# Sports

Photo of the Day |



**UConn Women's Lacrosse faces UAlbany on March 1 at Morrone Stadium in Storrs, CT. The Huskies fought hard until the last minute to secure the win.** PHOTO BY MADISON HENDRICKS/ THE DAILY CAMPUS.

# LATO'S LENS:

## FINAL FOUR PREVIEW

**by Tyler Lato**
STAFF WRITER
HE/HIM/HIS
tyler.lato@uconn.edu

For four teams, the road to the NCAA Division I Men's Basketball National Championship ends in Indianapolis, Indiana, starting this Saturday at the famous Lucas Oil Stadium.

This year's Final Four features a matchup between the No. 2 UConn Huskies and No. 3 Illinois, and a brawl between Arizona and Michigan, who are both No. 1 seeds.

Before the madness officially begins, let's take a look at each matchup and what to expect.

**Final Four Matchups**

**No. 2 UConn (33-5) vs. No. 3 Illinois (28-8) – Saturday at 6:09 p.m. EST**

The storyline:

Earlier in the season, the Huskies defeated the Fightin' Illini 74-61 on Black Friday at Madison Square Garden. Though UConn was without both Tarris Reed and Braylon Mullins, a more neutral site in the Midwest gives the Illini more of an edge this time. If the Huskies continue to struggle from the three-point line, they could be in serious trouble.

How UConn got here:

82-71 win in the round of 64 over No. 15 Furman

73-57 win in the round of 32 over No. 7 UCLA

67-63 win in the Sweet 16 over No. 3 Michigan State

73-72 win in the Elite Eight over No. 1 Duke

How Illinois got here:

105-70 win in the round of 64 over No. 14 Penn

76-55 win in the round of 32 over No. 11 VCU

65-55 win in the Sweet 16 over No. 2 Houston

71-59 win in the Elite Eight over No. 9 Iowa

Players to watch:

Tarris Reed, C, UConn — 14.7 PPG, 8.8 RPG, 2.4 APG

Reed is currently the backbone of a Huskies offense that is averaging just 29.6% from the 3-point line in the tournament. His post play has dominated opposing centers thus far, making him nearly unguardable.

David Mirkovic, Illinois — 13.5 PPG, 8.1 RPG, 2.6 APG

The freshman from Nikšić, Montenegro, has raised eyebrows this tournament, recording double-digit rebounding performances in three of the Illini's four games. Seeing Reed and Mirković battle for boards should be a sight to see.

Prediction:

UConn 81, Illinois 76

We saw the Huskies' heart of a champion in their come-from-behind, buzzer-beater win over Duke last week, and we'll see it again on Saturday. UConn wins a high-scoring offensive affair to punch its ticket to the national championship game.

**No. 1 Arizona (36-2) vs. No. 1 Michigan (35-3) — Saturday at 8:49 p.m. EST**

The storyline:

The thought of this matchup has had college basketball fans frothing at the mouth since the release of the bracket, as many claim this as the national championship. Both have notched double-digit victories in every tournament game, taking rather different paths to the Final Four than UConn and Illinois.

How Arizona got here:

92-58 win in the round of 64 over No. 16 Long Island

78-66 win in the round of 32 over No. 9 Utah State

109-88 win in the Sweet 16 over No. 4 Arkansas

79-64 win in the Elite Eight over No. 2 Purdue

How Michigan got here:

101-80 win in the round of 64 over No. 16 Howard

95-72 win in the round of 32 over No. 9 Saint Louis

90-77 win in the Sweet 16 over No. 4 Alabama

95-62 win in the Elite Eight over No. 6 Tennessee

Players to watch:

Koa Peat, F, Arizona — 14.1 PPG, 5.5 RPG, 2.7 APG

It's rare for a freshman to lead a team through the tournament, but Peat is living proof that it can happen. He's projected to be drafted in the first round of this year's draft, and his performances in the Big Dance are only boosting his stock.

Yaxel Lendeborg, F, Michigan — 15.2 PPG, 7.0 RPG, 3.3 APG

Lendeborg, by far, is one of the most intriguing players in the tournament. Having transferred from mid-major UAB, he's dominated the NCAA Tournament, averaging 21 points per game. He's a true example of what mid-major basketball has to offer.

Prediction:

Michigan 78, Arizona 71

Both teams are playing their best basketball of the year right now. However, Michigan's ability to control the tempo, defend the paint without fouling and stretch the floor offensively will be the difference.




**The poster for the 2026 Men's NCAA Final Four Championship game. The UConn Men's Basketball team is headed to Indianapolis after their win against Duke.**

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