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Roman Owen's path to Quinnipiac

A match 11 years in the making

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It's March 21, 2015 and inside the Maples Pavilion in Stanford, California, an NCAA Tournament first-round matchup between the No. 5 Oklahoma Sooners and the No. 12 Quinnipiac Bobcats is underway. Standing courtside, donning Oklahoma maroon, is the staff's video coordinator, Roman Owen. As he watches the Bobcats trade blows with a Power Five program, he asks the question, "Who is Quinnipiac?"

As the final buzzer rang, nobody on the staff had an answer, so he put it in the back of his mind.

Over a decade later, Owen now sits in his office at M&T Bank Arena in Hamden, Connecticut, as the head coach of the same program nobody knew about 11 years ago.

And he wouldn't have it any other way.

"I think success leaves footprints and this place has that," Owen said. "I'm still in shock and awe that I get to lead this program."

For Quinnipiac women's basketball's newest head coach, the story begins in Oklahoma City. There, a young Owen picked up a basketball for the first time, wanting nothing more than to be on the court and part of a team. At 10 years old, he got that chance, and never looked back.

"It was in those early years where I was like 'man, I never want to walk away from this,'" he said.

Owen would then spend his college career at Southwestern Christian University. During his time as an Eagle, he set the all-time scoring record with 2,802 points and was inducted into the men's basketball Hall of Fame in 2014.

Whether it was college, high school or travel basketball, Owen credits his parents for being there for him, supporting him every step of the way, however they could.

"My dad never missed a high school game in four years and only missed a handful of college games," he said. "Both of them were incredible."

Once his playing career came to a close, he transitioned to the bench, joining the Oklahoma City University men's basketball staff as an assistant. Owen looks upon that experience fondly, but he wanted more. Two years later, he would get it in the form of a head coach position at Mid-America Christian University.

"When I got the opportunity to go be a head coach on the women's side after two years in my mid-20s, I was pretty excited," he said.

Even after experiences as a head and assistant coach, Owen still had his sights set on the Division I level. Who was going to give him that chance?

Enter Oklahoma head coach and women's basketball legend Sherri Coale.

"(Sherri) asked 'Would you come do all my scouting and be my video coordinator?'" he said. "I told her, 'Coach, you know that I want to be coaching.'"

Coale responded with a promise: "Come do it for two years, and then we'll help you figure out where to go."

He accepted the position of video coordinator, taking a step back from a head coaching role and learning from one of the best coaches the sport has ever produced. After two years, it gave him the experience and preparation he sought out, while also giving him something else.

On that same staff was a 24-year-old graduate assistant by the name of Lindy La Rocque.

"We were kind of the gophers that did a little bit of everything," La Rocque said in an interview with The Chronicle. "No task too big, too small. We were in the trenches together and just really got to know each other."

Those trenches birthed a friendship that has stretched over a decade, the pair seeing each other go through different stages of their lives.

"Sometimes you come across people in your life, and you're like, this person will probably be in my life for the rest of my life," La Rocque said. "That was Roman for me."

Two years came and went, and Owen still had a palpable desire to coach. Yale University and former head coach Alison Guth granted that wish, making Owen an assistant coach for the first time at the Division I level.

Two ensuing stops at the University of North Texas and Tulsa University led Owen to believe that he would never leave the Midwest again. Both he and his wife, Natalie's family were from Oklahoma. They had just given birth to their second child. It had finally sounded like time for Owen to plant himself back home.

But then, La Rocque called. She was the newly named head coach of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas women's basketball program and gave Owen an opportunity he couldn't refuse: "Come be my right hand."

He couldn't say yes fast enough.

Their long-lasting bond helped turn UNLV into a powerhouse within the Mountain West Conference. UNLV boasted a record of 128-30 overall, with a 79-11 record in conference play and three NCAA Tournament appearances as conference champions. Owen had to be a Swiss Army knife to get them there, wearing many hats on the staff to achieve success.

"His fingerprints are all over this place," La Rocque said.

Owen had turned down head coaching opportunities before; he'll be the first one to tell you that. In the current landscape of college athletics, he wanted to go to a winner.

So when Quinnipiac came calling, he knew the answer.

"I wanted to go to a place now in this landscape that knew what winning looks like," he said. "This place has that."

Owen accepted the offer. After an 18-year journey, he had finally achieved his dream of leading a women's basketball program at the highest level. And there was no shortage of challenges once he started.

His first hurdle was to build a roster almost from scratch, as Quinnipiac only had three returning players from its 2025-26 squad. A tall task for any coach, but for one who was once called "a relentless recruiter," Owen was ready for it.

He would bring 11 recruits to Hamden for the 2026-27 season through two avenues: the transfer portal and high school recruiting. The former, Owen sees as a means of opportunity.

"I'm a pro transfer portal because I'm a pro-student athlete," he said. "If I'm gonna lose a player, I can't get upset because I'm going to have an opportunity to go get a player."

With the latter, Owen wishes to build the future of the program.

"I want there to be a foundation within the program through high school recruiting," he said. "I think that's the best way to get some retention year to year."

Owen will not be the only new face in Hamden. Three assistants, Adam Call, Amaya West and Kourtini Stevenson, will head to the bench with him. When asked about how to describe them, Owen kept it simple.

"They're family," he said. "That's who they are."

There's an old adage in coaching that says you never want to follow a legend; you want to follow the guy who followed the legend. A resume comprised of 31 years, 571 wins and five NCAA Tournament berths is, by any measure, legendary.

Owen knows the pressure of following in former head coach Tricia Fabbri's footsteps and is ready to face it head-on.

"Pressure is a privilege for me and for anybody that sits in an opportunity like this," he said. "What Coach Fabbri did in her time here was incredible. I have a high level of respect for her."

La Rocque, who knows that pressure firsthand, believes Quinnipiac made the right call.

"There's no one that's going to honor the past more than him," she said.

Despite the fact that Owen has yet to coach a game as a Bobcat, he has already thought about the legacy that he wants to leave behind when it's all over, and it doesn't start with wins and losses.

"I would love to start a legacy of being a coach that our players love playing for," he said. "I'm fighting for them every day."

The first step to establishing that legacy begins Nov. 2, as Quinnipiac kicks off its season at home against St. Joseph - Long Island, over a decade after he sat on the sideline of Maples Pavilion, asking the question, "Who is Quinnipiac?"

Now, at the helm of the program, he gets to show them.



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