



Saturday, March 30, 2024

ILLINOIS FIGHTING ILLINI VS. UCONN HUSKIES

Game Time: 07:09 pm ET

Watch: TBS, truTV, YouTube TV

Selection: UConn Huskies -8

Back on February 20, the Huskies had to play their third game in six days and travel to face a very good Creighton team that was chomping at the bit to knock them off again. That was one of several reasons why we took a rare shot against UConn and played Creighton who ended up winning in blowout fashion. However, we also stated in our writeup: "The Huskies don't figure to lose many games, if any, between now and April" and that has held true. After that wake up call in Omaha, Dan Hurley's Huskies have reeled off 10 victories in a row with 8 of them by double digits, including all three games here in the NCAA Tournament. They have steamrolled their opponents and Hurley's team rarely takes their foot off the gas pedal.

UConn entered the NCAA Tournament ranked No. 1 by averaging 126.6 points per 100 possessions, trailing only 2018 champion Villanova (127.4) and 2015 runner-up Wisconsin (126.8) for the best of any team's adjusted offensive efficiency since 2001. They look every beat as dominant as last year's team which rolled through March Madness and into the Final Four like few teams before them have. But as good as their offense is, their defense is also elite and they don't rely on just one or two players to carry them.

Hurley has done an incredible job with the defending champions, overcoming some players who left for the NBA, but benefited from returning sophomore Donovan Clingan, who at 7-foot-2 and 280lbs could have been a first-round NBA draft pick but decided to come back for more seasoning.

Today, they face the Illinois Fighting Illini who have had an excellent tournament, dominating Morehead State (#116 on KenPom) and Duquesne (#88) before holding on to defeat Iowa State (#8) by 3 points. That was their first win this season versus a team in the top 15 on KenPom after losing the previous four (UT, Marquette and Purdue twice). The Fighting Illini have an excellent offense that can typically go toe-to-toe with any other team, but their weakness is their defense. They rarely force turnovers and they often struggle getting defensive rebounds. This is a real problem facing a team like UConn (and Clingan) who figures to wear them down in the 2nd half. Look for a close game early and UConn to pull away down the stretch.

If a single game you purchased does not win based on the point spread, you will receive the next equivalent game FREE OF CHARGE.

Any questions or comments can be sent to: wiz@wizardraceandsports.com

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