



# Sports



No. 1 Christian Vital and No. 15 Sid Wilson high-five as the Huskies win 64-61 after a close and suspenseful game against Memphis on Sunday, Feb. 16. PHOTO BY MAGGIE CHAFOULEAS, ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

## Men’s Basketball Notebook: Despite devastating loss, Huskies pull off emotional win

by **Andrew Morrison**  
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There aren’t many things that can bring a sold-out crowd to deafening silence. A devastating injury to one of the most beloved and integral players on the team is, unfortunately, one of those things.

In front of the first sold out XL Center in two years, red-shirt freshman Akok Akok made what should’ve been a highlight reel play: A block on Memphis freshman Precious Achiuwa, one of the

most highly regarded prospects in college hoops who for a while seemed headed to a UConn uniform.

But on the landing, Akok’s left leg buckled. He turned around as if someone had hit him from behind, then collapsed in pain and, because this is Akok we’re talking about, did everything in his power to get up and carry on playing. But he fell once again, unable to put any weight on the leg, and this time could only lie there as his teammates and coaches surrounded him.

The tears began flowing as Akok was carried to the locker room, probably due to a mix of pain and the dread of the news to come. Soon after, that news turned out to be as awful as feared: A likely Achilles tear, to be confirmed by an MRI on Monday. Not even a minute into the game, and UConn had lost one of its bright stars for not only the remainder of the season, but likely a good chunk of next year as well.

See AKOK, p. 9

## Men’s Basketball: Vital, Bouknight lift Huskies in win over Memphis

by **Kevin Arnold**  
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It was a refined combination of youth and veteran leadership that guided the UConn men in a gritty and emotional 64-61 win over Memphis.

Sunday’s contest was yet another revenge game of sorts for the Huskies (14-11, 5-7 The American), who have beaten the likes of Cincinnati, Tulsa and now Memphis, after previously suffering losses. UConn did not escape completely unscathed, however, losing starting big man Akok Akok to a torn Achilles tendon

just 58 seconds into the game.

“It was a big win, obviously, but it doesn’t feel like it,” head coach Dan Hurley said through tears afterwards. “There’s no joy in it when something like that happens in the first minute. Sports are brutal sometimes, life is brutal sometimes.”

The team was hurt, but not totally lost, in the moments after. Shots were tough to come by in the first half with UConn shooting 28% and 31 overall, but the vets did what they’re supposed to do: Lead.

See VITAL, p. 9

## Women’s Basketball: Huskies shake rough first quarter to beat USF

by **Sean Janos**  
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UConn went on the road Sunday afternoon and beat USF 67-47, but despite the 20-point win, the Huskies didn’t dominate all 40 minutes.

UConn (21-3) got off to a slow start, losing the first quarter 19-13. By halftime, they clawed back to cut the deficit to just four. The score was 29-25, which remarkably was the halftime score last season when these two teams played on the very same court.

What changed for UConn in the second half was they were able to effectively run their offense and control the ball. They turned the ball over 10 times in the first half, then just once in each of the following two quarters.

“It’s amazing how when you get into something that looks like offense and you cut, screen, pass and shoot when you’re supposed to, you end up winning games,” Geno Aureimma said.

UConn took their time in the locker room at halftime, coming out just a minute before the second half was set to start. Whatever they went over in there, it worked.

The Huskies’ offense was

carried by forwards Megan Walker and Olivia Nelson-Ododa. Walker scored a game-high 21 points shooting 8-for-12, also grabbing four rebounds and two steals. Nelson-Ododa had 20 points, eight rebounds, two steals and four blocks, going a great 9-for-12 from the field.

“We saw how hard she [Nelson-Ododa] was working defensively and offensively in the post,” Auriemma said. “On a couple of the shots that she made, there was a lot of traffic and bodies on her. She played a really solid game.”

“Coming out of halftime, we were able to turn things around and turn up the intensity defensively,” Nelson-Ododa said.

As much as UConn turned the ball over in the first half, they were able to get more of those possessions back on the other end with their aggressive defense. The Huskies forced 22 turnovers, coming away with 17 steals. Five of those steals were from freshman Aubrey Griffin.

“Aubrey was amazing defensively; she changed the complexion of the game,” Auriemma said.

Griffin also scored eight points and grabbed seven rebounds.

“Aubrey and Olivia were the two that really impacted the game today,” Auriemma said.

UConn played six players all game. Three of UConn’s taller, longer players, Walker, Nelson-Ododa and Griffin, combined to shoot 21-for-31. Guards Crystal Dangerfield, Christyn Williams and Anna Makurat shot 7-for-27. This serves as a testament to how challenging playing against USF’s guards can be.

Rolling with a three-guard lineup for the majority of the game, USF got a lot of their offense from the perimeter.

Elisa Pinzan led the team in points with 15, adding four assists and hitting three 3-pointers. Sydny Harvey and Elena Tsineke each scored nine points, both also hitting a shot from beyond the arc.

After shooting 5-of-6 from deep in the first quarter, USF was held to just 1-for-12 for the rest of the game.

“They’ll change sides of the floor three or four times and the second you make a mistake, they can get in the lane and find open 3-point shooters,” Auriemma said. “We did a great job of not letting them break us down individually and staying connected to shooters. Our on-ball defense was way better.”



See WBB, p. 10



In this file photo, UConn beat Memphis 94-55 last Friday night in Gampel Pavilion. Sunday, the Huskies took down the USF Bulls 67-47 in Florida. PHOTO BY KEVIN LINDSTROM, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER / THE DAILY CAMPUS

THIS WEEKEND IN UCONN SPORTS

Men’s Basketball



64 61

Women’s Basketball

Wednesday, 7 p.m.


XL Center

Men’s Basketball

Thursday, 7 p.m.

Philadelphia, PA

INSTAGRAM OF THE DAY



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HUSKIES WIN

TWEETS OF THE DAY

Andrew Morrison  
@asmor24  
find someone who looks at you like CV looks at Jalen Adams

Boneyardigans  
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Before anyone shits on Memphis and Penny Hardaway, just remember how hard it is for a community college to even play at this level.

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# Men's Hockey: Huskies split weekend with No. 17 Maine

**by Danny Barletta**  
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There's an old saying that if you're going to take a trip up to Orono, Maine, at least make it worth your time.

Well, maybe I just made that up on the spot, but it applies here because the Huskies did take advantage of their weekend in Orono.

The cards were certainly stacked against UConn coming in, as the Black Bears (16-10-4, 10-8-2 Hockey East) were winners of five straight games — three against ranked teams — and they hadn't lost at home all season. UConn had a streak of their own, as winners of four straight conference games, but they were idle for two weeks prior to this matchup.

The Huskies (12-13-4, 9-8-2 Hockey East) showed no signs of rust this weekend in a tough win on Friday and a near-repeat on Saturday.

In Friday's game, UConn jumped out to a 2-0 lead in the first period on goals by Jake Flynn and Alexander Payusov. Then Maine answered right back with two goals in the second period by Tim Doherty and Samuel Rennaker to tie it up.

UConn captain and Falmouth, Maine, native Benjamin Freeman netted the difference-maker in the third period to give the Huskies a 3-2 advantage. Tomas Vomacka



**In this file photo, UConn beats UNH 7-4 in the XL Center. The Huskies split the series with Maine this weekend, winning 3-2 on Friday and losing 1-0 in overtime on Saturday.** PHOTO BY KEVIN LINDSTROM, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

made 14 saves in the final period to preserve the lead and hand the Black Bears their first home loss of the season. He had 24 saves overall. Carter Turnbull recorded assists on all three of the UConn goals.

Saturday's game was a more physical and defensive battle as

both teams struggled to find the back of the net. UConn dominated in shots for the majority of the game, but Jeremy Swayman refused to let anything by him, as did Vomacka.

After 57 minutes of scoreless hockey, it looked like Maine had finally broken through. Penalties

by Wyatt Newpower and Adam Karashik resulted in a 5-on-3 opportunity for the Black Bears, and it looked like they cashed in with a goal. But after review, the refs waved it off for goalie interference, and the Huskies were able to kill off the rest of the power play.

The game went into overtime still scoreless, and the goalies continued making saves. It looked like it was going to be one of those nights where nobody scored, but with 53 seconds remaining in overtime, Maine finally broke through with a goal by Mitchell Fossier to win the game 1-0 and salvage the weekend. Swayman played out of his mind with 41 saves in the shutout, while Vomacka made 25 saves.

UConn's power play unit struggled throughout the weekend by not converting on any of its five opportunities. That's an area that coach Mike Cavanaugh has repeatedly said needs to improve and it potentially cost them a win on Saturday.

The Huskies played exceptional hockey this weekend, but at the end of the day, they went just 1-1, which dropped them to eighth place in the crowded Hockey East standings. Only five points separate the top nine teams in the conference with plenty of head-to-head matchups left, so every game is an important one for every team from this point forward.

UConn's next test will come in two games against Boston University next weekend, a team that is five slots ahead of them despite having just three more points. One win or loss could be the difference in a home playoff series and not even making the playoffs. That's how big these games are.

# Softball: Huskies sweep Spring Games

**by Conner Gilson**  
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The UConn softball team was back in Florida this weekend to compete in the Spring Games. The Huskies came out on top in all five of their games, beating Central Michigan, Stetson and Purdue en route to winning the Spring Games in sweeping fashion. UConn allowed just eight runs over 36 innings while batting in 32 of their own, looking impressive on both sides of the field and continuing their great start to the season.

The festivities began Friday, with UConn (8-2) taking on Central Michigan (0-5) and Stetson in the Sunshine State. The Huskies got to work immediately, shutting out the Chipewas 8-0 behind great performances from Aziah James, Briana Marcelino and Mary-

beth Olson, who went 2-2 on the day while pitching the team's first no-hitter of the year.

After serving a quick 1-2-3 inning, Olson found herself at the plate with two runners in scoring position. The junior ace hit a single up the middle, bringing in both runs to open the scoring for the Huskies. UConn struck again in the third after Marcelino hit her first homerun of the year, extending UConn's lead to four. After another score in the bottom of the fourth and RBIs from James, Kiwi McDaniel and Devon Casazza, the Huskies enforced the mercy rule, ending the game after just five innings. This was Olson's third win of the season and first no-hitter, picking up right where she left off with her strong season last year.

Next up for UConn was a matchup against Stetson University (5-4). The Huskies kept

in rhythm, completing their second shutout in as many games, this time beating the Hatters 7-0, once again spearheaded by strong performances from James and Marcelino along with Meghan O'Neil's third win of the season.

Just like in its earlier game, UConn got off to an early lead in this one, with Marcelino and McDaniel each knocking in a run. They added two more in the second with a two-RBI single from Marcelino, extending their lead to four, and through three innings held a 4-0 lead while O'Neil kept the Hatters hitless. O'Neil's no-hitter came to a halt after four innings, but UConn kept rolling, as three more runs in the seventh sealed the game and the second win of the day for the Huskies.



**In this file photo, UConn Softball takes home a 2-1 win against Quinnipiac University. The Huskies went 5-0 this weekend and only allowed a total of eight runs.** PHOTO BY BRANDON BARZOLA, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

See SOFTBALL, p. 9

# Baseball: UConn leaves Arizona with a win over No. 8 Michigan

**by Mike Mavredakis**  
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In their first appearance in the three-game MLB4 tournament, the UConn baseball team struggled at the plate over the weekend but didn't leave Arizona empty-handed as they stole a win from No. 8 Michigan on Sunday.

"I thought the pitchers overall were good, we've gotta get more than five hits in two days," head coach Jim Penders said post-game Saturday following the 6-1 loss to Vanderbilt. "I think we struck out, what, [24] times in the first two games, that's way too much. We've got to get the ball in play and our middle of the order guys have to hit."

The UConn (1-2) offense was stymied by Cal Poly and No. 1 Vanderbilt's pitching staff in the first two games, collecting just five hits and one run in the first two contests. Sunday is when they turned things around, however, grabbing seven runs on nine hits in a huge win over Michigan.

In their first game of the year, UConn left their bats back in Storrs. Other than a Kyler Fedko single in the first and a Ben Maycock single in the fifth, the Huskies drummed up very little noise in their opener. Cal Poly's pitching staff retired the last 13 batters they faced, striking out in five of those plate appearances.

Overall the Huskies struck out 12 times on the day, and they would finish the weekend having struck out 34 times in three games.

UConn was faced with a tall task in game two, as they took on No. 1 Vanderbilt and starter Kumar Rocker. Last season, in

his freshman campaign, Rocker threw a 19-strikeout no-hitter against Duke in the Super Regionals.

The result, a 6 inning, 9-strikeout performance from the potential No. 1 draft pick in the 2021 MLB draft. He gave up just one run in the second inning, after walking third baseman Conor Moriarty with the bases loaded. It was UConn's opportunity to break the game open, but Rocker shut it down with a strikeout and a flyout to end the inning.

"There's your opportunity, you're not going to get too many against one of the best programs in the country, and defending national champs," Penders said post-game Saturday. "You have an opportunity like that where you have the bases loaded and nobody out,

you have to cash in with more than one. I'd have loved to have seen a single from anybody or hard contact there."

The Vanderbilt bats were quieted by starter Colby Dunlop until the fifth inning, when catcher CJ Rodriguez flied to right and drove in Cooper Davis from third base. Dunlop was lifted from the game after five, with a solid final line of six hits allowed, four strikeouts, one walk and one earned in 79 pitches.

"Colby was a really good bright spot, he took a comebacker and jammed his right finger," Penders said post-game Saturday. "We thought it was on his glove hand and it was on his throwing hand, and he didn't say a word, he was fine...He was enjoying competing tonight."

The sixth is when things got away from UConn, as reliever Erik Stock allowed four runs, three earned, in just .1 innings pitched. Rodriguez came up with the bases loaded and one out in the sixth before roping a single to the wall in left, driving in two. He finished the day with four hits and three RBIs.

"When we made mistakes, Vanderbilt cashed in every time," Penders said post-game Saturday.

The score finished 6-1 Saturday, after reliever Max Nielson gave up an unearned run in the ninth.

After two five-run losses to start the weekend, UConn's bats finally arrived in Arizona as they picked up a convincing 7-1 win over No. 8 Michigan Sunday afternoon. Coming into the day, Michigan had taken it to Cal Poly, Vanderbilt and No. 9 Arizona State.



**In this file photo the Huskies beat the Boston College Eagles 3-1. The Huskies went 1-2 at the MLB4 Tournament this weekend in Arizona** PHOTO BY ERIC WANG, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

UConn took a first inning lead on a Christian Fedko single to center, which was answered by a Michigan run in the fourth. UConn grabbed the lead right back on a Maycock dinger to right field off of pitcher Isaiah Page, who was lifted after the ninth hitter.

With two outs in the sixth, UConn rallied again to increase their lead to 4-1, as Kyler Fedko drew a walk and Paul Gozzo followed it up with a double to left field. Then UConn's top recruit Reggie Crawford singled them both home off amidst a lefty-lefty battle with Keaton Carattini.

Crawford came up big again in the eighth, slashing a double to the left-center gap and clearing the bases in another lefty-lefty battle win over Ben Keizer to make it 7-1.

Starter Nick Krauth had a solid game for the Huskies, throwing 5.2 innings and giving up just one unearned run. He struck out five and walked two in 86 pitches on the afternoon.

Overall there were some things UConn needs to clean up to be successful, defense especially. They made a total of 10 errors on the weekend, with three Friday and Sunday and four on Saturday.

"We gotta play better catch, we're not playing good catch in the infield," Penders said post-game Saturday. "We've been especially bad in the last two games, balls just off gloves. We're just not catching the ball, it's popping out, and when we do get a glove on it, it seems to go 30 feet in the wrong direction and the guy gets another base."

UConn walked away from the weekend with an important win over a ranked team, who they have to face in a three-game set next weekend.



Photo of the Day | 55 looking for the 5 hole



The Huskies defeat the Merrimack Warriors 6-1 Friday evening at UConn. Merrimack scored the first goal four minutes into the game, but goals from junior Savannah Bouzide and graduate student Jessie Aney were just two of the six that UConn scored following to give them a comfortable win. PHOTO BY KEVIN LINDSTROM/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Women’s Lacrosse:  
UConn face tough defeat  
against James Madison

by David Sandoval  
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The past few years between UConn and James Madison in women’s lacrosse have resulted in the Dukes’ favor, and history repeated itself once more on Sunday.

The Huskies were on the road to the U.S. Lacrosse Headquarters to face JMU where they lost 11-8. This puts UConn at No. 3 in the American Athletic Conference with an overall of 1-1 while JMU are No. 2 of the Colonial Athletic Association with a 2-1 overall.

In the first half, the Huskies managed to take the lead with two goals: The first coming from midfielder Lia LaPrise in the 16th minute followed by midfielder Olivia Miles scoring the second half a minute later. It didn’t take long for the Dukes to regain their momentum, 47 seconds to be exact, as attacker Kacey Knobloch scored JMU’s first goal of the match. LaPrise scored again, her fourth of the season, in the 19th minute, how-

ever the Dukes quickly began to take charge before the half ended.

With 10 minutes left in the first half, attacker Isabella Peterson scored an unassisted goal, her sixth of the season. In the 23rd minute, midfielder Lizzy Fox scored the 3-3 equalizer for the Dukes. About a minute later, attacker Katie Checkosky scored and gave James Madison the lead.

JMU were quick to score again in the second half as midfielder Kelsey Reed scored in the 34th minute, however the Huskies managed to catch the Dukes by surprise within one minute.

Within the 35th minute, midfielder Madelyn George scored her second goal of the season while attacker Stephanie Palmucci scored about half a minute later for the 5-5 equalizer. Six seconds later, midfielder Olivia Troy scored her second of the season and gave UConn a momentous 6-5 lead. Game on ... or so they thought.

See LAX, p. 9



The women’s lacrosse team defeated Fairfield University 19-12 in the season opener game. This weekend, the team lost to James Madison University at the US Lacrosse Headquarters 11-8. PHOTO BY ERIN KNAPP, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

HUSKIES OVERCOME ROUGH START TO CRUSH USF

WBB, cont. from p. 12

Griffin checked in for Makurat midway through the game, and her impact on defense kept her on the court for the remainder of the contest. Those three Bulls guards committed 13 turnovers by the end of the game.

“Aubrey came in and changed the game with the pressure she put on their point guard,” Auriemma said. “She’s become a constant source of bewilderment.”

With the victory, UConn has extended their record against the American Athletic Conference to 131-0. All five of the remaining games on the schedule are against conference opponents, and I’m sure departing the conference with a perfect record before joining the Big East next season will be a goal of Geno’s.

Next up for the Huskies is a home game Wednesday night against Tulane. That game will tip off at the XL Center at 7 p.m.

Women’s Hockey Recap: Huskies split series  
versus Merrimack on Senior Weekend



The Huskies defeat the Merrimack Warriors 6-1 Friday evening at UConn. Merrimack scored the first goal four minutes into the game; junior Savannah Bouzide scored UConn’s first goal on a power play. In addition, graduate student Jessie Aney scored her first UConn career goal. PHOTO BY KEVIN LINDSTROM, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

by Ben Berg  
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This weekend, which was Senior Weekend at the Freitas Ice Forum, the women split a two-game series against their Hockey East rival Merrimack. They earned a 6-1 victory on Friday but dropped Saturday’s game 2-1.

Friday night’s contest saw the Huskies (16-14-2, 13-10-2 Hockey East) dominate the Warriors (5-22-5, 2-18-5 Hockey East) for the majority of the game. Merrimack struck first though, as Mikyla Grant-Mentis ripped a shot top-shelf over UConn goalie Morgan Fisher at 4:34 of the first period to take the 1-0 lead. From there, the Huskies locked in defensively and scored six consecutive goals to win the game 6-1.

UConn graduate student Jessie Aney scored her first goal as a Husky at 6:35 of the second period after she forced a turnover

at the Merrimack blueline to put her team up 2-1. The goal ended up being the game-winner. Head coach Chris MacKenzie said that seeing Aney get rewarded for her efforts made him “very happy.” “That was a huge goal for us,” he said.

Late in the third period, UConn forward Natalie Snodgrass scored her second goal of the night on a pass from senior captain Briana Colangelo to put the Huskies up 6-1. The assist was Colangelo’s 100th career-point, putting her fourth all-time in points at UConn. After the game, Snodgrass said she was just excited to help her teammate reach that milestone. “I was very excited for her. I really didn’t care about the goal; I knew it was the 100 points that really mattered,” she said.

In addition to Snodgrass and Aney, sophomore Danielle Fox, junior Savannah Bouzide and senior Catherine Crawley each

potted goals. Meanwhile, Fisher stopped 18 of the 19 shots she faced to collect her ninth win of the season.

After a compelling win on Friday, the Huskies dropped Saturday afternoon’s rematch 2-1. The two clubs battled through a scoreless first period before Merrimack’s Chloe Cook scored 11:18 into the second. After Merrimack scored again, Snodgrass knocked in a rebound for her 14th goal of the year to make it 2-1, but that would be the final score.

MacKenzie said his team “played a pretty solid game,” but failed to solve Merrimack’s goalie Lea-Kristine Demers. “We created a whole bunch of chances but you’re gonna have to score. Their goalie came in big,” he said.

Next Friday the Huskies travel to Massachusetts for a pair of games against Boston University in the final weekend of the regular season.

Track: Huskies have succesful Valentine Invitational

by Sebastian Garay-Ortega  
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UConn’s men’s and women’s track and field teams finished up the regular season this weekend at the David Hemery Valentine Invitational in Boston.

The women’s track and field team would start the two-day stay for the Huskies on Friday, looking to get off to a hot start.

Women’s head coach Lindsey Crevoiserat expressed confidence in her team’s ability to have a big impact and build momentum as they head into conference.

“We competed really well at New England’s, both men and women, and now we go out and see what kind of shape we are in.

We know what we are here for. We should be really loose,” Crevoiserat told UConn Athletics.

Distance returned to action for the Huskies and were looking to build off their performance at the New England Championship. Sophomore Shanelle Colmon finished first in the 200m, coming in at 24.75, while Kristina Cherrington finished the 500m in second with a personal best of 1:14.45. As a collective, the 4x800 teams took first place with times of 11:52.46 and 9:05.25, respectively.

Junior Kelly Ward was able to place fifth in heat five of the 60m hurdles, coming in at a time of 9.49. The 800m run saw sophomore Ayoola Gbolade finish second in the sixth heat at 2:11.65.

Encouraging results also emerged from the 400m and 200m dashes. In the 400m, senior Kristina Cherrington finished fourth in the sixth heat with a time of 57.37, while Shanelle Colmon finished first in the eleventh heat, coming in at 56.22. Furthermore, freshman Shauntae Nelson was able to make progress and come in 33rd at a time of 24.70.

Sophomore Emma Krebs participated in the 1000m run for the Huskies and finished 48th with a time of 2:58.00. Meanwhile, Junior Mia Nahom finished 24th in the mile coming in at 4:39.00, and 59th in the 3000m at 9:29.99.

See TRACK, p. 9



# Huskies overcome Akok injury in win



**The Huskies defeated the Memphis Tigers 64-61 Sunday at the XL Center. In this photo, No. 1 Christian Vital gets ready to drive as No. 5 Isiah Whaley sets a pick.** PHOTO BY MAGGIE CHAFOULEAS, ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

## AKOK, cont. from p. 12

When head coach Dan Hurley received the news on the sideline, he was visibly distraught, overcome with anguish. All season long, Hurley has raved about Akok's unwavering work ethic and dedication to the team. In the moment, he had to coach and somehow gather his team's emotions. But after the game, he admitted he's nowhere close to recovering from the sight of Akok going down.

"It will take months, a long time — you have no idea how close these kids are with each other, with the coaches. It's a family," Hurley said after the game. "I've never seen someone with this kid's work ethic. He deserved better."

But there's one other thing that can silence a sold-out crowd: Free throws with the game on the line. And as senior Christian Vital stepped to the line for four free throws in the final 10 seconds, you could hear a pin drop. Vital drilled all four, a perfect 10-for-10 from the line on the day, delivering the nail in the coffin as UConn battled to an inspiring 64-61 victory over Memphis.

Hurley fought back tears for the entirety of his postgame press conference, clearly hurting more for Akok as a person than for Akok as a basketball player.

"It was a big win obviously, but there's no joy in it when something like that happens in the first minute," Hurley said, his voice breaking. "Sports are brutal sometimes, life is brutal sometimes ... Akok will come back and be the special player that he deserves to be, is destined to be."

In between those moments of silence, the XL Center was as loud as it's been in a long time. When freshman James Bouknight took a Vital feed and dunked all over Achiuwa, and-one, to give the Huskies a four-point advantage with three minutes to go, the explosion of sound probably registered on the Richter scale.

"We won the game for him," Bouknight said. "It's always going to be emotional — being around him, that's really my brother, not just my teammate at this point. So that was very upsetting, but I talk-

ed to him, and he just wanted us to win the game."

It was a season-defining victory amidst a season of bad breaks, the biggest one of all occurring in the first minute, as Akok joins Tyler Polley on the list of players' seasons cut early due to injury. It was a win that would not have been possible without some huge performances from the rest of the UConn frontcourt, stepping up for their fallen teammate.

Junior Josh Carlton was massive on the boards, pulling down a career-high 13 rebounds to help the undersized Huskies outdo the athletic Tigers in the rebound category. Junior Isaiah Whaley more than filled in for the loss of Akok on the defensive end, recording a career-high six blocks, including two monumental ones in the final minutes.

"When Coach told me what happened, I was in shock. It was hard to get over," Whaley said. "When you lose a shot blocker like Akok, somebody has to pick up the slack, so that's what I tried to do."

While Whaley and Carlton came up big defensively, it was on Vital and Bouknight to carry the offense. Neither had a pretty shooting performance, but the two combined for 29 of UConn's 39 second half points. After the game, Vital said that the team will "be with him the rest of the way," but asked the media to not ask any further questions about Akok, clearly still deeply hurting over the injury.

Akok refused to go to the hospital, instead putting on a boot and watching the rest of the game from the bench. It was odd not seeing Akok's usual antics on the bench — no jumping when his teammates challenge a shot, no leaning as a UConn 3-pointer goes up, no goofy smile — but his presence was enough. When the game ended, he waved off crutches, instead asking an assistant to help him hobble down the handshake line on one leg.

"It's hard with any of these guys, even the guy that drives you nuts the most. But he's been perfect — he hadn't played perfect games, but his approach every day was perfect," Hurley said, barely holding back tears. "He will be back."

# Guard play gets Huskies win over Penny and the Tigers

## VITAL, cont. from p. 12

Christian Vital scored 18 of his game-high 23 points in the second half, shooting 5-for-15 overall, but made all 10 of his shots from the charity stripe. His nine boards were second to Josh Carlton's career-high 13 and Isaiah Whaley, who filled in for the injured Akok, set a new PR in blocked shots with 6—all in the second half.

"Christian, Josh, Isaiah in particular, the character as older players and Brendan and the freshmen, they're just helping us daily build character as a program and culture," Hurley said.

James Bouknight, who has ascended from a highly-touted recruit to a budding star, had a first half that compared to the team's holistic numbers with six points on 2-for-11 shooting. He then flipped a switch after halftime and finished with 17 points and career-high eight rebounds in 32 minutes.

"Coach Hurley is always in conference with me," the freshman guard said. "When I had a tough first half, couldn't make any shots, he was just telling me that I was the second-half king."

Akok came back to the bench, wearing a boot and on crutches, shortly after suffering his injury. It was an emotional scene when his head coach embraced him on the side, but the men on the court were going to work. The Carlton-Whaley tandem outdid the young Tigers (17-8, 6-6 The American) on the glass, winning the game's rebounding battle 45-42 and outscoring Memphis 17-11 in second-chance points. Precious Achiuwa finished with 16 points but missed 11-straight points for a stretch.

The Huskies did not lead for much of the game and entered the half knotted at 25 with the Tigers. UConn took its first lead of the second half—and since 1:48 in the first—at 8:59. Outside of a brief moment, it did not relinquish the lead the rest of the way, handing over the keys to Bouknight and Vital.

On one sequence, Vital forced a turnover, kept it in bounds by throwing it off a Tiger and tossed it ahead to a running Bouknight. The freshman finished emphatically—and overtop Achiuwa—for an and-one. UConn led by five with 3:05 to play and the sold-out XL Center crowd loved every second of it.

"I think we're starting to gel," Vital said. "I think we're figuring each other out at the right time and we're just gonna stay confident, stay confident in each other, stay in the lab and keep taking it a day at a time."

"Our fans are great, they're always loud," Bouknight added. "Sometimes they're too loud and I can't hear the play calls. I wasn't shooting my best and I can still hear people saying my name. It's a lot of love."

Vital made the final four free throws of the game, in a game where UConn went 18-20 from the line, to secure the game late.

"I think we're just learning how to win now," Bouknight said. "We're just all confident in each other. We know each other's abilities and we know what we can do as individuals so we just go out and play our hardest."

The Hurley culture of grit and toughness has shown itself in bits and pieces throughout the season, but is becoming more apparent each time UConn takes the floor. Sunday, fighting for a win after losing a teammate to injury, was a prime example.

"Everyone poo-poops culture, but most of those people don't know s--- about how to build an organization because they've never really been in one," Hurley said. "We're building a championship-level culture with the way we're competing and how determined we are to win."

The Huskies have six contests before their conference tournament, the next being a midweek road trip to Temple, but are more than ready for the challenge.

"March is about to be here," Vital said.



**UConn beat Memphis 64-61 Sunday at the XL Center, and freshman James Bouknight, No. 2, scored 17 points and brought down eight rebounds in the win.** PHOTO BY MAGGIE CHAFOULEAS, ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

# Men's and women's track and field competes at the Valentine Invitational

## TRACK, cont. from p. 10

Finally, the 4x400 continued to improve, finishing sixth with a time of 3:42.00.

Field competitors were looking to make just as strong of an impact as they followed up distance.

Junior Kelly Ward and freshman Olivia Bowes were able to get UConn positive results in the long jump, with Ward finishing 16th at 5.50 meter, and Bowes finishing eighth and coming in at 5.55 meters.

Sophomore Mikayla Rodgers held down the weight throw for the Huskies, finishing 14th with a throw of 19.01 meters.

Sophomore Emma Chee continued to build momentum in the pole vault, finishing 20th.

Junior Julia Silverman and freshman Paricia Mroczkowski both participated in the high jump, with Silverman finishing

12th at a height of 1.62 meters, and Mroczkowski finishing seventh at 1.70 meters.

UConn's triple jump participants were freshman Akayla Leak and senior Gabriella Gavalas. Leak finished sixth at 11.68 meters, while Gavalas finished 14th, registering a jump of 11.50 meters.

For the men, qualifying for any event — or even standing a chance — would rely on them showing out and performing at their highest level, head coach Greg Roy told UConn Athletics.

The Huskies entered Saturday as the top-ranked men's program in the Northeast, according to the latest USTFCCA regional ranking.

Sophomore Myles Calhoun and junior Eric Van Der Els showed out for UConn, with Calhoun obtaining a victory in the 60-meter dash, coming in at a personal best of 6.76 seconds and marking his

second career collegiate victory. Van Der Els also clocked a second consecutive personal best, finishing the mile at 4:04.08 and taking 30th in the race.

Sophomore Wellington Ventura and freshman Joseph O'Brien also had strong performances. Ventura finished second in the 400 meter, achieving his fastest time of the season at 47.27 seconds. O'Brien set a personal best in the 200 meter, coming in at 21.32 seconds. Junior Safir Scott finished at 47.55 seconds in the 400 meter to take fourth and obtain a personal best of 47.55 seconds.

Freshman Stephen Sutton ran his first collegiate 500 meter, finishing fifth at a time of 1:04.35.

"It was a really productive meet today. You can see the movement by our guys on the conference list," Roy said.

Field also was able to make much progress on Saturday.

Sophomore Christopher Keegan led the Husky trio that finished in the top five in the weight throw with a throw of 18.35 meters, a personal best.

Freshman Tyler Hybek finished with a personal best in the pole vault with a height of 4.80 meters. Fellow freshman Travis Snyder also had a solid performance, finishing second at a height of 4.90 meters. In the shot put, junior Todd Steber took second and had a season-best throw of 16.86 meters. Junior Nile Uzzell represented the Huskies in the triple jump, finishing with a jump of 14.71 meters.

"Tyler got off the injured reserve in the pole vault and Nile had the most consistent meet of his career in the triple jump," Roy said.

Both teams now set their eyes on the AAC Conference Championship, set to take place on Feb. 28.

## SOFTBALL SWEEP

### SOFTBALL, cont. from p. 11

Things picked back up Saturday with a rematch against Stetson. This time the game was much closer, going to extra innings before UConn scored the walk-off run in the bottom of the ninth. Through seven innings the score was tied at 1-1 before things got interesting in the top of the eighth. The Hatters put together a two-run inning, but the Huskies were quick to respond, as steals coming from Carli Cutler and Ashley Esty put UConn one run behind with Hollis Wivell coming up. Wivell did what she was brought up to do, hitting a liner to right center, sending Cutler home and tying the game once again. After giving up another run in the ninth, Marcelino came up big again, hitting a double to right field to score James and Marcelino and seal the victory.

UConn wrapped up day two with another convincing 9-3 win against Central Michigan. The Huskies put up a combined seven runs in the first two innings, including five in the first, to create separation and never looked back. Samantha Barnett brought home James, Cutler scored Barnett and after Olivia Sappington scored, Casazza knocked in Ashlee Dahman and Cutler to top off UConn's impressive five-run first inning. Both teams would score a few more runs on the day, but the Huskies' win was never in doubt, as Katie Koshes earned her first win of the season and they remained undefeated heading into their final test against Purdue Sunday.

The Huskies got off to a good start against the Boilermakers, as Reese Guevarra hit her first home-run of the season in the first, giving UConn the early lead. Purdue responded quickly though after Madison Douglass hit a home-run — her second of the year — to tie the game. UConn's Olson and Purdue's Sydney Bates would both hold their opponents scoreless for the next five innings, and the game was sent into extra innings, the second such game for the Huskies in three games. But as had been the case all weekend, James came up clutch when it mattered most.

After Cutler got into scoring position to start the eighth inning, James hit a single to right field, scoring the senior and giving UConn the lead, but they were not done there. On the very next at bat, Dahman hit another single to right field, sending James all the way around the diamond to extend their lead to 3-1. Olson took care of the rest, shutting down the Boilermakers offense in the bottom of the eighth, earning her fifth win of the season and handing Bates her first loss.

After this weekend, the Huskies sit at 8-2, their best start to a season since 2007, and have won their last seven games. They will now have two weeks off before they head to California to compete in the Capital Classic starting Friday, Feb. 28 and ending March 1.

# LACROSSE LOSES TO JAMES MADISON

## LAX, cont. from p. 10

Less than a minute later attacker Daria Lucchesi scored for the Dukes, making the game leveled again. In the 42nd minute, Reed scored again, followed by Lucchesi scoring again two minutes later to make the game 8-6.

UConn attacker Sam McKenna scored in the 46th minute, with Palmucci providing the assist, in an attempt to bring the match leveled again. However JMU midfielder Taylor Marchetti scored in the 48th minute, her first of the season, and maintained their two-goal lead for a short period of time.

With less than 10 minutes left in the match, Palmucci scored her second goal of the match, her third of the season, with LaPrise providing the assist. It wasn't enough for the Huskies to claim victory in the final minutes of the match as Marchetti scored once more in the 54th minute and attacker Logan Brennan secured the win for the Dukes with four and a half minutes left in the game.

The Huskies will host UMass Lowell for their third game of the season this Friday at 3 p.m. at the George J. Sherman Family Sports Complex.