy to decide who is more worthy of the title. I went into writing this article sure I would pick Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young — sweet, simple, beautiful. Now, I'm thinking that Madness is the winner here (by a very narrow margin).

The lyrics are a beautiful reflection of the sacrifices that families make in order to ensure the best lives for one another. The message is clear: Loved ones are what make life beautiful. Additionally, the struggle that the band went through to make this song — inexperience, hours of tweaking chords and lyrics, isolation from loved ones — makes the final result more special. It was a true labor of love.

Title winner: Madness

Hello and welcome to Hearing Double, where I compare and contrast two unrelated songs of the same name and decide which one does the song's title the most justice!

Over the past two weeks, college students from across the country dispersed from their campuses in celebration of spring break. Some travelled to beautiful destinations like Cancún, San Juan or Miami, soaking up the sun after midterms. Others, like myself, enjoyed some quiet time at home.

It seems perfectly fitting that this week's focus is on the familiar charm of home. Two songs, both entitled "Our House," were released by folk rock supergroup Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young and British pop group Madness.

Before I dive into my analysis of these songs, it's interesting to note the word choice in the song title. There's a distinct difference between the connotations of "house" and "home." While both songs use the colder "house," the lyrics evoke much warmer feelings of home.

Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's "Our House" certainly paints a picture of domestic bliss. The lyrics go beyond the physical bounds of a house, putting more emphasis on the feelings and the domestic activities than the structure itself:

"Staring at the fire / for hours and hours while I listen to you / play your love songs all night long for me."

This 1970 release was written by Graham Nash while he was living with his then-girlfriend Joni Mitchell in Laurel Canyon. The story behind the song is simple: The couple got breakfast and then went to an antique store where Mitchell found a nice vase to bring home. When they got home, Nash lit a fire while she put flowers in the vase, which struck him as a beautifully "ordinary moment" in what was an otherwise extraordinary life for the two.



Formed in 1976, Madness is an iconic English ska and pop band from Camden Town, known for their role in the late '70s and '80s ska revival. They still perform with all six original members.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @MADNESSBAND\_S2S ON INSTAGRAM

about passion, grand romantic gestures and excitement. These are important factors in a relationship, to be sure, but they mean nothing without the feelings of comfort and home when with your partner.

The Laurel Canyon sound is immediately felt in this folksy

can just imagine this song being sung around a firepit, smiling faces of friends, family and lovers illuminated by the firelight.

Don't get me wrong, I'll always desire city life, but Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's "Our House" makes

band's Spotify describes their music as rooted in ska, pop and British classic rock. It's a much different sound than Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's rendition, with a faster-paced, upbeat tempo and a loud backing band. But the two songs are not entirely different.



British singer-songwriter Graham Nash captivates the audience with a live performance, showcasing his timeless music and artistry.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @OFFICIALGRAHAMNASH ON INSTAGRAM

# EAR 2 DA SKY: JAWNINO FINDS TIME ON '40'

by **Hayden Cromer**  
HE/HIM/HIS  
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT  
hayden.cromer@uconn.edu

Welcome to Ear 2 Da Sky! Each week, I will be going over topics within music culture and reviewing albums and EPs across genres, eras and artists that are submitted by readers like you and listeners of my radio show, ear 2 da ground, which airs every Wednesday at 11 p.m. on WHUS 91.7 FM! After being out of my cage, I'm back on campus and got the chance to listen to Jawnino's simply titled: "40."

A relatively small artist, Jawnino is part of the underground rap scene in South London. "40" is his debut mixtape, sitting at 15 songs and clocking in at 41 minutes. Released May 3, 2024, it follows a slurry of singles and a four-track EP released in 2020. Jawnino's flow and the production he raps over is very intriguing, with a mix of grime, jungle, electronic and chilled out alternative hip-hop beats, overlapped with a drawn-out, slow style of delivery.

He opens the mixtape with "2trains," a prolonged instrumental intro, until his drowned out, echoey vocals, call out: "I think I see you on the other side" and that he's just "two trains away," truly making you feel the distance. This distance could be a testament to how far ahead he is than the rest of us, as he claims that for anything good happening — from girls showing up, to birds flying — he's the reason.

Jawnino moves into track two, "Dance2" — a groovier track, with more transparent and real lyrics to pair with it. This song is definitely a good reference point for Jawnino's drawn-out style of delivery, but with this style comes a sort of stiffness. This stiffness is neither good nor bad, but noticeable. It comes across as a retroactive style

of rapping as it turns into a spoken-word-esque delivery. This makes the raps feel like actual raps: poetry. He opens up emotionally a bit with, "I denied it / How could you? / But I get it now," grappling with different stages of the grieving cycle.

He stays true to his national roots and lays down raps over a jungle beat on track four, "Lost My Brain." He speaks on his drug usage, a reoccurring topic of discussion on this mixtape, "I can't / take any more of these pills or I might just find what I left in vain / I just gave this tab the kiss of life / It won't switch on me / It's by my side just like Sade." His stiff and stoic raps provide a sense of urgency and seriousness in his intentions within the themes of each track, and the jungle beat on this track definitely adds another layer of urgency.

Jawnino finds himself on track five sharing a beat with a bigger name: MIKE, an American rapper who has ties to the rap scene in London as he grew up in Hackney. Jawnino compares himself to the rest of the field throughout his verse, "We couldn't take the same steps

/ You wouldn't leave the rain wet." He seamlessly passes off the baton to MIKE as he interweaves his relationship with his late mother, death and the time and effort he pours into his work.

"40" is a really interesting piece of art. From the mixed bag of hypnotic production to the variety in Jawnino's vocal delivery, it culminates into something interesting and unique. With this being his first real concrete work in his rap career, I am on the edge of my seat, excited to hear more from the British rapper.

If you want to submit something to my radio show, ask for advice, hear your music on the radio and possibly even see an album or EPs you submit get reviewed in the paper, submit it here: <https://bit.ly/ear2dasky>



LOGO BY SAMANATHA HASS, ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

**RATING: 3.5/5**



Jawnino has gained recognition in the UK underground rap scene for his powerful, laid-back freestyles. Following in the footsteps of artists like M Huncho and CASISDEAD, he maintains his anonymity, often hiding his face through digital manipulation.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @JAWNINO ON INSTAGRAM



# Life

@dailycampuslife

# DEAD & COMPANY ROCK SPHERE WITH OPENING SHOWS OF 'DEAD FOREVER'

by Dan Stark  
HE/HIM/HIS  
STAFF WRITER  
daniel.stark@uconn.edu

A sea of gray hair and tie-dye descended upon Las Vegas last weekend as Dead & Company, the latest reunion of the Grateful Dead, kicked off the first weekend of their “Dead Forever” residency at the Sphere. The shows featured an array of stunning visuals that accompanied a band that delivered jam after jam.

When I walked to my seats in the 300-level on Thursday, March 20, the first thing that struck me was how steep the seats are set up. As I carefully walked down my section, I stared in wonder at just how massive the arena’s famous LED screen is, stretching from the stage all the way to the back of the highest seats. As is typical for any opening night, anticipation grew as the crowd slowly filed in.

Coming into the first show, I was expecting the band to start with “The Music Never Stops” or “Shakedown Street,” two of their classics that are often used as openers. Instead, the band surprised the crowd with the debut of “Gimme Some Lovin’” by The Spencer Davis Group, a song that was a staple of Dead shows in the late 1980s. With the fitting refrain of “so glad you made it” and Jeff Chimenti’s soulful Hammond organ playing, this was a great way to kick off the show.

Following that, the graphics began to take center stage, with the scaffolding background opening to reveal the iconic house in San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury district where the Dead lived in the late 1960s. From there, the view slowly panned up from the Bay Area and into space, where the arena turned into a planetarium as stars filled the screen while the band played a rolling version of “Mississippi Half-Step Uptown Toodleloo.”

The rest of the first set consisted of staples from the early 1970s as the band continued to pick up the energy. An early high point came during “Brown-Eyed Women” when Chimenti and lead guitarist John Mayer traded solos with each other with the crowd cheering along in approval.

The good vibes continued with bright versions of “Good Lovin’” and “Don’t Ease Me In” to end the set. Visually, the screen featured the group’s iconic dancing bears artwork and a collage of old ticket stubs.

The second set, which typically features more extended jams, started with “Feel Like a Stranger,” with the band extending the song’s outro jam with a deep, funky groove. From there, the crowd was treated to “Scarlet Begonias,” which was accompanied on the screen by an animated dance sequence inspired by the back cover of the group’s 1974 album “From the Mars Hotel.”

“Scarlet” then went right into its sister song “Fire on the Mountain,” where drummer Mickey Hart got on the mic for a rare rendition of the rap portion of the song, which I was thrilled to see. A majestic version of “Terrapin Station” followed, which featured an ever-growing circle of dancing bears, peace signs and skulls on the screen.

After the improvisational “Drums/Space” portion of the show, the band emerged with the ballad “Standing on the Moon.” Rhythm guitarist Bob Weir took center stage with his powerful vocal delivery and his subtle, yet effective slide guitar. As the last chords rang out, it was time for another dance number, “Goin’ Down the Road Feeling Bad,” where Mayer, Weir, Chimenti and bassist Oteil Burbridge took a verse as the crowd danced along.

The crowd was then taken back down to Earth to the Grateful Dead house, though it

was depicted this time around as what it looked like in the ‘60s. An audio clip of Phil Lesh, the Grateful Dead’s longtime bass player who died in October 2024, was played to great applause before the final number of the night, “Touch of Grey,” sent fans home on a high note.

Thursday night’s show was an excellent example of an opening night for the Dead: classic songs with tight jams. But Friday night’s show saw them get into deeper, unexplored musical territory, resulting in what may have been the best Dead & Company show I’ve seen of the 26 that I’ve been to.

After a lively “Cold Rain and Snow” to start the night, the band went into the aforementioned “Shakedown Street” as the crowd was transported to space once again. During the closing jam, the graphics transitioned to show the Egyptian pyramids as a reference to the Dead’s 1978 famed concerts there.

The crowd was also treated to another debut this show with Eric Clapton’s “Lay Down Sally.” I did a double take at first when I heard the opening chords, as the song had only ever been done by the Jerry Garcia Band. Nevertheless, this was a welcome addition that fits squarely in the band’s repertoire.

One thing that was clear early on Friday night was that Mayer was locked in. Armed with a replica of Garcia’s Alligator Stratocaster, he kept the energy at a high level with his solos. The highlight of the first set came with the set-closing “Sugaree,” delivering skyscraping solos highlighted by Garcia-esque tremelo picking that sent the crowd into a frenzy. Though they only played six songs, we were all satisfied with what we heard.

But the second set was an absolute work of beauty. After an extended opener of “Uncle John’s Band” that was complimented by hypnotic flowers falling and dancers floating across the screen, the band settled into the menacing 7/4 groove of “Estimated Prophet.”

“Prophet” then gave way to a sparkling version of “Eyes of the World,” which featured another impassioned call-and-response between Chimenti and Mayer. Burbridge also had his chance to shine with a solo of his own at the end, leading the band as they vamped and grooved until the ending hits.

Then came the crown jewel of the two shows that I saw: “St. Stephen.” I’ve seen them play it multiple times, but nothing comes close to this. Every time that it felt like the jam was peaking, Mayer kept going and going, alternating between emphatic chords and blistering fast high notes. Drummer Jay Lane did an excellent job matching his energy, ebbing and flowing with Mayer as the band wended through the epic jam.

The latter portion of the set featured a similar structure to the night prior, with the slow “Wharf Rat” coming out of “Drums/Space” before jumping into a rocking “U.S. Blues.” The crowd was also taken back down to Earth, this time to the sounds of “Throwing Stones.”

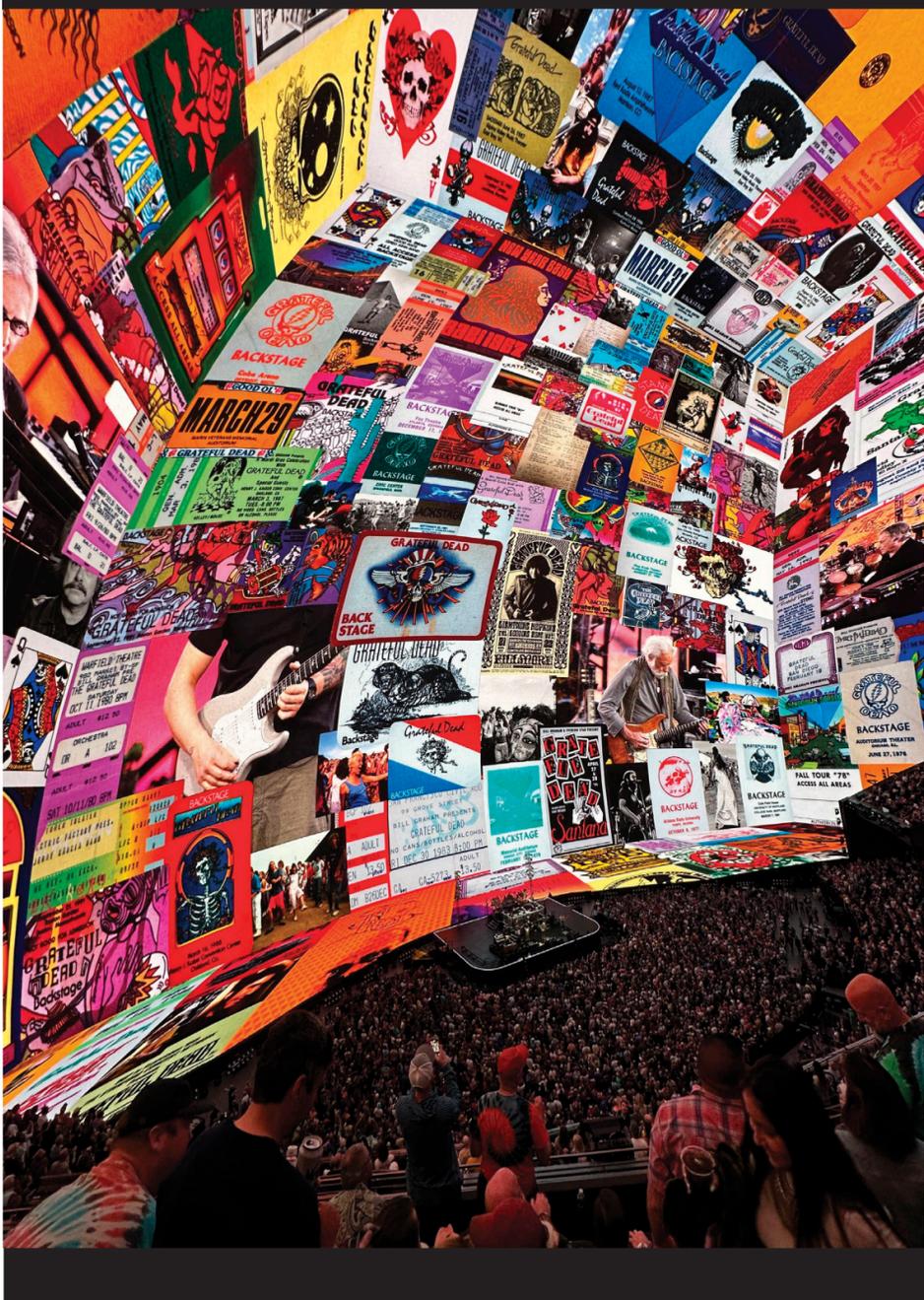
After another audio clip, it was time for the closing number, “Casey Jones.” It’s always a good time when the Dead plays this one, especially when they jam out the ending like tonight. As the band hit the final chord, the crowd roared in approval at the masterpiece of a show they heard.

Though I wish I could have attended Saturday night’s show as well, these two shows rank among the best I’ve ever seen the band play. The combination of beautiful visuals and passionate jamming was remarkable, especially Mayer’s performance. Though the residency is called “Dead Forever,” the band was alive and thriving.



Dead & Company performing at Sphere in Las Vegas, Nev. on March 20, 2025. A popular music and entertainment venue, Sphere opened in September of 2023.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF AUTHOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS





# Opinion

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# ROUNDTABLE

## What is the UCONNIC you would've liked to see?

by the Opinion Section | [opinion@dailycampus.com](mailto:opinion@dailycampus.com)

On March 24, the artists set to perform at the 2025 UCONNIC music festival were revealed to the student body. The annual show hosted by the Student Union Board of Governors will feature local DJs ONNAME and NL, Nashville-based alternative rock band Edgehill, Connecticut-based rapper Saby, R&B singer Raveena and the headlining artist, Ross Lynch's The Driver Era.

UCONNIC has long been a very contentious topic for the student body as in recent years the high student expectations for who will perform have been difficult to satisfy. Last year, there was significant controversy following the announcement of Swae Lee as a headliner, with many complaining about a lack of real voice in the decision-making process. This year's release faced much of the same reaction, with 159 comments under UCONNIC's Instagram post announcing the artist lineup (as of the drafting of this article) being overwhelmingly negative about the lineup.

So, for this roundtable, the writers of the Opinion Section weigh in on the controversy and look to answer the question:

**What was your biggest takeaway from the UCONNIC lineup announcement?**

**by Tomas Hinckley**  
OPINION EDITOR

First, why does the lineup have six acts? This is too many. You either attract an audience because of local interest or big name recognition. The majority of these artists fail to do either of those things, as they aren't famous enough for a majority of people to recognize their quality through name alone but also aren't connected to UConn enough to have this community be familiar with them. Even Ross Lynch, the biggest name on the ticket, is only known because he's an old Disney star; no one knows him for his music. Instead of getting a bunch of mid-tier artists, a show of two really big artists and one or two Storrs locals would do better at attracting people.

Plus, there is the issue of genre. The variation of style across these six acts is too wide. We have indie pop, R&B, basic club music, alt-rock and rap all in one show. No one is interested in all those genres. This will lead to people either 1) not paying for a \$45 ticket to just see the one act they like or 2) leaving midway through the night. We need a more cohesive setlist which makes choices about what it is and isn't. When you attempt to cover every genre of music in one night, you're going to cover all of them poorly.

Then, there needs to be a better job of choosing local acts. The current lineup seeks to attract local interest through two well-known UConn DJs and one CT rapper. Yet, these are ineffective choices to achieve that goal. DJs at UConn simply don't attract people to see them, full stop. They play at bars and frats which are in themselves the attractor of people, with often these DJs just being an add-on. Plus, as some commenters pointed out, UCONNIC should be a special event, and it loses the appeal if I can get the same experience any other weekend with a \$10 cover at Ted's. There was a huge opportunity to select popular UConn bands that are known to actually have a fanbase who will follow them, guaranteeing at least some people at this university would be happy with the event, but this completely missed that mark.

**by Raegan Skelly**  
CONTRIBUTOR

The only name on this lineup I recognize is The Driver Era, but I would say I know them very loosely. I'm unsure if I've ever heard a song of theirs, I've just seen the very viral snippets of Lynch performing shirtless at their shows. I have no issue with them being on the lineup because I do think they, or at least Ross, are relatively well known. Although, I don't think he is primarily known for this band but instead his Disney projects or maybe even the previous Lynch-sibling band, R5, that I remember seeing during commercial breaks on the Disney Channel. From what I've heard, students last year were upset about the fame status of the headliner, so I think they were trying to overcompensate this year by picking someone who people know, even if he is not mainly known for The Driver Era music.

**by Evelyn Pazan**  
ASSOCIATE OPINION EDITOR

I will start this off by saying that I don't think that the organizers of UCONNIC should be receiving the level of hate that they are. It is noble to express your opinion and advocate for change in the selection process, it is unacceptable to outright hate on students and staff who have worked to put this together. Rather, you could write for the Daily Campus instead, and put together a well thought out argument, which is more effective than an Instagram comment that lacks proper grammar and gets two likes.

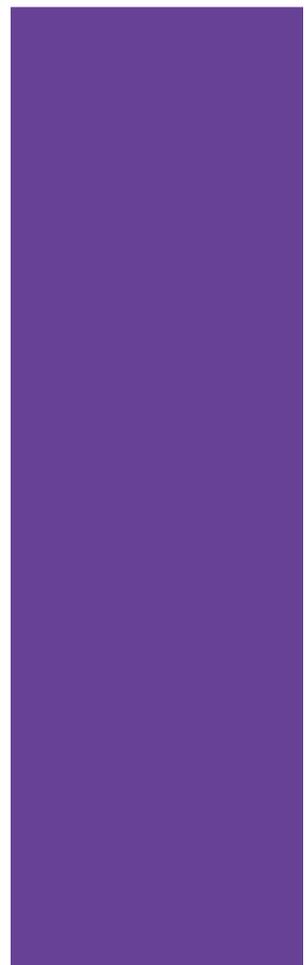
That being said, while bringing in The Driver Era is certainly a step up from Swae Lee, I am still disappointed by their inability to provide us with a performer of higher caliber. In the past years, UCONNIC (or the UConn Spring Concert, in past years) has managed to bring in incredibly talented artists. In 2018, there was Khalid, a rising R&B singer who was incredibly popular. In Spring 2004, UConn brought in Kanye West (maybe not the best choice now). Most recently, in 2022, there was Dominic Fike.

Don't get me wrong, I like The Driver Era, Ross Lynch and their music, but I just wish that the performer were a little bit closer to the fame level of the aforementioned performers.

**by Patrick Minnerly**  
WEEKLY COLUMNIST

I think this entire situation is summarized by the fact that I knew nothing about UCONNIC before seeing this announcement. Despite the clear play on "iconic" that UCONNIC is trying to achieve, it does not seem to have the gravity of other events that are sponsored by SUBOG. By contrast, SUBOG's One Ton Sundae event is a huge deal at UConn and is always looked forward to.

Beyond that, the lineup feels a bit lackluster. I understand that The Driver Era is fairly well known, even though I've never heard of them personally. I also understand that there is no way to satisfy everyone, especially college kids who have a very wide range of what they consider to be good artists and good music, but there is also a way to satisfy no one, and that is what UCONNIC has pulled off here. No one set to appear in the concert has generated very much excitement, even the headliner, and the other acts have resulted in a consistent response of "Who?". In other words, there is nothing to get people hyped up for the concert, especially for the price of \$45.



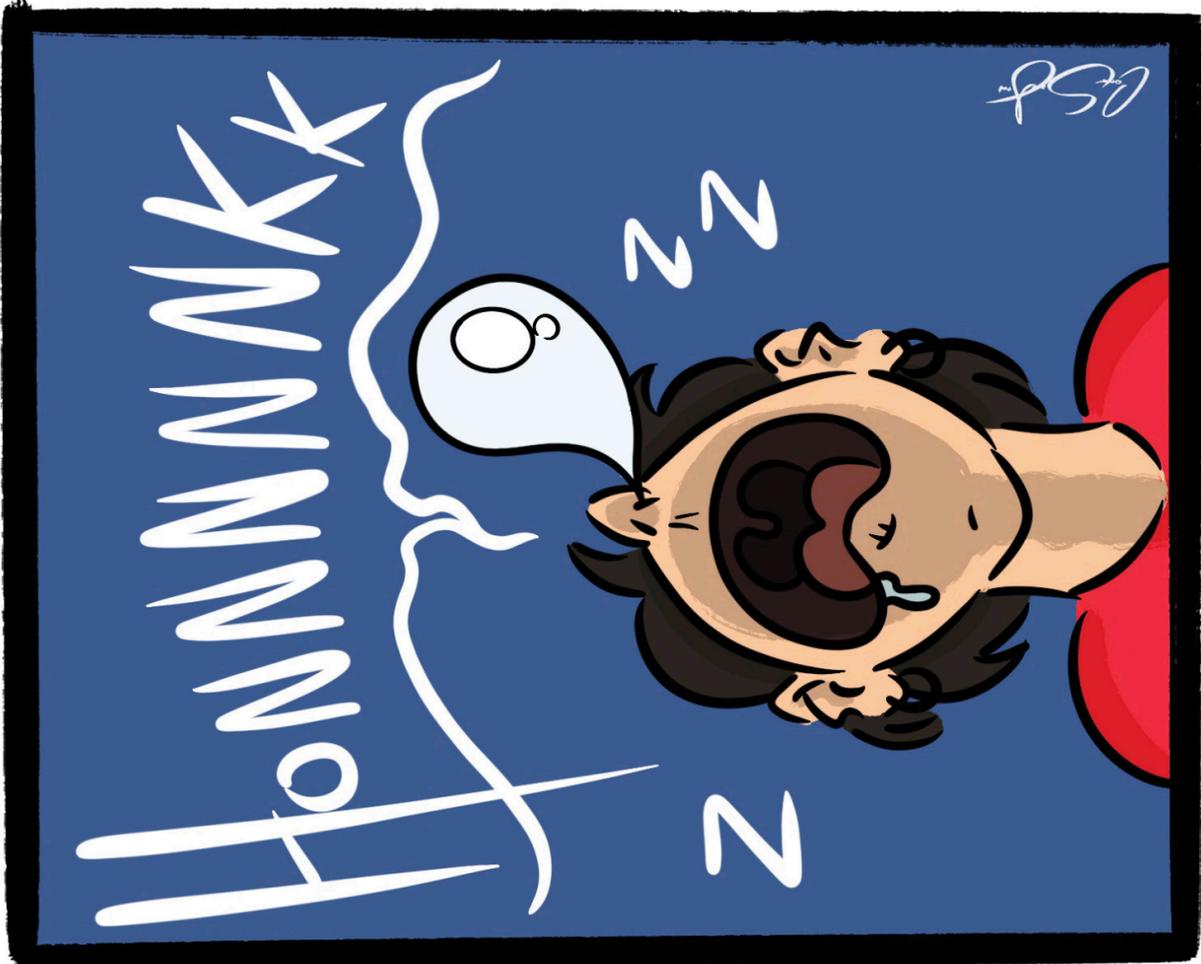
# Opinion

Photo of the Day | Returning from spring break



The UConn Storrs Campus in Storrs, Conn, on March 25, 2025. It was a busy day on campus as students were returning from spring break and starting the second half of the spring semester. PHOTO BY BLAKE SYKES, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

## Comic of the Day



by Connor Szrejna, Staff Artist

# LATO'S LENS:

## WHO'S HOT, WHO'S NOT — SWEET 16 EDITION

by Tyler Lato

HE/HIM/HIS  
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT  
TYLER.LATO@UCONN.EDU

As has been the case since the beginning, March Madness is in full swing!

For the first time since 2007, the Sweet 16 of the men's tournament will have no team seeded 11 or higher—a major disappointment for some. However, this only means one thing: The big dogs are still out to play.

Florida. Auburn. Duke. Houston. Every one-seed in each region of the bracket is still vying for their chance at college basketball glory. There are also several other top-seeded teams still alive, setting the stage for an intense Sweet 16.

I, myself, have religiously paid attention to this tournament, causing my opinions to vary on several of the remaining teams. Some of them have convinced me that they're genuine contenders for a national championship. Others, well, have not. Let's take a look at who's hot and who's not as we head into the Sweet 16 on Thursday.

### WHO'S HOT?

#### Arkansas (West region)

Second-seeded St. John's resurgence on the big stage ended on Saturday at the mercy of No. 10 Arkansas by a 75-66 margin—a stunning upset, to say the least. Though Head Coach John Calipari's Razorbacks are coming off a subpar and rollercoaster regular season, the No. 10 seed in the West Region is heating up at just the right time. The Razorbacks' wins against St. John's and the No. 7 seed Kansas showcase what they're truly capable of, and I would not be surprised in the slightest if Calipari's squad won some hardware in the coming weeks.

#### Florida (West region)

After a crushing defeat of Norfolk State in the round of 64, No. 1 Florida overcame adversity to defeat the defending two-time national champions UConn, 77-75 in the second round of the tournament. The Gators rallied back from several second-half deficits to take a late lead over the Huskies, clinging on to win the game. However, what caught my eye in this Florida victory

was guard Walter Clayton Jr., who I believe is the best guard in all of college basketball. Clayton Jr.'s performance was nothing short of impressive hitting several clutch shots as the shot clock wound down to keep the Gators in the game. His teammates Will Richard and Alijah Martin are among the best in college basketball as well, and their ability to make several shots while being smothered by the opposing defense is something I found incredible. Their Sweet 16 matchup against Maryland is a must-watch.

#### Duke (East region)

No. 1 Duke has lived up to the hype. It's easy for a team that possesses such high expectations for success to fold come March. However, the Blue Devils have done the opposite. In a second-round game against No. 9 seed Baylor, who won the Big Dance in 2021, projected top draft pick Cooper Flagg and his Blue Devil teammates pummeled the opposing Bears in 89-66 fashion, hushing all Duke-haters at last. Teammates Tyrese Proctor, Khaman Maluach and Kon Kneuppel are all playing

their best basketball right now, supplementing Flagg's play like bread and butter. The Duke train is rolling, and there are very few teams that can stop it.

### WHO'S NOT?

#### Michigan (South region)

Every Michigan performance thus far has been hard to watch. Although the Big Ten Tournament Champions and No. 5 seeded Wolverines possess some of the best players in college basketball—Vlad Goldin, Danny Wolf and Roddy Gayle Jr.—they also showcase inconsistency on both sides of the ball as well as a tendency to turn the ball over rather frequently. The Wolverines currently average 13.9 turnovers per game compared to their opponents' 11.2, according to ESPN, which could be a huge problem down the stretch if the Wolverines can't fix this.

#### Houston (Midwest region)

Although the Houston Cougars have been a household name in college basketball in recent years under the reign of Head Coach Kelvin Sampson, the school has yet to win a national championship. Despite several number one rankings year in and year out, the

Cougars have almost routinely fallen short when it matters the most. Combined with their current offensive inconsistencies and apparent late-game woes displayed in their matchup with Gonzaga, this may be a recipe for disaster for the top-seeded Cougars. Not to mention, No. 4 Purdue is seeking vengeance after their runner-up finish in the championship last year, adding fuel to this Sweet 16 showdown.

#### Maryland (West region)

I'm not sold on this Maryland team at all. Despite Big Ten Freshman of the Year Derik Queen's buzzer-beater to oust No. 12 Colorado State in their second-round matchup, the Terrapins struggled defensively and trailed the Rams throughout the entirety of the game. It often looked like the Terps were outworked, getting dominated in the paint and out-rebounded by a 13-8 margin in the first half. The Terps are now facing off against the scorching-hot No. 1 Florida Gators, headed by none other than Clayton Jr. If they start this game similarly to the Colorado State game, one can only imagine what will happen.

# SAM'S SECTION:

## WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT EVERY TEAM THAT MADE THE SWEET 16

by Sam Calhoun

HE/HIM/HIS  
STAFF WRITER  
SAMUEL.CALHOUN@UCONN.EDU

Even though there are no true Cinderella stories this year, the Sweet 16 features the best 16 teams in the country, which makes the second weekend primed for classics.

This edition of Sam's Section will provide a rundown of every team that got past the first weekend.

#### Auburn (No. 1 seed in South Region)

Auburn was the No. 1 overall seed in the NCAA Tournament and beat its first two opponents by an average of 25 points. Behind Johni Broome, who is in a two-way race for National Player of the Year, they have all the assets to win the national title. Auburn is the No. 3 offense and No. 12 defense on KenPom in terms of efficiency.

#### Duke (No. 1 seed in East Region)

Out of every team in the country, Duke is the only team ranked in the top 4 in offensive and defensive efficiency. Despite Cooper Flagg being one of the best players in college basketball, guard Tyrese Proctor has emerged as a leader for the Blue Devils, averaging 22 points through the first weekend.

#### Houston (No. 1 seed in Midwest Region)

Led by LJ Cryer, who has averaged 22.5 points so far this tournament, the Cougars handled business in the first weekend, including underseeded Gonzaga. Houston and Duke are the only teams in the country ranked in the top 10 in offensive and defensive efficiency.

#### Florida (No. 1 seed in West Region)

Florida is one of the most popular picks to win its third national championship after cruising through the SEC Tournament. Superstar guard Walter Clayton Jr. has been

phenomenal so far in the NCAA Tournament, averaging 23 points in the team's first two games.

#### Tennessee (No. 2 seed in Midwest Region)

Out of every player remaining in the NCAA Tournament, no player has scored more in the first two rounds than Chaz Lanier (24.5 ppg), who has been one of the best transfers in the country. The Volunteers are in this position thanks to the third-best defense in the country.

#### Alabama (No. 2 seed in East Region)

With superstar Mark Sears leading the Crimson Tide, there is no doubt that Alabama has what it takes to get to San Antonio. What is holding them back is while they have the No. 4 offense in the country, their defense ranks 29th. That is not bad, but that is lower than any of the national champions since 1997.

#### Michigan State (No. 2 seed in South Region)

Michigan State has what it takes to finally break the Big

Ten's national title drought, which has been ongoing since 2000. They rank in the top 25 in both offensive and defensive efficiency, including having the fifth-best defense in the country. Behind freshman phenom Jase Richardson, the Spartans can go even deeper in the NCAA Tournament.

#### Texas Tech (No. 3 seed in West Region)

New Mexico transfer JT Toppin has led Texas Tech all year long. They are powered by the fifth-best offense in the country and have not scored under 70 points since Feb. 19. Their defense is not on the same level, ranking 37th in the country.

#### Kentucky (No. 3 seed in Midwest Region)

Despite losing Jaxson Robinson for the year, Kentucky has found its way back to the Sweet 16 in the first year with Head Coach Mark Pope. The Wildcats are more offense-heavy with the 11th-best offense in the country while boasting the 45th-best de-

fense. Watch out for Koby Brea, the former Dayton Flyer who can light it up from behind the 3-point line.

#### Purdue (No. 4 seed in Midwest Region)

Behind an underrated duo of Braden Smith and Trey Kaufman-Renn, the Boilermakers can get back to the Final Four after making it a season ago. Their offense, seventh in the country, is powered by their ability to knock down shots from downtown, ranking ninth in the country in 3-point percentage (38.5%).

#### Maryland (No. 4 seed in West Region)

Watch out for the Crab Five. Behind freshman center Derik Queen, the Terrapins have their best net rating on KenPom since winning the national championship in 2002. They barely made it out of the first weekend alive after Queen made a game-winning buzzer-beater to stun 12th-seeded Colorado State.

#### Arizona (No. 4 seed in East Region)

Despite being down 19-4 to Oregon in the second round, the Wildcats stormed back with a 29-point performance from star guard Caleb Love, who knocked down five 3-pointers on Sunday night.

#### Michigan (No. 5 seed in South Region)

Despite being a fifth-seed in the NCAA Tournament, no one should sleep on Michigan. They have two phenomenal centers: Danny Wolf and Vladislav Goldin. They won the Big Ten Tournament after losing their last three games of the regular season. If any team remaining has shown resilience, it is Michigan in its first season under head coach Dusty May.

#### BYU (No. 6 seed in East Region)

In his first season as head coach, Kevin Young has taken BYU to its first Sweet 16 since 2011. They are led by Richie Saunders, who scored 20.5 points on average in the Cougars' first two games of the NCAA Tournament. Their effective field goal percentage is one of the best in the country (57.2%) and second to Duke out of the teams remaining in the tournament.

#### Ole Miss (No. 6 seed in South Region)

Sean Pedulla was the leader for Ole Miss all season long. He turned his game up to another level in March Madness, scoring 20 points in each of the Rebels' first two games. Ole Miss is one of the most balanced teams in the country, with similar rankings in offense and defensive efficiency.

#### Arkansas (No. 10 seed in West Region)

The only double-digit seed to make it through the first weekend was Arkansas. Led by Hall of Fame Head Coach John Calipari in his first year with the Razorbacks. A major story has been the health of Adou Thiero, who will return on Thursday.



## Sports

## Photo of the Day | Women's Basketball



UConn women's basketball plays South Dakota State at Gampel Pavilion in Storrs, Conn. on March 24, 2025. The Huskies won the match 91-57, earning their spot in the Sweet 16.

PHOTOGRAPH BY EMMA MEIDINGER, ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

# GRADING AND OBSERVING OF THE PATRIOTS FREE AGENCY MOVES

by **Graham Wilker**

HE/HIM/HIS  
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT  
GRAHAM.WILKER@UCONN.EDU

## Overhauling the Defensive Interior: Milton Williams the big-ticket item, Davon Godchaux Traded

The defensive interior was very poor for the Patriots last season. While a big piece of that was the medical issues with Christian Barmore, there's no doubt it needed addressing, and that's exactly what the team did. They handed one of the top players in the class in Milton Williams a massive deal to make him the highest paid player in team history, already a significant move that likely means a move to a 4-2-5 base defense. Additionally, they moved veteran Davon Godchaux for a late round pick and re-signed Jeremiah Pharms Jr., who led the room in pressures last season and will look to replace the departed Daniel Ekuale. 28-year-old Khyiris Tonga will make his fifth stop on the NFL and compete for a depth role. This group needed changing, and changing it got.

**Overall Grade: B+**  
**Offensive Line: Addressed?**

After a season in which the team allowed the joint sixth most sacks in the league, the line needed addressing. They added some names, but how much better off will the team be? Morgan

Moses is a massive upgrade at right tackle despite the three-year deal for the 34-year-old being a bit lengthy. Long time center and future Patriot Hall of Famer David Andrews was released, will seemingly retire and has been replaced by Garrett Bradbury. The former first round pick struggled in 2024 but has starting experience and should return to better form with New England. The team also added the Jets interior lineman Wes Schweitzer, who's played in 90 games and started 62 through his eight seasons. Left tackle remains unchanged, but it seems like that will be a need addressed in the first two rounds of the draft. I would like to see them add at least one more serviceable depth piece across the unit to fortify Drake Maye's protection.

**Overall Grade: B-**  
**Carlton Davis reunited with DC Terrell Williams**

With Jonathan Jones's departure to Washington, the Pats opted to add a higher level CB2. Davis has never played a full season, which is a scary headline, but as a CB2 behind Christian Gonzalez, availability will hopefully matter less. While I think that Davis was probably the third best option on the market behind the Colts' Charvarius Ward and the Lions' D.J. Reed, I understand the connection to former Lions staffer and DC Ter-

rell Williams. A trio of Gonzalez, Davis and Marcus Jones in the slot is a very solid unit, and I would expect they add another name at some point in the draft.

**Overall Grade: B+**  
**Linebacker Upgrades: Spillane signed on Day One**

While I thought the linebacker group last year was okay, there's no doubt they could have used an addition or two. An addition or two was made, as we saw Robert Spillane sign a three-year deal worth more than \$12 million a season on the first day of free agency. Spillane will join Ja'Whaun Bentley and Jahlani Tavai as hard-hitting run stoppers in the group, but I'd argue the team needs more pass coverage at the position. Nonetheless, Spillane is a hard hitter that should be a very fun watch in 2025 and beyond. The team brought back Christian Elliss after a career year in which he recorded 80 total tackles, his previous best was 23. Former Titan Jake Gibbens, who recorded 14 total tackles and a half sack against New England this season also joined the team on a one-year deal. Bentley or Tavai could be released, but given the plethora of cap space the team still has, I'd guess both are safe until camp.

**Overall Grade: B**  
**Mack Hollins.**

Full disclosure, I actually like Mack Hollins as a player. He's a hard worker and has found a way to stick in the league as a special

teamer and deep threat, and had some okay weeks last year with Buffalo. He's nothing to scoff at, but as the only addition to a group who's top three receivers combined for 1,500 yards, he isn't taking them over the top. They made an effort to sign Chris Godwin but were unwilling to give Cooper Kupp \$15 million a season or make a move for D.K. Metcalf. It isn't impossible that they add Stefon Diggs or can swing a trade for a Brandon Aiyuk, but the former doesn't move the needle enough for me, and the latter seems unlikely however many times it's mentioned. I like the Hollins signing- the lack of quality additions at the position, I don't.

**Overall Grade: F**  
**Quarterback Competition?**

The team brought in Josh Dobbs on a two-year deal to backup Drake Maye and compete with Joe Milton. Do I see this as an omen for Milton's departure? No. I personally feel that any trade for him would yield a minimal return, and while Dobbs would facilitate a trade, I'm not sure who a trade partner would be at this point: does someone come calling during or after the draft? Regardless, I don't think there's much to investigate here, a very run of the mill signing - not good or bad.

**Overall Grade: C**  
**Bringing in another pair of**

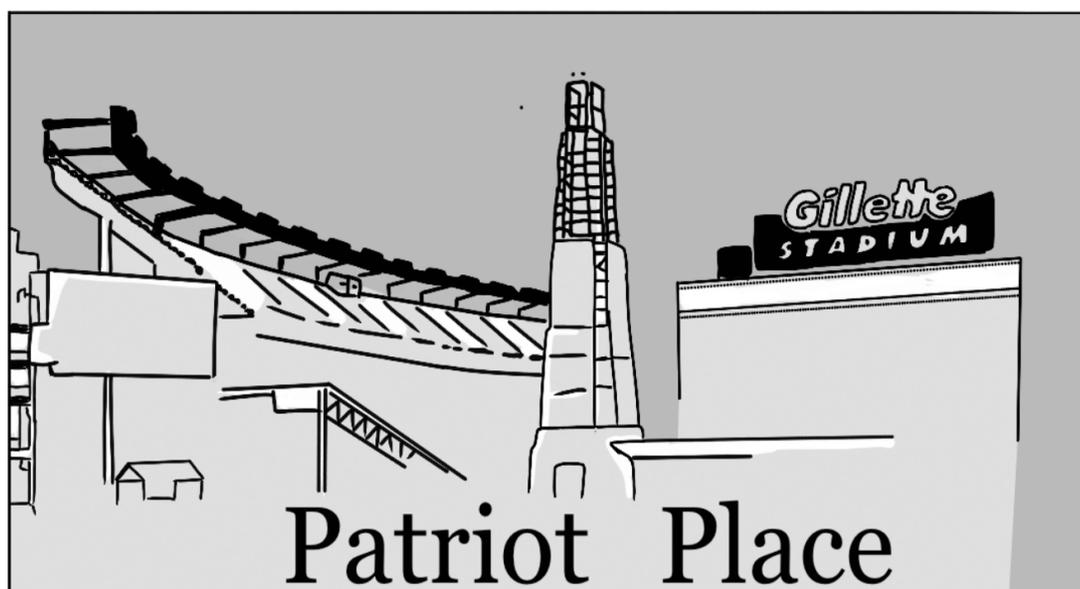
**Raiders: Epps and Chaisson**  
Aside from Spillane signing with New England and Elliss on

his way to Vegas, the Patriots also made two more moves involving Raiders, signing Marcus Epps and K'Lavon Chaisson. Epps's one-year deal will likely see him compete for the third safety role with the re-signed Jaylinn Hawkins. His experience playing as a deeper safety is a nice stylistic change compared to Jabrill Peppers and Kyle Dugger, who both play closer to the line and missed time last season. Chaisson was a piece to the great Joe Burrow who led 2019 LSU team, but never figured it out with the Jaguars, recording just five sacks in four seasons. He matched that total last season under Antonio Pierce and will likely be in a Josh Uche style role under Vrabel. I like both players a lot as depth options.

**Overall Grade: A-**  
**Bringing 'Em Back: Austin Hooper and Jaylinn Hawkins**

Hooper and Hawkins each played bigger roles than most people expected last season, but both were solid when given opportunities. Hooper ranked third in receptions and fourth on the team in yards, while Hawkins's 613 snaps prove he played a sizable role. Hooper seems set to be the TE2 again, but Hawkins will need to work hard to beat out Epps to be the third safety despite getting a slight pay raise. I like bringing back cheap depth pieces, and this is a good example of exactly that.

**Overall Grade: A-**





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# ALEX'S MOTORSPORTS RECAP: NASCAR, INDYCAR AND F1 TRIPLE HEADER

by Alex Klancko  
HE/HIM/HIS  
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT  
IVB24001@UCONN.EDU

This week in motorsports featured three major races, ranging from NASCAR, IndyCar and F1.

The IndyCar Thermal Club Grand Prix in Thermal, Calif. took place this past Friday. In that competition, Chip Ganassi driver Alex Palou took the top spot with a time of just over a minute and 40 seconds. Saturday had a lot in store during Qualifying, as Alexander Rossi, Marcus Ericsson, Colton Herta, Christian Lundgaard, Pato O'Ward and Palou made the Firestone Fast Six, with O'Ward taking pole position by almost two-tenths of a second. O'Ward was followed by fellow Arrow McLaren driver Lundgaard, and he was followed by Palou, Herta, Ericsson and Rossi.

At the start of the race, Devlin DeFrancesco of Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing took out Scott McLaughlin of Team Penske, with McLaughlin retiring later

in the race due to the overheating issues from the wreck.

O'Ward and Lundgaard both had an amazing start to the race, as they were far ahead of everyone except Palou. On lap 50, Palou and Lundgaard had an amazing clean fight for second place, as the two drivers fought for four consecutive corners, with Palou eventually taking second from Lundgaard. On lap 56, Palou outbroke O'Ward for the lead of the race and kept the lead for the remaining 10 laps. Palou won the race with O'Ward finishing in second, and Lundgaard taking third overall.

Now onto China and F1, there would be a sprint and main race. In the one and only practice session, Lando Norris topped the charts with a lap time of a minute and 31 seconds. The sprint qualifying was electric, as Lewis Hamilton took his first ever pole for Ferrari. Max Verstappen added onto the

excitement of

almost dethroning the Ferrari driver. Eventually, Verstappen fell just 18 thousandths of a second off of Hamilton's time. The 19-lap race was not as exciting, as Lewis took his first Sprint win for Ferrari, and nobody made any big moves in the standings.

During the Race Qualifying, Oscar Piastri took pole position followed by George Russell and teammate Lando Norris. During the race, Piastri led most of the laps en route to his first win of the season. The rest of the podium consisted of Norris in second and Russell in third. But the biggest story of the grand prix weekend was Ferrari drivers Hamilton and Charles Leclerc along with Alpine driver Pierre Gasly, getting disqualified from the race, all for different reasons. Hamilton was disqualified

after his skid block was 0.5mm less than allowed. That means Hamilton's car was closer to the ground than his competition, giving him an advantage in the corners. Leclerc and Gasly were both disqualified for their cars being underweight. Leclerc's car was one pound underweight, while Gasly's was not made clear.

Finally, there was the NASCAR Cup Series race at Homestead-Miami Speedway. For Qualifying, No.48 Alex Bowman took pole position and was followed by No.21 Josh Berry who took a win just a week ago. The opening stage of the race had no accidents as No. 12 Ryan Blaney took first place followed by Bowman, No. 19 Chase Briscoe, No. 5 Kyle Larson, No. 2 Austin Cindric, No. 24 William Byron, No. 16 A.J. Allmendinger, Berry, No. 4 Noah

Gragson and No. 22 Joey Logano. Stage 2 also had no accidents as No. 11 Denny Hamlin took home the playoff point, followed by Larson, Blaney, Byron, No. 23 Bubba Wallace, Bowman, Cindric, No. 77 Carson Hocevar, No. 9 Chase Elliott and No. 45 Tyler Reddick. With 59 laps to go in the race, Blaney's engine blew out, causing him to have his third "Did Not Finish" in a row, simultaneously bringing the caution flag out. Blaney led two-thirds of the race before his engine blew up. With seven laps to go, Larson overtook his teammate Bowman for the lead of the race and took home the win. Larson was followed by Bowman, Wallace, Briscoe, Hamlin, No. 17 Chris Buescher, Allmendinger, Reddick, No. 60 Ryan Preece and No. 7 Justin Haley. Larson also won the Truck Series race on Friday and finished fourth in the Xfinity Series race on Saturday.

It was a wild weekend all around, from closing lap passes from Larson and Palou to Piastri's dominance. What an amazing week for racing!



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# Sports

# TOP STORYLINES AND PREDICTIONS FOR THE NCAA MEN'S HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

by **Ryan Lombardi**  
HE/HIM/HIS  
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT  
RYAN.LOMBARDI@UCONN.EDU

The road to the Frozen Four is officially set.

The NCAA Men's Hockey tournament bracket was released on Sunday, including a mix of seasoned powerhouses and newcomers to the tournament. The bracket is filled with electric matchups and storylines, as the sixteen participants battle for college hockey's ultimate prize.

**UConn and Bentley make tournament debuts**

Two schools made the tournament field for the first time in program history: The Connecticut Huskies and the Bentley Falcons. UConn was selected as an at-large after an impressive 22-11-4, with several wins against top Hockey East opponents. The Huskies are coming off a deep conference tournament run before ultimately falling to Maine. Bentley, meanwhile, entered the Atlantic Hockey tournament as a No. 3 seed at 23-14-2. However, a late season surge propelled them to a conference title to secure an automatic bid to the big dance.

**Hockey East sends six teams to the field**

This year's bracket is dominated by Hockey East with a record-tying six of the participants coming from the conference, reaffirming its status as one of the top hockey leagues. Boston College and Maine earned No. 1 seeds after dominant regular seasons and the Black Bears claimed the Hockey East championship. UConn, Providence and Boston University each secured No. 2 seeds, and UMass rounded out the field as a No. 4 seed. This marks the highest number of Hockey East teams in the tournament since 2015, and the first time having two No. 1 seeds since 2012. Despite the dominance of the top teams, the league was highly competitive in-conference and had strong out-of-conference performances. The next most-represented conference was the Big Ten, with four teams in the tournament, led by powerhouse Michigan State.

**NHL draft prospects on display**

The tournament is filled with potential NHL draft picks, headlined by Boston College center James Hagens. Hagens is projected to go early in the first round in this year's draft and was ranked No. 2 in the NHL scouting midterm rankings. The freshman has 35 points this

season (10 goals, 25 assists) and has been a key factor in the Eagles' dominant regular season. Michigan State is also on the field with wing Shane Vansaghi. Despite being mostly a third-line player with such a talented Spartans roster, Vansaghi has demonstrated his physicality and balanced skillset. Boston University freshman defenseman Sascha Boumedienne is another name to look out for. He has demonstrated his high hockey IQ and fluid skating ability that has impressed NHL scouts, making him a potential second round pick in the draft.

**Longtime coach gets last shot at the tournament**

Cornell Coach Mike Schafer announced he would be stepping down at the conclusion of this season after 30 years coaching the Big Red. His team did not meet its lofty expectations over the regular season, finishing sixth in the Eastern College Athletic Conference. However, Cornell looked like a whole new team once the playoffs arrived, blowing out Yale in the first round before stunning Quinnipiac to advance to the final. Schafer's squad took down Clarkson in the championship to cap off an exceptional run to make the NCAA tournament. Now, with momentum on their side, Cornell could be a dangerous dark horse looking to send their coach off in

storybook fashion.

**Denver seeks back-to-back titles**

The reigning champions are back in the tournament looking to repeat and earn their 11th NCAA Hockey championship. That would be their third title in four years, which hasn't happened since 1958-1961 by none other than Denver. Coming off a devastating double overtime loss in the NCHC championship, the Pioneers will once again have a tough path to the Frozen Four in the Manchester regional. This also sets up a potential rematch of last year's championship against Boston College, who was placed in the same bracket. The Broncos return with key pieces from last year's run, including two Hobey Baker award finalists, forward Jack Devine and defenseman Zeev Buium.

**Predictions**

The road to the Frozen Four is always filled with surprises, with dark horses emerging to challenge the top seeds. Here are my picks to make it to St. Louis in this year's tournament.

**Michigan State, Toledo Regional**

The Spartans were recently tested in the Big Ten championship, edging out Ohio State in double overtime.

The Spartans have been dominant a season,

boasting impressive non-conference wins against Boston College and Western Michigan, and finishing 15-5-4 in a tough conference schedule. The Spartans are 9-3-4 against teams in the tournament, proving they are built for a deep run.

**Boston College, Manchester Regional**

The Eagles are the No. 1 overall seed for a reason. Their early exit in the Hockey East tournament raised some concerns, but the Eagles have proven their resilience before. This team is filled with talent, including Hockey East Player of the Year Ryan Leonard and sophomore forward Gabe Perreault. They should be able to handle Bentley and would then face either Denver in a rematch or Providence in a conference matchup. Either way, the Eagles should be fired up in their revenge tour and will be a true threat if they play to their potential.

**Western Michigan, Fargo Regional**

After their first ever NCHC championship, Western Michigan is looking to carry their success into the NCAA tournament. The Bronco offense is lethal, as the highest scoring team in the nation, powering them to 30 wins and dominating in-conference. The program has been unable to make a Frozen Four appearance despite participating in the tournament in the past three seasons. WMU should be eager to finally get over the hump, and this may be their best chance to do so.

**UConn, Allentown Regional**

The Huskies aren't satisfied with just making the tournament for the first time— they're looking to make a deep run. UConn has been able to grind out wins in a grueling Hockey East schedule, including the No. 1 seed in the regional, Maine. They will start out their path in an in-state matchup against Quinnipiac, who they met in the CT Ice tournament in January. If they can win that matchup, the Huskies would likely face Maine, who recently defeated them in the Hockey East final. Connecticut will be hungry to take revenge should they meet again.

This year's field features elite squads and rising programs and could be one of the most exciting tournaments in recent memory. Whether it's a powerhouse showing off their dominance or an unexpected Cinderella run, the road to St. Louis should prove to be a must-watch for hockey fans.