

History making Huskies

Connecticut women win record 71st consecutive game

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HARTFORD, Conn. — The top-ranked Connecticut Huskies made women's college basketball history Monday night — not that you would have known it by watching them.

Tina Charles scored 16 points and Maya Moore added 11 to help UConn win an NCAA record 71st straight game, a 59-44 victory over No. 6 Notre Dame in the semifinals of the Big East tournament.

The Huskies didn't gloat, though. They didn't even celebrate. Just another night's work for coach Geno Auriemma's latest dynasty.

At the final horn they just shook hands with the Irish — the way they have with opponents after nearly every other game during their incredible streak.

"I can't think anything is more important than winning and playing in the Big East championship for these kids," Auriemma said.

UConn surpassed its own mark set from Nov. 9, 2001, to March 11, 2003. Unlike that amazing run, which ended in a loss in the Big East conference tournament semifinals to Villanova, this Huskies team has thoroughly dominated its opponents in every game, winning all of them by double digits.

"After the season, the last game we play we can look back and see what we've done," said Kalana Greene, who scored 15 points. "You don't want to celebrate about wins. We don't plan on our season being over any time soon."

The Huskies are focused on bigger goals — not just winning a 16th Big East conference championship but also a seventh national title. Connecticut (32-0) faces West Virginia tonight for the conference title.

Even top teams haven't posed much of a challenge for the Huskies since they beat Georgia Tech to start this run on Nov. 16, 2008.

With Monday's win over Notre Dame (27-5), UConn improved to 13-0 against top-10 opponents, winning by an average of 26.2 points. Even second-ranked Stanford lost by 12 when the teams met in late December.

UConn has rarely even trailed during its streak. The Huskies have been behind for a total 86 minutes in the 71 games. It's been even more uncommon for UConn to be down in the second half — only

facing a deficit three times after intermission. None of those scares lasted long. There hasn't been a need for any late-game rallies or last-second shots by the Huskies.

Notre Dame kept this one close for a half.

UConn only led 25-22 at the break — its lowest scoring output in nearly three years. The Huskies then asserted themselves, led by Greene.

The senior hit only one of eight shots in the first 20 minutes, but scored the first four points of a decisive 13-4 run that gave UConn a 49-35 lead with 9:00 left. Moore's deep 3-pointer capped the spurt.

Notre Dame, which was led by Skylar Diggins' 10 points, was only able to close to 10.

Even with the incredible numbers that this team has put up, coach Geno Auriemma is still partial to the 2002 team that started its previous record streak. Those Huskies, led by Sue Bird and Diana Taurasi, featured four of the first six picks in the WNBA Draft.

"I think that group would beat this group," Auriemma said. "But that's not important because they'll never have to play each other."

West Virginia 56, Rutgers 49: Sarah Miles scored 18 points to lead No. 9 West Virginia over Rutgers in the Big East semifinals.

Asya Bussie added 10 points for the Mountaineers (28-4), setting up a matchup with top-ranked and undefeated Connecticut in tonight's final.

Khadijah Rushdan led Rutgers (19-14) with 12 points and Monique Oliver had 11. The loss snaps a four-game winning streak that likely put the Scarlet Knights into the NCAA Tournament.

The Mountaineers used a 12-3 run in the second half to build a 12 point lead, and held on from there.

The trip to the finals is the West Virginia's first since they lost to UConn 50-44 in 2006.

ATLANTIC 10

Xavier 57, Temple 55, OT: Conference player of the year and tournament MVP Amber Harris tied a season high with



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CONNECTICUT'S TINA CHARLES IS DEFENDED Monday afternoon by Notre Dame's Becca Bruszewski during the Huskies' 59-44 win in the Big East semifinals in Hartford, Conn. It was UConn's record 71st consecutive victory.

23 points and Ta'Shia Phillips had a season-high 21 rebounds for the No. 5 Musketeers.

Xavier (27-3) won its 18th straight game, third conference title in four years and an automatic NCAA bid. The Musketeers appear to be in line for a No. 2 or No. 3 seed in the NCAA tournament.

They joined 2004-05 Temple as the only A-10 teams to make it through both without a blemish.

WEST COAST CONFERENCE

Gonzaga 76, Pepperdine 48: Courtney Vanderoost scored 19 points and Heather Bowman added 14 as the No. 17 Bulldogs earned their 17th straight victory and an NCAA bid.

Kayla Standish had 10 points for the Bulldogs (27-4), who dominated the conference with a 14-0 regular-season run followed by tournament blowouts of Santa Clara and Pepperdine at the Orleans Arena.

Lauren Bell scored 16 points for the Waves (20-11), whose otherwise successful season included three one-sided losses to Gonzaga, the nation's fifth highest-scoring team.

SOUTHERN CONFERENCE

Chattanooga 72, Samford 67: Shanara Hollinquest scored 22 points and Michelle Davis added 16 and hit two key 3-pointers late as Chattanooga rallied to win its eighth conference title in 10 years.



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CLEVELAND'S DELONTE WEST shoots Monday over San Antonio's Roger Mason Jr. during the third quarter of the Cavaliers' 97-95 victory over the Spurs. Cleveland was without star LeBron James.

Cavaliers rally past Spurs

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CLEVELAND — Mo Williams made two free throws with 9 seconds left Monday night and Delonte West made the kind of plays down the stretch reserved for LeBron James as the Cleveland Cavaliers won without their superstar, beating the San Antonio Spurs 97-95.

Williams finished with 17 points for the Cavs, playing their second straight game without the injured James. The NBA's reigning MVP is nursing a tender right ankle and the Cavs are being extra cautious. West had 16 points and made a key steal in the final minute as Cleveland became the first team to reach 50 wins this season.

Manu Ginobili scored a season-high 38 points to lead the Spurs, playing their first game without guard Tony Parker. He's out six weeks with a broken hand.

Grizzlies 107, Nets 101: Mike Conley and Rudy Gay had 21 points each and Marc Gasol added 19 points and 13 rebounds as Memphis withstood a second-half rally to defeat New Jersey, snapping an eight-game home losing streak.

Memphis got help from DeMarre Carroll and Sam Young, who scored 10 points each, ending the Nets' three-game road winning streak.

Hornets 135, Warriors 131: Darren Collison had 16 points and a career-high 20 assists as host New Orleans snapped a four-game losing streak.

Collison's assists total tied Phoenix's Steve Nash for the most in an NBA game this season.

Mavericks 125, Timberwolves 112: Shawn Marion had a season-high 29 points and 14 rebounds as visiting Dallas stretched the league's longest active winning streak to 12 straight games.

Dirk Nowitzki scored 24 points and Caron Butler had 23 for Dallas, which has flourished since acquiring Butler and Brendan Haywood from the Washington Wizards at the trade deadline.

Knicks 99, Hawks 98: The New York Knicks beat the Atlanta Hawks for the third time this season when video replay showed Al Horford's basket came after the buzzer.

Wilson Chandler stopped Josh Smith's drive to the basket with seconds to play and the ball bounced out to Horford in the lane. Referees originally ruled his short jumper good, but replay clearly showed the light was on above the backboard with the ball still in his hands.

NUGGETS' MARTIN EXPECTED BACK BEFORE END OF YEAR

Denver Nuggets forward Kenyon Martin will receive therapy on his aching left knee and is expected to return before the end of the season.

The team announced Monday that Martin will begin platelet rich plasma therapy, a treatment which uses a patient's own blood components to stimulate healing.

Zags zapped

Saint Mary's upsets Gonzaga in West Coast title game

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAS VEGAS — Mickey McConnell scored 26 points Monday night and Ben Allen added 20 as Saint Mary's upset No. 18 Gonzaga with an 81-62 victory in the West Coast Conference tournament title game.

Omar Samhan had nine points and seven rebounds for the Gaels (26-5), who earned the sixth NCAA tournament berth in the small Bay Area school's history with a remarkable shooting performance against the top-seeded Zags (26-6), the 10-time regular-season WCC champions.

McConnell and Allen hit four 3-pointers apiece, propelling the Gaels to a first-half lead before an electric 18-7 run down the second-half stretch.

Saint Mary's won the WCC

tournament for just the second time since it began in 1987, beating Gonzaga for the first time in 10 tourney meetings.

Siena 72, Fairfield 65, OT: Edwin Ubiles scored 27 points and Alex Franklin added 22 points and 12 rebounds as Siena rallied from a double-digit half-time deficit to beat Fairfield to win the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference tournament for the third straight season.

Old Dominion 60, William & Mary 53: Darius James scored 12 points and Kent Basemore had 10 as top-seeded Old Dominion beat William & Mary in the Colonial Athletic Association tournament championship to earn the league's automatic berth in the NCAA tournament.



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GONZAGA'S STEVEN GRAY SHOOTs Monday night over Saint Mary's Mickey McConnell during the first half of the Bulldogs' 81-62 loss in the West Coast Conference championship.

ROAD TO THE FINAL FOUR



NCAA TOURNAMENT AUTOMATIC BIDS

Men

Cornell, Ivy League
East Tennessee State, Atlantic Sun Conference
Murray State, Ohio Valley Conference
Northern Iowa, Missouri Valley Conference
Old Dominion, Colonial Athletic Association
Siena, Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference
Winthrop, Big South Conference
St. Mary's, West Coast Conference

Women

Austin Peay, Ohio Valley Conference
Chattanooga, Southern Conference
Duke, Atlantic Coast Conference
East Tennessee State, Atlantic Sun Conference
Gonzaga, West Coast Conference
Marist, Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference
Ohio State, Big Ten Conference
Princeton, Ivy League
Tennessee, Southeastern Conference
Xavier, Atlantic 10 Conference