

With Bird on guard, Huskies will soar

By T.J. O'CONNOR
The Tattoo

The UConn women's basketball team in the last decade has been as dominant as when Michael Jordan played for the Chicago Bulls.

The University of Connecticut is known across the country as having one of the best women's basketball programs. The Huskies have won most of their games with ease and have had a lot of success due to six factors:

1) **The leader:** Every good athletic team has one — someone with experience who takes charge of the team when it goes to battle.

The Huskies definitely have a leader on and off the court in senior point guard Sue Bird.

Bird, who has started all three of her years at UConn, always seems to lead her team to victory.

Whether it is scoring, motivating her teammates or shutting down her opponent on defense, Bird always seems to get the job done.

In her three years at UConn the Husky point guard has guided her team to two Final Fours including a National Championship and three Big East Tournament Championships. Bird looks to take her team to another Final Four this year.

2) **The scorer:** Some say this player should start on the UConn men's team. I agree.



Sue Bird

Even though this Californian is just a sophomore, she may be the best female basketball player in the country.

Diana Taurasi is a prolific scorer and her specialty is draining shots from downtown consistently with ease.

When she shoots it doesn't even look like she jumps.

Not only can she hit the trifecta but she can zoom past her defender on the drive and finish with a reverse lay-up. Taurasi is also known for her "razzle-dazzle" plays that ignite the Husky faithful.

By the time Taurasi is done wearing the blue and white Husky jersey she may be the best player ever to play in that uniform. She is second on the team in scoring this year (only because she got into foul trouble against North Carolina).

3) **The do-it-all player:** Swin Cash can do it all: score, pass, rebound, handle the ball, cheer on her teammates, and play solid "D."

Cash may be the most versatile player in women's college hoops. One advantage that she has over most of her opponents is her leaping ability, which she uses to get rebounds, block shots and get above her defender to score.

Cash is also extremely quick without the ball. When she doesn't have the ball she runs away from her defender to get open. Cash leads the team in scoring so far this year.

4) **The space eater:** Tamika Williams is a great example of a "space eater." She controls the middle and plays a huge role in UConn's success.

Williams uses her strength and her effective mobility to get rebounds — and boy, does she get a lot of them.

Williams is also known for her high shooting percentage. As the "space eater" she also uses her strength to score down low in the post.

She always is able to overpower her opponent and much of the Huskies' success this year will depend on Williams staying healthy.

5) **The coach:** Arguably the best coach in women's college basketball, Geno Auriemma has had many successful seasons in Storrs. He is a great motivator, recruiter and preparer.

Auriemma is the heart of the UConn team. Year after year, he has his team in contention for the National Title.

If you ask his players, they will tell you he is a great teacher of basketball and a great person.

Part of the reason for the Huskies' excellent play in the '90s and in the year 2000 was Auriemma's unwillingness to settle for anything less than perfection.

Even when his team blows out every team they play he still has them working hard in practice and he still gets on their cases when they make foolish mistakes.

Auriemma has taken UConn women's basketball to a higher level of play.

6) **The fans:** The Husky fans are by far the loudest and most supportive of all women's college basketball fans.

They never get down on their team and they show great pride in their school. The Husky fans not only cheer on their team but they taunt UConn's opponent and jump on them whenever they make a mistake.

After this year — when Bird, Cash, Williams and Asjha Jones (another great forward on the starting lineup) graduate and move on to the WNBA — there will be many spots to fill.

Many of the team's success factors will be gone, but Auriemma has been finding younger players his whole career who can fulfill these roles and he'll no doubt do it again.

Dance rules leave students twisting

By CASSIE NOWAK
The Tattoo

School dances are supposed to be those times for friends to get together and have fun, but why is it more work than any type amusement?

School dances have become more of a hassle than they may be worth.

First, you have all the rules, such as no inappropriate clothing, no sneaking in other people under false names and the need to check all handbags or book bags carried in.

I mean, can we even go to the bathroom without a rule?

I can understand the school wanting to keep the students safe, but come on. Give us kids a break here.

We need to have some sort of fun without all the unnecessary rules. If administrators would let friends from other schools in,

What I say

there wouldn't be a problem.

But, of course, they have to say no for the sake of bringing students from a "rival" school into the dance. For that could cause a huge problem, right? No!

So, for all you dance committee people out there:

Can you please put a little sanity in the way you make the rules for the dance and let us finally have some fun around here!?

Two kids and a job at 18

Young wife shoulders responsibility

By MIKE NGUYEN
The Tattoo

You can't tell Anna is only 18. Holding one of her hands recently was her daughter, a shy three-year-old girl in yellow pajamas, and on her other arm was another girl, a smiling seven-month-old stuffed in a puffy pink jacket.

"She's a really happy girl," Anna said about her youngest daughter, Aisha, and "she barely ever cries."

A content, healthy baby is one of the simple pleasures Anna is grateful for.

While other 18-year-olds are starting a new chapter of their lives in college or other typical post-high school pursuits, Anna's been hit with reality since she was 16, when she became pregnant with her oldest daughter, Michelle.

Before Michelle was born, she married the child's father. They both work to support the family, and he attends UConn. With two little children, two jobs and not much income, it's not easy.

Anna is one of five especially needy Bristol teenagers that The Tattoo is profiling this holiday season. The project, called

The Tattoo Christmas Presence, aims to spur kind-hearted readers to donate gifts or checks to help those teens have a merrier Christmas. The Tattoo enlisted the help of The Family Center and the Bristol Emergency Shelter in finding teenagers to feature in the stories.

Anna wasn't ready to be a teenage mother.

At first, she said, "I was kind of embarrassed." She remembered wishing she could "freeze them in time" so she could be a normal teenager "and come back when I was ready."

But Anna couldn't, so she had her baby at 17 and finished high school.

"It was very hard. I'd sometimes wake up with morning sickness," she said. "If I had to do it again, I don't know if I would be able to do it. It was horrible. I would wake up early, get them breakfast, and go to school. I'd be up all night."

Harry Potter's got nothing on a hobbit

By KAISHA LEE
The Tattoo

Life with magic, it's fantastic — or so they say.

Please, I need help!

Someone out there please explain the concept of this enigma called Harry Potter.

Yes, I know the Mr. P series hit the \$100 million sales mark in its first four years.

And that Coca-Cola has negotiated with J.K. Rowling and

What I say

Warner Bros. the biggest marketing tie-in in history, worth \$100 million, and others such as Lego are producing models and spin-offs.

I have also read the first book and recently caught the much-hyped movie.

Still, I just don't get it.

Exactly what is it about this phenomenon that has everybody and their grandparents declaring this Potter chap is the best thing since sliced bread?

Granted, my lack of clarity could possibly have risen from watching too many TV productions. But if anyone out there can help me answer a list of questions about the plucky boy wizard, it might stop me from tearing my hair out.

1) So many people are enthralled by J.K. Rowling because she is the new Enid Blyton. So why not just read Enid Blyton?

2) There was a comic book which appeared 10 years ago about a bespectacled young boy who was discovered to be the world's greatest magician.

Called the Books of Magic (by Neil Gaiman), the boy was tutored by four magicians in the ways of magic. The boy, Timothy Hunter, also had an owl and a teacher out to kill him.

Reflecting on how life would've been without children, she said, "I'd still be having fun, hanging out rather than worry about them getting sick."

When she got pregnant, Anna moved away from home — leaving behind friends and the regular end to an already stressful high school career — and married the baby's father. She'd been seeing him since she was 13.

"I wouldn't say I was in love when we met," Anna admitted. "We fell in love when I got pregnant. [Our love] just keeps going, [and] getting stronger."

"He's always there for my kids. I'd be scared to lose him," she said. She's thought about life without her husband, and said she'd be scared of

her daughters asking, "Who's my daddy?" Her husband works and attends college. Two years after Michelle was born, Anna had her second child, Aisha.

"The second time around, it was harder," she said, but added her first pregnancy was still difficult with school and everything.

The Family Center and her own family helped her through the difficult times, Anna said.

"They helped in every way they could," she said, providing her with a job in the baby room at Bristol Central High School where the children of students can stay while their mothers study.

Anna said her biggest support came from her father-in-law and her own mother.

But at first, she said, her mother wouldn't talk to her for a month.

"That was hard," she admitted.

Eventually, her mother became very supportive. She organized a baby shower that brought many essential items for her kids and gave Anna two cars for transportation.

Anna has looked ahead to her own relationship with her daughters and worries they'll make the same mistake that she and many teenagers make.

Gazing at Michelle searching for a toy, she said, "I want her to be a kid. I hope she will go to college. I hope they [Michelle and Aisha] have a good life."

Anna even sees possible careers for her kids.

"Michelle, she's playing with doctor things a lot. She might be a doctor. Aisha, she has a strong voice. She might be a singer."

But for the present, Anna balances priorities between her and her children.

"When I want a pair of sneakers, it's hard," she said. She has to think about

what her children will eat or what they need.

"I'm always the last one. I have to think about my kids," Anna said. "I want my kids to have it better than I have. I see other kids with good clothes and I wish I had that for my kids."

While caring for her daughters, working 16 hours a week, and also cleaning houses on the weekend for extra money, Anna hopes that she can get one nice night out for herself or with her husband.

"I have to save a little just to go out," she said.

Her wish is to one day be able to take her family to Disney World. She said she's trying to save for that trip.

For now, Anna hopes that she can get some diapers for Aisha, "stuff for my house, and clothing for my kids."

Possible donations for Anna would be gift certificates to a restaurant or the movies, a babysitter for the night or items for the home.

Anna said she never regrets having both Michelle or Aisha, no matter how much she has to endure. She said she hopes, most importantly, that young girls wishing to fool around or wanting to have a child will think and "just to be careful, because you might mess up your life for a moment of fun."

She added, "Don't rationalize it. Life's too short, have fun. Be a kid."

Donations for Anna and other struggling teens can be dropped off at The Bristol Press, 99 Main St., during normal business hours. Checks may be sent to The Tattoo's Christmas Presence/ c/o Steve Collins and Jackie Majerus, P.O. Box 483, Bristol, CT 06011-0483.



Joe Keo / The Tattoo

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