UCONN FAITHFUL FILL TWO ATHLETIC VENUES FOR NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP WATCH PARTY

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If one were to have taken a stroll down Jim Calhoun Way on Monday night, they likely would have heard the faint sound of cheering leaking through the glass wall at the front of the Toscano Family Ice Forum.

Walk another hundred steps, past the small hill across the street from the Forum on top of which a small gathering of students attempted to peer in through the oversized window, and a different buzz would have begun to dominate the soundscape.

The overwhelming noise would be flowing out of Joseph J. Morrone Stadium, where rows upon rows of squealing basketball fans shouted at two small screens at midfield.

With the University of Connecticut men's basketball team preparing to face off against the University of Michigan over 800 miles away in Indianapolis, thousands of UConn students gathered back in Storrs for a pair of watch parties.

Traditionally held in Gampel Pavilion, the watch party was split up and moved to both Morrone Stadium and the Toscano Family Ice Forum due to the ongoing renovations at Gampel.

Inside Toscano, the atmosphere felt a lot like it would had the Huskies been playing in person, even if the floor in the middle of the crowd was made of ice rather than maple.

"It feels like we're at a basketball game, honestly," said Grace Maria, a sixth-semester real estate student.

Indeed, many aspects of the Toscano watch party mirrored the typical Gampel gameday experience, besides just the long concession lines.

In addition to a greatest hits list of UConn Athletics sponsors giving away free merchandise to attendees, including both Aquaphor and Dunkin', the UConn Pep Band and the Dance and Cheer teams made their presence known throughout the evening.

"I think all of us want to go and have our team win another natty, and I think we're all just ready to go and bring it," said Hayden Watts, a second-semester trombone player, before the game.

Even before the seats at Toscano filled up, the Pep Band got the energy going, playing as students filtered into the seats.

"I feel like the pep band kind of stands for the energy inside the crowd," Watts said. "Sometimes, [the crowd] can be a little bit quiet. I definitely think that just us being here and having some kind of energy with some bangers that people love, I feel like that just hypes everyone up to a whole other level."

Though it took a bit of time for both stadiums to fill as the two lines that stretched down the street filed in through security, there wasn't a single empty seat by the time tipoff rolled around.

"We got here really early," said Maggie Carley, a sixth-semester biology major. "We were a little nervous if it was going to fill up or not, but it's super filled and everyone gets super hype."

The seconds just prior to the national anthem were one of the final moments of silence across the rest of the evening.

As soon as Michigan players began to be shown on the four-sided jumbotron hanging above center ice at Toscano, the crowd erupted in boos. The jeering shifted to cheers as soon as the images on the screen changed to images of Dan Hurley and the Huskies. The waves of boos and cheers largely drowned out the sounds of the national anthem as they echoed off the walls.

Though it was more of a grassroots operation at Morrone (two portable screens had been set up on top of the Husky logo at midfield and facing opposite sidelines), that didn't stop students from finding ways to make it feel like a traditional UConn game day at the outside party as well.

As Michigan's starting lineup was announced, students screamed "sucks" after each player's name, with some turning their backs to the field. Chants of "defense" and "let's go Huskies" staggered between the two sides as the sound traveled across the field. After big baskets, a few especially energetic students went sprinting down the aisles handing out high fives.

Fans also dressed in their finest game day attire. While some resorted to a basic jersey, others opted to don UConn flags as capes and even break out the face paint. Those decorating their faces in school colors included Maria and Carley, who are teammates on the UConn Women's Volleyball team. The pair painted their faces with red and blue stripes to go with matching overalls.

"We've painted our faces every year," Maria said. "This year, we decided to get the game day bibs and they had stripes, so we decided to go with the stripes for our faces too."

Also in the crowd at Toscano was fourth-semester student Braden O'Marra, known amongst UConn basketball superfans as the first student waiting in line for the Arizona game back in November.

"They gotta put a little run together here, but being here is nice," O'Marra said during the first media timeout of the second half. At the time, Michigan led by seven points.

Though it remained a close game and the crowd stayed loud throughout, UConn's second last-minute comeback of the tournament came up just short, as Michigan held onto a 69-63 victory.

As deflated crowds drained out of the two facilities, flooding onto the roads and past the signs with taped-over M's, the night might have seemed over. However, for those who stuck around after the game had ended, the evening kept going.

Some students remained out until the wee hours of the morning, mourning UConn's season but celebrating the effort it took to get there and the valiant effort they had just shown.

While the outcome was forgettable for UConn fans, the energy of the evening will be a lasting memory for many.

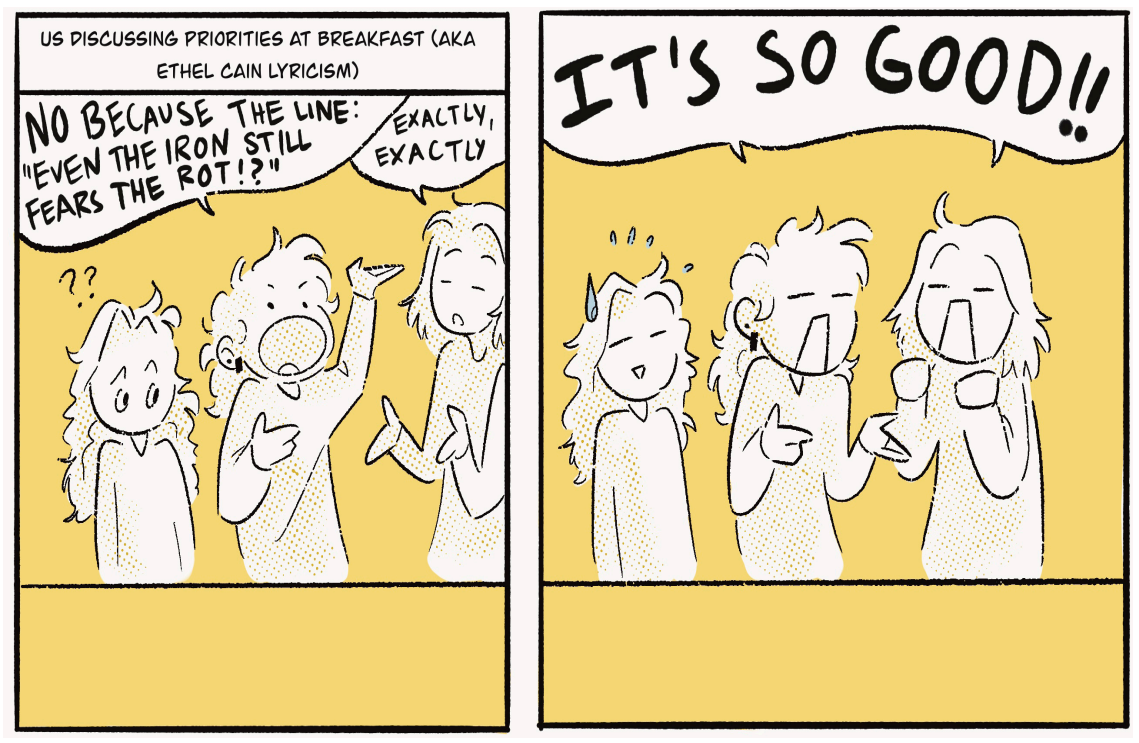
"We've been loud," O'Marra said. "We've all been yelling at the refs in unison, so it's been fun."



Students at the Morrone MBB National Championship watch party wishing the UConn basketball team good luck while shooting a free throw. PHOTO BY PARKER MEYERS, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

COMICS

CARTOON BY SAM HASS, ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS



YOU GOT THIS: 5 tips on how to survive the last month of the academic year

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We've just entered the homestretch of the academic year. After spending over seven months dealing with homework, stress and exams, we have one more month to go!

As we get closer to May, we're probably beginning to lose our motivation. Many of us may be procrastinating, while some of us might be developing the urge to skip class. But we need to remain strong. After surviving so many weeks of academics, we can survive just a few more by using one or more of these tips.

#1: Staying active

The key thing to pushing through the last month of the academic year is keeping yourself busy. If you sit in your dorm doing nothing all day, then the time will pass like a sloth, making you feel bored and unmotivated. However, if you spend your free time doing activities such as going to the gym, playing sudoku or going on a run, the time will pass in a swifter manner, allowing April to be an easier month to handle.

#2: Build a routine

Similar to staying active, building a routine is an excellent way for you to keep yourself busy. This is something I do daily. My routine is that I have classes, I do my homework between them, and then I have club meetings in the evenings. In any free time that I have afterwards, I work on my articles or play some sudoku.

Having a routine helps me a ton. Not only does it keep me driven, but it prevents me from asking myself what I should do whenever I have free time. By having a routine, I always have something I can do even when I have no homework to take care of. This is something you can do as well. By planning what you'll do each day, you'll keep yourself organized as well as prevent yourself from falling into boredom, which can cause you to feel unmotivated and drained.

#3: Find a study buddy

Have you ever tried studying for an exam by yourself but procrastinated? As May comes around, you're going to have final exams to study for, and if you consistently lose your willingness to study, you're not going to get the grades you want. However, if you study with your friends, you can restore the energy needed to get out your textbooks and practice the concepts you need to ace your final exams.

I've found that studying with a friend is very beneficial. When I study with a friend or a classmate, we keep each other on task by telling each other we got this and that passing our exams is critical to graduating. The same can be done for you. If you study with a peer, and you begin going off task, you'll have your peer to remind you of the importance of final exams and why it's crucial to prepare for them.

#4: Create a rewards system

Sometimes, doing homework and studying for exams can be demanding. You might have an eight-page essay to take care of, you might have a midterm to prepare for or you might have a research project that needs to be submitted by the end of the month. These challenging tasks are ones you can easily set to the side or ignore entirely. But if you establish a rewards system, you won't find yourself ignoring the things you need to complete.

When you create a rewards system, you're motivating yourself by giving yourself a treat after completing an assignment such as reading a book or doing a group project. After finishing the assignment, you can reward yourself by getting a cappuccino from Starbucks, a meal from the Student Union or some delicious ice cream from the Dairy Bar. Giving yourself that reward will allow you to stay focused since you'll know that by successfully getting your work done, you'll get rewarded for it.



The South Reading Room in Wilbur Cross. The building offers services for student needs which are especially important as we near the end of the semester. PHOTO BY CONNOR SHARP, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

#5: Maintain a positive attitude and focus on the future

There's nothing more important than keeping your head high and focusing on what lies ahead of you. Every day, I remind myself that summertime is near and that I only have a few weeks left. Staying positive and thinking about the future is a marvelous way to persuade yourself to remain fierce in the few weeks you have left in the academic year. It can also serve as a reminder that while you have a lot of work to take care of right now, you'll soon be able to relax, hang out with your friends and travel without having to worry about homework or school.

April is a difficult month. But it doesn't have to be. If you follow one or more of these tips, April will fly by, and when you blink, it'll be summer vacation.

We've already survived so much homework, projects and exams. Let's stay strong and finish the academic year together!