



WHUS Battle of the Bands concert this Saturday



Band The Jawns performing at the Battle of the Bands on Feb. 2, 2024. They performed in the Student Union.

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WHUS Radio will be hosting their annual Battle of the Bands event this Saturday at 6 p.m. in Rome Ballroom. The event will feature four local bands facing off in a bracket-style tournament. This year the bands are Elizabory, Part of the Problem, Vices Inc. and West of the Gate. University of Connecticut students must bring their student ID for free admission. Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. WHUS Events Director Sire-Lawrence Brock, an eighth-semester psychological sciences and economics major, talked about why the bands were selected. “What we sort of discussed when doing the selection process was that they all brought something very interesting and different in terms of their sound,” Brock said. “We just thought, why not highlight them and bring them to the Storrs campus and show them off to the community.” For the first round of the competition, the four bands will go head-to-head two at a time with 20-minute sets. The winners will be decided based on which

band gets louder cheers. The final round will consist of a 30-minute set from each band. The winner will get the opportunity to open at WHUS’ Spring Fling concert. “[The Battle of the Bands] an opportunity to find new connections,” Brock said. “This isn’t really like an event that you see on campus at all. I feel like a lot of events that do occur just in general don’t really highlight the local music scene... I think students are able to find connection and community if they were interested in this, but they weren’t aware of [it].” Brock said that they “often like to highlight students who have bands at UConn,” but any local bands are allowed to apply. “It’s great that we’re able to highlight any local bands that aren’t just specifically UConn students,” Brock said. West of the Gate is an alternative jam band that was formed in Storrs. This will be their first concert and their “first impression as a band,” according to vocalist Jack Lombardo. “We’ve written more original music in the last month than we have ever before,” Lombardo wrote in an email. “We’re excited to bring out our

best and show everyone what makes us unique as a group!” Elizabory is an experimental metal band from Worcester, Mass. They played in the Battle of the Bands in 2025 and have also performed at local DIY music venue The Dog Pound. “We pour all hopelessness, hurt, and horrors we face into our music. We are no one genre except for pain,” Elizabory member Frozt wrote in an email. “Listen to us on any platform and you’ll understand our pain and suffering.” Vices Inc. is a female-fronted alternative and pop punk band based out of Portland, Maine. Part of the Problem plays “riot grrrl” music, a feminist subgenre of punk music, according to Brock. The local music scene is important because it can help bring the community together, Brock said. “It’s important to sort of bridge that connection... and then bring us all together,” Brock said. “This does bring in a lot of students just in general who don’t happen to know us who want to check it out, and then they end up checking out these bands and getting involved in the local music scene.”



Students perform with their bands at the battle of the bands on Feb. 2, 2024. They performed in the Student Union.

WOW leader applications due March 1

by Kevin Guinan
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Students enthusiastic about the University of Connecticut’s Storrs campus are encouraged to apply to be a Week of Welcome (WOW) leader by March 1. Erin O’Keefe, a program coordinator at UConn Student Activities, said previous WOW leaders spoke highly of the opportunities the job opened for them. “We have WOW leaders employed across the UConn campus, and the experience they gain is a great addition to any resume,” O’Keefe said. “They were able to use their WOW experiences as talking points in job interviews after commencement.” While applicants of all sorts of personality types are considered, O’Keefe said students who are fond

Captains also work events beyond WOW like Spring Weekend and Mega Weekend, according to O’Keefe. Fourth-semester psychology major Giovanni Lavado, a WOW captain for 2026, said when he was a leader last year, one of the captains inspired him. After students lost interest in an activity, the captain took it upon herself to be innovative and re-engage students. “One of the WOW captains was able to think outside the box and she combined... three groups together and we had this big ice breaker game,” Lavado said, describing how the decision helped more people get to know each other. “That moment represented what it meant to be a WOW captain.” One benefit of being a part of WOW that both O’Keefe and Lavado mentioned was feeling more familiar on campus. “You get to meet a lot more



Student wearing WOW t-shirts posing together for a photo outside the Student Union.

of the Storrs campus have higher chances to be hired. “I look for students who truly love the UConn campus. Someone who walks in the room knowing that they are about to make a positive impact on our incoming class of first year students,” O’Keefe said. “[T]hat doesn’t always mean that each student needs to be the most outgoing or loud.” WOW leader applicants are facing more competition than previous years after an increase in student participation, according to O’Keefe. One of O’Keefe’s favorite parts of coordinating the program was seeing how many siblings and family members become part of WOW. She mentioned how two captains of the upcoming Fall 2026 team are siblings of former captains. WOW captains assist in the WOW leader hiring, recruiting and interview process.

people, they have big events there,” Lavado said, pointing out one of the activities where students watched a movie by a bonfire. “If you’re an introvert, it’s good for coming out of your shell and connecting with people at the school.” As UConn experiences enrollment increases, Student Activities Associate Director Jess Gerum said she expects events to get bigger, which might make accommodating everyone difficult. “Finding space on our campus is a consistent challenge between construction and the increased number of students attending WOW,” Gerum said. One way WOW works around this challenge is by holding events outdoors to accommodate large numbers of students, Gerum said, but weather remains an unpredictable variable for outdoor venues.



Student wearing WOW t-shirts posing together for a photo outside the Student Union.

8 backcountry skiers found dead and 1 still missing after California avalanche

TRUCKEE, Calif. (AP) — Crews found the bodies of eight backcountry skiers near California’s Lake Tahoe and were searching for one more after they were caught in an avalanche, the nation’s deadliest in nearly half a century, authorities said Wednesday.

Authorities said the skiers had little time to react. “Someone saw the avalanche, yelled ‘Avalanche!’ and it overtook them rather quickly,” said Capt. Russell “Rusty” Greene, of the Nevada County sheriff’s office.

Six were rescued six hours after the avalanche hit Tuesday morning as they were concluding a three-day trek in Northern California’s Sierra Nevada during a monster winter storm. The tour included four guides, three of whom are presumed dead, authorities said.

The group was a mix of women and men between the ages of 30 and 55, authorities said. Some of the people killed were members of the Sugar Bowl Academy community, a private boarding school and ski and snowboard club on Donner Summit, according to the academy. School officials did not release the names of those killed or describe their connection to the academy.

Nevada County Sheriff Shannan Moon said investigators would look into the decision to proceed with the trip on Sunday despite the forecast. That morning at 6:49 a.m., the Sierra Avalanche Center issued an ava-

lanche watch, indicating that large avalanches were likely in the next 24 to 48 hours.

Hours before the avalanche hit, the center increased the watch to a warning, which means avalanches are expected. It’s unclear if the guides would have known about the change before they began their trek out of the wilderness.

With one person unaccounted for, authorities’ mission moved from rescuing people to recovering bodies, Moon said.

Authorities were waiting to release the victims’ names to give the families time. “They’re still reeling,” Moon said. “I could not imagine what they’re going through.”

The victims were found fairly close together, Greene said. The crews have not yet been able to remove the victims from the mountain because of the extreme conditions.

Three to 6 feet (91 centimeters to 1.8 meters) of snow has fallen since Sunday. The area was also hit by subfreezing temperatures and gale force winds. The Sierra Avalanche Center said the threat of more avalanches remained Wednesday and left the snowpack unstable and unpredictable in an area known for its steep, craggy cliffs.

Rescuers were guided by beacons and a cellphone in dangerous conditions

Rescuers reached the survivors just before sunset on Tuesday. The skiers all had beacons that can send signals to rescuers and at least one of the



Angel Tapi tries to install chains on his tires while stuck in the snow along interstate 80 during a storm Thursday, Feb. 19, 2026, near Camp Spaulding in Placer County, Calif.

(AP PHOTO/GODOFREDO A. VÁSQUEZ)

guides was able to send text messages, but it wasn’t clear if they were wearing avalanche bags, which are inflatable devices that can keep skiers near the surface, Greene said.

While they waited to be rescued, the survivors used equipment to shelter themselves and fend off temperatures dipping below freezing. They found three others who had died while they waited, Moon said.

Rescuers used a snowcat to get within 2 miles (3.2 ki-

lometers) of the survivors, then skied in carefully so they didn’t set off another avalanche, the sheriff said.

One of those rescued remained hospitalized Wednesday, Moon said.

The area near Donner Summit is one of the snowiest places in the Western Hemisphere and until just a few years ago was closed to the public. It sees an average of nearly 35 feet (10.6 meters) of snow a year, according to the Truckee Donner Land Trust, which owns a cluster of huts where the group was staying near Frog Lake.

The avalanche is the deadliest in the U.S. since 1981, when 11 climbers were killed on Mount Rainier in Washington state. Each winter, 25 to 30 people die in avalanches in the U.S., according to the National Avalanche Center.

It was the second deadly avalanche near California’s Castle Peak this year, after a snowmobiler was buried by one in January.

Skiers were heading for the trailhead when the avalanche struck

Greene said authorities were notified about the avalanche by Blackbird Mountain Guides, which was leading the expedition, and the skiers’ emergency beacons. The sheriff’s office said Tuesday night that 15 backcountry skiers had been on the trip, not 16 as initially believed.

One skier had pulled out at the last minute, Moon said.

The skiers were on the last day of the backcountry trip and had spent two nights in huts, said Steve Reynaud, an avalanche forecaster with the Sierra Avalanche Center.

Reaching the huts in winter takes several hours and requires backcountry skills, avalanche training and safety equipment. Blackbird said the tour was for intermediate-to-expert skiers.

The area near Donner Summit was closed for nearly a century before it was reopened by the Truckee Donner Land Trust and its partners in 2020. Donner Summit is named for the infamous Donner Party, a group of pioneers who resorted to cannibalism after getting trapped there in the winter of 1846-1847.

When asked what went through her mind as her staff and volunteers responded to the scene, Moon said she was hoping they would be able to make it there safely. Once they did, she said she was “immediately thinking of the folks that didn’t make it, and knowing our mission now is to get them home.”

Watson reported from San Diego and Seewer from Toledo, Ohio. Associated Press writers Christopher Weber in Los Angeles, Trần Nguyen in Sacramento and Hallie Golden in Seattle contributed to this report.



A map showing the location of an avalanche in California.

AP DIGITAL EMBED

The Daily Campus

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Daily Crossword

- ACROSS**
- 1 “Catastrophe” writer/star Delaney
- 4 Power unit
- 8 School assignment
- 13 Filter target
- 15 2025 Pixar film about a boy who meets aliens
- 16 Hollers
- 17 Nix
- 18 Big pig
- 19 Windows shopping
- 20 *Aircraft marshaling?
- 23 Grammy winner Baker
- 24 Thus far
- 25 Lara Croft target
- 27 Taoism founder
- 31 Couch surfer’s spot
- 34 *Lifeguarding?
- 37 Ore. neighbor
- 38 Pressed sandwich that’s part of a friendly rivalry between Miami and Tampa
- 39 Quaint quarters
- 40 *Bounty hunting?
- 43 Accordion-heavy music
- 45 Latin for “as originally positioned”
- 46 One on the Mohs scale
- 48 Spills the beans
- 51 “Let’s maybe take it down a ___ or two”
- 54 Advice to a problem solver, or an apt description of the answers to the starred clues
- 57 Country singer Rimes
- 59 Lemon-shaped
- 60 Choose yea or nay
- 61 Bright and airy courtyards
- 62 Relocate
- 63 Icicle locale
- 64 Streisand film with the song “The Way He Makes Me Feel”
- 65 Imp
- 66 Scolding sound

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11	12
13			14		15				16				
17					18				19				
20				21					22				
	23					24							
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31	32	33				34	35	36					
37					38						39		
40			41	42					43	44			
45								46	47				
			48			49	50		51		52	53	
		54					55						56
57	58					59				60			
61						62				63			
64						65					66		

By Benjamin Panico

2/20/26

- DOWN**
- 1 Choose yes or no
- 2 Place for binoculars
- 3 Track and field handout
- 4 Zoom lens?
- 5 Bundles
- 6 Quinceañera crown
- 7 Doughnut shape
- 8 Monocle, for one
- 9 Put on
- 10 “You ___ me!”
- 11 Actor Mahershala
- 12 Fashion monogram
- 14 Cocktail garnished with mint
- 21 ___ collar
- 22 Synthetic fabric
- 26 Fuzzy memory
- 28 Slog away
- 29 Pass (out)
- 30 Fibula counterpart
- 31 Pacific nation that exports water
- 32 Nagoya noodles
- 33 Pop-top tops
- 35 Pre-K sequence
- 36 Thai coin

Thursday’s Puzzle Solved

A	L	D	E	R		S	L	A	P		I	S	L	E	T
S	H	E	R	A		Z	O	N	E		S	U	E	M	E
S	A	B	R	I	N	A	C	A	R	P	E	N	T	E	R
A	S	I	A	N	A						E	E	R	I	E
M	A	T	T			S	L	E	E	V	E		I	T	T
			C	U	T	T	I	N	G	C	L	A	S	S	
U	M	A	M	I		M	O	O	R		D	E	L	T	A
P	A	R		P	R	E				S	P	A	I	O	N
S	E	D	A	T	E					S	N	A	P	P	Y
			F	O	S	T	E	R	F	A	I	L			
	S	A	F	E		A	G	U	A		A	L	P	S	
I	N	C	A			G	L	A	N	C	E		O	R	C
D	O	U	B	L	E	E	D	G	E	D	S	W	O	R	D
O	U	T	L	E	T	S				D	E	F	I	N	E
S	T	E	E	D	S					N	O	N	E	W	S

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2/20/26

- 38 Sealing substance
- 41 “Happy Days” retort
- 42 Everlasting
- 43 Bulldoze
- 44 Interval of eight notes
- 47 Jewelry often worn with sandals
- 49 Relationship-deepening word, informally
- 50 Really relish
- 52 Slovenian neighbor
- 53 Man cave fixtures
- 54 Alert
- 55 Vena ___: major blood line
- 56 Switch roles after hiding
- 57 ___ of the land
- 58 Beach season in Marseille

and Sudoku

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

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

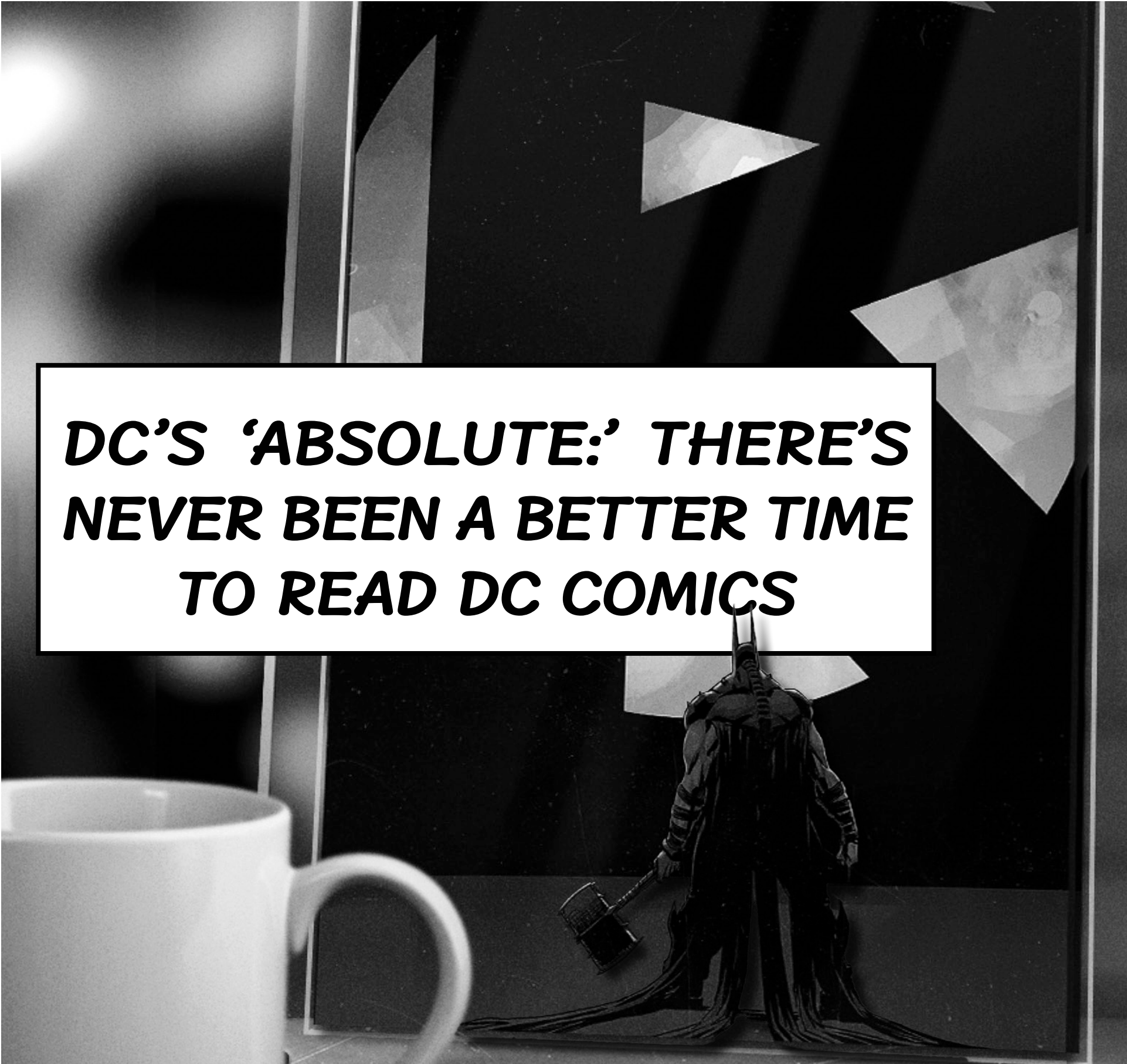
Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 box (in bold borders) contains every digit from 1 to 9. For strategies on solving Sudoku, visit [sudoku.org.uk](https://www.sudoku.org.uk).

Solution to Thursday’s puzzle

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

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DC’S ‘ABSOLUTE:’ THERE’S NEVER BEEN A BETTER TIME TO READ DC COMICS

The cover for Absolute Batman Issue #20. The Absolute Universe comic line is reprinting this year.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @DCCOMICS ON INSTAGRAM

by Samantha Brody
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After the runaway success of the brand-new “Absolute Universe” line of DC Comics, the company has announced a rare move: comic reprints. While reprints aren’t unheard of, it’s fairly uncommon for single issues, especially when the comics in question were only printed at most two years ago.

The Absolute Universe line, as the comics are collectively referred to, is a series of comics focused around highly popular, mainline DC heroes: Batman, Wonder Woman, Superman and more. However, instead of walking down a well-trod path of superhero backstories and story arcs, the Absolute line places the heroes into a grittier, dirtier, more vicious world, featuring some of the most horrifying villains ever put to page.

“Absolute Batman” kicked off the new line with “The Zoo,” a five-part epic detailing a darker Gotham City. In this series, Bruce Wayne’s mother is still alive, but his father, a teacher, was killed during a mass shooting at the Gotham Zoo, which Bruce escaped by hiding in a literal bat cave exhibit.

Bruce is, noticeably, no longer rich in the Absolute

line. He has a mind naturally suited for engineering but also excels in a variety of other subjects. By day, he is a construction worker, and by night, he’s a towering figure at over six feet tall, wielding a massive hammer, and going by the name Batman.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the Absolute Universe line had sold over 8.2 million units by the end of November 2025, just over a year since the line first launched. This is an astonishing number by all accounts — the comic industry hasn’t seen massive success since the Golden Age of comics in the 1940s.

Marvel, DC and now Image have been duking it out for the top spot for many years, but the Absolute Line seems to be securing the crown for DC — if only for what could be a very short time. Furthermore, the revitalized DC Cinematic Universe seems to be opening the door for new fans to enter the franchise.

With DC now seeing a monumental rise in sales thanks to the Absolute Universe, and with the recently announced reprints of the line, one question remains: Which comics are worth reading?

Thanks to the reprints, all of DC’s newest universe will be readily available for consumers in March. If the

line intrigues you at all, my personal recommendation must be “Absolute Batman.”

Batman is a tried-and-true staple of DC, but after so many years of the character acting as the main figure of DC, it’s easy to get tired of him. “Absolute Batman” is a fresh take on the character that brings in new ideas and concepts while remaining faithful to the true meaning of the character. Additionally, the book doesn’t treat the reader like a Batman veteran — the series is accessible for both new and returning fans.

“The Zoo” is also simply a perfect opener for the Batman character. This volume is short but memorable, with plenty of references to various parts of the Batman mythos. And with the cover of issue #20 hinting that Batman may finally find himself an “Absolute Robin,” it seems things are only looking up. Give the first issue a try; it’s impossible to hate.

Batman-related ravings aside, I also recommend “Absolute Wonder Woman.” While “Absolute Batman” places rich-boy Bruce Wayne in a world without the vast resources of the Wayne estate, “Absolute Wonder Woman” depicts a Diana Prince who grew up in hell, not the sunny beaches of Themyscira.

The re-vamped Diana

Prince is a force to be reckoned with, character-wise. Her bolder, tougher persona is a fresh take on the character and a welcome sight. Keep an eye out for both Diana and Bruce this March!

If you’re more interested in starting something fresh instead of catching up on the current comic landscape, it’s best to keep an eye on comic stores when May arrives. “Absolute Green Arrow” will finally hit the shelves that month, followed by the long-awaited “Absolute Catwoman” in June. If Catwoman’s depiction in “Absolute Batman” is anything to go off of, the new book should be a wild ride.

I also recommend taking a look at “Supergirl: Woman of Tomorrow,” written by Tom King and illustrated by Bilquis Evely. The Supergirl movie coming out this summer is based on King and Evely’s 2022 book, and it’s highly regarded as one of the best Supergirl comics out there.

“Supergirl: Woman of Tomorrow” does a lot of legwork to fully separate Kara Zor-El from Clark Kent, also known as Kal-El. Kara is depicted as angrier, more troubled and certainly more intense than Clark, which makes her a very compelling character. You can find it on Amazon if you’re interested.



The issue #1 cover of Batman (2025). Batman was relaunched with a new number one issue for the first time in 85 years. PHOTO COURTESY OF @BATMAN ON INSTAGRAM



Variant cover for “Absolute Wonder Woman” #17 by Mattia De Iulio. The “Absolute Wonder Woman” line features a grittier take on the Wonder Woman character. PHOTO COURTESY OF @MATTART91 ON INSTAGRAM

Slavery Reparations In The US: How can it be done?



Students listen to Dr. Thomas Craemer talk on slavery reparations at the African American Cultural Center in Storrs, Conn., On Feb. 19, 2026.
PHOTOS BY PARKER MEYERS, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

by **Elijah Polance**
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A University of Connecticut professor and reparations expert spoke to the African American Cultural Center (AACC) about his research on U.S. reparations for slavery on Wednesday.

Dr. Thomas Craemer is a professor of public policy at UConn. He began his lecture by explaining where — as someone born and raised in Germany — his interest in U.S. slavery reparations began. He said he learned about the Holocaust extensively in high school, which filled him with shame.

Craemer said when he got older, he met Miecú Langer, a Jewish man who survived five concentration camps and a death march. Despite the horrors Langer withstood, he returned to Germany and benefited from a monthly pension equivalent to \$2,500 in 2022. Craemer said he could not believe Langer would return to Germany, but his pension made him curious about quantifying extreme loss.

“There is no amount that can actually represent his losses,” Craemer said. “What price tag

do you put on losing your entire extended family? When your loved ones and your own life and suffering and your health, no price. But it’s a gesture.”

From this, Craemer said he determined that reparations “can’t repair the past,” but if done correctly, they can “repair the relationship between the victimized side and the perpetrator side.” He identified specific elements that he thought reparations required to be successful.

Craemer determined that first, any injustices must cease with a promise to never resume them. Then, a formal apology must be made, one made credible with a “token of sincerity.”

Craemer said this token, which can be monetary, should mean something to whoever’s receiving reparations. He said the final element was establishing a “culture of memory,” which ensures the injustices stay talked about through things like education, dialogue, research, museums and more.

Afterward, Craemer gave an overview of historical reparation efforts, which were often imposed after wars, like Germany and its allies paying other countries after World War I. But after World War II, repara-

tions for human rights abuses became more common, notably with Germany’s self-imposed reparations to Holocaust victims. Craemer highlighted that the U.S. also began engaging in reparation efforts by compensating Indigenous Americans and Japanese Americans who were impacted by internment camps, though not until 1988.

Craemer then narrowed in on specific reparation efforts made in the U.S. because of slavery. He started with George Washington’s decision to free his slaves in his will and called it a “naive idea” that never caught on. Craemer said the first relevant example was “40 acres and a mule,” a promise made during the Civil War that would redistribute Confederate land to freed slaves but got overturned by President Andrew Johnson.

More recently, some places, like the state of California and Georgetown University, have made active efforts toward reparations, Craemer said. However, the federal government has not acted. Craemer said a bill about reparations has been introduced to Congress every year since 1989 but never passed.

“It’s a double standard,”

Craemer said. “Why are African American reparations not treated with the same urgency as other reparations?”

Much of Craemer’s reparation work focuses on how to calculate financial losses for reparations. He broke these cost areas down into four categories: lost wages, lost capital, loss of opportunity for capital and pain and suffering.

To calculate the economic losses, Craemer converted past wage prices to their equivalent in 2022 dollars and factored in a 24-hour workday for slaves. To calculate pain and suffering, Craemer said he multiplied the economic loss by 1.5, though he said other estimates sometimes multiply by five instead. By compiling the total number of slaves between 1776 and 1860, Craemer calculated a total loss cost of \$71.3 quadrillion.

“That’s astronomical,” Craemer said. “But that’s not just a made-up number, that comes from the hours that were lost.”

Craemer said the ripple effects of slavery and subsequent racism in the U.S. could justify reparations for African Americans for other losses, like health and education disparities, mass incarceration,

redlining and the war on drugs.

The talk ended with some logistical questions to keep in mind when it comes to slavery reparations. Craemer said it can be complicated to determine who should pay, as it could be the federal government, state governments, descendants of slaveowners or others who benefited from slave labor historically most directly.

Angela Adu-Boateng, a fourth-semester biology major who works at the AACC, said she was surprised by how Craemer’s reparation model took into account conditions like pain and suffering.

“It went beyond just the labor aspect and was inclusive of experiences that can’t necessarily be quantified,” Adu-Boateng said.

The event was organized by Eric Meade, a second-semester graduate student studying public administration. He said he is helping Craemer, who is his advisor, with a book about slavery reparations research.

“It’s the 100th year anniversary of Black History Month, so it would be cool to show reparation studies and put it at the forefront of minds,” Meade said. “A lot of people aren’t too knowledgeable about that.”



Joe La Puma talks career evolution and consistency



Joe La Puma speaks to students during a journalism class in Herbst Hall on Feb. 19. La Puma is known as the host of Complex’s “Sneaker Shopping” where he interviews athletes and entertainers. PHOTO BY OLIVIA DICKSON, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS



Joe La Puma poses next to Kim Kardashian. La Puma is known as the host of Complex’s “Sneaker Shopping” where he interviews athletes and entertainers. PHOTO COURTESY OF @JLP ON INSTAGRAM

by Thaddeus Sawyer
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Content creator and University of Connecticut Alum Joe La Puma came to UConn yesterday to talk about the evolution of his career and give advice to young journalism students. La Puma is the creator and host of the YouTube show “Sneaker Shopping,” which has received over 1 billion views. His interviews have ranged from pop culture icons like Kim Kardashian to political figures like Kamala Harris. He is also the content strategy director for youth culture website Complex. LaPuma, who graduated from UConn in 2005, spoke to Professor Mike Stanton’s Sports Reporting class, with others from the journalism department also in attendance. “We always talk to you as teachers that you’re building the bridge to the future of journalism, which is constantly being reinvented,”

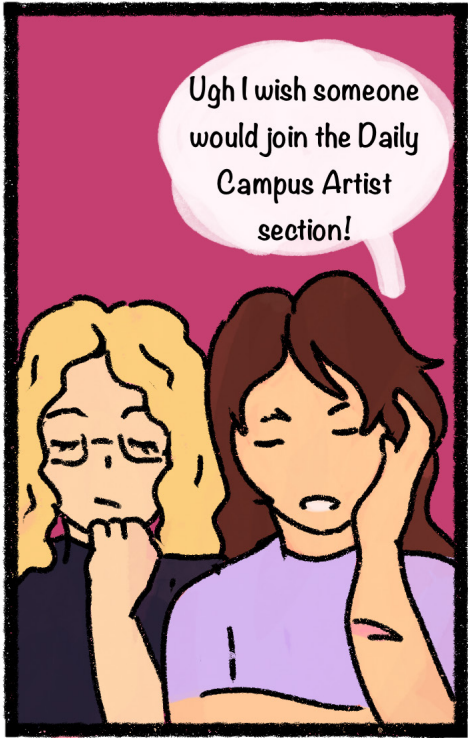
Stanton said. “Joe’s show on YouTube, I think YouTube just started the year [he] graduated from UConn. So journalism today is about storytelling, the eternal truth, but it’s also about reinventing yourself.” La Puma talked about the ways that he went about reinventing himself early in his career. While at UConn, he wrote about pop culture, fashion and did album reviews for The Daily Campus. After graduating, La Puma eventually found an internship with Complex magazine, which he had begun reading while in college. “I remember going into the city, and I go into the interview and there’s a stack of resumes,” La Puma said. “They weren’t hiding how competitive it was going to be.” Though La Puma didn’t expect to land the internship, he soon found himself commuting by train twice a week to his unpaid gig with Complex. He was also working 50 hours a week as the manager

of a shoe store to pay his bills. “I loved it,” La Puma said. After a year and a half, La Puma was hired full time to work on their website, which Complex felt was “going to be a big thing,” La Puma said. “I didn’t tell them this,” La Puma said. “I was like, ‘I really wish I could get hired for the magazine,’ but anything to get my foot in the door and leave the sneaker store.” La Puma eventually received that chance when he got to fill in for an interview with Tracy Morgan and Christopher Mintz-Plasse. “I got Perez Hilton quote of the day,” La Puma said. “Perez Hilton was like TMZ, the only game in town. You got on Perez Hilton, it was getting like a full post on TMZ now.” La Puma went on to pen 21 cover stories in print, the most anyone has done for Complex, he said. Though he was initially given a goal of 3,000 unique viewers per day on the website so that Complex could sell ads, he helped to build the audience

to tens of millions of monthly visitors. The next step in his evolution was video. “The publishing industry kind of is like, ‘yeah, the online thing is cool, but now people want to do video,’” La Puma said. “It’s like, okay, so we went from print to online and now we have to figure out video.” One of La Puma’s early videos of himself sneaker shopping with rapper Jim Jones was eventually adapted into “Sneaker Shopping.” “There’s old episodes online and I’m just standing there hosting and the celebrity’s talking and I’m not,” La Puma said. “I had no formal training. I’m just like a statue. And now I’m a lot more jumpier.” The series, which now has over 300 episodes, features celebrities appealing to all sides of pop culture. La Puma said that he pushes back on the notion that you have to be a sneakerhead to fit in on his show. “I could do episodes with

everyone in here, 100%,” La Puma said. “We can get eight to 10 minutes on YouTube. Trust me, just by asking, ‘do you remember your first pair? What was the worst pair you had? What is your current rotation at college? It’s snowing out. Do you wear [Timberland boots]? Do you wear Uggs?’ I can get eight to 10 minutes, no matter who it is.” For La Puma, the takeaway from his journey is the consistency that was required for him to get to where he is today. “When I walked into the dining halls and I saw someone reading the first article I did, it was just such a rewarding feeling that I wanted to chase over and over again,” La Puma said in an interview following the talk. “It’s still with my show that I want to chase people consuming content. It’s just a feeling that, to this day, I want to chase, and it stems from the passion of loving what I’m doing, having some sort of audience react to it and have a feeling about it and then just being consistent.”

comic by Jason J. Sampson, contributing artist/The Daily Campus



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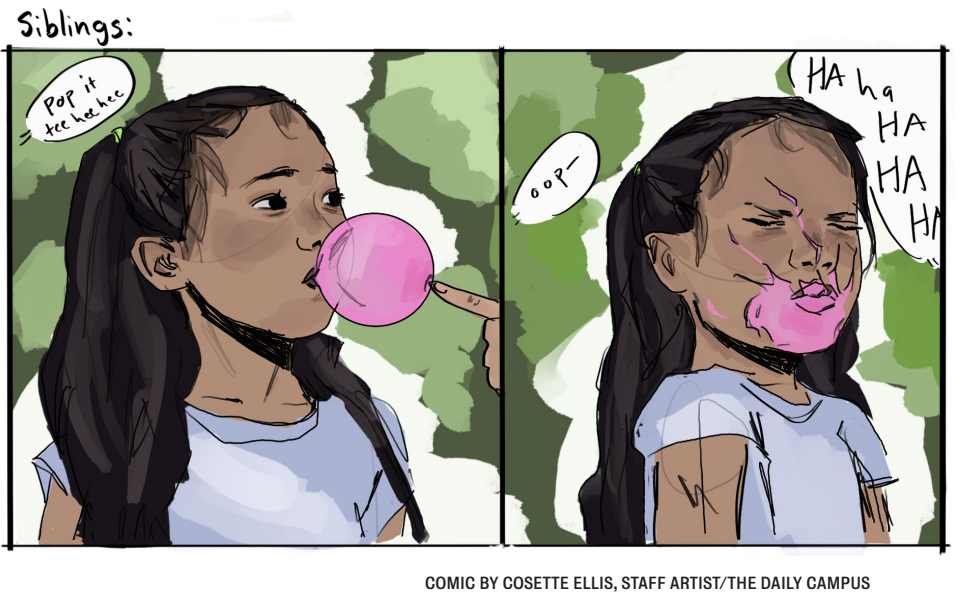
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UConn should do more to protect against ICE

by Nadav Asal
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Last week, students, faculty and staff received a one-sentence long official announcement titled, “Guidance on Potential Interactions with Immigrations Authorities” directing community members to a UConnToday article published that same day. The article is similarly brief, centered around a single infographic providing three simple steps should anyone encounter federal immigration authorities (ICE) on University of Connecticut campuses.

When encountering federal immigration authorities, the UConn administration recommends that UConn community members politely inform the agent that they are required to contact University Safety and kindly ask them to wait while they then call the safety number, which is the same phone number as the UConn police department’s standard dispatch phone number.

This announcement is the most recent codification of UConn’s half-baked, milque-toast policy to protect its campus community. Petrified by the mere possibility of federal retribution, the university has decided its best course of action is to throw its students, staff and faculty to the wolves, adhering to the idea that the “line of neutrality” is one that does anything other than push threat into the hands of those at risk and not the institution that should be protecting them.

As seen from its extreme violence nationwide, Immigration and Customs Enforcement encounters are often quick and chaotic. Their common practices do not include waiting for their targets to make a phone call. Agents are trained to assume their targets are dangerous “terrorists,” according to the federal government. In video evidence of ICE abductions, agents display a clear hostility towards those brandishing phones. In the case of Alex

Pretti this hostility resulted in murder.

It is ridiculous to ask those under threat of violence by a federal agent directed to ignore federal warrants to ask their attackers to politely wait for them to place a call. These policies are even more ridiculous for a campus that is home to The Dodd Center for Human Rights; established in honor of Thomas J. Dodd’s dogged pursuit of human rights in the wake of the Holocaust. I cannot imagine that Dodd would be enthused by UConn’s current approach. Would we ask Jewish people in Nazi Germany to ask for the SS to wait patiently while they informed their families, superiors, what-have-you of their impending abduction?

The UConn administration’s response to this exigent crisis has been far too little, far too late.

University administration refuses to identify private spaces on campus, saying that doing so would be impossible, yet in 2024 the administration had no issue with clarifying that an open air encampment was taking place on private property, using this as justification for the arrest of 25 students with the very same police force that UConn directs those at risk to contact in case of immigration enforcement’s arrival. The incompetence and administrative negligence is astonishing.

The university administration is more interested in protecting its financial investments than they are in protecting the very thing that keeps this institution standing: faculty, staff and students. An institution built on the good graces of faculty, staff and students does a grave disservice when they do not protect those very same people who allow it to flourish.

A firm stance with students, faculty and staff would be just the kind of “good press” that UConn craves; to take a stance and put their foot down against a tyrannical injustice circling ever closer, with ICE abductions

as close as Willimantic, Windham, and Eastford. The time for a firmer stance was yesterday. Yet university administration is paralyzed by their fear of retribution, a self-indulgent fear. Tyrannical federal authorities have larger things to contend with than the opinion of a flagship university in a blue state. Federal grants for research have already been cut. Visas for international students have already been revoked. There is nothing left to lose but dignity, and the UConn administration has misplaced even that in their mishandling of this situation.

The past year has made it more than clear that the UConn Administration is not interested in protecting its community; only lining its pockets. As residence halls fall into disrepair and class sizes swell, UConn has shown where its priorities lie: in achieving another “largest freshman class ever.”

With a backdrop of betrayal, outrage is only understandable, but outrage will not fix the problems UConn ignores. It is up to the people to stand with the people; to demand that the university take responsibility for those it employs and educates. If that plea is ignored, like it so often is, the power will lay where it always has, with the people.

We, the people, can identify private and public spaces on campus. We, the people, can form communities of solidarity and protection for those most at risk. We, the people, can identify ICE. We the people can impede their tyranny on our campuses. We, the people, keep us safe.

Nadav Asal is a 6th semester majoring in Digital Media and Design: Film and Video Production

Tomas Hinckley, the opinion editor at The Daily Campus is a member of one of the organizations that assembled the petition; however, he did not edit or fact check the article

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UConn students study in the Auriemma Reading Room in Homer Babbidge Library in Storrs, Conn. on Feb. 18, 2026.. PHOTO BY SYDNEY CHANDLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

BLM To ICE: Lessons in abolitionist organizing

by **Tomas Hinckley**
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It is quite clear that America is currently in a crisis. As federal immigration efforts have escalated racialized violence across the country, many Americans are confronting very uncomfortable realities for the first time. Instead of simply appearing in online videos and news articles, more people are interacting with state violence on a personal level. In response, communities across the country have taken to the streets in protest, largely starting in cities like Minneapolis and growing outwards in solidarity.

In this context, an incredible shift has occurred. Whereas in 2024 a significant majority of Americans wanted stronger enforcement efforts, YouGov polls now show that 46% support abolishing ICE. This rise in popular dissent against law enforcement and calls for abolition sharply resembles Black Lives Matter, 2020-era politics. However, even by those standards, these are unprecedented numbers — in June 2020 only 31% of Americans supported the much lower bar of simply “defunding” police.

The opportunity now presented to grassroots organizers is incredible, but not without its dangers as well. To push the needle and not let this effort fall into obsolescence, a critical eye must be taken to previous abolitionist movements — especially BLM — so that those rallying against ICE do not repeat past mistakes.

In 2024, two researchers from

Oxford University tried to examine the material impact of the BLM movement across America. They found very simply that the movement did not create decreases in police budgets in the vast majority of the 264 major cities analyzed, and actually led to many increases in Republican-led areas. Although there were still many positive outcomes which came from the organization and collective action developed during this time, the ultimate policy goal was clearly not achieved.

It’s a reality that is hard to fathom, given that between 15 to 26 million people were involved in BLM protests during the summer of 2020, according to the New York Times. So, what went wrong? And what do we learn from it? There are two key takeaways.

As the seasons changed and the red-hot summer of 2020 turned to autumn, Democrats began to go full tilt on their efforts for the presidential election. A significant part of their strategy was utilizing the incredible anger over racial tensions to position themselves favorably against the beligerently racist Republican party. They showed off Senator Chuck Schumer and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi kneeling in Kente cloths, tugging on sympathies and pushing energy from the streets into the ballot box.

Yet, in private they disparaged the movement, with some saying it was “killing the party” and alienating moderate voters. Instead of fully embracing the movements’ de-

mands, they relied on old strategies of trying to quietly diffuse dissent and cut momentum that would threaten their position. Then the election passes, the Democrats see record voter turnout in their victory and the new President Joe Biden increases police budgets across the country by billions of dollars. It was a complete betrayal of everything the movement stood for.

Now, ICE abolitionists face a similar situa-



tion. As midterm elections approach, it’s clear that the party machine is already attempting to shift momentum into electoral efforts. An op-ed was just published in USAToday by a long-time federal prosecutor, arguing that “Abolishing [ICE] won’t bring justice... That said, a midterm blue wave would bring accountability.” This so-called accountability will most likely take the form of bodycams, extra trainings and increased funding, the same tired strategies which entirely failed to address

police violence. To avoid this co-optation, communities must reject the allure of being dragged into electoral efforts by the Democratic Party.

The second warning is deeply tied to the first, for it is not just the Democratic which tricked communities in 2020, but movement “leaders” themselves.

When the ideas behind BLM took off in 2020, the official nonprofit organization behind it, Black Lives Matter Global Network (BLMGN), became the subject of incredible international attention. The central organization, despite not being the people doing the groundwork and deep community organizing to drive the movement, was the force that shaped its narrative. Leaders focused on media work and elite-level politics, disparaging radical action from their supporters and trying to keep a clean face.

The connection it had to its chapters, as reported by many former organizers, was incredibly undemocratic and murky. This resulted in a break between the central nonprofit and some of its largest regional organizers, who would go on to be known as the BLMio. The cause? It was revealed that BLMGN had raised over 90 million dollars in 2020, none of which was sent down to support its local chapters and help them build communities. Instead, it was slipped into the pockets of the Democratic machine through a secret BLM PAC. They had willingly sacrificed their own movement on the elec-

toral altar, leaving it to die slowly without energy, money or support once the push to elect Biden was over.

A movement’s strength is in the grassroots. Across the country, communities are coming together to protect each other from ICE without the need for motivation from nonprofits or name brands. The goal of official “Organizations” in this area must be to support the natural level of self-organization that occurs between families, neighborhoods and people. This is not to say that added structure and analysis from experienced political activists cannot help develop a struggle, but democracy and accountability to those who are on the ground must be central.

If the new actors of the current moment are able to synthesize these lessons into a better way of fighting back, the potential for positive change is high. The abolition of ICE can and will serve as a catalyst for a new type of politics which looks past what exists and towards something new. As this still nascent effort grows, these lessons must provide hope that this end is possible; the point of analyzing previous failures is not to lament. Mistakes and failures have never stopped liberation movements, only slowed them down. There is a collective responsibility and opportunity to face them honestly and learn, as Malcolm X recognized in his quote: “Every defeat, every heartbreak, every loss, contains its own seed, its own lesson on how to improve your performance next time.”

Husky Talks

What's your biggest hot take?

“People should never cook with their puke bowls!”
(Photographers note: “huh?”)

KELLY GARCIA
PSYCHOLOGY AND SPANISH
4TH SEMESTER

“Walking is better than taking the bus, even if it’s -5 out.”

THATCHER KLING
DIGITAL MEDIA AND DESIGN
2ND SEMESTER

“Morgan Wallen sounds like nails on a chalkboard if the nails were boulders.”

AVA GUTTERSEN
PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES AND
DIGITAL MEDIA & DESIGN
2ND YEAR

“Blueberry’s are disgusting and all blueberry factories need to be blown up.”

MILO DIAMOND
POLITICAL SCIENCE
2ND YEAR

Men’s Hockey: UConn to face Boston College in Hockey East matchup

by Nicole Caruso
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The No.10 UConn men’s hockey team (17-7-4, 11-5-2) is set to take on the No. 12 Boston College Eagles (17-10-1, 11-7-0) in a two-game matchup this weekend.

Heading into Friday’s game, Connecticut is coming off a shootout victory against the University of Maine last week-end. Boston College is also entering the matchup having just won their latest game against Merrimack 4-2.

The Eagles also recently won the 2026 Beanpot Championship, defeating the reigning champions, Boston University, 6-2. This is the first time since 2016 that the Eagles took home the championship, ending a 10-year drought.

The Men’s Beanpot Championship, played at TD Garden in Boston, Mass., each year consists of Boston College, Boston University, Harvard



UConn men’s hockey faces Ohio State on Oct. 18, 2025, at PeoplesBank Arena in Hartford, Conn. The Huskies lost 4-2 to the Buckeyes. PHOTO BY SARAH TURNER, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

University and Northeastern University.

UConn and Boston College last faced off against one another on Dec. 4, 2024, with the Eagles taking home a 2-1 win.

Boston College currently holds a 19-8-2 record over UConn, who has struggled in previous seasons to net goals.

Junior forward Joey Muldowney currently leads the Huskies in goals scored (15) while also contributing 9 assists throughout the season so far. Senior forward Ryan Tattle leads the team in points (26), many of which are assists (16).

UConn’s starting goaltender Tyler Muszelik is a force in the net with a .935 save percentage. Muszelik was named the Hockey East Goaltender of the week on Feb. 15 after his dominant performance in the week-end series against Maine.

During that week, Muszelik had 82 total saves with a .965 save percentage. The Florida Panthers draft pick is having an impressive senior season so far with a lot more hockey left to be played this season.

Looking towards the Eagles’ roster, one of the Boston Bruins’ top prospects is sophomore forward James Hagen. Hagen currently leads the team in points (34) and tied with goals scored (17) along with fellow teammate and Bruins draft pick Dean Letourneau. The 6-foot-7 forward is a strong offensive player who contributed significantly to the Eagles’ Beanpot Championship win.

In Hockey East Standings, UConn sits in second place (36 points) and right behind them are the Eagles with 34 points. This weekend series is crucial for UConn, as Boston College has the chance to top them in the rankings. These games against Boston College will allow UConn to push themselves with their regular season in its final stretch.

UConn will head to Chestnut Hill to face the Eagles at home on Friday with puck drop set for 7 p.m. UConn will have the home advantage on Saturday with an afternoon game at PeoplesBank Arena set for 3 p.m. Fans can tune in to ESPN+ to watch both games.

AVA’S ANGLE: WINTER OLYMPICS VS SUMMER OLYMPICS

by Ava Inesta
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Keeping up with the Olympics is a popular occurrence for people worldwide. Some even travel lengths to watch the competition in person. However, the real question is would fans rather be bundled up head to toe in snow gear in the winter or watch the games with the sun shining on a hot day in the summer? Is the Winter Olympics or Summer Olympics more popular?

The Summer Olympics have been a consistent sporting event across the world since the 1896 Athens Games. The first Winter Olympics were held in 1924 in Chamonix, France. Since the start, both games have been a staple in most sports fans’ lives every two years.

Starting with the Beijing Olympics in 2008, the Summer Olympics has since averaged 3 billion worldwide in TV viewership. The most recent peak was in 2012 at the London games with 3.6 billion viewers. But for the Winter Games, the viewership looks a little different. The past four Winter Games have averaged near 1.9 billion total viewers across the globe. The recent peak was in 2014 with 2.1 billion viewers at Sochi.

There are various reasons for the difference in TV viewership for the Olympic games. The Summer Olympics has more sports with 329 total events. By contrast, the current Winter Olympics in Milano Cortina, Italy only has 15 sports with 116 events. The sheer number of events gives the Summer Olympics an easier chance of engaging a larger audience as there is more to watch.

The Summer Olympics has also been constantly adding new sports to its lineup. For the 2024 Paris Olympics: sport climbing, surfing, skateboarding and even breakdancing were all added to the games.

For the upcoming 2028 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, more popular team sports are being added including baseball, softball, flag football, lacrosse, cricket and squash. These new sports that are joining the 2028 games also bring in some of the biggest professional leagues worldwide with the NFL, MLB, Pre-



Marianne Fatton at the 2026 Winter Olympics. She won gold in Ski Mountaineering. PHOTO COURTESY OF @OLYMPICS ON INSTAGRAM

mier Lacrosse League, Indian Premier League and the Premier Squash League.

The 2002 games in Salt Lake City, Utah was the last time since a new sport was added to the Winter Olympics with skeleton. However, ski mountaineering was added as an optional sport in 2021 and will make an appearance this year in 2026 at Milan for the first time ever.

The sports that get the most attention during the Winter Olympics are less popular and watched less outside of the games. The most popular winter sport is hockey, with professional leagues across the world. The National Hockey League (NHL) is the largest league with a yearly revenue of \$5.93 billion. Hockey is a large attraction to the Winter Olympics, especially when fans get to see their favorite NHL stars represent the USA or whichever country of their origin. Similar to when fans get to follow along with the top NBA stars playing for the USA team in the Summer Olympics. Steph Curry, LeBron James, Jayson Tatum, Anthony Edwards, all the NBA’s biggest faces. All of the new sports being added to the Olympics in addition to

long-time favorites make all the summer and winter games full of anticipation for all parties following along.

Both the Summer and Winter Olympic games include some of the biggest names in sports, there’s no denying that. The summer has Michael Phelps (swimming), Simone Biles (gymnastics), Katie Ledecky (swimming), Usain Bolt (track and field), etc. The winter has Shaun White (snowboarding), Lindsey Vonn (alpine skiing), Chloe Kim (snowboarding), Elana Meyers Taylor (bobsled), Alysa Liu (figure skating) and more. Without comparison, these star-studded names help fuel the brand image of the games and the fan initiative to tune in.

While both the Summer and Winter Olympics showcase elite athletes and unforgettable golden moments, the summer games typically attract a larger global audience. Overall, both season’s games have plentiful events, expanded sport offerings and widespread connections to professional leagues with headline athlete names. No matter the season, the Olympic spirit continues to be a staple that unites fans across the globe.

Tyler’s Take: Top 2026 offensive free agents

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With the 2025-2026 NFL season officially over, franchises will now need to come to terms with players whose contracts are expiring.

When it comes to making a decision, players can either leave for free agency or resign with their respective teams.

If a long-term deal does not happen, general managers can use a non-exclusive or exclusive franchise tag. When tagged, the player is under a one-year guaranteed contract, a salary that is the average of the top five at the position, or 120% of the player’s previous salary, whichever is greater.

In a non-exclusive tag, the player can negotiate with other franchises. If a deal is finalized, the former team has the right to match the offer. Compared to an exclusive tag, the player cannot talk to other squads.

With that being said, in this week’s edition of Tyler’s Take, I discuss the top offensive free agents.

George Pickens, Wide Receiver, Dallas Cowboys:

Over the 2025 offseason, the Pittsburgh Steelers renovated their roster and decided to move on from Pickens.

On May 7, the Steelers sent the former Georgia Bulldog to the Cowboys for a 2026 third-round and 2027 fifth-round draft pick.

While with the Steelers, Pickens never flourished as a true wide receiver one due to the franchise never finding the right quarterback. However, the 24-year-old reached his full potential with veteran gunslinger Dak Prescott.

In the Alabama native’s first year with the Cowboys, Pickens racked up a career-high 1,429 receiving yards for nine touchdowns. By the end of the 2025-2026 campaign, the wideout finished with the third-most receiving yards.

Not to mention, star receiver CeeDee Lamb suffered a high ankle sprain in Week 3 versus the Chicago Bears, which sidelined him for three games.

During this time, Pickens did not disappoint as he totaled 359 receiving yards for four endzone appearances.

As of now, it is expected that the Cowboys will apply the franchise tag to Pickens, but if not, it should come as no surprise to see him leave the market quickly.

Kenneth Walker III, Running Back, Seattle Seahawks:

Despite winning Super Bowl LX and becoming the Super Bowl MVP, the Seahawks are not expected to use the franchise tag on Walker.

Through 17 matches, which is the first time in Walker’s four

years that he has stayed healthy the entire season, the 25-year-old rushed a career-high 1,027 yards. It is worth noting that he posted a career low of five touchdowns.

To finish the 2025-2026 stretch, the powerful runner landed at No. 16 in rushing yards and tied for No. 30 in endzone appearances.

In the playoffs, moving the chains was not a problem for the former Michigan State Spartan as he plowed through for 313 rushing yards, but did not cross the goal line once.

This was while backup running back Zach Charbonnet sustained a season-ending torn ACL in the divisional rounds against the San Francisco 49ers.

With that in mind, Charbonnet will most likely not return to action for Week 1 of the 2026-2027 run. If the Seahawks do not resign Walker, they will face a big challenge in filling the backfield.

Alex Pierce, Wide Receiver, Indianapolis Colts:

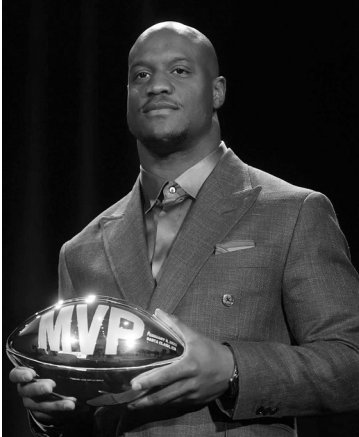
With the 53rd pick of the second round in the 2022 NFL draft, the Colts selected Pierce and secured a reliable downfield threat.

In his first four years in the league, the former Cincinnati Bearcat increased his production each year and this season was no different.

To conclude the 2025-2026 campaign, the 25-year-old led the Colts with a career-high 1,003 receiving yards and six touchdowns. This was his first year notching a 1,000-yard season. Trailing behind him, rookie tight end Tyler Warren recorded 817 receiving yards.

If the Colts do not re-sign the wideout, the Buffalo Bills could suit him well. In the 2025-2026 stretch, only two players earned 500-plus receiving yards for the Bills. Khalil Shakir finished with 719 yards, while tight end Dalton Kincaid accumulated 571 yards.

Besides that, connecting with Pierce should come easy as shot-caller Josh Allen sits at No. 4 with a deep ball accuracy percentage of just over 69%.



Kenneth Walker III of the Seattle Seahawks is the Super Bowl MVP. The Seahawks won the Super Bowl 29-13. PHOTO COURTESY OF @SEAHAWKS ON INSTAGRAM

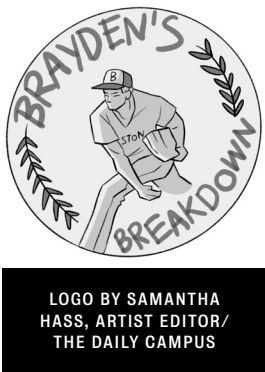
LOGO BY LILLIAN LAFEMINA, ASSOCIATE ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Photo of the Day | It's friiiiday



UConn women's basketball takes on Butler University at PeoplesBank Arena on Feb 7, 2026, wearing pink uniforms for the Play4Kay Pink Game. The Huskies won, 80-48. PHOTO BY ZACH MOLLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Brayden's Breakdown: Addressing the Boston Red Sox infield situation



Roman Anthony and Duran Jarren of the Red Sox together in the outfield. The Red Sox play a spring training game against the Minnesota Twins on Feb. 21. PHOTO COURTESY OF @REDSOX ON INSTAGRAM



by Brayden Gorski
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As Boston Red Sox fans cope with the departure of Alex Bregman in free agency, the team has looked for new ways to bolster their infield.

Over the past month, the Red Sox have signed both Isaiah Kiner-Falefa and Brendan Rodgers, while trading for Caleb Durbin and Andruw Monasterio from the Milwaukee Brewers. Willson Contreras, who started his career as a catcher, will be the primary first baseman while Triston Casas continues to recover from a torn patellar tendon. The three-time all-star was acquired via trade in December.

That gives Boston plenty of options to round out the infield, but there are still plenty of players remaining from last year's playoff squad.

Trevor Story, Marcelo Mayer and the currently injured Romy Gonzalez all played a big role on last year's team and are still on the Red Sox payroll this year. There is also Kristian Campbell, who was on fire for the first month of the season before struggling and being sent down to the minors in June. Campbell also spent time in the outfield, another position logjammed with great players.

So, who will man the infield on Opening Day and beyond?

Manager Alex Cora has a few options for his squad.

The locks for the infield are Story and Contreras. The two veterans have rightfully earned the spots come March 26 when Boston takes the field for the first time.

The second and third baseman spots are relatively up for grabs, however.

The fan favorite pick would be Mayer, but his injury problems are becoming a concern. The 2021 first-round pick has never played more than 91 games in a season and his season was over by July in 2025 after wrist surgery ended his campaign. His talent is undeniable, but his health will be a big story point for the 2026 season.

Durbin is a very underrated pickup for Boston. As a rookie, Durbin finished third in NL Rookie of the Year voting after accumulating 2.8 WAR over 136 games. The soon-to-be 26-year-old can play a mix of second and third, the latter having a massive hole to fill with the departure of Bregman and the trade of Rafael Devers last June.

Monasterio is a good depth option for Cora's bench. With a career on-base percentage of .321 and a low strikeout rate, Monasterio will provide decent hitting and reliable defense on the right side of the infield.

Then there is Kiner-Falefa. The former Yankee and Blue Jay makes his third stop in the

AL East after inking a one year \$6 million contract with the Red Sox. Kiner-Falefa plays all over the infield and leaves it all out on the field. Despite the blunder in Game 7 of the World Series last year, Kiner-Falefa can usually be counted on to make the right play. Hence why Boston signed him after years of being near the top of the error leaderboard.

Rodgers is an interesting case. The 29-year-old missed most of last season with a laundry list of injuries, causing him to move on from the Astros after only one season. His best season came with the Rockies in 2022 where he had 140 hits in 137 games played. Rodgers also collected a Gold Glove at second base that season, something that would be vital for the Red Sox infield. If Rodgers can play above average defense, then he has a good chance of being a mainstay in the lineup.

The final two options are Nate Sogard and Nate Eaton. Both saw time at the major league level last season, including time in the playoffs. Cora could go to these two since he has a rapport with the youngsters.

Spring training is just kicking off, so there is plenty of time for Cora and crew to make final decisions. However, the foundation of the infield is there, it is time for all the pieces to fall into place.

WOMEN'S HOCKEY: HUSKIES TO WRAP UP HOCKEY EAST PLAY AT HOME SITUATION

by Thaddeus Sawyer
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The UConn women's hockey team will close out the regular season this weekend with a pair of Hockey East home contests.

The No. 6 Huskies (23-7-2, 16-5-1) will take on No. 5 Northeastern University (24-7-1, 9-2-1) on Friday before closing the regular season against Merrimack College (7-21-4, 4-16-2) on Saturday. Both games will take place at the Toscano Family Ice Forum.

UConn rides a four-game winning streak in the final weekend of the regular season. They've also earned the chance to return to Toscano for postseason play, as they've clinched the two-seed in the Hockey East.

The Huskies will honor seven seniors prior to Saturday's game, including leading point scorer Kyla Josifovic and star goalie Tia Chan.

Chan is coming off of a dominant weekend in which she allowed just one goal and made a combined 32 saves across two contests.

A pair of wins this weekend would put Chan at a career best 15 victories on the season, tying her with Brittany Wilson for the fourth winningest season by a UConn goalie. The graduate student also has a chance to pass Wilson for an all-time record, as 41 saves would leave her with the third most in team history.

Northeastern won't make either of those feats easy, as they swept UConn back in late January in a two-game series. That included a heartbreaking loss for UConn in which freshman defender Ella Lloyd snuck one by Chan with 15 seconds left in the contest for the

1-0 win.

Despite dominating Hockey East play for much of the season, Northeastern took a loss their last time out, a 1-0 overtime victory for Boston College. Still, Northeastern has already claimed the Hockey East regular-season crown and the one seed in conference postseason play.

Senior Lily Shannon leads Northeastern with 18 goals on the year, tied with BC's Ava Thomas for both the Hockey East lead and 15th in the nation. The forward leads an offensive attack that is closing in on 100 goals on the year as a unit and currently sits ninth in the country.

Goalkeeper Lisa Jönsson has also proven to be an elite insurance option. The sophomore has saved 93.6% of shots faced as is in line to win the Hockey East Goaltender of the Year award.

Merrimack should be an easier matchup for UConn, though the Warriors are as hot as they've been all season. Over their last three games, they have notched two wins and a draw. Merrimack won the tie in shootouts.

They also took a 2-1 overtime win against the Huskies. However, Chan didn't play that game, and the Huskies had blown them out, 8-1, a day earlier.

Much of Merrimack's surge has come courtesy of Madison Vittands. The sophomore forward has three goals since the start of their hot streak. Freshman forward Stina Sandberg had a goal in each win as well.

Friday's puck drop is at 5:30 p.m. and can be watched on ESPNU. Saturday's afternoon contest is set to start at 3 p.m. and will stream live on ESPN+.



The UConn women's hockey team took on the University of New Hampshire on Jan. 31, 2026, at Toscano Family Ice Forum. New Hampshire won in over time leading to a UConn loss, 3-2. PHOTO BY ELLA GORHAM, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

The Honor Roll:

UConn plummets, Michigan-Duke headline massive Saturday slate

by Sam Calhoun
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Ranked teams have lost a bunch lately, but no loss is more gut-wrenching than UConn's to Creighton on Wednesday night. Quad 1 opportunities are plentiful this weekend, including my No. 1 team against my No. 2 team.

Michigan (25-1, 15-1 Big Ten) remained No. 1 after a dominant 91-80 win at Purdue on Tuesday. The Wolverines take on No. 2 Duke in the Edward Jones Capital Showcase on Saturday at 6:30 p.m. on ESPN.

Duke (24-2, 13-1 ACC) moved up to No. 2 with dominant wins at home against Clemson and Syracuse. The Blue Devils take on No. 1 Michigan in Washington, D.C., on Saturday at 6:30 p.m. on ESPN.

Iowa State (23-3, 10-3 Big 12) moved up to No. 3 after a huge win at home against Houston. The Cyclones visit BYU, now without Richie Saunders for the year, on Saturday at 10:30 p.m. on ESPN.

Arizona (24-2, 11-2 Big 12) dropped to No. 4 after bouncing back from an overtime loss at home to Texas Tech with a 75-68 win over BYU on Wednesday. The Wildcats visit No. 5 Houston in a massive Big 12 showdown on Saturday at 3 p.m. on ABC.

Houston (23-3, 11-2 Big 12) fell to No. 5 after a close loss at Iowa State on Big Monday. The Cougars host No. 4 Arizona on Saturday at 3 p.m. on ABC.

Florida (20-6, 11-2 SEC) moved up to No. 6 after extending its win streak to six games with a 76-62 win over South Carolina. The Gators visit Ole Miss on Saturday at noon on ESPN.

Kansas (20-6, 10-3 Big 12) moved up to No. 7 after a domi-

nant win at Oklahoma State, despite concerns remaining around Darryn Peterson. The Jayhawks host Cincinnati on Saturday at 1 p.m. on CBS.

Illinois (22-5, 13-3 Big Ten) moved up to No. 8 following back-to-back dominant wins over Indiana and USC, two tournament-caliber teams. The Fighting Illini visit UCLA on Saturday at 8 p.m. on FOX.

St. John's (21-5, 14-1 Big East) skyrockets to No. 9 after extending its win streak to 12 games with wins at Providence and Marquette. The Red Storm return home to host Creighton on Saturday at noon on FOX.

Purdue (21-5, 11-4 Big Ten) fell to No. 10 after a stunning 91-80 loss at home to top-ranked Michigan. The Boiler-makers aim for a bounce-back win against arch-rival Indiana at 8 p.m. on FOX.

Michigan State (21-5, 11-4 Big Ten) improved to No. 11 following a dominant 82-59 win over UCLA at home. The Spartans stay at home to host Ohio State on Sunday at 1 p.m. on CBS.

UConn (24-3, 14-2 Big East) plummeted to No. 12 after a gut-wrenching Quad 3 loss to Creighton in a rocking Gampel Pavilion. The Huskies visit No. 20 Villanova in a massive game on Saturday at 5:30 p.m. on TNT and truTV.

Nebraska (22-4, 11-4 Big Ten) fell to No. 13 after a stunning, momentum-halting loss at Iowa on Tuesday. The Cornhuskers host Penn State on Saturday at 2 p.m. on Big Ten Network.

Virginia (23-3, 11-2 ACC) comes in at No. 14 after back-to-back wins over Ohio State and Georgia Tech, extending its win streak to seven games. The Cavaliers host Miami (Fla.) on Saturday at 2 p.m. on ESPN2.

Gonzaga (26-2, 14-1 WCC)



UConn men's basketball plays Creighton University at Gampel Pavilion in Storrs, Conn. on Feb 18, 2026. The crowd hyped up the team throughout the entire game PHOTO BY SYDNEY CHANDLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

improved to No. 15 after back-to-back convincing wins over Santa Clara and San Francisco. The Bulldogs return home to host Pacific on Saturday at 9 p.m. on ESPN+.

North Carolina (20-6, 8-5 ACC) dropped to No. 16 after a blowout loss at N.C. State on Tuesday and do not have Caleb Wilson for the time being. The Tar Heels visit Syracuse on Saturday at 1 p.m. on ABC.

Miami (Ohio) (26-0, 13-0 MAC) moved up to No. 17 after a huge win at UMass on Tuesday to remain undefeated. The RedHawks return home to host Bowling Green at 8:30 p.m. on CBS Sports Network.

Alabama (19-7, 9-4 SEC) comes in at No. 18 after extending its win streak to five games with a double-overtime thriller over Arkansas. The Crimson Tide visit LSU on Saturday

at 6 p.m. on SEC Network.

Villanova (21-5, 12-4 Big East) moved up to No. 19 after surviving an overtime thriller at Xavier, extending its win streak to six games. The Wildcats host No. 12 UConn in a massive Big East showdown on Saturday at 5:30 p.m. on TNT and truTV.

Arkansas (19-7, 9-4 SEC) fell to No. 20 after a double-overtime loss at Alabama. The Razorbacks return home to host Missouri on Saturday at 4 p.m. on ESPN.

Vanderbilt (21-5, 8-5 SEC) dropped to No. 21 after losing at Missouri in the final seconds. The Commodores host rival No. 23 Tennessee on Saturday at 2 p.m. on ESPN.

Texas Tech (19-7, 9-4 Big 12) dropped to No. 22, losing JT Toppin for the year in a loss at Arizona State. The Red

Raiders return home to host a struggling Kansas State on Saturday at 2:30 p.m. on FOX.

Tennessee (19-7, 9-4 SEC) comes in at No. 23 after rattling off three-straight wins, all of which were by nine points or more. The Volunteers visit rival No. 21 Vanderbilt on Saturday at 2 p.m. on ESPN.

Utah State (23-3, 13-2 Mountain West) comes in at No. 24 after extending its win streak to 10 games with wins over Memphis and Boise State. The Aggies now visit Nevada on Saturday at 10 p.m. on FS1.

N.C. State (19-8, 10-4 ACC) comes in at No. 25 after bouncing back from back-to-back losses with a blowout home win against rival North Carolina. The Wolfpack are on a week-long break before visiting No. 14 Virginia on Tuesday at 7 p.m. on ACC Network.

The Big Apple: Who are the contenders in the Eastern Conference?

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We have entered the final third of the NBA season, which means teams are ramping up for a playoff push while others look ahead to the draft. If there is a time for the New York Knicks to push for a championship run, this is the biggest chance they have.

The Eastern Conference is wide open this season; there are usually one or two teams at this point in the year that will make the Finals, but this year, there are far more teams competing with the Knicks to make the Finals.

Detroit Pistons:

Detroit has achieved one of the most significant turn-arounds in NBA history. Just two seasons ago, they finished last in the NBA with a record of 14-68. This season, they are 40-13, making them the No. 1 seed and 5.5 games ahead of second place. None of their matchups against the Knicks were remotely close. They battered New York by 31 points in early January and again by 38 earlier this month. They've held the Knicks to an average of 85 points per game, while scoring 120 points per contest.

New York has been phenomenal on the defensive end since last month, holding eight opponents under 101 points, yet the Pistons have exposed them.

Boston Celtics:

I can't say I expected this at all. Without Jayson Tatum, Boston is No. 2 in the East with a record of 35-19, half a game ahead of the Knicks. New York leads the season series 2-1, with their most recent game being a dominant 111-89 win for the Knicks just under two weeks ago.

In a season where everyone thought they'd take a step back, they stayed right at the top. Head

Coach Joe Mazzulla deserves all the credit for their success this season. Losing your superstar for most likely the entire season yet performing at the same level is no easy feat.

Jaylen Brown has been putting up MVP-level numbers this season as the number one option for the Celtics. Brown averages 29.4 points per game, which puts him fourth in scoring. His defensive presence this season has been remarkable, and he has even declared himself the best 2-way player in the

game.

We might see a playoff rematch this spring if the Celtics continue to play at this level. If Jayson Tatum comes back, it will be interesting to see if he returns to being the number one option or if he goes to the second option before getting back to full strength.

Cleveland Cavaliers:

It's safe to say that Cleveland took a step back this year. The Cavs are 34-21, putting them as the No. 4 seed in the East. New York leads the season series

2-0, with their last game being a Christmas Day thriller.

Although they're seven games out of first, Cleveland has won 10 of their last 11 games. And with the acquisition of James Harden, they have played like a top team in the league. Harden has fit right into his role in Cleveland and pairing up with Donovan Mitchell has made the team fire on all cylinders. Is this just the usual honeymoon phase the 36-year-old goes through when he makes his debut for a new team? Or is this chemistry

he's developing going to follow through into the playoffs?

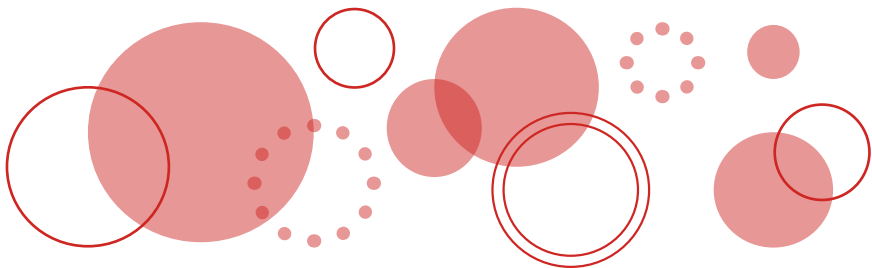
Looking ahead for the Knicks, they take on the Pistons on Thursday night, host Houston on Saturday night and head on a three-game road trip against Chicago, Cleveland and Milwaukee. These next few weeks are pivotal, facing potential playoff opponents as well as surging teams in the west. After the road-trip they come home to play San Antonio and reigning champion Oklahoma City Thunder.



Karl Towns and Jalen Brunson of the New York Knicks on the court. The Knicks played the Detroit Pistons on Feb. 19. PHOTO COURTESY OF @NYKNICKS ON INSTAGRAM



Sports



ELLIOT'S OLYMPIC UPDATES: MEDAL RACES AND KEY RESULTS FROM THIS WEEK

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The current gold medal standings in the Olympics have Norway with the lead at 16, followed by Italy with nine and lastly the USA with eight according to the official Olympics website on Feb. 19, in the afternoon.

The United States men's ice hockey team defeated Sweden and will advance to the Olympic semifinals to face off against Slovakia. The USA has struggled in past matchups against Sweden but were able to take down the Swedish 2-1 in overtime thanks to a Quinn Hughes game winner. The men will take on Slovakia on Feb. 20.

The United States women's ice hockey team is on a hot streak, going undefeated in the preliminary rounds, scoring 20 goals and only letting one in. The women have not been scored on since the first game of the Olympics, while netting a total of 31 against opponents.

In the gold medal match on Feb. 19, Team USA took on Canada and found themselves down 0-1 after the second period. The USA tied the game with 2:03 left in the third period with a goal by Hilary Knight.

Team USA would go on to defeat Canada 2-1 in overtime to bring home gold for the Americans. The game's winning goal was scored by Megan Keller.

American alpine ski racer Mikaela Shiffrin captured her first gold medal since 2018 in the women's slalom finishing with a combined time of 1:39:10 - 1.5 seconds ahead of Switzerland's Camille Rast, according to Cody



Breezy Johnson during the 2026 Milan Cortina Olympics. Johnson got engaged at the Olympics. PHOTO COURTESY OF @BREEZYJOHNSONSKI ON INSTAGRAM

Nagel of CBS.

This is her second gold medal of these Olympics after struggling in Beijing four years ago.

As for other Americans, Ben Ogden continued to find success in Milan Cortina after he and teammate Gus Schumacher fought for silver in the men's cross country skiing team sprint. This was the United States' first ever Olympic medal in that event, according to Nagel.

In other news, Olympic legend Lindsey Vonn announced she will undergo at least two more surgeries after her crash during her downhill race. The crash came after she ruptured her left ACL in a different accident last month.

The Olympic accident had Vonn airlifted to the nearest hospital and was announced with a broken leg, according to CBS sports.

Ukrainian athlete, Vladislav Heraskevych was unable to compete after a dispute with officials surrounding his helmet. The helmet featured photos of deceased athletes who were killed in the Ukrainian-Russia War.

Following this, "Heraskevych received a \$200,000 financial gift from a fellow countryman in order to continue his athletic career and advocacy work," according to People magazine. "The AP reported the \$200,000 amount is equal to what a Ukrainian athlete would have received from the government for winning a gold medal at the 2026 Winter Olympics."

Love is in the air for some athletes, as four athletes have been proposed to during this year's games.

American alpine skier Breezy Johnson claimed a gold medal, and five days later added an en-

agement ring to her hardware.

On Feb. 12, she crashed during the Super-G event but was met at the finish line with her boyfriend Connor Watkins down on one knee.

She told NBC, "I may have told him that I always kind of had the dream of getting engaged at the Olympics," according to People.

With Valentine's Day last week, two more Olympians made it official when former rival figure skaters Olivia Smart (Spain) and Jean-Luc Baker (USA) announced their engagement. Baker was a former ice skater for Team USA, and last skated in the 2022 Beijing Olympics.

The proposal occurred on the streets of Milan on Valentine's Day, and Baker posted a video on Instagram of her eventual engagement ring with footage of her competing on the ice, before popping the question.

Also, on Feb. 14 Ukrainian freestyle skier Kateryna Kotsar received a proposal from boyfriend Bohdan Fashtyha. This proposal happened after Kotsar qualified for the big air final in Livigno, according to People..

"I'm still really excited and can't understand what happened tonight, because it's two really huge things for me," Kotsar said.

Lastly, two USA athletes shared their proposal at the 2026 Olympics after they fell in love at the 2022 Beijing Olympics. The two were Brittany Bowe (who placed No. 4 in the 1000m speed-skating race this year) and Hilary Knight (the captain of Team USA women's hockey team).

Lastly, there is another famous dog at the Olympics this year. Snoop Dog has been involved in the Olympic Games since the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics, according to NBC. However, the famous rapper was joined by a famous four-legged dog after a 2-year-old Czechoslovakian wolf-dog ran across the finish line at the women's team sprint cross country race on Feb. 18, according to Fox News.

The dog did not have major implications on the race, however it did influence the racers' mental state.

Croatian skier Tena Hadzic told NPR, "I was like, 'am I hallucinating?'" according to Fox News.

"I don't know what I should do, because maybe he could attack me, bite me".

The Olympics this year have been filled with record breaking gold medal races, proposals and dogs.

Only a few days are left for this year's games.

Men's Basketball: No. 5 Huskies face a Big East survival test with Villanova

by Matt Dimech
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No. 5 UConn looks to avoid

its third loss in five games on Saturday when it travels to play Villanova on Saturday. The Huskies (24-3, 14-2) have lost two of their last four

games and are ranked No. 51 in net rating over their last five. UConn had its conference slate derailed by Creighton

on Wednesday night. The Huskies fell 91-84 in front of their rowdy home crowd. They missed 2-of-16 during a nine-minute stretch in the second half, which allowed the Blue Jays to go up 10 late in the game.

Braylon Mullins hobbled off the court in the second half amidst a career night where he scored a personal best 25 points. He was put in a knee brace while the trainers tended to him on the bench, but later checked back in and finished the game.

Mullins assured the media that he would be ready to play on Saturday at the press conference following the game.

Hurley was unaware that Mullins was ever in a brace after the game and said that both Mullins and Alex Karaban are both dealing with "something" injury wise, which he neglected to elaborate on. He did say that Karaban had a "leg thing" after the win over Georgetown on Saturday.

Karaban's mysterious lower body injury was prevalent against Creighton. He scored just two points on 1-for-6 shooting. Hurley even second guessed if playing him hurt was the right decision, saying he was moving like a "cargo ship" on the court.

Wednesday night was the most points the program has allowed in regulation since 2019 against St. Joseph's.

The Huskies' defense, which was once the team's identity, has begun to deteriorate in recent weeks. Their four worst performances in defensive efficiency this year have occurred over the last five games.

"Our defense has just been

so bad these last four games... we've been playing with fire," Hurley said.

UConn's defense was rated as high as No. 2 this season. It now sits at No. 13.

"There's multiple players on our team that are great individual defenders and are getting worse as the season's getting later, and it's not fatigue," Hurley said.

The Wildcats (21-5, 12-3) enter the game on a six-game winning streak, juxtaposed to the Huskies' recent struggles. Their last loss? An overtime battle on the road against UConn in January. Solo Ball scored 24 points in that game, including five three pointers.

The Huskies dominated the overtime period 14-4 and shut the game out on an 8-0 run following a back-and-forth affair in regulation.

The Huskies allowed 37 total points from the Blue Jays back court tandem of Josh Dix and Nik Graves. Their defense will be tested by another high scoring guard duo against the Wildcats in Acaden Lewis and Tyler Perkins.

Lewis scored 21 points in Villanova's overtime win over Xavier on Tuesday. The freshman is averaging over five assists per game which ranks No. 3 in the conference. The Huskies held him to just four points in their first meeting of the year.

Perkins is the Wildcats' leading scorer with 13.7 points per game. He is shooting a career best 36% from three this season and has scored at least 15 points in each of Villanova's games since Jan. 13.

Tipoff is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. and the game can be watched on truTV and TNT.



UConn men's basketball takes on Villanova at PeoplesBank Arena on Saturday, Jan 24, 2026. Both teams were tied 61-61 at the end of the second half, but the Huskies toppled the Wildcats in overtime, winning 75-67. PHOTO BY ZACH MOLLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS