Daily
Life

Students Embrace Mud, Tradition at UCONN OOZEBALL

by Jack Zussman | CONTRIBUTOR | HE/HIM/HIS | hgq24003@uconn.edu

Mud, smiles and teamwork returned to the fields behind North Campus this weekend as the University of Connecticut hosted its annual OOzeball tournament, a spring tradition that has lasted decades.

Created by students in 1984, OOzeball has been played every spring since, growing into one of UConn's most recognizable campus events. The mud volleyball tournament is organized each year through a collaboration between the UConn Student Alumni Association and UConn Recreation.

Despite being a chilly Saturday, hundreds of students gathered to compete, socialize and embrace the messy spectacle.

"It could be a few degrees warmer and sunny, but every match has been immaculate," said Christian Hade, an eighth-semester civil engineering major. "We've had no cupcake teams, but that's also made every game that much more intense and that much more fun."

For many students, OOzeball is less about winning and more about the experience. Meredith Kelley, a second-semester allied health sciences major attending her first tournament, said the day was both exhausting and memorable.

"It's been a long day, but it's been a lot of fun," Kelley said. "I got to dress up as Troy Bolton for the first two hours, so it was really fun."

Behind the scenes, organizers spent months preparing for the large-scale event. Marc Alexis, a sixth-semester student and OOzeball staff member, said upper-level staff coordinate logistics ranging from food and scheduling to court setup.

"They've probably been preparing for a few months," Alexis said. "They organize the food, the schedule, the courts; they do all of that."

Players also pay to participate, with teams covering registration costs that contribute to the event's operations. Michael Pinedo, an eighth-semester communications major, said he nearly missed this year's tournament.

"I recently got up at 12:30 and forgot that I signed up for OOzeball," Pinedo said. "But now I'm here. It's my second time doing it, and I'm just trying to enjoy this before I graduate."

Pinedo described a straightforward strategy rooted in basic volleyball rules.

"If you have the ball, call it — pretty simple volleyball rules," he said. "Those fundamentals can get you a lot further than one might think."

While competition remains a factor, the muddy playing conditions often level the field, creating unpredictable and entertaining matchups. Alexis noted that some teams stand out due to experience and physical advantages, but said most games remain competitive.

"There are a few teams that have been in the finals or quarter finals the past few years that keep coming back," he said. "Those teams are pretty good."

Even so, early losses do little to hurt spirits. Eighth-semester pre-med student RoseMina Notch said her team was eliminated quickly but still found enjoyment in the experience.

"We lost immediately. It was cold," Notch said. "But it was great. We won spiritually."

Participants said small moments like even falling in the mud can become highlights.

"The first time I fell, I was like, 'Okay, I'm doing this correctly,'" Notch added.

Team "Big Mama" took home the 2026 OOzeball title, defeating runner-up "Roydemption" in the final match. Winners of the tournament receive prizes, including intramural T-shirts and sponsor-provided items. This year, according to participants, each player on the winning team is expected to receive a case of Monster energy drinks.



Eighth-semester student Christian Hade, left, and eighth-semester student Ian after competing in an OOzeball game on April 25, 2026, at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, Conn. OOzeball is an annual Spring Weekend tradition at UConn.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF JACK ZUSSMAN, CONTRIBUTOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Kehlani showcases variety of artists in new self-titled album

by Jaylyn Davis | STAFF WRITER | SHE/HER/HERS | iue25001@uconn.edu

To celebrate their 31st birthday, Kehlani released her fifth studio album on Friday, April 24. The album is self-titled, and it features 17 tracks. Nine songs feature other popular artists such as Cardi B., Lil John and Leon Thomas.

The album focuses on joy, "including the joy of collaboration with the artists" that inspired Kehlani, according to Apple Music. It is also a symbol of maturity and how far Kehlani has come since releasing her debut album in 2014.

The opener, **"Intro,"** is a 32-second inspirational speech that discusses change and growth. As uplifting piano music plays in the background, Kehlani declares, "Growth doesn't sound pretty at first. Sometimes it cracks. Sometimes it bends. But it always finds its way to the light." While the song is only spoken word, it's a unique way to start the album. It's also an excellent way to motivate listeners and persuade them to listen to the rest of the tracks.

The next two songs, **"Anotha Luva (feat. Lil Wayne)"** and **"No Such Thing (feat. Clipse)"** have similar themes and background music. Featuring club music and elegant vocals, they discuss romance and having the perfect lover. Lil Wayne and Clipse have amazing solos in the songs; however, I wish they were longer.

"Folded" is the album's most popular song. It has numerous remixes, and it's Kehlani's very first top 10 Billboard Hot 100 hit. The track also won Best R&B Performance and Best R&B Song at the 2026 Grammy Awards. Overall, the song is a fun one to listen to. Kehlani's vocals shine all the way through, and they craft a smooth blend with the track's pop melodies.

The next song, **"I Need You (feat. Brandy)"** is more on the melancholy side. Containing somber guitar music, the track examines the absence of a lover and the desperation of needing them. At one point, Kehlani sings, "I'm going crazy over heartbreak," demonstrating their unwillingness to cope with the pain that's portrayed in the song.

After getting a taste of sorrow, we experience some tranquility in **"Oooh."** There's not much happening in the song. However, it has a moderate tempo and mellow pop backing that makes it a serene listen.

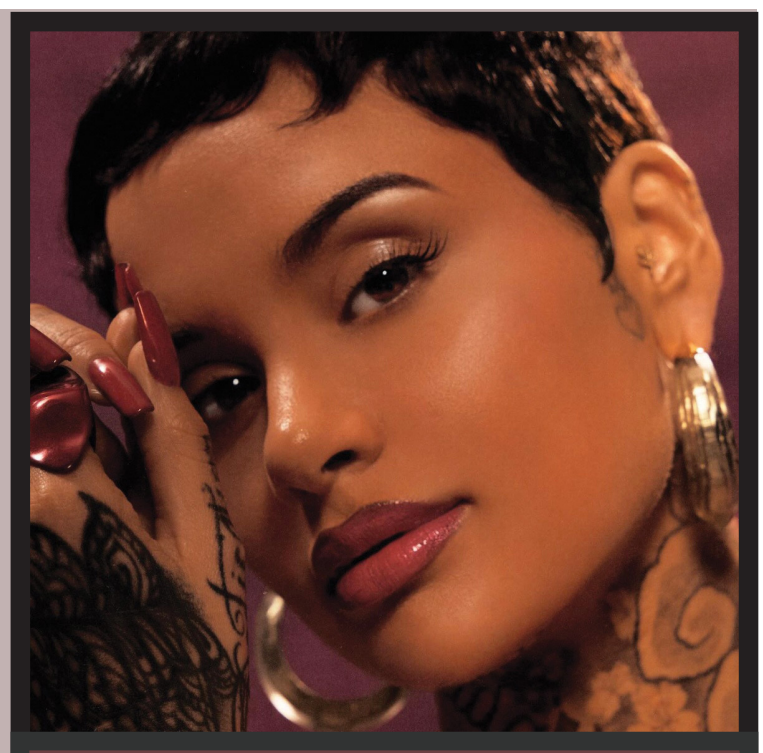
"Back and Forth" is one of the album's livelier songs. A lovely duet between Kehlani and Missy Elliott, the song focuses on jealousy and an envious boyfriend. One element that stands out is the bridge, where Missy Elliott tells her boyfriend she's going out. The boyfriend asks her a million different questions such as "Who are you riding with?" In response, Missy Elliot declares, "I'm grown, not a teen," exemplifying her boldness and ability to stand up for herself.

"Shoulda Never (feat. Usher)" and "You Got It" are two more tracks that encompass club music and R&B melodies. The lyrics of "Shoulda Never (feat. Usher)" are a little difficult to comprehend because of the song's rapid tempo. However, Kehlani and Usher's captivating duet allows the track to be enjoyable.

"You Got It" is a nice tune to play for your lover, especially if they're dedicated to keeping you safe. In the song, Kehlani describes her lover protecting them and shielding them from harm.

"Out the Window" is another popular hit from the album. The song has a music video that shows Kehlani and a few other women dancing in an array of scenes, such as clubs and rainy weather. In the song and music video, Kehlani utilizes powerful vocals to shed rays of misery and anguish.

The 11th track, **"Still,"** has identical themes to "Out the Window." Beginning with rain sounds and somber piano music, the music eventually shifts to laid-back pop as Kehlani sings about love and the complications that come with it.



The album cover for "Kehlani," artist Kehlani's fifth studio album. The album was released this past Friday, April 24.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @KEHLANI ON INSTAGRAM

The next three tracks, **"Call Me Back (feat. T-Pain and Lil John),"** **"Pocket (feat. Cardi B)"** and **"Lights On (feat. Big Sean)"** are essentially the same song. They have similar melodies, and they revolve around romance. On a positive note, the duets in each song were stellar, and all the featured artists' solos were marvelous.

"Sweet Nuthins (feat. Leon Thomas)," **"Cruise Control"** and **"Unlearn"** also contain analogous subjects. All three talk about romance again, and while "Unlearn" has laid-back piano and R&B instrumentals, "Sweet Nuthins" and "Cruise Control" contain riveting pop beats and fast tempos that make them catchy.

I think the album could have been better to me. While it had remarkable duets and featured artists, it lacked a variety of background music and melodies, especially in the second half.

RATING: 3/5