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UConn men's basketball takes on Villanova at PeoplesBank Arena on Saturday, Jan 24, 2026. Both teams were tied 61-61 at the end of the second half, but the Huskies toppled the Wildcats in overtime, winning 75-67. PHOTO BY ZACH MOLLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

MENS BASKETBALL: NO. 3 UCONN SEEKS REVENGE AT THE GARDEN AGAINST NO. 22 ST. JOHN'S

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When Big East Media Day wrapped up in October, one thing was clear: everyone's calendars had the dates between the past two outright Big East champions circled with a thick red pen. No need to keep marking X's every day — the wait is over.

No. 3 UConn will travel to meet No. 22 St. John's at Madison Square Garden on Friday, Feb. 5, in a contest that carries major conference implications.

The Huskies (22-1, 12-0) and the Red Storm (17-5, 10,1) were ranked as the preseason No. 4 and No. 5 teams in the country respectively, by the AP Poll. The two programs had a combined 11 players receive Big East Preseason Honors. The reigning conference champions, St. John's, finished first in the Big East Preseason Coaches' Poll, edging out UConn 97-94.

A ball had not yet been bounced off the hardwood, but it was obvious that the path to the Big East title would inevitably run through these two teams.

St. John's got the best of the series last year, completing a season sweep over the Huskies. The Red Storm cruised to an 89-75 victory the last time the two met in The Garden. Connecticut bested the Johnnies the year prior in the 2024 Big East Tournament, ending their season in the penultimate game.

We've already seen Muhammad Ali vs. Joe Frazier, and Rocky Marciano vs. Joe Louis -- the next heavyweight bout in the World's Most Famous Arena will not be fought in a ring. It will be fought in the paint, between the two most dominant big men in the Big East.

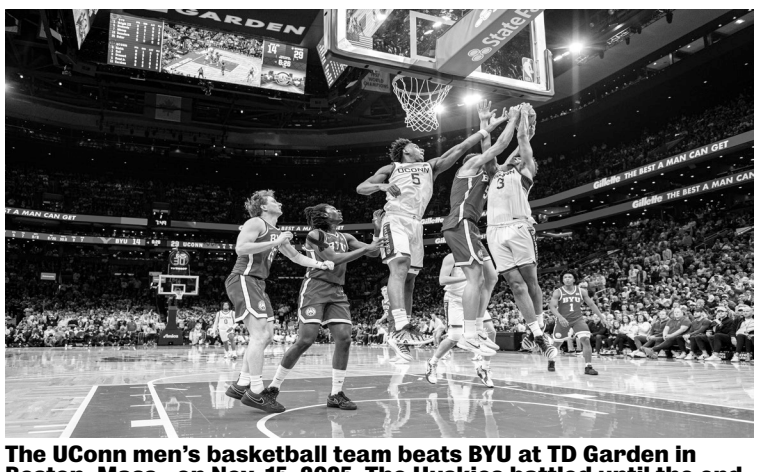
Tarris Reed Jr. vs. Zuby Ejiofor.

Fighting out of the blue corner, Reed has not missed a shot at the cup since Jan. 27 against Providence. That is 14 straight makes, which includes two perfect performances against Creighton and Xavier.

Reed pulls down the fifth most rebounds in the conference, and was named to the Naismith Hall of Fame's Defensive Player of the Year Watch List, along with teammate Silas Demary Jr.

In the red corner, Ejiofor was named the Preseason Big East Player of the Year in October. The 6-foot-9 forward leads the Johnnies in points, assists, rebounds, blocks and field goal percentage this season. Ejiofor has only failed to score double digits in one game since the start of conference play.

The Huskies had no answers for Ejiofor during last year's meeting at The Garden. Ejiofor scored 18 points, which was tied for the game high. His presence was felt across the stat sheet beyond the scoring. Ejiofor nearly had a double-double, grabbing nine rebounds, while dishing out six assists along with two steals and three blocks.



The UConn men's basketball team beats BYU at TD Garden in Boston, Mass., on Nov. 15, 2025. The Huskies battled until the end, when they won with a final score of 86-84.
PHOTO BY SYDNEY CHANDLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Reed has been looking forward to the supersized matchup since the fall.

"It's going to be like a dance, like a tango, you know? I want him at his best. He's going to want me at my best," he said during Big East Media Day.

UConn's offense has ramped up over the past two weeks. The Huskies have scored 80 points in each of their last three games. The recent offensive lift can be credited to the team's improved shot making. UConn has hit double digit three pointers, including 16 against Creighton, over the three-game run.

Demary, Alex Karaban, Jayden Ross and Braylon Mullins are all shooting above a 38% clip from beyond the arc this season. The Huskies have jumped to No. 25 in KenPom's offensive efficiency rating.

"This is who we believe we can be, who we think we are," UConn head coach Dan Hurley said. "We've got guys that can make shots and firepower."

The Red Storm are on an eight-game winning streak, the second longest in the conference behind UConn's 18. The stretch followed a loss to Providence where St. John's blew an 18-point lead which dropped its record to 9-5. What's changed since then?

Dillon Mitchell.

Mitchell is averaging 11.4 points and 9.3 rebounds since re-entering the starting lineup after the upset loss to the Friars. He started in the Johnnies' first two games but had been coming off the bench for a majority of the regular season. Mitchell is top 10 in the Big East in offensive and defensive rebounding rates.

Both teams are skippered by two of the greatest coaches in the history of the sport. Hurley and St. John's' Rick Pitino are among the 16 coaches all time to win multiple National Championship, with two apiece.

Neither coach believes that Friday is a true rivalry game between the two top contenders of the conference, despite the magnitude of the upcoming meeting.

"You can't do a rivalry if one team is at the top of the sport... and other programs haven't had any level of success like that. Your rivals are the people that are threatening you," Hurley said.

Pitino agrees with the notion. The 53-year veteran spoke with CBS Sports' Jon Rothstein about the impending clash with the Huskies.

"I don't consider it a rival. I think they're in a class by themselves. I think we're just resurrecting our program, but I don't consider that game more of a rivalry game than Villanova or Georgetown or Providence or anybody else," Pitino said on Inside College Basketball.

Hurley's sentiment does not take away from how competitive Friday's game will be.

"There's certainly a nastiness to when we're going to play St. John's," Hurley said. "There's definitely an intensity and a tension between the programs."

The top dogs of the conference will finally come to blows on Friday, in the pursuit of the Big East regular season title.

Tipoff is scheduled for 7 p.m. and will be televised on Fox.

Track and Field: The Huskies head to Philadelphia for the Sykes and Sabock Challenge

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After two track and field school records were broken last week at Boston, the UConn track and field team is headed to University Park, Pa., for the Sykes and Sabock Challenge on Saturday.

UConn will face Temple, Penn State, Binghamton University, West Virginia, Towson University and Cornell among many other teams at the event.

The UConn men's team last attended a track and field meet held by Penn State on Feb. 20, 2016, which was unscored. The most recent scored event the men's team attended at Penn State was Saturday, Feb. 4, 2012, where UConn placed second.

The UConn women's team last attended an event at Penn State on Jan. 12, 2019 which was unscored.

For this year's Challenge, field finals will start at 9:45 a.m. for the women's weighted throw followed by the men's and women's long jump and men's and women's pole vault at 11 a.m.

Other field events happening on Saturday are triple jump, high jump, men's weighted throw and shot put.

The track events finals start at 10:30 a.m. with the mixed 3000m run and mixed one mile run followed by the 60m hurdles and 60m dash preliminaries.

Then, the event finals start at the one mile run, 60m hurdles, 60m dash and 400m dash.

Other track events taking place are the 1000m run, 600m, 800m, 200m, 3000m and 4x400m relay.

Last weekend at the Terrier Classic and Harvard Initational, the Huskies showed out. Junior Medwin Odamtten broke the men's 60m sprint record and freshmen Peyton Butler and TJ Jaravaza, sophomore Del Lindsay and junior OJ Singletary broke the school record for the men's 4x400m relay.

Adding on to those wins, junior Dar Jankovic won the men's heptathlon, freshman Brooklyn Taylor won the women's long jump, freshman Brooke Struass won the women's 1000m final and senior Rachel Mason won the women's pole vault event after her and Holy Cross athlete Bridget Sachs went to overtime.

Jankovic was awarded Big East Men's Field Athlete of the Week this week for winning the heptathlon.

Some athletes you should look out for are freshman Mason Brosious, who came second in the men's 800m final and sophomore Enaji Muhammed, who came third in the high jump final last weekend.



UConn hosts the UConn Dog Fight Invitational in Storrs, Conn. on April, 4, 2025. The sunny day promoted a big crowd which instilled a strong work ethic from the team. PHOTO BY SYDNEY CHANDLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Others to look out for are junior Calista Mayer, who came second in the 800m final and senior Mia Dansby, who came fourth in the 200m final last weekend.

It will be an exciting show this weekend for the Huskies. Whether it's personal bests or record-breaking performances, it will be fun to see who breaks out next.