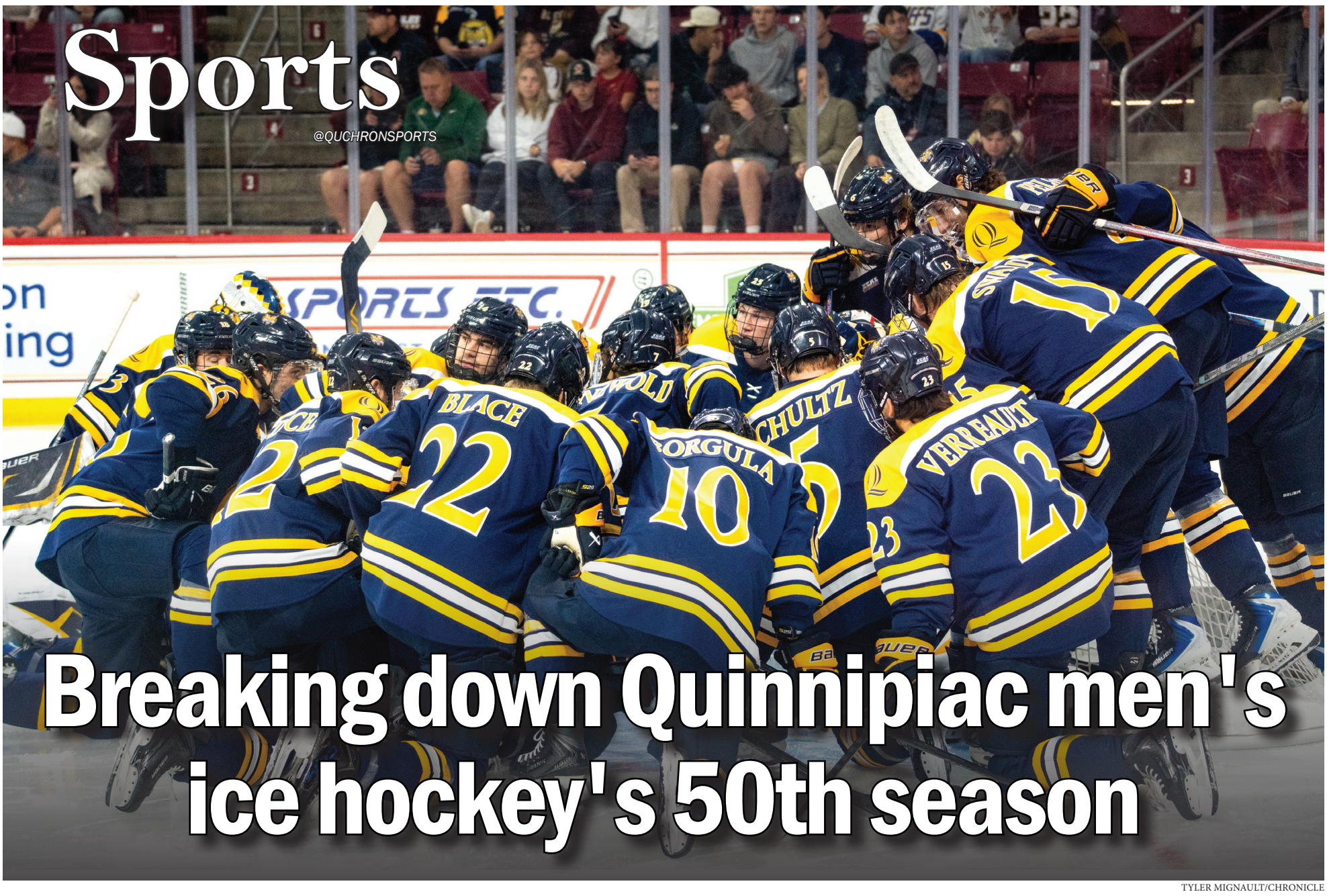
Sports

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Breaking down Quinnipiac men's ice hockey's 50th season

TYLER MIGNAULT/CHRONICLE

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"I like our group this year, I think we still need to mature a little bit."

"We gotta find a way to make these kids buy in and once we do that we'll be rewarded."

Anytime head coach Rand Pecknold talks about his team, you definitely hear him use these phrases in one way or another.

And on paper, it makes more than enough sense. Over the past three years, the Bobcats' roster has seen a pretty significant turnover, with 11 new names joining the roster this year, replacing the same number lost in the off-season to graduation and transfers.

"We don't change much each year, we tweak things here or there," Pecknold said in a pre-season interview. "I think we make sure that we get players that fit our culture, fit our identity and certainly they need to mature once they get into our program but I think we do a great job on bringing the right kids in the door and that's why we got success."



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And while the number of players in the locker room might have stayed the same, there is a significant difference when it comes to the size of the senior class.

This year only six players are seniors — no graduate students — and only three of them have spent more than one season on the squad.

"We have guys like (senior forward) Anthony (Cipollone) and (senior forward) Alex (Power) and (senior forward) Victor (Czerneckianair) who have been here four years, so they definitely know what they're doing, the mentality was built into them from day one," senior defender Charlie Leddy, assistant captain in his second season with the Bobcats in a pre-season interview said.

"But guys like me and a couple other transfer older guys, we had to readjust and relearn things. We got a lot of differences between young and older guys, we kind of gotta exclude that and just work. We're all here for a reason, we're all in the same place at the same time so let's stay together."

On the opposite side of the spectrum are nine freshmen, Quinnipiac men's ice hockey's largest incoming first-year class since 2019.

"Honestly they've been great," Czerneckianair said, who boasts the 'C' on his chest this season in a pre-season interview. "They kind of came in knowing what to do and what they were expecting, they don't complain and they're just putting their head down right to work so it's really easy with those guys."

Almost all of the newcomers have at least a year of junior hockey experience, and the team has a 21-year-old age average.

The ECAC Tournament Champion earns an automatic bid into the NCAA Tournament, and while Quinnipiac has earned the regular season champs Cleary Cup nine times, the Whitelaw Cup has eluded them for the past nine years, making the team have to rely on its Pairwise ranking to get an NCAA Tournament bid.

Last year, the team was on the verge of missing out on that spot after a rather miserable start to its season, and almost falling out of the USCHO's top 20 for the first time since 2017.

"I thought last year we really struggled in October, cause we had a lot of kids kind of going rouge and trying to do their own thing and we got the buy in, we'd like to get to a better start this year," Pecknold said.

Let's take a look at the roster of players who will do their best to achieve that in the 2025-26 season.

FORWARDS

Quinnipiac's roster sees 10 returners on its front line, alongside five newcomers. With only 12 spots across the four lines — and the caliber of Quinnipiac's incoming class — all of the players have their work cut out for themselves.

"It's a work in progress, kids are still battling for spots, to be on the power-play and kill penalties and then things change over the course of the year, guys that might not be killing now might be doing it in January," Pecknold said. "We push our kids to be better, we don't kind of lock them into roles. They can always change their fate and get more ice time and guys battle everyday."

One of the most significant returners is sophomore Chris Pelosi, who in his first year of collegiate play netted 13 goals — tied for the second most goals amongst ECAC freshmen last season.

The center already has two more goals this season to his name and is slowly but surely shaping up to be one of the most important players for the Bobcats.

Another name to keep an eye on is senior Jeremy Wilmer, who netted 15 goals last season and recorded 26 assists.

His experience on the front line is going to be crucial for the Bobcats as he's one of only four senior forwards on the team, only three of whom have appeared in all 38 games last season.

These seniors include Czerneckianair, Anthony Cipollone and Alex Power.

An important name on the roster is junior Mason Marcellus. The center has been a consistent player since his first season with the Bobcats.

Sophomore Aaron Schwartz was seen practicing in a no-contact jersey at the end of September and yet has already notched three points in the game against Notre Dame.

Among the newcomers, freshman Ethan Wyttenbach is definitely a stand out. The second youngest player on the team already has four points to his name (two goals and two assists).

Wyttenbach is a Calgary Flames pick with only one year of play in the USHL, where he netted 24 goals.

To round out the NHL draft picks, freshman Matthew Lansing, a Vancouver Canucks agent, joins the Bobcats with three years in the USHL under his belt. He already nets a goal and an assist.

Freshman Markus Vidicek is another name that battles for his spot on the first line. The center played five years in QMJHL and recorded 328 points.

Another name hailing from QMJHL is freshman Antonin Verreault, who netted two goals so far and one assist.

The only freshman without a point to his name as of right now is Ben Riche.

DEFENDERS

Only four players on Quinnipiac's blue line have returned from last year's roster — and all of them are only in their second season with the Bobcats.

That might not be an inherently bad thing. Quinnipiac has seen some struggle on its defensive line-up with player inconsistencies and injuries. Having what is essentially a new team could actually work to Quinnipiac's advantage.

A big loss came in the form of former senior forward Jack Ricketts who earned the 2025 ECAC Gladiator Best Defensive Forward accolade.

A stand-out amongst the new defenders is freshman Graham Sward. The 22-year-old Canadian has not only years of experience from WHL, but also played in two AHL games with Manitoba Moose and 47 ECHL games under Norfolk Admirals — both affiliates of the Winnipeg Jets — last season, totaling 13 points.

Sward is the only defenseman right now with a goal to his name, which he netted during the opening game as a part of the second defensive line.

His linemate, senior Will Gilson, is Quinnipiac's only incoming transfer on the season. Gilson previously suited up for the RPI Engineers where he led the team both in points (24) and assists (16).

The starting defending line for now still belongs to the returners, and that to Leddy and sophomore Elliott Groenewold.

Alongside Pelosi, Groenewold is a Boston Bruins prospect, who last season recorded

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