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Senior outside hitter Ginevra Giovagnoni celebrates after scoring a point against Iona at the MACC Semifinals on Nov. 18, 2023.

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feeling, I remember that my knee twisted. I didn't even need the MRI, I knew I was out. The thing that got me crying was seeing all of my teammates at the end of the game crying on the sideline."

"The first thing I said was 'Guys, I'm so sorry.'"

Quinnipiac's volleyball prides itself on the team's sisterhood. It shows in the chemistry they have on the court. It shows in their relationships with each other in and out of the locker room. And it showed when her teammates would help Ginevra walk when she was on crutches.

"I was a burden for them, mentally and physically, they needed to help me and they needed to be there," Ginevra recalled. "It's mentally very tough. Now, you're scared. Is it gonna happen again? Is it fixed? Do you really know? It was a mess."

She was out for quite a while. First a surgery, then a tough recovery. For a few days, she wouldn't have gotten up from the couch. How could anyone blame her? There was no warning of her injury. One second she was in the air, the other she was on the ground in pain. It would be enough to make anyone say that they are done with the sport.

But not Ginevra.

While many would think that her story and determination to come back to the sport and the people she loves are impressive, she believes otherwise.

"I don't think (it's admirable)," Ginevra noted, struggling to find the right words. "The first two months I couldn't even watch a ball. I couldn't even talk. I was a parasite. A dead bug on the couch. But then something snaps you and you talk to yourself. 'Okay G, now, it's not you against your knee, it's you AND your knee. Do we wanna get out of this hole? Pick — yes or no.'"

And Ginevra picked yes.

So she got up. She walked around on crutches and did her physical therapy every day. She joined her teammates on the sidelines, for a long time still in a cast, sitting in a chair.

"This type of resilience takes time, but when it comes, you are unstoppable," she added.

Eventually the cast came off and Ginevra stood up. But instead of joining her non-playing teammates, she started standing closer to Robinson, until eventually she ended up mimicking his mannerism on the side-lines.

"Everyone tells me that," she exclaimed and then emphasized: "I don't wanna stay all the way in the back, I don't wanna chit-chat, I'm very … locked in. Standing (straight) for two hours gets tiring, sometimes you just go (and she promptly demonstrated the exact position Robinson stands in for the majority of the game)."

Ginevra became someone the girls could rely on. As she said herself, her teammates would look to her for advice even when she was sidelined. And no matter how difficult it was for her, she always tried her best to support them.

"I wanna make sure that they are fine," Ginevra said of her teammates. "Everyone can rely on me. They know it. I want them to see me as a cornerstone. It's been tough watching them playing from the bench, when you were supposed to be with them and help them. It was tough to talk to them in the breaks without crying."

Despite being sidelined and not playing a single conference minute that season, Ginevra was still named into the Preseason All-MAAC Team alongside senior setter Damla Gunes. She, however, believes she shouldn't have been the one to get it.

"(Senior outside hitter) Yagmur (Gunes) was amazing last year, (Junior outside hitter) Leilani(-kai Giusta), it was just the two of them," Ginevra insisted. "I went down like this (she snapped her fingers). Nobody was expecting it. They had to adjust, support and carry the burden of being the only two outside hitters on the team that is supposed to go to the finals. Pressure is a privilege but it wasn't easy. A lot of people expect something great and you don't wanna disappoint them. I took (the award) as a compliment, I think it's unfair towards the two of them."

Then came Quinnipiac's 2025 MAAC season opener against Sacred Heart University. For the first time in 388 days, Ginevra stood next to her teammates dressed in the new uniform, being cleared to play just a mere three days before.

"I had two days of practice and (Robinson) knew I was cleared for the back row," she said. "I didn't actually think that he would put me in, but going in even for a few points … I wasn't expecting much from myself."

And then as the Bobcats led two sets to none and were tied by 13 points in the third set, a referee substitution whistle made everyone's heads shoot up as Ginevra walked to the net and switched places on the court with freshman outside hitter Vittoria Tonelli.

Her return was heavily anticipated, not just by the fans but also by her teammates.

"I'm really excited for her to play," graduate student opposite Elena Giacomini said of Ginevra in a pre-season interview with The Chronicle. "She's starting to practice again, a little drills and stuff, but I'm confident that with time she's gonna get back on court. I didn't get to play with her but my teammates did and they know how important she is for us. We're just waiting for her moment to come."

Despite being only cleared for the back row so far and not yet recording a single attack, just her presence back in the line-up signals a lot of hope for the team.

"I got so emotional," Gunes said after the game, tears welling in her eyes. "I'm very proud of her and I'm very happy that she's back."

"I didn't come back from the war," Ginevra joked after being told her teammate's reaction.

No one knows what the future will hold. Not even Ginevra. Will she be able to play the whole season? Will she come back for one more year with her extra year of eligibility? Will she be able to continue playing after her collegiate career ends? Will her injury limit her going forward?

These and many more are the questions Ginevra has no answer to.

"This season dictates a lot," she reluctantly admitted. "If I'm constantly in pain, there's no way I'm getting into it again. I still have two months to decide."

But right now there's hope. Hope that Ginevra generated by her hard work and her dedication, not only to the sport she loves but to the people she grew to love in the process.

"I was like 'Now, I'm really back,'" she said, smiling ear to ear. "I'm on the court with them. Every single day that I've spent in the ER was worth it. Just the smile, cheerings and the pride that I could see in their faces was priceless."





CONTRIBUTED BY GINEVRA GIOVAGONI



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