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Women's ice hockey battles for first ECAC Championship on Miracle ice

By EMILY MARQUIS
Associate Sports Editor

Quinnipiac women’s ice hockey is no stranger to history this season. Junior forward Kahlen Lamarche broke Quinnipiac’s Division I points and goal records, setting the new standard for offensive excellence within the program. The squad was one of four teams selected to an ECAC Championship Weekend held on neutral ice instead of at the top-seed’s home rink.

There was plenty of history left to be made in the ECAC Championship game.

What better place to do it than in one of the most historic arenas in hockey?

The ghosts of the 1980 U.S. Olympics team seemed to be with the 2026 Bobcats beyond just their shared arena. The parallels are clear. The underdog taking on a bitter rival in a championship game

The analogy falters a bit when you realize the Bobcats were underdogs in seed only. The No. 3 Bobcats went undefeated against the No. 1 Yale Bulldogs this season, taking the crown of the undisputed champions of Whitney Avenue and the ECAC.

The first time the rivals faced off, Quinnipiac handled business with a 3-1 victory in Ingalls Arena on Oct. 24. The contest opened up conference play for both squads. Quinnipiac continued its early season dominance while Yale struggled.

Sophomore goaltender Felicia Frank stopped all but one of the Bulldog’s chances, and Quinnipiac’s penalty kill went perfect. Quinnipiac’s defense wasn’t afraid to score, notching multiple assists on the night. Finally senior forward Emerson Jarvis sealed the game with an empty net goal.

Quinnipiac’s first ECAC matchup of the season mirrors that of its last. It’s hard to beat a team three straight times, but the Bobcats managed that feat resoundingly in Saturday night’s ECAC Championship game in Lake Placid, N.Y. The 5-1 final score took every aspect from Quinnipiac’s first game against Yale and dialed it to the max.

Despite four opportunities on the man-advantage for Yale, Quinnipiac’s penalty kill remained perfect, with Frank stopping each of the Bulldog’s eight shots on goal during the contest. The secret to Quinnipiac’s .884 percent penalty-killing success remains its calm, cool and collected assistant coach Amanda Alessi.

“She’s just so calm and logical about what she wants to do with the PK and is so smart in her scout,” Quinnipiac head coach Cass Turner said.

Every title-winning coach in Lake Placid needs a killer assistant. Luckily for Turner, she has two. Besides Alessi, assistant coach Brent Hill has plenty of experience winning in big games. Less than a month ago, Hill helped coach the U.S. Women’s National Ice Hockey team to a gold medal in the 2026 Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics. Now, at the site of the 1980 Lake Placid Olympics, he helped another team secure a coveted piece of hardware: the ECAC Championship Title.

Quinnipiac’s defense played another sharp game against Yale, jumping into the offense. Three different defenseman recorded points, making simple plays to put the game out of reach.

“Right back to the basics,” Turner said. “I think that really built to us playing some strong offensive hockey too.”

Senior defender Zoe Uens’ power play goal followed that to a tee. Simple puck movement put Uens at the right place at the right time to snipe a shot past freshman goaltender Samson Frey, putting the Bobcats up 3-0. For a power play that has slipped under the radar for most of the season, the Bobcats couldn’t have picked a better time to execute than on the ECAC’s biggest stage.

Just like in the Bobcats’ ECAC opener, Jarvis would put in the final empty net goal, stopping the Bulldogs in their tracks one final time.

The goal was a culmination of a hard working weekend for Jarvis, even though she was kept largely off the scoresheet.

That’s what has powered the Bobcats through the ECAC Tournament, and may be the key to continuing to play hockey in the NCAA Tournament. A complete team effort where everyone plays for each other.

“We have such a special group where we support each other, no matter what’s going on, and we’re gonna take all those lessons forward and attack the next weekend,” sophomore defender Makayla Watson said.

There is one part of this championship equation that has been left out, where the comparisons to the 1980 Miracle on Ice team returns. Both Team USA and Quinnipiac wouldn’t have stood a chance without the stellar play of its respective goaltenders.

ECAC Goaltender of the Year, All-ECAC First Team Goaltender, a top three finalist for the Women’s Hockey Goalie of the Year Award and Helios Hockey Most Outstanding Player at the ECAC Championship. What a resume for the sophomore from Falkoping, Sweden.

1980 U.S. Olympic goaltender Jimmy Craig who?

Each of her accolades are a testament to both her play on the ice, and her actions to help her team off it.

“Frankie has been the heart and soul of our team this year,” Watson said. “She’s just such a good teammate, has honestly been the star for us.”

That title of star couldn’t have found a more deserving candidate Felicia stopped all but two of the 63 shots she faced.

If you ask the Bobcats if this win was shocking, look no further than the captain for the answer. Graduate student defender Mia Lopata knows better than most the kind of team it takes to win at Lake Placid, N.Y. Six years ago, she was a captain of another team that won in the historic Herb Brooks Arena, scoring the game-winning goal to take the New York State Championship.

But for the Clinton, N.Y. native, this experience at the ECAC Championships was something different.

“To be here with this team… it beats being here with my high school team for sure,” Lopata said after Friday’s win against Princeton.“This group is just so special.”

Like all good captains, Lopata did it all. Despite being in her final season, she has grown her offensive game to match the needs of her team, earning a crucial assist against Princeton to propel the Bobcats into the championship game.

“If you had told me when I was in high school that I was going to win an ECAC Championship here, I don’t know that I would have believed you,” Lopata said.

Coming into ECAC Championship weekend though, she didn’t have a doubt.

“Before the game even started I was like, oh, we’re gonna win,” Lopata said. “Before we even came here, I got my nails done. I was so excited. I’m like my nails need to be done when I lift that trophy.”

But it wasn’t just the captain’s personal belief that drove the Bobcats to this historic victory. Like winning a championship, it takes the whole team.

“We’ve been saying since we went to Ireland, believe in the Bobcats, believe in the Bobcats, and I think every single one of our staff and our players believed in the Bobcats,” Lopata said. “We did it.”

Behind the Bobcats bench on Saturday was a sign. A neon yellow poster, with colored stars drawn in navy, gold and York Hill Sky Blue around four simple words.

“Believe in the Bobcats.”

The hundreds of Bobcat faithful that drove hours to watch Quinnipiac hoist the ECAC Championship trophy certainly did.

There was something special in the air in Lake Placid. For one day, the words that rang through Herb Brooks Arena weren’t, “Do you believe in miracles?” They were, “Do you believe in the Bobcats?”

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