‘Pressure is a privilege and I was lucky enough to add that pressure’

Resilience and perseverance shape Ginevra Giovagnoni

By ALEXANDRA MARTINAKOVA
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You might have heard of her as the 2024 MAAC Preseason Player of the Year. You may have seen her as No. 16 on Quinnipiac’s volleyball team.

But did you know that senior outside hitter Ginevra Giovagnoni has a twin? And if it wasn’t for Lucrezia, Ginevra might not have played volleyball at all.

She and her sister grew up playing volleyball and tennis together. Eventually, playing two highly demanding sports at the same time was no longer an option. So the twins had to make a choice.

“My mom didn’t wanna be a taxi driver, she sat us down and said ‘pick a sport,’” Ginevra said, laughing. “I went with tennis, she went with volleyball. (We did) rock, paper, scissors — I lost. That’s how I got into volleyball full time.”

For the first year, Ginevra wasn’t on board with the decision for both to play volleyball. However, with time, that all changed.

“I’m very competitive,” she explained. “I didn’t have much control over my emotions. Volleyball is a group sport, I didn’t wanna yell at people, I didn’t wanna yell at myself, I didn’t wanna yell at my sister and bring those issues back home. But I like the game, I just didn’t like the early version of myself playing it.”

Ginevra has been leading the Bobcats in kills and points at many different times across her years on the court. However, being a hitter wasn’t her original choice for a position.

“I was a setter, but so was my sister. She’s …. (really) good,” Ginevra said with a mix of pride and envy, that only siblings will understand. “I had no chance to play over her. My coach told me that I have a great touch and to think about being an outside (hitter). I said that if it’s the only way I can play then I’m switching cause I didn’t wanna sit on the bench for my sister.”

Despite dubbing her sister “better,” Ginevra was the one who decided to pursue a career in U.S. collegiate volleyball.

Her biggest reason and inspiration? Her cousin.

“I always looked up to her, she was my role model,” Ginevra said. “Me and my sister kind of followed her. When she got here, she struggled a little bit. But after she pulled out this resilience, that I really admired. So I said, ‘OK G, do you really wanna challenge yourself? Then go.’”

Manuela Nicolini played six years at Fairfield University as a starting setter, graduating in 2022, earning MAAC Setter of the Year four times, being named MAAC Pre-season Player of the Year and MAAC Player of the Year, while consistently making the All-MAAC Team.

“I was a Stag fan,” Ginevra admitted. “I didn’t know the conference and how the system worked. I was cheering for my cousin.”

While Ginevra might be a Stag fan turned Bobcat, her cousin is the opposite, cheering on Ginevra even during the MAAC Championship games when they face her alma mater.

“(She’s at) all the finals,” Ginevra exclaimed. “She came with a QU T-shirt and a Fairfield sweater!”

Nicolini was the primary reason why Ginevra chose a school in New England, helping her choose Quinnipiac by seeing the potential the program had, especially since she was familiar with head coach Kyle Robinson. The other three top contenders were American University, Auburn University and Boston College.

Ginevra wanted to stay close to her cousin, who planned on staying in the area. However, just a few weeks before Ginevra sat on a plane and made her journey across the Atlantic, Nicolini got a job all the way down in Tampa.

“I got (a gesture meaning nothing),” Ginevra said laughing. “But I was still happy to be here. What we have done so far makes me proud. I love the people, I love my coach.”

Ginevra joined the program alongside five other freshmen, four of which were international, and a few of which became the starters. That made the transition from Montale Rangone, Italy to Hamden, Connecticut a little less daunting but no less easier.

“I felt like a fish out of water,” Ginevra said. “The food was the biggest difference. The people, the friendships, they take time. Volleyball wise, everything went smooth. I found a great support staff, anytime I needed they would be there for me. I started to appreciate the little things instead of the material stuff that I was used to and made myself happy.”

That class, alongside the seasoned players, ended up propelling the Bobcats to their first ever MAAC Championship.

A rather memorable feat, especially for the fact that six out of 13 players were in their first year of their collegiate career. For Ginevra, however, it was a regular Sunday.

“For me it felt normal,” Ginevra explained. “Maybe now it would feel different because of all the story I’m carrying and all the love for people, so maybe now it would mean more because I’m more attached than I was when I first came here. But for the first year, that was the purpose. That was the goal and we achieved it. Great, that was the task.”

And that was the philosophy she carried with herself into the next season as well.

There is no doubt that as a sophomore, Ginevra was one of the strongest players on the team. She led the team with 261 kills and even led the conference with kills per set, as well as points per set. She had four 20+ kill games and recorded just shy of 200 digs.

But then came the 2024 season. After her stellar performance in the year before, she earned the MAAC Pre-season Player of the Year title and all eyes were on her.

“Until you actually get it I don’t think it means anything,” Ginevra admitted. “It’s just a responsibility that you have towards your teammates. They trust you enough to get you in that spot. I’m not a big fan of awards, I don’t care, I think it’s a pressure but I was lucky to add that pressure. You gotta have on your mind that you’re an example. Act like it.”

And Ginevra was clearly prepared to deliver on everyone’s expectations. In just the first four pre-season games, she recorded 50 kills and registered 60.5 points with 48 digs and 3 blocks.

Then came the game against Long Island University on Sept. 3, 2024. It was a close and tough match that eventually went into five sets.

It’s the third set. After an early run from the Sharks, the Bobcats caught up in a little game of tug-of-war, trading points, kills and errors back and forth.

The score is 20-21 for the Sharks. Senior (then junior) setter Damla Gunes sets the ball to Ginevra who jumps, swings and kills the point, evening out the set.

However once she hit the ground her knee buckled and she went down.

“I knew immediately,” Ginevra said, her voice strained. “I remember the crack, I remember the

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The Egdahl sisters tackle challenges together on and off the golf course

By JACK OULIGIAN and IAN NOLAN

As Quinnipiac women’s golf enters the 2025-26 season, it looks to uphold its MAAC Champions title, with a little family help.

Sisters junior Alexia Egdahl and freshman Mason Egdahl are both a part of the Bobcats roster this season, and are looking to make an impact.

Alexia and Mason grew up in Placentia, California, which is about 2,862 miles from Hamden. For most people, the jump from one coast to the other is challenging in itself for just education. Yet, the Egdahl sisters are also faced with the changes in the course as well, when competing on the East Coast.

“The courses here are tough; the Northeast is a different animal when it comes to golf,” Alexia said.

Alexia and Mason are not only on top at the course, but they also find themselves sitting in high regard in the academic landscape. During high school, both sisters graduated on the principal’s honor roll all four years at Orange Lutheran High School.

While upholding the student-athlete title, being at the top in terms of academics and sports is a tough challenge that not many are up to. However, the Egdahl sisters are.

“Yeah, I definitely think it’s difficult, especially for me,” Mason added. “I’m coming from golf and then doing around four hours of homework every single day on top of classes and everything. So it’s not easy.”

Alexia is a part of the 3+3 JD Law program at Quinnipiac, currently in her final year of her undergraduate program. On the other hand, Mason is a part of the physical therapy program.

“Our coach, John (O’Conner), puts a big emphasis on our team GPA,” Alexia said. “It’s one of his main points. He thinks having the highest team GPA at the school is just as important as winning the MAAC conference.”

Alexia and Mason are living in Connecticut, which is across the country from their hometown, but how did they end up here?

“My freshman year, I was recruited by the seniors on my team who were also from California,” Alexia said. “So it was kind of a word-of-mouth thing. I heard about the success of this team.”

The switch wasn’t all sunshine and rainbows.

“I’ve been here for over two years, but at first, it’s a culture shock coming here,” Alexia said. “You don’t fit in with the Northeast because you’re not, you’re not from here, you can’t go home every weekend. That’s difficult. But you don’t quite fit in with the international students, even though you are the same distance from home, yet they are international.”

Siblings have a way of pushing each other to new heights, even if it involves some friendly competitions along the way.

“I think it’s every older sibling. I don’t want to see Mason beat me. I really don’t,” Alexia said. “You put in a different gear when you’re competing. Like I hate to say it, Mason. I see you as a competitor; I take the last name out of it.”

It can be hard to see your sibling as an opponent in all aspects of life, whether it be in the career field or simply competing at a backyard game at a family gathering. But when it comes to competing at the highest collegiate level, it’s certainly a mindset that is required.

“Once we’re on that golf course, I have to understand it’s hard. I think we’ve both had ups and downs even in this experience,” Alexia said. “We were also high school teammates all throughout junior golf, playing against each other. It’s hard because you want to root for them, you also want to destroy them at the same time.”

As much as the older sibling never wants the younger sibling to catch up to them, that same motivation goes the opposite way for the younger sibling, constantly trying to prove they are every bit as good as their older counterpart. Yet, Mason views her older sister as someone who aids her well on the course.

“I’m a little bit more of a mellowed-out person, and I don’t get very fired up, and that has its pros to playing golf,” Mason said. “So for her, I think that when she gets a little bit more fired up, it’s like, okay, I’m getting fired up, I’m ready to play, I’m ready to compete, which is nice. And then I also think it goes the other way around.”

Siblings often have varying personalities, as you never want to be too much like your siblings, especially in your preferences and hobbies.

For two sisters at the same school, competing in the same sport, this statement holds true for the Egdahl sisters.

Alexia admitted that things were different growing up.

“(When we) were younger, I would say we weren’t the best friends or siblings,” Alexia said. “We will always be close and she’ll always be my sister, but when we were young, we got into a lot of fights. Having two different personalities, I think, was the big reason for the fights.”

Mason further added to Alexia’s thoughts, saying, “We kind of deal with things a little differently and deal with conflicts.”

“So when one’s doing one thing and the other one, it just creates bigger stuff. But I think honestly, when I decided to commit to QU, I think that’s when we started to really become close,” Mason said.

While siblings will always have their ups and downs, they’ll always find a way back to each other. For Mason and Alexia Egdahl, that may mean fighting over pars and birdies, or battling in upcoming tournaments for individual placement. However, when they come off the 18th hole, they will always be the best thing you can have in life: family.