Women's ice hockey opens regular season season sweeping Maine in weekend series

By EMILY MARQUIS
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ORONO, Maine — No. 6 Quinnipiac women's ice hockey opened its 2026-27 season with a successful road trip to the University of Maine, sweeping the Black Bears.

GAME ONE

Quinnipiac has spent the last six season openers beating the Maine Black Bears and Friday's 2-1 victory was no different.

However, with the support of the "Maineiaks" student section at full volume, the Black Bears began the contest hot. Back-to-back penalties to forwards junior Ilsa Lindaman and senior Alex Law forced the Bobcats to retreat into their defensive zone.

Maine managed four shots on the power plays, but could not punch the puck past sophomore goaltender Casey Clausen before its opportunity on the man-advantage was over. Despite that, Maine's momentum only grew as the first period progressed.

"We faced a team that was just relentless on the puck," head coach Cass Turner said.

Relentless is the only word to describe it. In the first 20 minutes, the Black Bears swarmed, forcing mistakes in the neutral zone to secure possession and halting puck movement in the offensive zone. However, Maine threatened Quinnipiac with its physicality.

A swell of energy in the Black Bears favor, both on the ice and echoing from the arena above, peaked when a loose puck found the stick of junior forward Gracie Hansen right in front of the net. The Bobcats defense swarmed to keep Hansen from shooting from close range, but she passed the puck to unguarded senior forward and captain Lily Fetch, teeing up a 1-0 lead for the Black Bears.

Initially, Maine seemed poised to make Quinnipiac just as miserable in the second period. A minor penalty for interference on freshman defender Rosalie Breton gave the Black Bears another chance on the man-advantage. However, the Bobcats held strong, thanks in large part to Clausen. Despite Maine peppering the Whitesboro, New York native with shots, including five on this power play alone, Clausen stood on her head to hold the deficit at one.

"She was composed when we needed her to be," Turner said. "She was very solid, poised and very impressive."

The Bobcats began to adapt to the physicality that Maine continued to bring throughout. A tripping call on Hansen gave Quinnipiac a chance to show off the other side of its special teams, and the Bobcats' secondary powerplay unit delivered.

A long range shot on net from junior defender Ella Sennick caused a scramble in front of junior goaltender Kiia Lahtinen's crease. The Porvoo, Finland native failed to locate the puck as sophomore forward Ella Johnson punched it in to even the score at one with five minutes remaining in the middle frame.

The bruising from the Black Bears didn't stop. Every hard check elicited a surge from the crowd, regardless of the on-ice outcome. Among the Bobcats, Law in particular seemed to always have a Black Bear ready to force her off the puck.

It was Law's turn to make an impact — not with her physicality, but her puck-handling.

The Whitby, Ontario native made no mistake, utilizing a screen from Lindaman to find the back of the net and earn the Bobcats their first lead of the night.

"It's been a long journey for her to get back into playing, so it was awesome," Turner said. "That shift … for her to continue to just pursue and find that opportunity and score top corner — it was a great finish."

GAME TWO

Quinnipiac secured its 12th straight victory over the University of Maine Saturday, overcoming the Black Bears' physicality to take a 4-1 victory.

The Black Bears' physicality remained the biggest struggle point, but the Bobcats came in with a plan to negate it"We talked as a team to use the speed," Law said. "I just think it was a good all around 200-foot game by us."

From the opening puck drop, that speed on both ends of the ice put the Bobcats ahead of the Black Bears. After subduing the Maine power play for the sixth consecutive time to kill off a delay of game penalty, Quinnipiac got to work, firing four quick shots to start the first frame.

Law in particular embodied the quick feet and sharp passing the Bobcats needed to score. After ending yesterday's contest with the game-winner, she would find the back of the net once again, beating Lahtinen in a scramble to give the Bobcats an early 1-0 lead.

Later in the period, the Bobcats doubled that mark off the stick of junior defender Anysley D'Ottavio. She took the puck herself down the left wing, circling behind the net before squeezing a shot between Lahtinen's shoulder and the post for her first goal of the year.

"I thought we managed the puck well and that led to so many more offensive chances," Turner said.

With all the momentum and a 2-0 lead at its back, Quinnipiac posted a scoreless second against the Black Bears. However, Maine would not be denied in its own barn in the third.

After the Bobcats tried to exit the defensive zone, leaving sophomore defender Paige Fong unmarked. When Maine forced the turnover, Fong was in behind the defense all alone in front of Clausen, beating her five-hole with the back-hand to half the Quinnipiac lead and put real pressure on the visitors.

But as quickly as Fong helped the home side, her tripping penalty hurt them. Although the Bobcats failed to convert on the subsequent power play, less than a minute later Breton scored her first goal, popping a loose puck over Lahtinen.

"She's done really good things so far for us and is adjusting in really well, so it was awesome," Turner said.

With Lahtinen pulled for the final two minutes, Quinnipiac found the back of the net one final time off the stick of senior forward Kahlen Lamarche. After the Black Bears put a body to Lamarche for the entire contest, the Sudbury, Ontario native scored her first goal of the season on an empty net, capping off the Quinnipiac victory.

The Bobcats have the opportunity to continue the momentum against the Providence Friars. According to Turner, the key to that success is continuing to build on this early season momentum.

"I think it's really easy to get ahead of yourself and I think that we need to be sure the things that we got better at from day one to day two, those continue on as we go into our first game against Providence," Turner said.

Quinnipiac's first matchup against the Friarsmarks the squad's first time back at M&T Bank Arena since securing the ECAC Championship. Puck drop from Hamden, Connecticut is set for 3 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 2.



EMILY MARQUIS/CHRONICLE

Sophomore goaltender Casey Clausen stretches for a save against Maine Sept. 26.

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During his freshman season, he was selected to the 2024-25 CCHA All-Rookie Team. Last season, Applebee was selected to the 2025-26 Richter Award Watch List, which features the top 29 Division I men's college hockey goaltenders.

With his plethora of college hockey experience before Quinnipiac, Applebee's .910 career save percentage speaks for itself, making him a hopeful valuable contributor to the Bobcats this season.

Yet, out of Zug, Switzerland, the Bobcats have a fresh face to college hockey also joining their goaltending lineup this season: freshman goaltender Christian Kirsch.

Coming from the Kitchener Rangers, a major junior team from Kitchener, Ontario, Kirsch finished the 2025-26 season with an .899 save percentage in 41 games played. Additionally, alongside fellow Bobcat Edwards, Kirsch helped the Rangers take home the 2026 Memorial Cup, posting a 1.50 goals-against average and a .952 save percentage in four games played.

"(Kirsch) just won the (Memorial) Cup for Kitchener. That's a big deal; he was great," Pecknold said.

The 116th pick by the San Jose Sharks in the 2024 NHL Draft was also named to the 2025-26 Memorial Cup All-Star team and was a selection for the 2025-26 Most Outstanding Goaltender.

Despite only appearing in two games last season, the Bobcats also see the return of sophomore goaltender Sam Scopa, who's been putting in the work over the summer to continue to contend for the upcoming season.

"Scopa's back for another year, and he's worked super hard this summer; he looks great," Wyttenbach said. "I think when you have three goalies who are all really good, and they're pushing each other every day, I think that's kind of what you want. You want it to be competitive, and you want someone to really earn the net."

With new goaltending talent flooding in this season, it is unclear as to which goaltender Pecknold will decide to remain between the pipes as the season gets underway.

"I mean they're both talented, they're really good," Pecknold said. "We got to play some games though, but they're gonna be good."

STAFF AND CULTURE

Something that is talked about over and over, time and time again, is the emphasis on Quinnipiac's culture. Yet, what actually categorizes a team as having what others deem a good, strong culture? Well, for Quinnipiac, it's a combination of things centered around the men's ice hockey staff.

At the helm of the Bobcats this season is no other than Pecknold, who enters his 33rd season with Quinnipiac, solidifying himself as the longest active tenured coach in Quinnipiac Athletics history. Pecknold finished last season raising his career record to 693-369-110, while currently ranking first among all active NCAA Division I coaches in career victories and eighth all-time.

"I love it here," Pecknold said. "Quinnipiac's been great to me."

Alongside Pecknold is a team of people working to develop each athlete and make Quinnipiac the place for young athletes to want to come play college hockey.

"I think we do a really good job as a coaching staff of connecting with our players," Pecknold said. "And I think beyond just the coaches, you know our strength coach, our athletic trainer, Cam (Boon)...they all do a good job of making the kids, you know, feel comfortable and safe and they know it's a great environment to get better and to live in."

These points by Pecknold are echoed throughout the Quinnipiac culture, resonating with the athletes they recruit each year.

"Rand and Joe Dumais have been doing this forever together, and they've been unbelievably, like, they're so good," Marcellus said" I mean player(s) like me, undrafted and stuff, they develop us so well. Our coaching staff is a really, really big selling point."

Even despite the conversations surrounding NIL in college athletics, Quinnipiac's culture at its core holds true as the main reason athletes time after time choose to stay with the Bobcats.

"We are giving NIL out now…I think it helps, but in the end I don't think it's why a kid choose(s) to stay," Pecknold said.

With hopes of bringing a national championship title back to Hamden, the Bobcats kick off the 2026-27 season Saturday, Oct. 2, as they take on New Hampshire with puck drop set for 7 p.m.

"It's been a fun place to work and I'm not quite done yet," Pecknold said.

"I think this has been one of the best teams I've been on since I've been at Quinnipiac. "

– Mason Marcellus
SENIOR FORWARD AND CAPTAIN