

Rugby uses a lopsided start to fuel hopes for a title

By MICHAEL PETITTO
Associate Sports Editor

“When you go out and get absolutely schlacked in your very first game, there’s a couple things you can think about.”

Those were the first words out of Rugby head coach Becky Carlson’s mouth after the team’s second matchup of the year, a 33-14 victory over Brown.

That first game of the season against Dartmouth, a 59-0 bludgeoning at the hands of a rugby powerhouse, refused to leave Carlson’s mind.

Quinnipiac rugby is in an interesting position, with 13 players departing and 11 new ones coming into the fold this season. It’s difficult to build a title-contending team with so many new faces, but not impossible.

The Bobcat’s resilience against Brown proved that. Many teams would be completely

demoralized after experiencing a 59-point shut-out to open the season, but not Quinnipiac.

Rugby is a violent sport in nature, crashes and collisions happen nearly every play. But despite the hits, the bumps and the bruises, every time a Bobcat falls down, they get right back up.

Quinnipiac holds that same mentality game after game. It’s not about how you get knocked down, it’s about how you get up. The Bobcats are hungry, and it’s reflective in their playstyle.

“We have a program that has a rich legacy of winning and (the players) want to bring that back, they are hungry to bring that back,” Carlson said.

As Carlson reflected on player sentiments, she pointed to the Quinnipiac rugby scoreboard, which displays the three NIRA National Championships the program has, the last of which is from 2017.

“They don’t like seeing the gap between national championships, they don’t like it. We actively talk about language we haven’t used in a couple years, because we haven’t been putting the pressure on, we’re putting it on now and they’re responding to it.”

First year lock Carolyn Melody is one of the eleven new Bobcats who is just getting introduced to this mindset.

“One of our main focal points is continuity,” Melody said. “Trying to keep the ball alive, and that’s what helps us win.”

Continuity can be difficult to establish during the beginning of the season, especially when you have 11 new players trying to integrate themselves into a system, something Melody acknowledged.

“A lot of us are first timers playing on this field. To get that momentum right off the bat, to know that we can do this it’s (huge).”

Something that might help carry that momentum game after game is how Quinnipiac approaches each opponent. The Bobcats are implementing a new system in order to get the team more prepared for each team they face.

Last year Quinnipiac did a lot of scouting on opponents, and heavily relied on watching scout film to get an idea of what other teams were focusing on.

“Our game plan wasn’t getting much better because we were so focused on what the other team was doing,” Carlson said. “We’re going to keep continuing to work on the things we need to work on and keep pressing that in practice.”

It seems like the new strategy is beginning to pay dividends. After the loss to Dartmouth, Quinnipiac focused on improvement rather than trying to gain an edge on Brown, and it worked.



TAYLOR HUCHRO/CHRONICLE

Senior hooker Lucy Lamborn attempts to escape tackle from Brown defense on Sept. 6.

After finishing last season with a record of 4-3-2, Quinnipiac has more than enough opportunities to surpass that record and return to the NIRA tournament.

But it won’t be a walk in the park, as the team will face some formidable competition including longtime NIRA rival Sacred Heart, who currently has a 2-0 overall record.

As the Bobcats look to satisfy their own hunger and bring a championship banner back to Hamden, they’ve already proven the ability to block out the noise and get back up.

It’s not about how you start, it’s about how you finish.



TAYLOR HUCHRO/CHRONICLE

Quinnipiac and Brown face off in a scrum on Sept. 6 in Hamden.

Women’s tennis opens up 50th season with Hidden Duals

By ALEXANDRA MARTINAKOVA
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Following an undefeated last season, Quinnipiac women’s tennis opened up their 50th season with its Hidden Duals Tournament — but didn’t quite get the chance to finish it.

“I just found out about this yesterday,” head coach Paula Miller laughed at the mention of the milestone. “We are in the works of planning something. Hopefully over alumni weekend we can kind of incorporate that.”

The Bobcats hosted a three-day hidden duals tournament, playing Marist, UConn and Fairfield — or they would’ve, but their last game against Fairfield was canceled due to rain.

Hidden duals means that there is no team scoring for the games played, but the scores still count for individual statistics, and these pre-season tournaments are a good place for the team to figure out where they stand and how to structure the team. Quinnipiac’s included the aforementioned Marist, Fairfield, UConn and Army and St. Francis, that Quinnipiac did not face.

The Bobcats came prepared to show that they are more than ready to build on their last year and continue their success, with a “win” against their conference opponent the Marist Red Foxes.

“We played really well for the first weekend out,” Miller said. “That’s our goal for the fall, just compete and work hard and get ready for the spring.”

Sophomore Willow Renton had the longest match against Marist’s sophomore Viktoria Lorenzton, winning in a super tiebreak. The Bobcat was recently named into the pre-qualifying rounds of the ITA All-American Championships, the first one to get this honor in the history of the program.

“First ever player to qualify for that, it is exciting,” Miller said. “Just playing those matches is getting her ready for when we go to North Carolina and compete against the best in all of DI colleges.”

The ITA All-American Tournament is made up from pre-qualifying rounds, qualifying rounds and main draw. This year they will be held on Sept. 20-28 in Cary, North Carolina.

She will be joined by Miller and another player as support.

Renton dominating isn’t anything new, but sophomore Catlin Flower held her own as well, supporting Renton in dou-



BELLA KAMINSKY/CHRONICLE

bles as well as easily cruising past her match.

Quinnipiac’s newest additions got their own moments to shine as well. Junior Isabella Baker hails from Bowling Green State University, where she went from 21 wins in her freshman year to only one game played her second year. She supported her transfer partner and former BGSU teammate, junior Lilly Black.

Black saw no action while at BGSU, but in her first game as a Bobcat, she sailed past her opponent easily in two 6-3 sets.

But while the Bobcats were prepared to face the Red Foxes, their Saturday match up against UConn was a different story.

Because UConn has a smaller team than Quinnipiac, not all of the players got to play. Renton, Flower and Black were back in the line-up, but head coach Paula Miller

put in some more familiar faces as well, in the form of senior Vera Sekerina and junior Anagha Sankhar.

While Flower and Black fought out their wins, Renton fell at the hands of UConn’s junior Ela Platenikova.

The team’s only freshman Isabella Sicignano played one doubles match with sophomore Caroline Schulson and officially got her first collegiate tennis win. This duo alongside Black and Baker “earned” the team the doubles point, while Renton and Flower fell to the duo of Platenikova and junior Victoria Matos.

So the Bobcats were technically tied 1-1 for this tournament. Maybe they would’ve “won” maybe they wouldn’t have, but these hidden duals showed that their last loss to Texas A&M in the first round of the NCAA Tournament did not break Quinnipiac’s spirit at all.

“We concentrate on being aggressive,” Miller said. “I think that was something where we could’ve done a little bit better, but the nerves got the best of us the first match back.”

The Bobcats now have a little break before they head to West Point, N.Y., for the West Point Hidden Duals at Army on Sept. 26.

A MAAC Masters Tournament on Oct. 3, and ITA Regional Championship at Harvard on Oct. 9, will wrap up Quinnipiac’s fall tournament season.