

Administration of Barack Obama, 2015

Remarks Honoring the NCAA Women's Basketball Champion University of Connecticut Huskies

September 15, 2015

Everybody, have a seat. Welcome to the White House. And welcome back to the—surprisingly enough—NCAA Champions, the UConn Huskies! We have some rabid Members of Congress here today. And not only do we have the—some of the current delegation, but we also have Connecticut's own former Senator Chris Dodd here.

We have the chairman of the University of Connecticut's Board of Trustees, Larry McHugh is here. Give him a big round of applause. The Huskies' athletic director, Warde Manuel, who is having a pretty good run, it appears. And a frequent visitor and friend to the White House, Coach Geno Auriemma.

As some of you may be aware, this is Coach's 10th championship. This is this team's third visit in a row. They are now certified to provide White House tours. *[Laughter]* I was telling folks, this is becoming like the annual Christmas tree lighting. *[Laughter]* We do this every year around this time.

Now, last season began with something unusual for these Huskies, which was a loss. In their second game, Stanford needed overtime to snap UConn's 47-game winning streak. For this team, it was just a wakeup call. There was, as Associate Head Coach Chris Dailey would say, no dilly and no dally. *[Laughter]*

So Breanna Stewart, the National Player of the Year 2 years in a row—she has game—*[laughter]*—she reminded everybody how hard this team works to be the best. She said, "We make it look easier than it is, but it comes with a lot of hard work. We don't just step on the court and get the trophy. We have to get better. Each year, it seems there is someone else trying to test us and push us to our breaking point."

So Breanna may have been Player of the Year, but she was far from alone. This group of young women understand the concept of team. And this team was loaded. Kia Nurse. Morgan Tuck. Kaleena Mosqueda-Lewis, who I will not challenge in a "horse" game. *[Laughter]* The Huskies' point guard in the past two championships, Moriah Jefferson, who's got speed. After they won this last championship game, Moriah said: "I think this one for me is by far the most exciting. It's definitely one of the ones that means the most because we had to fight so hard."

And so now, here they are. And like my daughters, they apparently like Beyoncé, and they are now running the world.

That competitive spirit extends to their marathon Uno tournaments in the locker room. Kiah Stokes, one of the hardest working players on and off the court, is the reigning locker room Uno champion. Raise—*[laughter]*. Go ahead and—she's proud of that. They're also academic all-stars. These women won an award for achieving the highest GPA of any women's basketball team in their conference, and half the team made the Dean's List. So that deserves a big round of applause. *[Applause]* Way to go. I do—you know, when I see the men's teams, generally I say, you know, have you paid attention to the women's teams? *[Laughter]* And they go, yeah. *[Laughter]*

Over the past 4 years, every Husky who has completed their 4 years of eligibility at UConn has graduated. And that's something worth celebrating.

These women are also all-stars in their communities. They run Thanksgiving and winter food drives. They help stock shelves at local food banks. They put on a Christmas party for children with terminal illnesses. They spend their afternoon with senior citizens. They host basketball clinics and bike drives for kids in downtown Hartford.

So they are outstanding basketball players, more importantly, outstanding citizens, outstanding role models for our kids and not just for our girls, but also for our boys. They are fun to be with, I've gotten used to it. *[Laughter]* And I couldn't be prouder of them.

And I always say this, but it bears repeating: When I've got two daughters who are tall and gorgeous and athletic, for them to know that they've got a whole bunch of people ahead of them who are doing great stuff, it empowers them, and it makes me feel very proud to be with these outstanding young women.

So congratulations to all the Huskies. I don't want to jinx it: No team has ever won four in a row. *[Laughter]* I'm just saying. *[Laughter]* You get here one more time, we might have to name the White House Basketball Court after you, or at least, you can guide the tour. *[Laughter]*

So with that, let me have Coach Auriemma say a few words. And as I said before, no bunny ears this time. *[Laughter]* All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:07 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Breanna Stewart, Morgan Tuck, and Kaleena Mosqueda-Lewis, forwards, Kia Nurse, guard, and Kiah Stokes, center, University of Connecticut women's basketball team; and musician Beyoncé G. Knowles-Carter.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : NCAA women's basketball champion University of Connecticut Huskies.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Auriemma, Geno; Dailey, Chris; Dodd, Christopher J.; Jefferson, Moriah; Knowles-Carter, Beyoncé G.; Manuel, Warde J.; McHugh, Lawrence D.; Mosqueda-Lewis, Kaleena; Nurse, Kia; Obama, Malia; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Stewart, Breanna; Stokes, Kiah; Tuck, Morgan.

Subjects: NCAA championship teams; Sports : Basketball; Voluntarism.

DCPD Number: DCPD201500621.