



TYLER MIGNAULT/ CHRONICLE

From California to Connecticut: Sophia Fujita’s journey to Quinnipiac history

By **EMILY MARQUIS**
Associate Sports Editor

Nearly every program has a figure that defines it. Someone that embodies the team spirit, who lets their game speak for itself. Someone who turns heads and reshapes history.

A player like that is rare.
For Quinnipiac golf, that player is junior Sophia Fujita. Entering her third year with the Bobcats, the Torrance, California native has set the standard for golf in the Metro Conference.

But before Fujita amassed a list of records and accolades in the blue and gold, she was a kid from Southern California who was stepping onto the green for the first time.

Back then, there were no accolades. A four year old Fujita stepped onto the course and found a love for the game that would carry on for another 17 years. From there, it was all about finding a competitive outlet for that love of the game.

“It was a huge learning experience,” Fujita said. “We didn’t know too many people who played ... junior golf so we had to learn a lot.”

It began with local tournaments, where Fujita and her older sister Elise Fujita would compete against one another, learning to play competitively for the first time in their careers. But Sophia says that golf really became “serious” at 12 years old, as her family began to make sacrifices to put her and Elise’s golf dreams at the forefront.

“I was like, ‘okay, this is what I want to do for the rest of my life,’” Sophia said. “Right after school, we would go to practice. We would like to eat, breathe and sleep golf.”

Sophia’s golf career was less tethered to her older sister’s as time went on, as Elise began a recruiting process that brought her to Wagner College in Staten Island, New York. But that cross country move would pique Sophia’s interest in the East Coast — enough that when head coach John O’Connor came to her with an offer, she snagged it.

A brush with the harsh conditions of Hamden in the dead of winter on Sophia’s official

visit was her first taste of the shift the Southern California native would need to face to acclimate to Quinnipiac.

“I took her and her mother to a hockey game, and I thought ‘there’s no chance that she’s actually gonna come to Quinnipiac,’” O’Connor said.

Despite the -10 degree weather at the top of York Hill, Sophia made the choice to go blue and gold, with her parents supporting the nearly 3,000 mile move.

Sophia will be the first to admit that the transition from Torrance, California to Hamden, Connecticut was far from easy.

“I definitely overcame a lot of hardships during freshman year,” Sophia said. “Everything was just so difficult for me to adjust, being so far from home.”

But where that transition would have forced others to falter, the freshman continued to fight through. On the course, she was finding the same success that had brought her to the Bobcats in the first place. She competed in nine tournaments in her freshman season, maintaining an average score of 76.3 in 25 total rounds in the 2024-25 season.

But where Sophia began to build her legacy was where O’Connor says she plays best: Disney’s Magnolia Golf Course in Lake Buena Vista, Florida at the MAAC Tournament. In her first attempt, Fujita became just the second Quinnipiac golfer to win the MAAC Individual Championship in their rookie season, joining Alexandra Sazhin ‘20. Like Sazhin did in 2017, Sophia secured the MAAC Rookie of Year and MAAC Player of the Year in 2024.

But that first championship isn’t where her program defining legacy comes in.

“I’ve had a number of golfers come in and win conference,” O’Connor said. “I’ve had a lot of rookies of the year. I probably would’ve said you never know what you’re going to get from her during that first year.”

So Sophia did it again.
Not only did Sophia defend her MAAC Individual Title, becoming the first Bobcat to ever win consecutive confer-

ence championships, she also broke the Women’s MAAC Tournament 54-hole record on the course, shooting four under par to help the Bobcats edge out in-state rival Fairfield and tough MAAC opponent University of Albany en route to become back-to-back conference champions for the second time in five years.

“Coming off one MAAC win to another, I needed to really mentally prepare myself that I could do this,” Sophia said. “It was just trying to stay patient and enjoy the experience.”

Sophia’s performance once again earned her MAAC Player of the Year and a second All-MAAC First Team nod. After another season of witnessing Sophia’s play on the course first-hand, the result didn’t come as a surprise to her coach.

“The way she competes, the way she competes at MAAC especially ... she just wants to be the only person ever to win four times, and I think she has a good chance of doing that.” O’Connor said.

It was momentum that Sophia took into the Ann Arbor Regional Tournament in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Quinnipiac secured its best finish in the NCAA Tournament, besting Oakland and shooting 72 over as a team. For a mid-major program competing against schools with significantly more resources, the result is extremely promising.

Once again at the forefront of that team’s success was Sophia. She capped off her second NCAA Tournament appearance by setting the new Bobcat standard, shooting nine over par to lead the way for Quinnipiac.

“She finished ... in 30th place last year, which is the best by far of any of our golfers at regionals,” O’Connor said.

With all of that personal success in such an individualized sport, it would be easy for Sophia to lose the team aspect of collegiate golf. However, that perspective couldn’t be farther from how the Torrance, California native sees it. Sophia wants to credit those successes to the people that got her here.

“I have accomplished everything I’ve accomplished because of my teammates, and because of the people and the staff, and everybody here at Quinnipiac that has been so extremely helpful,” Sophia said. “I wouldn’t have been able to do it without them.”

It’s those people that helped make a small town in Connecticut 3,000 miles away a second home for Sophia. Teammates who opened their doors on small breaks and holidays, and answered questions about school and life. The people that understood everything that she was going through and stuck right by her side.

“I don’t know what I’d do without them,” Sophia said.

Her teammates share the sentiment. The individual nature of golf means that Sophia’s teammates have not only a built-in friend, but a built-in competitor.

“Sophia’s a great person, great player and you know she’s definitely the number one on the team right now,” senior Samantha Galantini said. “Me and Sophia have a lot of healthy competition, we also want to beat each other.”

Now, Sophia has the chance to help bring that team to one of the few feats the powerhouse Bobcats have yet to achieve: three straight conference championships. If the beginning of the 2026 fall season is any indication, Quinnipiac will once again be in serious contention.

In the squad’s first match of the year at the Nit-tany Lion Invitational, Sophia returned right back to her record-breaking ways, setting the 54-hole program record at five under par. When talking about her performance, O’Connor didn’t hold back. After spending 17 years building a quality program here at Quinnipiac, his analysis of Sophia could be boiled down to a single sentence.

“She’s probably the best golfer we’ve ever had here,” he said.

