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Tricia Fabbri's 31 year legacy at Quinnipiac

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In 1995, Quinnipiac Athletics found themselves at a crossroads. Former women’s basketball coach Bill Dixon was out of a job following his third straight and fifth losing season in seven seasons as head coach. Who would step up and attempt to right the ship?

Enter Fairfield Stags assistant coach Tricia Fabbri.

In 2026, over three decades, 571 wins, five MAAC championships, an NEC Championship and five NCAA Tournament appearances later, Fabbri is calling it quits, after announcing her retirement March 16.

“Thirty-one years ago, I accepted an offer from Burt Kahn to become the first full-time coach of the women’s basketball program at Quinnipiac,” Fabbri said in a statement posted to Quinnipiac Athletics’ Instagram. “Simply put, it has been the best decision of my life.”

The news stunned not only Bobcat nation, but the entirety of NCAA women’s college basketball. Fabbri had just made her second straight MAAC Championship and led the Bobcats to yet another 20 win season.

No one saw this coming.

But when it hit, fans and coaches everywhere came out to show their respect and love for the Delran, N.J., native.

“One of the best college coaches ever, not just in Connecticut,” UConn head coach Geno Auriemma said. “Her incredible consistency over a long period of time put Quinnipiac on the national scene for women’s basketball.”

Recent rival and Fairfield University head coach Carly Thibault-DuDonis also showed love to Fabbri.

“What Coach Fabbri has done at Quinnipiac is legendary,” she said. “She built a nationally-competitive program and has done it on her terms for 31 years. She is a shining example of stability, authenticity and making the big time where you are.”

Her impact stretches beyond the players, fellow coaches and dance partners on the court. Everyone Fabbri has interacted with from staff members, journalists, families of alumni and everybody in between has been impacted by her kindness and infectious joy on and off the court.

“I am who I am today, as a professional and as a person, because of my time with Trish,” Quinnipiac alumnus Tyler Brosius said on X. “One of the best people, leaders and teachers I’ve ever had the privilege to learn from.

Fabbri’s illustrious career began back in 1987 as a student-athlete at Fairfield University. During her time there, she captured MAAC gold twice, netting 1,622 points and 1,037 rebounds, good for fifth and fourth in Fairfield all time history.

With a historic collegiate career on the court behind her, Fabbri took her talents to the sideline, joining the Fairfield coaching staff.

She wouldn’t make that switch alone, as she would join legendary head coach and personal mentor Diane Nolan on the sideline.

“There has been no better mentor for me than Diane Nolan,” Fabbri said in a preseason interview.

With three years of assistant coaching the Stags behind her, Quinnipiac’s then athletic director Burt Kahn came calling. Khan offered her a job as the head coach for its struggling women’s basketball program and she took it, making her the first full time female coach in school history.

That would be the first of several pieces of history Fabbri would make.

Her first few years at the helm was a struggle, going 15-62 in her first three seasons. But then, Quinnipiac Athletics made the switch from Division II to Division I and the program began to show signs of life.

After back-to-back 18 loss seasons the program would turn its first positive record in 2000-01, doing so for 21 of the following 25 seasons. She would also get her first taste of gold and postseason tournament experience in 2008, winning the Northeast Conference regular season title and appearing in the NIT.

It would take five more seasons for Fabbri and the Bobcats to go dancing for the first time, winning the NEC in the 2012-13 season and cementing her name in the history books once more.

Following that season, both the men’s and women’s basketball programs would make the switch over the Metro Athletic Atlantic Conference. That switch changed the course of Fabbri’s career and the trajectory of the Quinnipiac women’s basketball program.

Her first season in the MAAC put Quinnipiac saw the Bobcats go 16-4 in conference, making it all the way to the MAAC Championship before dropping the final to Marist 70-66. Fabbri had established a name for herself within the MAAC just one season in.

Fabbri’s squad built off their success in year one, to a gold standard in the ensuing seasons.

From 2015-19, the Bobcats won the MAAC championship four times, including a three-peat from 2017-19. That 2017 was extra special because for the first time ever, Quinnipiac basketball had punched their ticket to the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Tournament.

The last few seasons of the Fabbri era were rocky to say the least. They never fell out of contention for the MAAC Tournament and were always competitive, but they always seemed to fall short when it mattered the most.

Where Fabbri has never lacked, is her ability to impact her players and coaches on and off the court.

“She’s like another mom,” junior forward Anna Foley said March 9. “It’s just a family inside and out. That’s been the culture since we got here… everything we have speaks the leader and the woman that coach Fabbri is.”

Whether it’s on or off the court, Fabbri has made a career of compassion, love and kindness. She’s the kind of person who, minutes after losing her final championship game, takes the time to thank the student media members who made the trip to cover it. It doesn’t matter if you’re a fellow coach, a player or a member of the media, Fabbri would always take the time to make you feel seen, loved and appreciated no matter what was going on.

“(Fabbri) is more than a coach - she is someone that has pushed me outside of my comfort zone and has empowered me to grow in every phase of my life,” University of Rhode Island Assistant coach and alumnus Jen Fay ‘19 wrote in a statement to The Chronicle. “I couldn’t be more grateful to have had the opportunity to play for and start my coaching journey with Coach Fabbri.”

It’s hard to describe the legacy Fabbri will leave. She has won over 550 games, six conference championships and put the program and university on the map. How do you replace that?

With Fabbri’s and two of the teams leading scorers departing, there is a lot of unpredictability in the program as the offseason kicks off. But no matter what happens, Fabbri will be there to support however she can.

“Whatever is needed of me, I will be there to assist,” Fabbri said March 22. “I’m excited to see the future of Quinnipiac women’s basketball.”

While her time on the sideline has come to a close, she will be a part of Quinnipiac University forever, signing off from her final press conference with the following six words: “I will always be a Bobcat.”