

UConn holds off Seton Hall in Newark to retain Big East control, 69-64

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NEWARK, NJ— Two top ten defenses, and perhaps the Big East's two best teams, went to battle at the Prudential Center last night. The two halves were drastically different, and for UConn in recent years, the result against Seton Hall was drastically different.

Dan Hurley had not won at the home of his alma mater in the last five years. Last season, Seton Hall won in dramatic, almost comedic fashion. It exemplified everything about UConn's year of 2024-2025: tumultuous, inconsistent, and maddening.

Last night, Hurley and the Huskies exorcised those demons against Shaheen Holloway and the Pirates, winning 69-64 at The Rock.

As aforementioned, the first half was markedly different than the second half. UConn went into the break leading 35-22. At one point tied 9:19, the Huskies stormed the last five minutes of the first half with Tarris Reed Jr. (21 pts, 9 rebs, 8-13 FG) leading the way

Even the beginning of the second half seemed to be moving UConn's way, with the Huskies opening up an 18-point lead almost two minutes in. However, from that point on, it was a Seton Hall attack.

The Pirates won the second half score (42-34), and were able to stifle UConn with their suffocating defense and press. They forced 17 total turnovers, scoring 20 points off of those turnovers in the process. Seton Hall's defense was ultimately necessary, as their offensive performance was relatively abysmal. The Pirates were led on offense by Mike Williams (16 pts) and Adam Clark (12 pts, 6-10 FG). Najai Hines scored 10 off of the bench, but as a team, the Hall struggled attacking the basket. They hit 41% of their field goals, while going a treacherous 1-16 from beyond the arc.

In truth, UConn was not much better. The Huskies hit just three triples out of 17 tries, with a 51% mark from the field. Seton Hall's defense was able to hold off UConn's attack enough to keep their offense in the game.

Braylon Mullins (11 pts, 5-9 FG) hit a jumper to make it 62-54 with just under six minutes to go, after Seton Hall had charged back to cut the lead from double digits.

They cut the lead to 62-60, before free throws for UConn made it 65-60 with about a minute to go (both teams were in the double bonus midway through the second half).

The final minute saw Seton Hall's lone three pointer fall, and it was a big one from Mike Williams. 65-64 UConn with 48 seconds left. Despite Seton Hall's valiant defensive efforts, it ended up being UConn's defense that made the difference. After Silas Demary Jr. hit two clutch free throws, Braylon Mullins had a key effort on the other end. With 17 seconds left, his block on Mike Williams proved vital— had the three gone in, the game would have been tied. After Demary nailed two more free throws, the game was written. The Huskies had won in New Jersey.

As it has been remarked upon all season, this year's Big East is different. UConn and St. John's seemed to be the two teams to watch out for coming into the year. With Pitinio's Johnnies not living up to their hype, Seton Hall just may be UConn's biggest challenger. The Pirates have lost twice prior to last night's game, with key wins over USC and at Kansas State in the non-conference. The Pirates are currently ranked 18th in the SM 25 Hard, and will be a focal point of the conference for the rest of the year.

The return game in Storrs comes on February 28th. By then, both teams will likely be fighting for a Big East regular season title. In the interest of the conference, we should all hope they both keep winning en route to that matchup.