

# Stony Brook Women's Basketball Falls to NCAA's Last Winless Team, Hartford

By **Kenneth Fermin** - February 27, 2020



*Junior forward McKenzie Bushee taking a shot against Hartford on Wednesday, Jan. 15. Bushee filled in nicely for the injured India Pagan by recording a double-double and a game-high 11 rebounds in the loss to Hartford on Wednesday, Feb. 26. PHOTO CREDIT: JIM HARRISON- STONY BROOK ATHLETICS*

For a team that has celebrated plenty this season, **Stony Brook Women's Basketball** will remember Wednesday night as one of the most upsetting in program history.

**The Seawolves** entered Feb. 26 fresh off a loss against the **Maine Back Bears**, the **2019 America East Champions** and current second-place team in the America East. Stony Brook looked like it would take out its frustrations against the hapless **Hartford Hawks**, the only winless team across **NCAA Basketball**. What seemed like a sure-win on paper, turned into a heartbreaking defeat for Stony Brook.

Stony Brook fell to Hartford 70-67 in Hartford, CT, dropping its second-consecutive game for the first time in over 13 months. Head coach Morgan Valley earned her first victory as the Hawks head coach.

The bad news piled on for the Seawolves as junior forward **India Pagan**, their leading field-goal shooter, missed her hometown return with a leg injury. Pagan did not dress to play against Hartford and was sporting a walking boot throughout the contest. Although neither head coach **Caroline McCombs** nor Pagan have given direct confirmation, it seems unlikely the junior will play again until playoffs begin.

"India Pagan . . . is allowing an injury time to mend before the America East playoffs," according to the Stony Brook [postgame press release](#).

Hartford had less than a five percent chance of upsetting Stony Brook, according to **ESPN Stats and Info's 'Basketball Power Index.'** The Hawks entered Wednesday night with the sixth-worst NCAA RPI ranking in the nation at 346 out of 351 teams. The victory also snapped a 30 game losing streak dating back to the 2019 America East Finals. The Hartford team's last win prior to Wednesday was, ironically enough, against Stony Brook, during the America East Semifinals in Hartford, CT.

The Seawolves had one final shot to tie the game, unlike in Sunday's overtime loss against Maine. Junior forward **McKenzie Bushee** grabbed a rebound setting up the Seawolves for a buzzer-beater opportunity. Sophomore guard **Anastasia Warren** put up the long-range three point shot over the defense, but it clanked off the back of the rim.

Stony Brook found itself in a familiar position after trailing by seven points with under two minutes remaining. Although the Seawolves were able to tighten up the deficit for the fifth consecutive game, it was the first time all season that the team could not match a conference opponent before the regulation buzzer expired.

Stony Brook was down early and often against winless-Hartford, burning an early first quarter timeout after surrendering an 11-2 run. The Hawks fed off a game-high 66 percent shooting tally in the second quarter and grabbed the 40-24 with just over two minutes left in the first half.

However, the Seawolves sparked a rally of their own, which cut the deficit at the half to seven.

Warren fed off the momentum in the third and capped off the 23-6 run with a successful jump shot, giving Stony Brook its first lead of the night. The Seawolves entered the fourth quarter clinging on to the 50-49 lead.

Stony Brook was up by seven early in the fourth, but redshirt-freshman **Azariah Wade** reignited the spark in the Hartford team's offense. Wade turned the tide by converting an 'and-one' scoring opportunity and gave the Hawks the lead after sinking two free throws. The team never looked back and flipped the game by taking a seven point advantage.

Although Hartford attacked its opponents around the perimeter, much of the team's damage came from behind the arc and the charity stripe. **Kaela Dothard, Jada Lucas and Carmen Villalobos** each knocked down three 3-pointers– with Villalobos and Lucas leading the game with 20 and 16 points, respectively. Forty-seven percent of the Hawks' field-goals were sent from downtown. The team also sank 13 free throws, with Wade leading the way by draining her five attempts.

Bushee stepped up for Stony Brook in place of the injured Pagan. The forward finished with 10 points and a game high 11 boards– grabbing eight on offense. **Kaela Hilaire, Victoria Johnson, Oksana Gouchie Provencher, and Hailey Zeise** all led the team with 11 points each.

The saving grace for Stony Brook is that the loss does not affect their position in the standings, and it will not face Hartford again this postseason. The Hawks were already eliminated from playoff contention and will finish last in the conference even with the victory.

While the Seawolves retained the top seed in the conference, the next match could be a preview of their **America East Quarterfinals** game. Stony Brook will wrap up the regular season against the **UAlbany Great Danes**, who are the eighth seed in the conference. If the Great Danes remain there, both teams will play in a rematch on Wednesday, March 4 at 6:30 p.m.

The Seawolves will have a chip on their shoulders when they return home and wrap up the regular season against the Great Danes on Saturday, Feb. 29 at **Island Federal Arena**. The team will look to finish the regular season at 14-2 and earn its fourth consecutive 'Senior Day' victory. Tip-off is set for 12:30 p.m. and the game will be broadcast on **SNY** and **WUSB 90.1 FM**.

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