

Quinnipiac women’s tennis aiming for more fall success in 2026

By **NOAH KIM**
Staff Writer

Quinnipiac women’s tennis enters the 2026 fall season off the back of its second straight undefeated season and its fourth MAAC title in five years. Further cementing its dominance, junior Willow Renton won her second consecutive MAAC Player of the Year award and head coach Paula Miller earned her ninth MAAC Coach of the Year award.

One of Quinnipiac’s strong suits has been its team energy, with players constantly being each other’s No. 1 supporters between courts.

“Paula always really wants us to be really energetic,” senior Caitlin Flower said. “I think that’s something our team has really worked on.”

Whenever someone gets a big point, everyone congratulates them; whenever someone is frustrated, they are there to pick each other up.

“It honestly makes the match 10 times more enjoyable,” Renton said.

Another one of Quinnipiac’s strong suits is familiarity, as the Bobcats only saw one departure from last year’s team in Vera Sekerina

‘26. Among the returners are five Bobcats who were recognized for MAAC awards last spring. Renton and Flower were named First-Team All-MAAC doubles, while senior Caroline Schulson and junior Isabella Sicignano were named Second-Team All-MAAC Doubles. Renton was also a unanimous selection as First-Team All-MAAC singles along with senior Isabella Baker, with Flower and Sekerina making Second Team All-MAAC Singles.

“They know how to compete,” Miller said. “They know how to, if they’re losing, come back.”

To partner with familiarity is the Bobcats’ chemistry, particularly in some of the doubles pairings. The top two pairs, Renton and Flower as well as Schulson and Sicignano, are back.

For Renton and Flower, it will be their third season together, taking All-MAAC First-Team doubles honors both seasons as a pairing, finishing a perfect 7-0 during MAAC play last spring.

“I absolutely love playing with Willow,” Flower said. “This is our third year playing together now. I think our chemistry grows every single year.”

Meanwhile for Schulson and Sicignano, their first season together proved a fruitful one, going 3-0 in MAAC play and ending with 12 wins on the year. For the fall, they will be aiming to return to the ITA Regional Championships where they made it to the second round.

“I think we compliment each other as a pair,” Schulson said. “We set each other up very nicely.”

The fall season presents a different outlook compared to the spring, as players return to playing matches after the summer off. In the fall, there is no tracking of wins and losses, as the common format for matches is Hidden Duals, where a group of teams plays at a host venue over a series of days, individual match results are kept, there is no scoring like during the spring. The format gives an opportunity for players to work on their game at competition pace, allowing them to prepare for when records are kept in spring.

“It is a way to get the kinks out and learn how each other

play, and just get ready for the spring,” Sicignano said.

This is particularly helpful for players new to collegiate tennis, such as Quinnipiac’s two freshmen, Josephine Derouare and Nora Jones, giving them time to learn the game before conference play.

“Freshmen coming in a lot of times do struggle being on a team,” Miller said. “A lot of people have been in an individual sport usually.”

Though the fall season presents an opportunity for players transferring in to adjust to their new surroundings. Junior Sia Mahajan comes to Quinnipiac after two years with Delaware State, looking to slot in like Baker did last season, transferring to the Bobcats after two years with Bowling Green State.

“I don’t think we’re struggling team-wise,” Miller said. “The chemistry is amazing, which is awesome.”

Despite the fall season presenting as a sort of tune-up to spring, it does not mean that there is any change in effort for the players. There are still a number of more individual events in the fall season through the ITA, notably the ITA Regional Championships and ITA Conference Masters Championship.

“Obviously, we’re still competing to our best ability,” Schulson said. “We want to win.”

Quinnipiac opened its season hosting the QU Hidden Duals from Sept. 11-13, winning 14 of 15 matches against the New Haven Chargers and then eight of ten matches against the Army Black Knights. Its third scheduled match with the Wesleyan Cardinals was cancelled due to inclement weather.

The Bobcats then head to Army for the West Point Hidden Duals from Sept. 25-27. They will hope to repeat the success they had against the Black Knights at the QU Hidden Duals, though Army had the better of Quinnipiac in West Point last year, taking six of the eight matches.

Quinnipiac then returns to Hamden to host the Metro Masters Tournament for the third straight season from Oct. 2-4. The Bobcats will be aiming to sweep the tournament as they did last year, with Renton winning the singles title and Renton and Flower taking the doubles title. The winners will earn automatic bids to the ITA Conference Masters Championship



AMBER EDWARDS/CHRONICLE

Senior Caroline Schulson celebrates with junior Isabella Sicignano against Army Sept. 12.

from Nov. 5-8 at the Rome Tennis Center in Rome, Georgia.

The Bobcats will then try to qualify into the ITA Regional Championships from Oct. 8-11, this year hosted by Yale in New Haven.

Last fall, five Bobcats qualified for the main championship. Renton and Baker qualified in singles. While Renton automatically qualified, Baker fought through the qualifying bracket and was one of 16 players to play-in to the main tournament. Renton fell in the first round to Boston College junior Olivia Benton, meanwhile Baker kept her momentum rolling, advancing to the second round before losing to Yale senior Orly Ogilvy. In doubles, Renton and Flower and Schulson and Sicignano both qualified, and both made it through the first round, with Renton and Flower falling just shy of the quarterfinals.

Quinnipiac will close its fall season with the URI Hidden Duals from Oct. 24-25; its opponents are yet to be announced.



COLLEEN DIETHER/CHRONICLE

Senior Caitlin Flower serves against Army Sept. 12.

Field hockey bounces back with a 2-1 overtime win against Hofstra

By **GAVIN MCNEAL**
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After losing three straight, Quinnipiac field hockey headed back home to face the Hofstra Pride in its last non-conference game before the squad starts Northeast Conference play. After failing to find a winner in regulation, Quinnipiac scored with under a minute left to get back in the win column with a 2-1 overtime victory.

The Bobcats came into the game with the current NEC Defensive Player and Rookie of the Week, freshman goalkeeper Meike van Schoot, who made 23 saves over two games last weekend against the Bucknell Bison and the Brown Bears. However, in this game, van Schoot only faced three shots on target, saving two of them.

Right out of the gate, Quinnipiac controlled the ball, moving it around its defensive half and making Hofstra chase constantly. That did not stop the Pride, though, pouncing on their first opportunity of the afternoon. After winning a fight for the ball in the shooting circle, senior forward/mid-

fielder Tess Satterfield passed to freshman forward Cara Zapach, who directed the ball into the goal to give the Pride a 1-0 lead, less than six minutes into the game.

Quinnipiac did not stop the pressure after the early goal. Attack after attack was launched on the Hofstra net, but sophomore goalkeeper Luci Hollister kept producing save after save. However, the Bobcats did not fold in a potentially frustrating situation.

Pressing Hofstra in its defensive half, senior forward Martina Calveira stole the ball right off a Hofstra defender. She slid it across to sophomore forward Rozemarijn van Keulen, who fired it past Hollister, tying the game at one.

Tying the game up less than six minutes after going down a goal gave the Bobcats more of an incentive to take the lead and put the game out of reach early.

After the breakthrough goal to tie the game, Hollister went right back to making incredible save after incredible save, the next one more impressive than the previous. Without this effort from the Hofstra

goalkeeper, the game could have gotten out of hand quickly.

With the game still tied after the end of the first quarter, Quinnipiac looked to take the lead before halftime.

Sophomore defender Maaïke van Wensen had a long range pass from the Quinnipiac defensive half to set up her teammates with an attacking opportunity, but it was to no avail.

At half, the score remained 1-1. Quinnipiac led in shots 7-3 and shots on goal 6-1.

The trend of the Bobcats controlling the game did not stop after halftime.

Quinnipiac was once again on the offensive, forcing Hollister to continue to keep her team equal with the Bobcats. Her counterpart van Schoot was finally tested this half as well, making her only two saves of the entire game.

Both defenses proved to be vital for the rest of the second half as the score remained 1-1 through the end of regulation.

However, it was overtime where a winner was found. With under a minute to go, the

Bobcats made one last effort to end the game.

A loose ball in the shooting circle found its way to senior forward Ava Bleier, who buried it in the goal to give the Bobcats the 2-1 win over Hofstra. “I honestly kind of blacked out,” Bleier said while describing her game winning goal. “It was exciting.” A much needed win for the Bobcats before they look to continue this new winning streak in NEC play.

“Grit is one of our core values, and I think with making this change I really want to dominate,” head coach Nina Klein said, talking about the change in conferences and what mindset that brings.

Today was also the team’s Mental Health Awareness game, and senior goalie Audrey Everett made it a point of how much this game means to her and her team.

“The fact we could have a game dedicated to mental health is awesome,” Everett said.

Next on the table for the Bobcats is their first game back in the NEC against in-state rivals Sacred Heart at 11a.m. on Friday, Sept. 18, in New Haven, Connecticut.