The Bobcats wishing Willow

How Willow Renton is making Quinnipiac tennis history

By CAYDEN STEWART
Copy Editor

Nearly three years ago today, a four-star recruit from Goshen, Kentucky, officially committed to play Division I tennis more than 800 miles away from home in Hamden, Connecticut.

Over the next three years, junior Willow Renton put the finishing touches on an illustrious high school career, highlighted by two state championships, and etched her name into Quinnipiac athletics history.

It seems the only thing she hasn't done as a member of Quinnipiac women's tennis is lose, as the Bobcats haven't lost a home or Metro (formerly MAAC) Conference match since her debut. Coincidence? Most who have seen her play think not.

"Having a team behind me and all being together in these matches, versus it just feeling like me, has definitely helped me succeed," Renton said. "The team environment that college brought definitely excited me. I loved being able to yell and cheer on court because that's something you didn't do as much in juniors."

The two-time MAAC Player of the Year has already cemented herself in the Quinnipiac tennis history books and become one of the most decorated athletes to pass through Hamden.

Renton is the program record holder in single-season wins, amassing 50 in her sophomore season, while also finishing just four wins short of tying the program's single-season record for doubles wins. Just recently, Renton earned career win No. 100 at the West Point Hidden Duals Sunday, Sept. 27, putting her well on pace to surpass the program record of 169.

Renton also boasts two conference championships, two All-MAAC First Team selections for both singles and doubles, Conference Player of the Month and 2025 MAAC Rookie of the Year.

Renton credits head coach Paula Miller with a lot of her success.

"Talking to (coach Miller), she described how the balance at Quinnipiac would work very well," Renton said. "When I came on my official visit I thought the school was beautiful, I got along with the team very well, and again I loved the coach."

Miller herself has led an illustrious career as a Bobcat. As a player, she won three Northeast-10 Championships, with another nine MAAC Championships, nine MAAC Coach of the Year awards and nine NCAA Tournament appearances.

Clearly, receiving high praise from Miller is something to boast about in and of itself.

"The difference with her is she has different playing styles…That's a hard trait; not everyone has that as a player," Miller said. "It's worked out in her favor."

It only makes sense that Renton has that level of natural talent, as both of her parents played Division I athletics. Her mom, Kelly, played tennis at the University of Louisville. Her dad, Luke, also played football at Ball State University.

Miller also recruited fellow Kentuckian, senior Caitlin Flower, who serves as Willow's doubles partner. Together, they beganhus, beginning a tandem that can only be described as dominant.

"Caitlin and I began playing the beginning of freshman year, and we instantly clicked," Willow said. "We just have so much fun on the court and love playing with each other."

Flower herself has had a decorated career at Quinnipiac, earning her 100th career win Mar. 21 against the University of New Haven, and having earned All-MAAC First Team honors for either singles or doubles in each of her first three years in Hamden.

Flower and Willow have built up a strong connection over the last three years, especially with Flower serving as Willow's first consistent collegiate doubles partner and early mentor, helping her acclimate to college tennis.

"She would be a little nervous sometimes," Flower said. "Acclimating to a team is very different. At juniors you're on your own, and on a team it's very different. You have lots of people supporting you."

The adjustments and advice clearly worked, as the pairing won the 2025 MAAC Masters Tournament Doubles Championship, boasted a perfect 7-0 doubles record for the 2025-26 season and finished the year with a seventh-place ranking for doubles in the ITA New England Region D1 rankings.

With Flower graduating following this season, the pairing will have one final season together as they look to cap off a three-peat of conference championships. Each has high aspirations for the 2026-27 campaign.

"Definitely to win the Metro Championship this spring…Hopefully Cait and I can go to Rome to play against all the other conference winners," Willow said. "We can achieve those by continuing to work hard in practice and keep our energy up."



AMBER EDWARDS/CHRONICLE

Junior Willow Renton prepares for a match against Army Sept. 12.

75 years down the line, Quinnipiac men's basketball is still thriving

By PETER BOCHIARO
Staff Writer

Almost 80 years ago, business professor Samuel Tator had a bold idea for the Junior College of Commerce. He announced that his small business school would begin athletics, launching a men's basketball team. The news was only part of a broader merger with Larson Junior College.

The school then announced a new name, Quinnipiac College, named after a Native American tribe in the New Haven area where the school was located at the time.

The addition of a basketball team came under heavy scrutiny. The college had no plans for where the team would play, so it eventually rented the Veterans of Foreign Wars Gym located in West Haven, which at the time was primarily known for hosting community gatherings and boxing matches.

But after 75 years of winning and success along with a long list of accomplishments, the university says it's time to celebrate.

This season, Quinnipiac men's basketball has announced plans to commemorate a 75th anniversary celebration and the athletics department could not be more fired up.

"We're really looking forward to celebrating the 75-year history of our men's basketball program this season. Reaching a milestone anniversary for the university's inaugural varsity athletic program is special," men's basketball head coach Tom Pecora said.

And he should be looking forward to it. In two of the last three seasons, Quinnipiac has won the MAAC (now Metro) regular-season championships and has rostered two of the last three MAAC players of the year.

This season, the Bobcats were ranked 6th in the Metro Preseason Coaches' Poll. However, Coach Pecora has the same belief in this squad as he did in his other successful teams.

"We're optimistic about both our returning core and the group of newcomers brought in during the offseason as we continue to compete for championships," Pecora said.

Recently, it was announced that Quinnipiac sophomore Keith McKnight was selected unanimously to the Preseason All-Metro First Team after being selected to the MAAC All-Rookie Team a season ago.

The only person who is possibly more amped up for the season is M&T Bank Arena Fan Engagement Director Nick Simeone.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY LILIANA MIRABELLA

PEYTON MCKENZIE/ TYLER MIGNAULT/QUINN O'NEILL/GEORGE MADDALONI/CHRONICLE/QUINNIPIAC ATHLETICS

"Super excited to get this season underway," he said.

This year is Simeone's first full season as fan engagement director, and he promises that some changes are on the way.

"Definitely want to get more creative," Simeone said.

The arena will certainly have some tricks up its sleeve with its newest partnership. Simeone announced that the M&T Bank Arena has now partnered with SQWAD, a fan entertainment vendor, which will allow the arena to hold a variety of in-game fan engagement activities.

Along with the celebration, Quinnipiac announced an alumni day for its game against Mount St. Mary's on Feb. 2, 2027. The game will include a halftime ceremony welcoming all alumni in attendance to come down to the court to be recognized. There will also be either a pregame or postgame reception that all alumni will be invited to, honoring their legacy.

Quinnipiac will also honor this season through social media. Throughout the season, the men's basketball social media accounts will spotlight iconic moments, great players and all the different seasons that make up Quinnipiac's history. Alums are also encouraged to submit past photos, memories and experiences to their channels. This campaign will be spotlighted using the hashtag #QUMBB75 on their posts.

There is still plenty to be desired for the fans. Over the course of this season, the Quinnipiac Marketing Staff will be participating in exclusive anniversary giveaways that fans and alumni can win. This will also be part of the promotional schedule for in-arena giveaways that will be announced soon.

Even though it may be annoying to take the shuttle over to the arena as the weather gets colder, Simeone believes the experience is well worth it. "At the University of Rhode Island (where Simeone went to college), I attended every basketball game I could because I felt pride watching a team representing my University."

There is still one thing left for Quinnipiac to accomplish, and it's winning the Metro Tournament Championship and qualifying for the March Madness tournament, which the Bobcats are yet to achieve as a Division I program.

Director of Men's Basketball Communications at Quinnipiac, Nick Solari, believes student turnout would also contribute to a successful season. "With the right amount of buy-in from our student population, our men's basketball atmosphere could echo our hockey atmosphere, making the M&T Bank Arena one of the nation's toughest to play in."

Coach Pecora also talked about how much his team would benefit from a ruckus fan atmosphere.

"Having a loud, energetic crowd behind us makes a real difference for our team. Your energy on game day directly impacts our success on the floor," he said.

Quinnipiac will begin its 2026-27 season with a trip to East Lansing, Michigan, to take on the Michigan State Spartans on Monday, Nov. 2, before hosting the Bryant Bulldogs on Thursday, Nov. 5, at 7 p.m.