Casey Clausen makes her case in Felicia Frank's absence

By COOPER WOODWARD
Sports Editor

Heading into Quinnipiac women's ice hockey's exhibition contest against UConn, the Bobcats had a major problem on their minds: with sophomore goaltender Felicia Frank out for the first part of the season with an injury, who was going to replace her?

For anyone, that's a hard question to answer. Frank ended her sophomore campaign setting the single season record in saves with 1,035, being named a member of the All-ECAC First Team, winning the ECAC Goalie of the year and finishing as a finalist for ECAC Player of the year. Near impossible shoes to fill.

But as Quinnipiac kicked off their season, head coach Cass Turner had two netminders to choose from. Freshman Natalia Dilbone and Sophomore Casey Clausen.

Dilbone had come to Hamden, spending time with the Team USA Under-18 team and Little Caesars 19u AAA squad in Detroit. The South Lyon, Michigan native recorded a .932 save percentage in four games played during her time on the National team.

Clausen had spent her freshman season as the fourth string goaltender to Frank, Calli Hogarth '26 and Tatum Blacker '26. Prior to Quinnipiac, Clausen spent time at three different schools across New York. Across 68 total games, Clausen recorded a 1.78 goals against average, a .914 save percentage and 28 shutouts.

Two goaltenders of high caliber vying for that coveted starting spot. For Turner, it came down to experience in the system, which gave the advantage to the Whitesboro, NY native.

"In her redshirt year Casey got better in such an amazing way," Turner said in a pre-season interview with The Chronicle. "She's a very good goalie."

Clausen got the nod and turned to the herculean task in front of her for her debut. She was faced with an offense returning four 20 point scorers and three All-Hockey East team members. To say UConn had an offense full of firepower would be an understatement.

Clausen didn't let the names on the back of the Husky jerseys intimidate or scare her in the slightest and her performance against the Bobcats, in-state rivals, showed just that.

The first period saw her be tested with six UConn shots on net. Three of those six came in the middle of the period and with several Husky and Bobcat sweaters in front of her, being peppered with a shot from distance and a wrap around attempt. Clausen corralled all of them.

But as with all goalies, adversity will come. It's an unfortunate but inevitable part of the sport. For Clausen, it came at the stick of freshman forward Laurie Aubin, who beat Clausen from the high slot to bring the game within a score.

A blow to her confidence, but as Vince Lombardi once said "It's not whether you get knocked down, it's whether you get back up"

Clausen tightened her skates, dug into her crease, and got right back up.

On an ensuing offensive possession, junior Claire Murdoch found freshman forward Caileigh Tiller on odd man rush. Closing the gap to Clausen, she aimed her shot to the four-hole, only for an outstretched Clausen to poke it away.

Less than a minute later, senior forward Julia Pellerin tried to thread the needle past Clausen, but the Bobcat netminder was safely able to corral the puck.

Two shots, two times, Clausen had picked herself up after facing adversity on the ice for the first time in her college career. Unfortunately, it wouldn't be the only time.

Midway into the final frame, the Huskies once again found themselves on the odd man rush. Senior forward Martha Mobarak found junior forward Ellie Markakis across the ice who



AMBER EDWARDS/CHRONICLE

Sophomore goaltender Casey Clausen guards the net against UConn Sept. 19

launched the puck past the weak side of Clausen to bring the game within a score.

Once again, Clausen was knocked down and needed to lift herself back up to seal a Bobcat victory, especially with the offensive onslaught that was coming in the final seconds.

On the man advantage, senior forward Livvy Dewar took the puck from just shy of the blue line and launched it towards net. Tracking the puck from the second it left her stick, Clausen deflected it just enough to hit off the crossbar and out. Tiller found the puck and sent in a rebound shot, which Clausen once again cleared away.

Time after time clausen was tested and time after time, even after being knocked down, she delivered.

"I was glad she had a game where she had some real chances like that and where she needed to perform," Turner said. "I thought she did really well."

The performance not only stirred confidence in the mind of her head coach, but in the minds of her teammates on the ice as well.

"Her performance gave us confidence," sophomore forward Avery Bairos said. "I thought she played great today."

Clausen faced no shortage of challenges in her debut, but seeing the Whitesboro, NY native whether the storm from one of the best offensive groups in the country, Turner and the Bobcats have every right to be confident heading into regular season action.

Frank's return will likely make her Quinnipiac's No.1. Saturday didn't do much to change the pecking order. But Clausen didn't play like a placeholder. She played like someone who intends to make the decision harder the next time it has to be made.

Will Morgan Cupo's dominance help or hurt women's soccer in its quest for Metro gold?

By COOPER WOODWARD
Sports Editor

If you ask any soccer coach across the nation, a player who can dominate on either side of the ball is someone they want wearing their jersey. Whether it's a goalkeeper who can stop anything coming their way, a defender who can lock down any attacker or a forward who just can't stop scoring, having a dominant player on any side of the ball will take your team far.

Quinnipiac women's soccer has just that in graduate student forward Morgan Cupo. Through the first seven games of the 2026 campaign, Cupo has recorded eight goals and two assists for 18 points, sitting alone atop the Metro as of publication. It's the best start to a season in program history.

But the Bobcats' current 4-2-1 record wouldn't suggest they have a history-making player on their roster. Their record indicates a rocky start and a team that just can't get on the right foot.

How does head coach Dave Clarke diagnose the problem?

Poor decision making.

"The stuff that we work on, telling them where to play the ball, who to play the ball to, and then you do the opposite," Clarke said after the Bobcats 3-2 loss against Niagara Sept. 5. "If you keep doing things like that you're going to get punished by not winning games."

That disconnect comes with the names below Cupo on the stat sheet and the sizable gap between them.

When you look past the seven goal season for Cupo, you see a four-way tie for second



CONNOR NEF/CHRONICLE

Graduate student forward Morgan Cupo drives down the field against Marist Sept. 19

with one goal apiece. In terms of points, the gap is even further, as junior forward Addyson Earl ranks second on the team with her four assists making up her point total.

That individually, according to Clarke, will do them more harm than good in the long run.

"You can have one player who scores goals but everyone else has to contribute," Clarke said. "Right now that's not happening."

For a team that has hopes of recapturing conference gold, depth at the sport's most important position will be critical.

History proves just that.

In 2022, Quinnipiac captured its first conference championship in over 20 years, finishing the season with a 15-3-1 record. In similar fashion to the 2026 team, the 2022 squad rode the momentum of a high-performing forward to contend with the best of the best.

The difference once again lay with the people behind forward Rebecca Cooke '23, as five Bobcats ended their seasons with a double-digit point total.

The 2023 Quinnipiac team may have had a less flashy road to a title, but it still got contributions from across the board. Nineteen Bobcats recorded a point, 17 of those 19 recorded a goal and five finished with eight points or more.

After a 2024 season that saw little depth, nor a breakout from any one player, 2025 saw the emergence of Cupo, as she exploded for career highs in goals, assists, points and shots. But come playoff time, she met her match.

In the MAAC Semifinals versus Canisius, Cupo was effectively neutralized. She was limited to a single shot on goal in 110 minutes of action and a missed penalty kick. With nobody else to fill in the offensive void, the Bobcats failed to put away a Golden Griffin squad that was down in nearly every single offensive stat.

Once again, depth had cost the Bobcats a serious chance to bring a championship home. Five games into the 2026 campaign, the pattern is looking like it's going to continue.

Seven of the eight goals from Cupo's run have come within the last four games. Before that, Quinnipiac went 1-1-1 and were outscored 10-3. By the numbers, when Cupo scores, the Bobcats win more often than not.

When Cupo has an off night or doesn't score, who is going to step up and give Quinnipiac the advantage?

Although it's a question that will only be answered with time.

But until someone emerges to becomes the two to Cupo's one, the Bobcats will be left with more uncertainty than confidence on the offensive side of the ball as they head into a stretch of conference play, looking to get back to the top of the Metro mountain.