

Four-Peat: UConn beats 'Cuse for 4th-straight title

By **DOUG FEINBERG**
AP Basketball Writer

INDIANAPOLIS — Peerless again. Perfect again.

Connecticut senior Breanna Stewart capped off her brilliant career with a fourth straight national championship — a feat never accomplished before in Division I women's basketball.

"It was the perfect ending," Stewart said. "We had a goal coming in as freshmen and now as seniors we did that. We did what we wanted to do. It was a lot of fun."

The 82-51 win over Syracuse on Tuesday night finished another flawless season for Geno Auriemma and his Huskies. Until now, only the UCLA men's team had won four in a row in D-I, rolling to seven consecutive championships under John Wooden from 1967-73.

And now Auriemma has passed the Wizard of Westwood with his 11th national title.

"What those 11 championships mean to me is how many great players I've had the opportunity to coach," Auriemma said. "How many great people have come through the program. It doesn't matter whose name is above, or whose name I'm under. As long as I have those players in my memory, I'm good."

Starring Stewart

He won't forget Stewart anytime soon.

The three-time AP Player of the Year has said it is up to others to decide her place in women's college basketball lore. There is no denying she is the most accomplished player ever, winning more titles than fellow UConn greats Diana Taurasi and Maya Moore, who watched from the stands at Bankers Life Fieldhouse. Auriemma wouldn't argue with the description of Stewart as the best ever.

"I'll say this. She's the



Connecticut's Morgan Tuck (3), Kia Nurse (11) and Breanna Stewart (30) celebrate after Connecticut's 82-51 victory over Syracuse in the championship game at the women's Final Four in the NCAA college basketball tournament Tuesday, in Indianapolis.

Michael Conroy/AP Photo

greatest NCAA Tournament player I've ever been around," Auriemma said. "When the lights were the brightest, that's (when) she was at her best."

Stewart said when she came to campus four years ago that she wanted to win four titles. She delivered on that promise by scoring 24 points and grabbing 10 rebounds. She and fellow seniors Morgan Tuck and Moriah Jefferson posed on a ladder after cutting down the net for the final time.

Mission accomplished. The three went 24-0 in NCAA tourney games, too.

"It wasn't a sense of relief, it was a sense of success. This is exactly what we wanted," Stewart said. "Going into every one of our national championship runs, we were confident and that's what we were tonight, confident. We



Connecticut's Breanna Stewart, left, Moriah Jefferson, center, and Morgan Tuck celebrate after defeating Syracuse in the championship game at the women's Final Four in the NCAA college basketball tournament Tuesday, in Indianapolis. Connecticut won 82-51.

Michael Conroy/AP Photo

made history and to be able to say that we did that with those two guys, we're going to remember that forever."

The Huskies (38-0) have been nearly unbeatable since Stewart arrived. They lost four games her freshman year

and only one since. The win over Syracuse was the 75th straight for UConn, all by double figures.

Stewart earned the most outstanding player of the Final Four all four years of her career. No other women's player has won it more than twice and only Lew Alcindor did it three times on the men's side.

Killer instinct

Like the other great UConn teams, this version had a killer instinct. The Huskies scored the first nine points of the game and UConn built a 23-6 lead. Stewart, Jefferson and Tuck, who have helped the Huskies to an NCAA-record 151 wins over four years, combined for 26 of the 28 points in the opening quarter.

Handling the Orange's press with precision pass-

ing that led to easy layups, the Huskies were up 50-23 at the half and extended their lead to 33 early in third quarter before Syracuse scored 16 straight points to get within 60-43 with 2:02 left in the period that brought the Orange fans to their feet. Consecutive layups by Napheesa Collier restored the 20-plus point lead and UConn cruised from there.

"Not shocked by how good they are, not shocked by the things they did in the game. We were definitely prepared for it," Syracuse coach Quentin Hillsman said. "We didn't play scared."

Stewart, Tuck and Jefferson left the game for good with 1:46 left, sharing an embrace together before hugging Auriemma. The trio then went down the bench hugging every member of the team.

"There's three key ingredients that go into this kind of success, 'One, two, three,'" Auriemma said afterward, pointing to his three seniors.

Undefeated

Auriemma certainly knows the recipe in the NCAA title game, going a perfect 11-0. This one gave the Hall of Fame coach a sixth undefeated season.

"He pushed us to levels that we didn't know we could even reach or play at," Stewart said. "And once we bought into that, it was a great journey to be on."

Fourth-seeded Syracuse (30-8) had the best season in school history, advancing to its first NCAA championship game. They hadn't made it out of the first weekend of the tournament until this year and wound up making a run all the way to the title game. They ran into the Huskies and Stewart, who is from the Syracuse area.

"I'm really happy for Breanna Stewart, who came to one of my camps," Hillsman said. "She's a great player."

JHS PREVIEW

Jewell track team continues to grow

By **DON ANDERSON**
For The Daily Astorian

JEWELL — When David Fix first came to Jewell High School a year ago to work with the track and field athletes, he had been used to working with some of the elite athletes of the sport, both at the University of Oregon and at Lewis & Clark College. If the change to such a small school was shocking, so was the change in attitude that he has brought to the Blue Jay track program.

This year 18 students have come out for Jewell track, and though the team was too small to win their first track meet by points, they got more first places than the other three schools at the meet that included Mapleton, Triangle Lake and Siletz Valley.

One of Jewell's young stars, sophomore Ben Stahly, came away with three first places and one second place at the Mapleton meet.

"I competed in the high jump, the 100-meter sprint and the 200-meter sprint. I also ran in the 4-x-300-meter relay," said Stahly, whose brother Josh and sister Rachel



LEFT: Jewell Sophomore Gabby Morales practices the hurdles during a rare sunny afternoon at Jewell. Morales won all three of her events at Jewell's first track meet at Mapleton. RIGHT: Senior Trystan Sylva practices the pole vault for the Jewell Blue Jays during a sunny practice Wednesday.

were also gifted athletes at Jewell before they graduated.

"In the high jump, I hit 5 feet, 6 inches which is a per-

sonal record for me. I would like to beat my brother who jumped 6 feet, 0 inches and someday I would like to beat

the Jewell Record which is 6 feet, 5 inches.

Sophomore Gabby Morales has high hopes for

her team this year.

"We're definitely ahead of where we were last year," she said. "The coaches work with

each of us personally and we are doing better and better." Morales won two events at the Mapleton meet, the high jump (4 feet, 9 inches) and the 300-meter hurdles.

Sean Hinson, a sophomore at Jewell, enjoys the field events more than the track events. "I've put more time in javelin and discus than I have the other events," said Hinson. It was time well spent, because Hinson won both events at Mapleton, sending the javelin 143 feet, 10 inches and the discus 106 feet, 2 inches. While he didn't do as well long jump, triple jump or 100-meter run, he is happy with his personal and his team's results.

"It helps to use the weight room every day after track practice. I also have weights class first period," he said. Hinson is excited about the direction that coach Fix and assistant coach Joe Kaczynski are giving the team.

"The coaches get around to all of the people during practice, but they set aside days for certain groups as well," he said.

"We have a lot of talented people on our Jewell team," Hinson said. "We should go a long way this season."

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