



UConn Skydiving wins second place in national championship

by Sara Bedigian
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Two members of the University of Connecticut skydiving team placed second in a national collegiate championship in Arizona over winter break.

With no prior competition experience, sixth-semester Alanna Ward and fourth-semester Kathryn Ausere competed in the two-way formation, where they performed a series of coordinated maneuvers, formations and freefall. By placing second, the girls scored above a military team, which they said is a big accomplishment since the cadets are operating at a professional level.

“It’s so rare for a civilian team to beat a military team. No one cared about the scores, we were just trying to do our best,” Ward said.

“It’s almost like a liberating feeling. I guess that feeling is just what keeps you going back and feeling, almost accomplished, in a sense, like, wow, I survived.”

KATHRYN AUSERE

The championship, which was hosted by the United States Parachute Association from Dec. 28 to Jan. 1, brought students from military academies and other universities in-

cluding Kansas and Iowa State. This allowed them to form friendships with other students and meet professional skydivers—all of which contribute to the tight-knit community that Ward said skydiving brings.

Other members of the UConn skydiving team attended the competition. Aidan Wright, Amelia Smith, Dylan Brockel and Sebby Gorgone, competed in the four-way formation and placed third. Ellarie Stevens and Shining Yu competed too.

Since you must be 18 to start skydiving, most people started when they got to UConn. This was the case for Ward and Ausere, who joined their first year and fell in love with it instantly.

“It’s almost like a liberating feeling. I guess that feeling is just what keeps you going back and feeling, almost accomplished, in a sense, like, wow, I survived,” Ausere said.

Ward said free falling feels like therapy to her because she only can focus on the jump and nothing else.

“You have to be focused on it,” Ward said. “You have to be aware of everything happening.”

After both attending Tandem Weekend hosted by UConn, a chance to jump harnessed to an experienced licensed skydiver, they knew they wanted to get their certification licenses to join the team and compete. The Accelerated Freefall license allows you to jump with other people, and create formations, which Ausere said is the best part of skydiving.

“No one really likes just sitting there. If you fall by yourself, it gets really boring,” she said.

Despite having jumped many times, they both still



Alanna Ward and Kathryn Ausere of the UConn Skydiving team. The two placed second in a national competition that occurred over winter break. PHOTO COURTESY OF @UCONN SKYDIVING ON INSTAGRAM



UConn students skydiving in a national collegiate competition in Arizona. The students placed second in the competition. PHOTO COURTESY OF @UCONN SKYDIVING ON INSTAGRAM

get nervous. For Ausere, it’s in the minutes leading up to jumping in the plane. For Ward, it’s the canopy ride down where she has to focus on sticking the landing.

Both out-of-state students, Ward and Ausere came into UConn not knowing many people and were able to find a strong community through skydiving. UConn’s home drop is at Connecticut Parachutists in Ellington, about 30 minutes from campus, which Ward said creates a strong family atmosphere.

“Our drop zones very much took us in as a family,” Ward said. “And it still feels like that.”

While you are at the drop zone all day, the jump itself only lasts around five minutes, Ausere said. This allows them to talk and spend time with other people at the jump zone.

“You’re packing your parachute, and then you’re also planning your jumps, and then

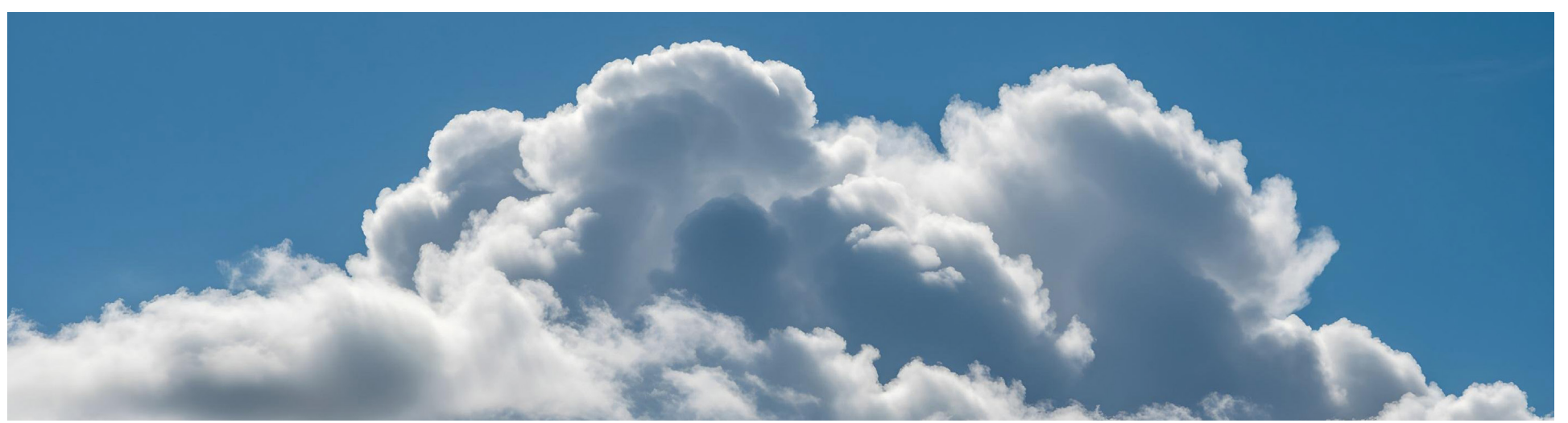
also it’s just kind of talking and hanging out with other people, which is a lot of fun,” she said. “It’s just kind of like hanging outside all day.”

In the winter months, they attend indoor tunnel competitions. Just last week, they competed in Nashua in New Hampshire.

As president of the team, Ward is trying to grow the group and provide more opportunities for members.

“I would like collegiate skydiving to be more popular and get it more out there for people to know about it, because I feel like there’s a lot of people that are interested in it, but just don’t know about it,” she said.

For those interested in joining the team or skydiving one time, UConn will host Tandem Weekend in April. Anyone interested in learning more can contact the team at uconnskydiving@gmail.com or on Instagram @uconnskydiving.



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Sarah Strong is IN as Huskies host Creighton on Wednesday

WE ARE NOT THE DAILY DIGEST

News

Mansfield joins CMDA, prioritizing family housing



by **Mikayla Bunnell**
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The town of Mansfield is one of the newest members of the Connecticut Municipal Development Authority, according to town council meeting minutes.

CMDA is a “statewide quasi-public organization that works with towns and cities to increase housing production in neighborhoods that are mixed-use, walkable, and well-served by transit,” according to its website. The organization currently works with 39 municipalities across the state.

CMDA was first introduced to the council at their Nov. 24, 2025, meeting by Executive Director David Kooris. He came to the meeting to present the organization to the council and offer an opportunity to opt in. Kooris told the council that CMDA would provide funding for potential housing development in Mansfield’s eligible downtown areas, including Downtown Storrs, the Four Corners, the East Brook Mall and the area of King Hill Road and North Eagleville Road.

After approval from the Planning and Zoning Commission at a meeting in December, the town council voted to officially join CMDA at their meeting on Jan. 12.

Jennifer Kaufman, Mansfield’s director of planning and development and a recent appointee to the CMDA board of directors, said that the council

felt like there was no downside to opting in. CMDA’s role is purely advisory. None of their recommendations are binding.

“[CMDA is] taking a look at our zoning regulations, and they’re going to provide recommendations [for] if our zoning regulations are likely to increase housing in these downtown areas,” Kaufman

said. “It’s up to the local Planning and Zoning Commission to enact those. They can take the recommendations or not.”

Mansfield is already having to take another look at their zoning regulations in compliance with HB 8002, a housing bill passed by a special session last fall requiring municipalities to adopt their

own housing growth plans or comply with a regional growth plan. Kaufman said that the goals of this bill and that of CMDA go hand-in-hand.

“Our planning and zoning commission felt like, well, we may as well learn from this group and figure out if it’s something we should be doing,” she said. “We’re going to

get some free technical assistance, and then if we do decide to establish a district... then we’ll work with CMDA to assist us in developing the type of housing that the town wants.”

Kaufman said that the town is hoping to add more family housing to these downtown areas to provide more opportunities for people to “age in place in Mansfield.”

“I think we have so much student housing that’s approved right now,” she said. “And I hear this all the time from the more long-term residents that we need housing for families and people and seniors.”

Landmark Properties, the company that owns the Standard at Four Corners which opened in fall 2025, was recently approved to build another student housing complex, The Mark Mansfield. It’s planned for completion in 2028.

Kaufman said that the town and CMDA are still in the process of defining the next steps. She will meet with the organization to discuss specific goals and focus areas. She said that CMDA is just one opportunity for the town to work on meeting their residents’ needs.

“Mansfield is trying to just serve the needs of our residents. Ultimately, we want to make sure that things that we do align with this vision for our community...” Kaufman said. “[CMDA is] one tool in the box, but it’s not the only tool. It’s one of many that we’re working on.”



Jennifer Kaufman, the director of planning and development for the town of Mansfield. The town has recently decided to join the CMDA for recommendations on zoning. PHOTO COURTESY OF JENNIFER KAUFMAN ON LINKEDIN

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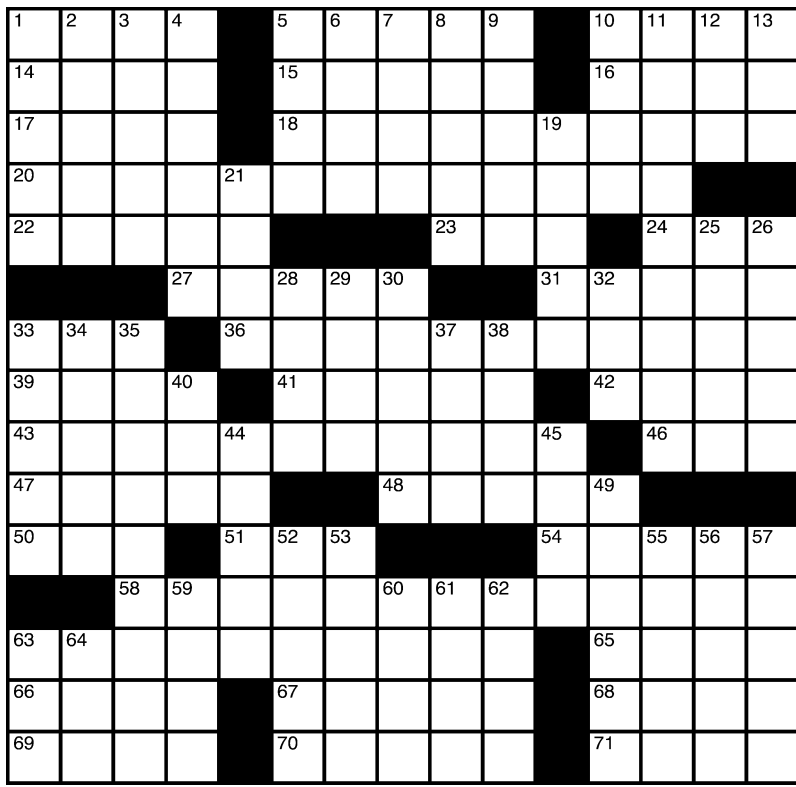
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- ACROSS**
- 1 Needlework?
 - 5 Engineer Nikola
 - 10 Not exciting
 - 14 Color name that means "unbleached" in French
 - 15 Mermaid whose best friend is Flounder
 - 16 Spa wrap
 - 17 Brontë novel locale
 - 18 Silver screen lovers
 - 20 Fish exhibit only viewable by appointment?
 - 22 Inception
 - 23 "XO, Kitty" creator Jenny
 - 24 Himalayan bovine
 - 27 "Oh my!"
 - 31 Invitation to eat
 - 33 1990 accessibility law, for short
 - 36 Procession of new arrivals to a lion sanctuary?
 - 39 Tree with an edible heart
 - 41 Accustom
 - 42 Outfielder Tommie in the Mets Hall of Fame
 - 43 Gorillas who give glowing testimonies?
 - 46 1960s youth activist org.
 - 47 Like some pads
 - 48 In motion
 - 50 Yang counterpart
 - 51 Up to, briefly
 - 54 Celeb's image problem
 - 58 "The Case of the Disappearing Crows," e.g.?
 - 63 Comfortable in social settings
 - 65 Oklahoma city
 - 66 Classic video game
 - 67 Words of concession
 - 68 Turn on a ___
 - 69 Tunneling pests
 - 70 Less vulnerable
 - 71 Love, in Lima



By Jill Singer

2/11/26

- DOWN**
- 1 Pace
 - 2 Source of a mighty oak
 - 3 Sept moins quatre
 - 4 Questionnaire
 - 5 Discretion
 - 6 Lake known for walleye
 - 7 Greed, lust, wrath, et al.
 - 8 Little sucker
 - 9 Generation after Z
 - 10 Élan
 - 11 Idles
 - 12 16th pres.
 - 13 Bucks and boars
 - 19 Odyssey maker
 - 21 On
 - 25 Helped
 - 26 Capped joints
 - 28 ___ large
 - 29 Fan pub
 - 30 "The Residence" actress Uzo
 - 32 Golden yrs. fund
 - 33 Appropriately
 - 34 "Would it be too bold of me?"
 - 35 Chiropractor's concern
 - 37 Noted times

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved



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- 38 Bottled (up)
- 40 Deg. for many a Wharton grad
- 44 Extreme
- 45 Call for a reservation?
- 49 Like decent bonds
- 52 Elba who voices Chief Bogo in the "Zootopia" films
- 53 "The Translator" novelist Aboulela
- 55 Fabric first known as "sergé de Nîmes"
- 56 Excellent
- 57 Truck rental choice
- 59 Some fluffy boots
- 60 Solar panels spot
- 61 Contemplate
- 62 Belgian river
- 63 Graduation stat
- 64 Director Howard



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

Solution to Tuesday's puzzle

2/11/26

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

Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 box (in bold borders) contains every digit 1 to 9. For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, visit sudoku.org.uk.

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CHILL PILL

TAKING A BREATH YOU DONT HAVE TO EARN

by **Ky'Lynn Monts**
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For most of our lives, the message that we “have to stay ahead” has been instilled in us. Our parents, teachers and even the media present the idea that must always be “doing.” Even when most of us try to relax, we go about it in a task-oriented, zealous way.

When we are constantly overdoing it and pushing ourselves to exhaustion, over time it starts to feel as if we are constantly either running towards or away from something. Our days start to be more about keeping up than about being present.

But slowing down is not an easy thing.

Slowing down and pausing can be difficult for our nervous system and can make us feel that it is easier to keep pushing rather than dealing with the emotional vulnerability that comes with being still.

Welcome to Chill Pill, a biweekly column every Wednesday about slowing down in a world that rarely lets us do so as college students. Here, we will talk about balance, burnout and the small things that can make college life feel a little less overwhelming.

Slowing down doesn't equate to caring less, but what it does mean is that you care

enough to keep moving in a way that won't cost you yourself. College life rarely leaves room for that kind of space. Weeks move faster than expected, days blur together and suddenly it's midsemester and you haven't taken a breath. There is an underlying press to keep moving, keep proving to others and yourself that you can handle and do it all.

But handling everything doesn't mean you never stop. There is a difference between giving yourself a moment and giving up.

Pausing without a reason is not about procrastination or disengaging from your responsibilities. But it is more so about disengaging in the belief and/or mindset that one's worth is tied to constant output. And that self-value is only valid based on how busy you are. Sometimes pausing and sitting on your bed after a long day and not doing anything in particular is meaningful. Sometimes it's about taking a deep breath before responding, instead of rushing to fill the silence. Now these moments do not change your life overnight and also don't solve all problems and also don't make college easier (sorry).

But what they offer is a way to soften experiences as we move through them.

Pausing not only helps to give your nervous system a

chance to catch up, but most importantly, it helps you to feel like a person again. Take the time to allow your thoughts to settle instead of piling up and remind yourself that you exist outside of due dates and expectations.

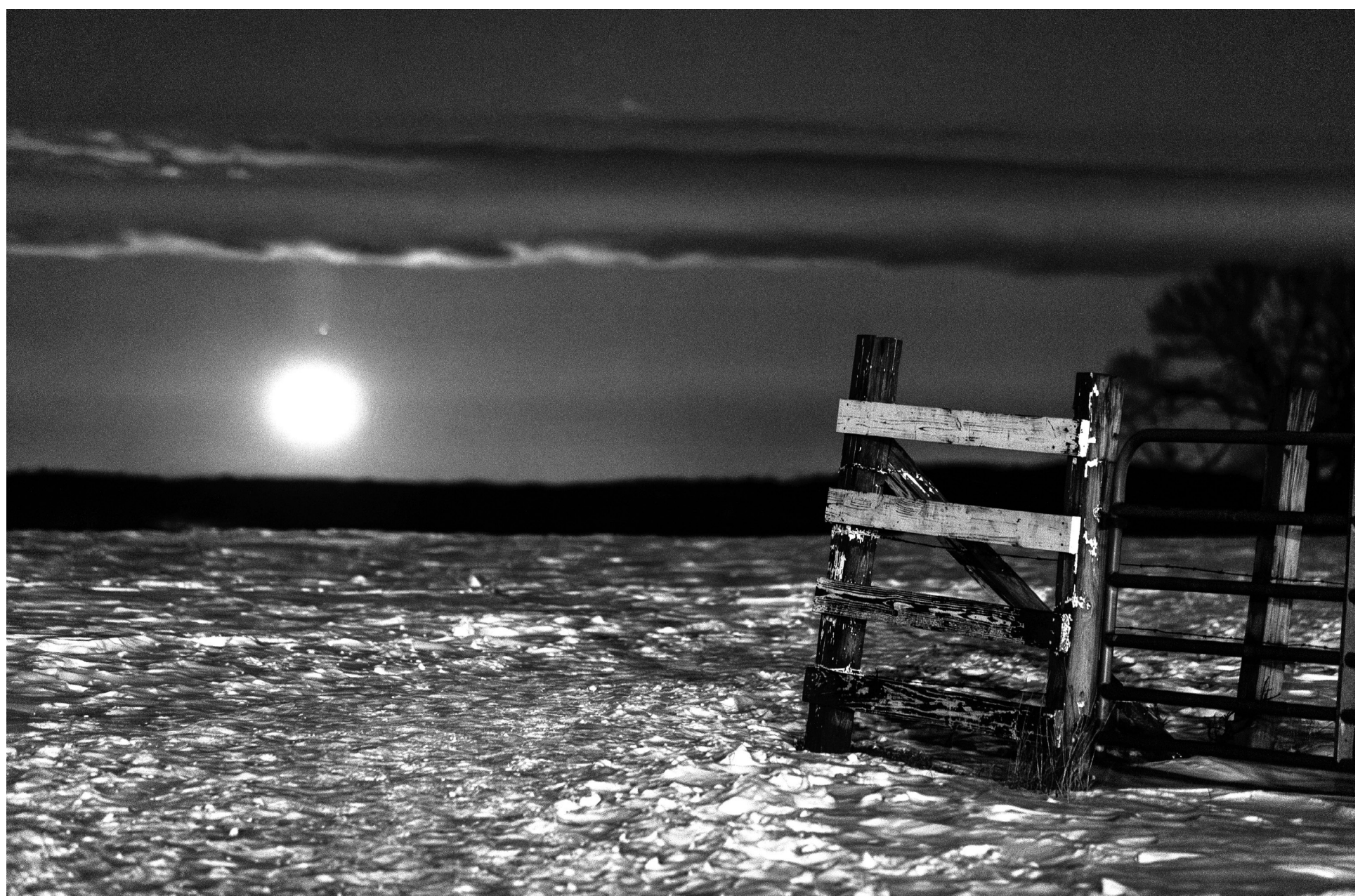
When you start to pause, you are allowing yourself a moment to ask, “Do I really want to do this? Am I only doing this to be nice? What am I actually feeling, and why?” Yes, it can seem a little childish or even uncomfortable sometimes, because slowing down makes you realize that sometimes what you are feeling is not so much about you but more about what is going on around you.

Slowing down will not make the world stop asking things of you. Responsibilities will still exist, deadlines will still exist, and sometimes life will slip right through our fingers. But being intentional with your rest, even if it is for only a brief second, allows you to meet those demands with more purpose and less self-erasure.

So if today feels full, overwhelming, or even just neutral, consider giving yourself a moment that doesn't lead anywhere. A moment that exists just to exist.

Sometimes the most meaningful thing you can do is nothing at all.

And that's okay.



The moon rises over Horsebarn Hill on Tuesday, Feb. 3, 2026 in Storrs, Conn. Horsebarn Hill is the perfect spot to relax after a long week.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ZACH MOLLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

BAD BUNNY BEATS THE ODDS AT SUPER BOWL

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Amid political controversy and a competing live performance, Latin rapper Bad Bunny surpassed all expectations in his Super Bowl XL halftime performance on Sunday, Feb. 8.

Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio, also known by the name Bad Bunny, is a Puerto Rican rapper, singer and producer. At only 31 years old, Sunday marked Ocasio's first time as a Super Bowl headliner but his second time in the halftime show, having previously performed with Shakira and Jennifer Lopez in Super Bowl LIV.

Following in the footsteps of his halftime predecessor, rapper Kendrick Lamar, Ocasio delivered a thought-out and well-executed performance, with several nods to current political tension in the United States. Additionally, much of the show included references to Ocasio's Puerto Rican identity, honoring many aspects of the nation's culture.

Ocasio performed the halftime show hot off his most recent wave of success — the rapper won Best Global Music Performance at the Grammys last week and won Best Música Urbana Album and Album of the Year for “DeBí TIRAR MÁS FOTOS.” Released in January of 2025, the album is the first Spanish-only record to win Album of the Year.

The 13-minute show featured guest appearances from Lady Gaga, who sang a salsa version of the 2024 hit “Die With A Smile,” and Ricky Martin, who performed “Lo Que Le Pasó a Hawaii.” The show also included cameos from Pedro Pascal, Cardi B and other performers.

One of the halftime show's standout moments was a wed-

ding scene, featuring a first dance and several partygoers. Surprisingly, the wedding was later confirmed to be real, with Ocasio serving as a witness for the ceremony, according to the Associated Press. A representative of Ocasio confirmed that the couple had reached out to Ocasio to ask him to attend their wedding, but Ocasio instead asked them

to join him in the halftime show, the AP reported.

Another major surprise from the halftime show was the appearance of a young boy, who Ocasio handed his Grammy to after performing his hit “NUEVA YOL.” According to the AP, several people on social media incorrectly labeled the boy as Liam Conejo Ramos, a 5-year-old boy who was detained by

Immigration and Customs Enforcement Officers in January.

The young boy was instead child actor Lincoln Fox, as confirmed via his Instagram account.

The halftime show also faced plenty of controversy before it even aired on television. Turning Point USA, a non-profit organization focused on advocating for conservative

politics, previously announced its plans to organize an “All-American Halftime Show.”

The All-American Halftime Show aired at the same time as Ocasio's Super Bowl performance on Feb. 8, with a lineup of Kid Rock, Brantley Gilbert, Lee Brice and Gabby Barrett. The show garnered 6.1 million concurrent viewers on YouTube, according to The New York Times.

Despite the competing performance and political backlash, Ocasio delivered a fun and enjoyable halftime show, with commentary on the state of Puerto Rico and the rest of the United States. This included a reference to the frequent widespread electric blackouts in Puerto Rico, which Ocasio called to with his song “El Apagón” (“The Blackout”). The song references government inaction and political corruption in its lyrics.

One of the best moments of the performance was towards the end, just after “El Apagón.” Ocasio picked up a football and announced the phrase “God bless America” before listing out the names of countries throughout North and South America.

During this scene of the show, Ocasio was followed by the flags of the nations he had mentioned, the football clutched to his chest. Behind him, the video board read “the only thing more powerful than hate is love,” a callback to Ocasio's Grammy acceptance speech.

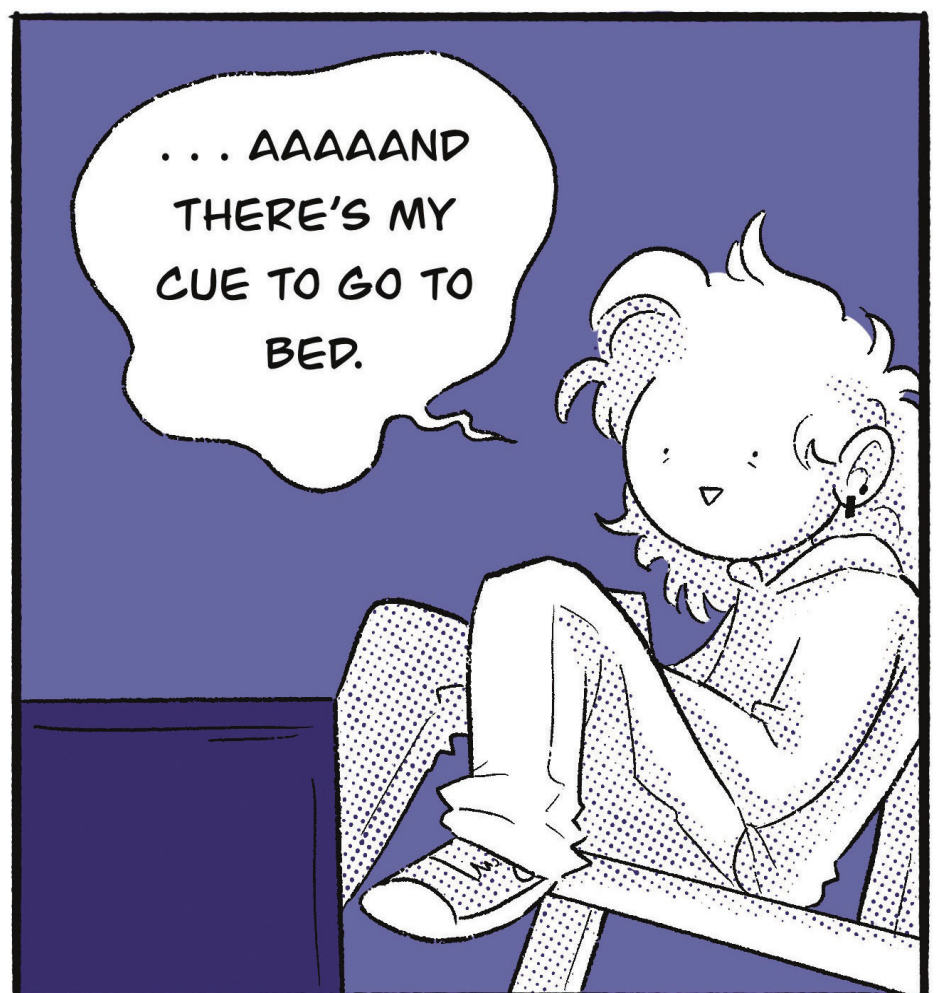
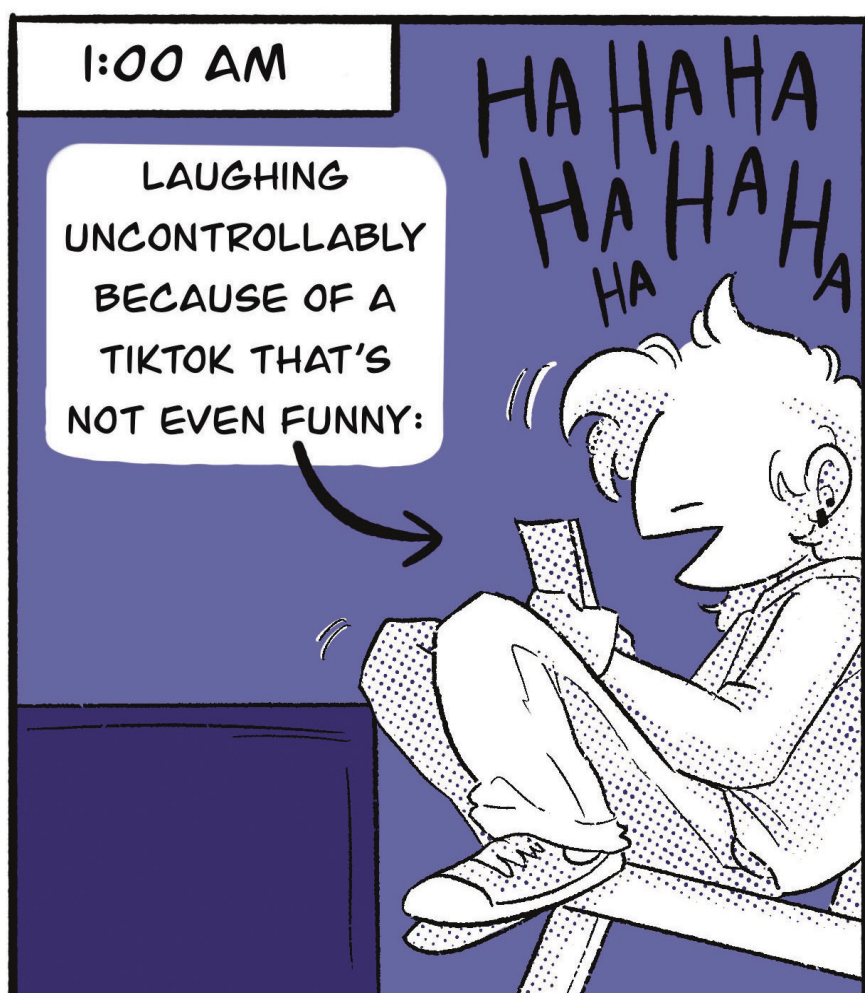
“The hate gets more powerful with more hate,” Ocasio had said in his speech. “The only thing that is more powerful than hate is love.”

After listing the countries of the Americas, Ocasio lifted his football to the camera in front of him, revealing the phrase “Together, We Are America” written across it. Ocasio then spiked the ball and finished out his performance with his hit song “DTMF.”



Bad Bunny performs during the halftime show of Super Bowl 60 between the Seattle Seahawks and New England Patriots in Santa Clara, Calif., Sunday, Feb. 8, 2026. PHOTO BY CARLOS AVILA GONZALEZ/SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE VIA AP

COMICS



CARTOON BY SAMANTHA HASS, ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS



Life

COME SEE THE TALENTED SINGERS IN UCONN A CAPPELLA

by Ayyan Tamjeed
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Nestled inside the St. Mark's Episcopal Chapel on a chilly Friday evening, the University of Connecticut A Cappella Association (UCACA) held their annual spring rush concert on Feb. 6, 2026.

In an effort to entice potential singers to join UCACA, 10 groups belted out two songs each, featuring a wide variety of solos, tenors, basses and vocal percussion.

First up was Drop the Bass, an all-treble-voices group, who kicked off with a 1980s mashup of "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" by Cyndi Lauper and "Wanna Dance with Somebody" by Whitney Houston. The highlight of this mashup was when both soloists started belting out the respective chorus of each song, making for a euphoric ending and an energetic start to the concert.

The competitive group A Minor took the stage next. This group went with two RnB songs and showed off their vocal chops with the spacious "Cherry Wine" by grentperez and the emotive "Stay for a While" by Victor Ray.

Next up was Extreme Measures, who received a jubilant round of applause for their first song "Oscar Winning Tears" by RAYE, thanks to the otherworldly singing from soloist Meredith Godfrey. Nick Jokl, the president of Extreme Measures, took the microphone to deliver an amazing and high energy cover of "Killing Me" by Conan Gray.

It was no wonder Jokl, a fourth-semester communications major, said over text "I told the group we could have performed them 3 rehearsals before the rush concert and we still would have sounded amazing. [...] We have sung these songs countless times but still feel the same if not more excitement and joy come over our bodies each time we perform it together."

Hus-Key's started their set off with a rendition of "Supercut," by Lorde, a song they released a music video for on Saturday,

Feb. 7. They capped off their set with three excellent soloists trading parts on the upbeat and folksy "Kiss Me" by Sixpence None the Richer.

For a change in pace, the UConn Conn-men performed a little doo-wop ditty, "Run Around Sue" by Dion. The scatting and bouts of fake cries throughout the song, adding an element of humor to their performance by these flannel-clad Conn-men. Their second song was a staple of their repertoire, a cover of "Animal" by Neon Trees.

"The two songs we originally set out to do were not what we originally ended up doing, but we did these two songs because we thought it showed off our repertoire the best," Conn-Men president Kevin Liu said. Liu is a sixth-semester student studying social work and psychology.

That wasn't the only surprise the group had, as Liu announced a new studio album — their first in six years — titled "Back to the Start," featuring a mixture of current members and alumni.

Without a moment's delay, Husky Hungama, UConn's lone South Asian fusion a cappella group, took the stage with an English-Hindi mashup of "Apple Pie" and "Zaalima." For their second song, they went with an interesting choice and sang Bollywood hits "Vaseegara" from the eponymous movie, "Manohara" from the movie "Minnale" and "Zara Zara" by Bombay Jayashri in Tamil, Telugu and Hindi respectively.

Husky Hungama president Shrinithi Kumar was worried the audience wouldn't enjoy a non-English composition but was glad to see the audience's response.

"The crowd really seemed to appreciate the beauty in an all-South Asian piece," Kumar, a six-semester English and secondary English education student, said over text.

Performing the songs live was also a challenge, but was one that Kumar and her group were willing to go through.

"Sometimes working through the nerves of that is really hard, but I think the excitement that comes along with those nerves



UConn A Cappella performing their annual Spring Rush concert. The concert took place on Feb. 6, 2026 inside St. Mark's Episcopal Chapel. PHOTO COURTESY OF @UGONNACAPPELLA AND @LKHANFRAMES ON INSTAGRAM

can really bring a song new life when we're singing it on stage," Kumar said.

One of the oldest UConn a cappella groups, A Completely Different Note, took the stage with matching blazers in tow. Their experience shows, as they delivered intricate and masterful performances of "Still Feel" by half alive and "Dine" by Olivia Dean.

Next, Rubyfruit took the stage. The moment that stood out was in their second song "Love Came Down" by Karl Jobe and how the soloist sang the lyrics "love came down."

Rolling Tones strolled in and performed the first of two Michael Jackson covers for the evening with "Rock with You." This cover was certainly one of the best performances of the

night, as the group fully embodied Jackson and the disco groove.

The final group to serenade the St. Marks crowd was Notes Over Storrs (NOS), another competitive a cappella group. Their first composition, "Vanish Into You" by Lady Gaga, was a marvelous showcase for the talents of the soloist Sophia Vieria, who delivered one of the best performances of the night. The last song of the concert was Michael Jackson's silky smooth "Human Nature."

"This song was tricky to learn due to its intricate parts, but we managed to mesh it together and support our amazing soloist Bryce Blodgett who embraces every ounce of Michael Jackson he can throughout the song," UCACA and Notes Over Storrs

president Nicole Jessel said. Jessel is a communications student in her seventh semester.

After a round of applause for NOS's performance, Jessel took to the microphone and thanked everyone who spent their evening watching 10 different groups sing and signaled that signups for auditions would happen after.

"I hope people were able to see and take away the beauty and pride in our culture that we work hard to bring to in our performances," Kumar said.

"Joining [UCACA] was the best decision I ever made and I hope this concert sparks the same ambition in you!" Jessel said over text. "If you love to sing this is the place for you. People find their friends here, create a family and of course make incredible music!"



UConn A Cappella performing their annual Spring Rush concert. The concert took place on Feb. 6, 2026 inside St. Mark's Episcopal Chapel. PHOTO COURTESY OF @UGONNACAPPELLA AND @LKHANFRAMES ON INSTAGRAM

Opinion

Photo of the Day | A break from studying



A student plays ping-pong in the McMahon game room on Feb. 10, 2026. The game room was available for people to hang out and relax throughout the day.

PHOTO BY NORA MARIANO, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Don't mistake Israel's genocide as environmentalism

by Colin Hamilton

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Since its founding in 1948, Israel has made environmentalism a key part of its international messaging. Its government, alongside the Jewish National Fund (JNF), an international Zionist non-profit closely aligned with Israel's government, has planted millions of trees across the nation and its surrounding lands in an effort to “make the desert bloom.” They proudly claim their efforts are tied to the intrinsic wellness of the world, creating and fueling afforestation efforts to make a happier, healthier and more environmentally conscious state. These claims are largely false, however, and instead represent only the bold print of a propaganda poster. Peeling away the scenic greenery and picturesque framing reveals a systemic history of carefully calculated exploitation masked behind a facade of charity. This is not gold-hearted, green-thumbed environmentalism, but instead territorial consolidation and economic harm packaged inside an oppressive system which bears remarkable resemblance to the settler colonialism that dominated the Americas across the 16th and 17th centuries.

But what does Israel have to say on the matter? A quick look at their

public messaging reveals a glorification of their forestation efforts. Working closely alongside the JNF, Israel's government claims they are building parks for recreation and tourism; urban forests and woodlands for improved air quality; creating a system that controls heat and fosters biodiversity. The JNF prides themselves as a world leader in managing open areas and forests in semi-arid and arid regions, where they work to combat desertification through their implementation of forest systems. What's more, they claim to value land conservation, a call back to our own land trusts here in New England, where they work in close partnership with farmers to develop sustained agriculture. This sounds incredible — after all, we all imagine planting trees to be a good thing.

Yet, somehow, these efforts have only hurt the environment. Why is that? Shouldn't fighting desertification be a good thing? The trick of the matter is where Israel is planting their trees. Across Palestine, where war now rages, afforestation efforts — where trees are planted in arid regions to combat the spread of desertification, where dry regions are degraded into desert-like terrain as a result of climate change and anthropogenic causes — have been underway since the early 1960s. Israel

claims this is land development — and yet much of Palestine is not a desert. Though a semi-arid dry region does stretch across the southern half of the region, Palestine is naturally a mediterranean climate, a semi-rare biome centered around low shrubs and seasonal rainfall: far from an empty land of wind-swept dunes. When Israel bulldozes over this rich land to replace it with their own trees, they are destroying a critical ecosystem, full of unique and complex flora and fauna that have defined the people of Palestine since time immemorial. Most notably, the native olive tree, an important producer in the region's ecosystem and a crucial crop for local farmers, has suffered large losses at the hands of Israel. The Israeli Defense Force (IDF), Israel's military arm, has actually sought out these trees by clearing and uprooting over 1 million of Gaza's estimated 1.1 million trees.

This has not only impacted the ability for Palestinians to sell their products on the global stage, plunging them into deeper economic instability, but has also severely hobbled the natural ecosystem of the land. Worse, the trees subsequently planted by Israel, often supported by the IDF, are an invasive species. Eucalyptus trees, native to Australia, release toxins that prevent other plant life from grow-

ing in their presence, crippling native biodiversity. These trees also require incredible amounts of water compared to Palestine's native species, serving to exacerbate an already drought stricken region. In fact, scientists have already shown that the major cause of desertification in Gaza is not a lack of trees — but rather the Israeli occupation that has led to 75% of Palestinian fields undergoing desertification due to scorched-earth tactics.

So why is Israel, and the JNF, doing all of this? Why are they pouring so much money into an environmental effort that only harms the environment? The truth of the matter is that their environmentalism does serve a purpose — as an offensive, oppressive weapon against a native population. Their planting of invasive Eucalyptus trees in an effort to mirror an idealistic European idea of a forest not only withholds economic autonomy from Palestinians but is also used to prevent their return in war-torn areas.

The Nakba genocide, Arabic for “the catastrophe,” refers to the violent, ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people at the hands of Israel, where over 500 towns and their populaces were destroyed by the IDF and other local Israeli militias. Nearly 75% of the native populations were then evicted by settlers,

backed by the state of Israel. In the aftermath of this horrific tragedy, the ruins of these former native villages were repurposed in one of two ways. Some were claimed by Israel, given new names and new residents. Others faced an unusual fate: they were planted over with trees, becoming parks managed by Israel. The consequences of this were subtle, but severe: now managed by a foreign state, the millions of refugees from the Nakba had no land to return to. Even if they did make the pilgrimage home, they would find an alien world awaiting them: a strange forest of uniform trees, a long call from the olive trees and low shrubbery they had lived among for countless generations. This practice of afforestation to claim territory has continued even today, further chipping away at Palestinian borders and identity.

We must not believe the lie that a desert is being painted green — the story only mirrors the “terra nullius” narrative of empty land that was used by early American settlers to justify the genocide and removal of Indigenous populations. If we are to truly seek a greener world, it must be one where change actually matters — and not as a hostile strong arm for the dispossession of innocents. After all, a greener world must be one built for the benefit of all, not just the few.

Palestinian residents look on during an operation by Israeli authorities to demolish properties built in Silwan neighborhood located in the East Jerusalem, near the Old City, Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2026.

PHOTO BY AP PHOTO/LEO CORREA



SPORTS SPECTRUM: NBA TRADE DEADLINE STANDOUTS

by **Seth Wallen**
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Milwaukee Bucks: Winners, but not for long

Many people were on high alert, feeling increased pressure to trade star player Giannis Antetokounmpo at the deadline. With the Bucks losing games, Antetokounmpo has been sending mixed signals about whether he wants to leave, and Milwaukee fans have been caught in the media circus since at least 2023 when the team was eliminated in the first round.

The current roster is not confidence inspiring. They recently acquired Cam Thomas after he was waived by the Nets for more scoring punch, but this, along with UConn alum Andre Jackson Jr. receiving little meaningful playing time, creates a roster surrounding Giannis that is a mix of scorers who struggle to defend and defenders who can't score. For many, it's okay for him to leave.

The team has taken a noticeable step back in quality, and multiple injuries, especially to Damian Lillard (whether due to blood clots or his Achilles tear last year), have caused it to fall out of the top tier of contenders and face first-round exits in consecutive years.

Unlike stars like Kevin Durant and LeBron James, there wouldn't be a clear reason for Milwaukee fans to dislike Durant t h e

him. left for Warriors—not only bringing them into a new era of dominance, but that was the team that had beaten them in the playoffs just months earlier.

James, however, had the narrative that he quit on his hometown team in 2010, despite front office moves that backfired. Milwaukee's best chance to handle this situation gracefully will be in the offseason when teams are more flexible.

Clippers, Cavs, and Pacers.

After being the preseason Eastern Conference favorites following Jayson Tatum tearing his Achilles, the Cavaliers haven't had the best start. They've finalized their roster, and adding a veteran guard who can do a bit of everything, especially on offense, will help them a lot, particularly next to Donovan Mitchell. Darius Garland had been somewhat of a liability due to injury concerns, so this trade more or less benefits Cleveland.

The Pacers, however, are on a completely different level from last year, currently having one of the worst records in the league.

With a significant need at center, they filled it by acquiring Ivica Zubac, a key piece, while the Clippers received some young players. It appears that the Clippers aimed to get younger, focusing on this after their early-season struggles. Although they're leaving their future uncertain, there's no long-term commitment after next season. One reason James Harden requested a trade is that the Clippers didn't offer him a two-year extension—outside their current time frame.

Mavericks have a Bad Trade Age Worse

In the year since they traded Luka Doncic, the team, its fanbase and its franchise have experienced a perfect storm of cursed

retribution until they got locked out, won the draft lottery and gained the ability to draft Cooper Flagg. Despite that, they haven't been doing so well, and with Anthony Davis injured, it seemed to be getting worse.

I thought it was the best deal they could have made; they essentially gave up Anthony Davis for Khris Middleton, AJ Johnson, Malaki Branham, Marvin Bagley III, the 2026 first-round pick from the Thunder, a 2030 first-round pick from the Warriors, and three second-rounders. Later, the trade was expanded to include the Hornets, to which Branham was rerouted, and Tyus Jones was sent from Dallas.

Middleton, aside from natural near-end-of-career regression, along with Jones, have

expiring contracts this year. Meanwhile, Johnson and Bagley are two players who averaged less than 10 minutes per game on the Wizards.

You can think of it this way: Dallas traded Doncic for salary cap space, two players who averaged less than 10 minutes, and three first-round picks that, upon closer inspection, are like early seconds.

The Oklahoma City Thunder is very likely to finish the season, for the second year in a row, with the best overall record in the league, meaning that pick will be the last in the first round. The 2029 Lakers first-round pick included a year ago will most likely be no earlier than 20, given the Lakers stay around .500 and are in the upper tier of team records in the league. The last first-rounder, the 2030 Golden State pick, is conditional. If it falls between pick 21 and 30, the Mavericks get to keep it. If it goes any higher, 20th or earlier, it is turned into a second-round pick.

In essence, that's six second-round picks.



Giannis Antetokounmpo dunking during an NBA game. Antetokounmpo has continued on with the Milwaukee Bucks following the trade deadline.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @GIANNIS_AN34 ON INSTAGRAM

Sports

Photo of the Day | Women's Hockey



The UConn women's hockey team faces off against Boston College on Feb. 7, 2026. The teams were tied 0-0 at the end of the first period, but the Huskies went on to win the game 6-2.

PHOTO BY NORA MARIANO, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

DEFENSE PROPELS SEAHAWKS IN SUPER BOWL, BEATING NEW ENGLAND 29-13

by Elliot Koplak

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Super Bowl LX saw two familiar foes from Super Bowl XLIX, 11 years later.

The Patriots and Seahawks took the field with Seattle looking for payback, while New England looked to build a new dynasty.

From the first few drives, it was obvious the game would be a defensive dogfight. With three points in the opening drive for Seattle, they scored the only points in the first quarter.

The second quarter saw more of the same with Seattle's kicker, Jason Myers, adding two more field goals to put the Seahawks up 9-0 going into the half. He would later set a Super Bowl record, kicking 5 field goals.

The Patriots struggled for the entire first half, failing to get a snap within the Seahawks 43-yard-line. The main point of struggle, the pressure the Seahawks brought. Nicknamed the 'Dark Side' this season, the Seahawks defense showed all signs of evil to the Patriots offensive line and Quarterback, Drake Maye.

Their defense was all over the second-year Quarterback, sacking him six times and generating a pressure rate of over 50%. Not only was Maye constantly scrambling, but the secondary locked down Patriots receivers leaving their Quarterback to take hit after hit.

The third quarter ended with another field goal making the score 12-0 Seattle.

The first touchdown of the game would happen in the fourth quarter with under 13:30 left to play when Seahawks Quarterback, Sam Darnold threw to Tight End, AJ Barner. This would be Darnold's only passing touchdown of the game, but it was all he needed. The 'Dark Side' defense would do the rest.

On the very next drive after being down 19-0, the Patriots offense would answer.

Seahawks Center Back, Josh Jobe was covering Patriots Wide Receiver, Steffon Diggs on a route and then blindsided Diggs after he was already out of bounds and not involved in the play. Diggs responded by coming back to Jobe, which brought in other Seahawks defenders as well. Punches were thrown; however, officials kept their flags in their pockets.

Patriots Head Coach Mike Vra-



New England Patriots quarterback Drake Maye fumbles as he is hit by Seattle Seahawks cornerback Devon Witherspoon (21) during the second half of the NFL Super Bowl 60 football game, Sunday, Feb. 8, 2026, in Santa Clara, Calif.

AP PHOTO/JULIO CORTEZ

bel was furious getting in the officials face with the no-call. That may have been the spark the Patriots needed as the following play Drake Maye would find Mack Hollins for a 24-yard gain. The very next snap, Maye would find Hollins again, except this time in the end zone for their first points of the game. This would give the Patriots some hope, cutting the lead down to 12.

A quick defensive stop for the Patriots would slightly shift the momentum their way until Maye lofted one deep that was picked off by Julien Love. Not only was the score a problem, but time was not on their side.

The Patriots defense came up big again holding Seattle to another field goal to only make the lead 15, with under six minutes to play.

With the Patriots having one last drive to cut the lead as time winded down, the NFL's best defense showed why they were on top. Pressure by Seattle's Devon Witherspoon caused Maye to fall back and force the ball right into Uchenna Nwosu, who returned it for the 45-yard pick-six. This would seal the game and start the party for Seattle.

The Patriots would come down and score a touchdown on their next desperation drive, but it would be too little, too late. The Lombardi Trophy was going back to Seattle.

The game ended with Seattle's defense getting three takeaways while holding Maye to 60 passing yards through the first three quarters.

The Patriots also did not take a snap in the red zone until the final two minutes of the game. Altogether, Seattle's defense shut down the Patriots to win the game.

On Seattle's offense, Running Back Kenneth Walker III led the way with 135 yards rushing and added 26 in the air. He was named Super Bowl MVP after his patient, yet explosive performance.

Walker was often seen walking or completely stopped with the ball, before finding a hole in the defense and exploding for a big gain. He was able to dismantle the Patriots defense that averaged an impressive 9 points a game scored on them this postseason. v

Seattle was crowned champions ending the year on a 10-game winning streak. As for the Patriots, they will look to add to their roster and hope this run gives their young team some experience for next season.

MEN'S BASKETBALL: NO. 6 HUSKIES AIM FOR BOUNCE-BACK WIN AT BUTLER

by Sam Calhoun
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For the first time since November, the UConn men's basketball team (22-2, 12-1 Big East) lost a game, falling to St. John's on Friday night.

As a result, the Huskies dropped to No. 6 in the newest AP Poll and are now in second place in the Big East standings after St. John's beat Xavier on Monday night.

Connecticut has another Quad 1 game on the horizon, visiting the Butler Bulldogs (13-11, 4-9 Big East) on Wednesday night. It is a Quad 1 game, for now.

The Huskies are unbeaten against Butler, a 12-0 record dating back to the 2011 National Championship game. Coincidentally, this year's title game will also be in Indianapolis, Ind.

St. John's exposed UConn, and Silas Demary Jr. looked like a shell of himself with a season-high nine turnovers.

"I've got to be better with the ball," Demary said on Monday evening. "Nine turnovers is unacceptable...I've got to be better with the ball, especially being a primary PG on the floor. Just got to be better, [make] smarter decisions and just being aware of defenders getting up underneath me."

Many of the mistakes the Huskies made on Friday night are not new, but the loss serves as a wake-up call for the team to address these

issues before they lose again, regardless of their terrific record this season.

"The video coming out of that game was not any [different]," Dan Hurley said, noting the tone of the coaches did not change either. "We've had games the last couple of weeks that we have not felt really good about the way we played. It came home to roost for us in this game, the things that were causing us to play closer games than they should have been."

UConn had a lot of momentum following dominant performances against Creighton and Xavier, to the point where the team thought they could run the table.

"I think when you run off that many [wins] in a row, you kind of get to the feeling of 'Man, I don't think anybody can stop us,'" Demary said. "I think having that attitude kind of hurt us, because we still got to respect the opponent and respect what the opponent has done."

Even though the Huskies lost for the first time since the Arizona game,



The UConn Huskies take on the St. John's Red Storm at Madison Square Garden in New York City on Feb. 6, 2026. Despite a close game, the Huskies lost 72-81.

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

The UConn Huskies take on the St. John's Red Storm at Madison Square Garden in New York City on Feb. 6, 2026. Despite a close game, the Huskies lost 72-81.

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



UConn's offense is still one of the 30 most efficient teams in the country. Turnovers and free throws were the glaring problems in Friday's loss to the Red Storm.

"It's jarring, no matter how many games, no matter how the season has gone," Hurley said. "If you can't defensively rebound or make a free throw, or take care of the ball or protect the paint on defense, if our centers can't do that, if our wing defenders can't keep the ball out of there, then the rest of the year is gonna be a struggle."

Wednesday night will be a homecoming for Braylon Mullins. The freshman phenom grew up about 40 minutes away from Butler's campus, which is on the border of Indianapolis and Rocky Ripple, Ind.

"It's always good to see family," Mullins said. "I think at this point of the season, it's just like any away game, any home game. It's just like we're focused on that game. We're focused on winning that game."

Connecticut has already beaten Butler this season. The Huskies won in Hartford, Conn., 79-60, behind a

career-high 26 points from Solo Ball, who was named to the Jerry West Award mid-season watch list last week.

The Bulldogs have struggled lately, losing four straight games for the second time this season.

Butler is led by Finley Bizjack, one of the best scorers in the Big East, averaging 17.9 points per game. The junior guard has proven that recently, averaging 21.6 points in the last five contests.

Michael Ajayi is a double-double machine, averaging 15.8 points and 11.6 rebounds per game. He and Bizjack have played in every game this season and are the only players averaging over 30 minutes a game.

"We have those two guys eyed on the scout," Mullins said.

Freshman Azavier Robinson showed promise for the Bulldogs this season, averaging 6.1 points per game on 47% shooting and a 43.3% mark from deep. On Tuesday morning, the team announced that Robinson will miss the remainder of the 2025-26 season due to a left wrist injury and will undergo surgery. It was a brutal blow for a team that does not have a true point guard to replace him after Jalen Jackson went down during the non-conference part of the season.

Tip-off from historic Hinkle Fieldhouse is set for 7:30 p.m. and is available to watch on TNT and truTV.



Sports

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL:

SARAH STRONG IS IN AS HUSKIES HOST CREIGHTON ON WEDNESDAY

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Before the top-ranked UConn Huskies (25-0, 14-0) took on Butler Saturday afternoon, the team announced that Sarah Strong would miss the game for rest purposes. Even without Strong, it proved to be no issue for the Huskies, who took the win against the Bulldogs 80-48.

Now, as the Huskies gear up to take on Creighton (12-12, 8-7) Wednesday evening, Head Coach Geno Auriemma announced that Strong will be back tomorrow.

Strong said to the meeting that she's been experiencing tightness in calf, but a rest from practice and the game felt very beneficial, and she's ready to get back on the court.

"I kept wanting to run out with them [...] it was a different look at the game it was a lot of fun," Strong said to the media on Tuesday evening.

Along with Strong, the Huskies were without freshman Blanca Quiñonez, who has been integral to the Huskies. Especially keeping her program productive during stagnant moments. Auriemma says that Quiñonez is "progressing her way up" and could return Saturday against Marquette.

However, in addition to Strong and Quiñonez, KK Arnold has been another of Auriemma's consistent pieces on the defensive end.

Throughout the season, Auriemma has emphasized how Arnold has evolved into a more mature player and voice on the team.

"I feel like at times, my past two years here, freshman, sophomore year, there were times where I was bringing up the ball and just had to be in that position," Arnold said to the media, "So, just kind of each and every year growing and knowing that this year and maybe a little bit of next year that I'll be the main ball handler and have to control the pace."

On Creighton's squad, UConn should take note of freshman guard Ava Zediker, who averages 13.8 points per game. The squad should also keep an eye on Grace Boffeli, who has been integral for her squad at the boards, averaging 8.9 rebounds per game.

The last time these two conference foes faced off was exactly a month ago on Jan. 11 in Nebraska. The Huskies took the win 95-54, and Zediker put up a total of 23 points that afternoon, while Strong and Fudd each had 18 and 14 points, respectively.

With the history between these two programs dating back to the 2014-15 season, when these two programs first faced one another, UConn has won all 12 of the games.

Tip-off is scheduled for 7 p.m. at Gampel Pavilion. If Husky fans cannot make it to Storrs, they can tune in to this conference matchup on Peacock.



CLIPART COURTESY OF FREESVG.ORG

UConn women's basketball takes on Butler at PeoplesBank Arena on Saturday, Feb 7, 2026, wearing pink uniforms for the Play4Kay Pink Game. The Huskies took a strong victory of 80-48 versus the Bulldogs.

PHOTO BY ZACH MOLLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS