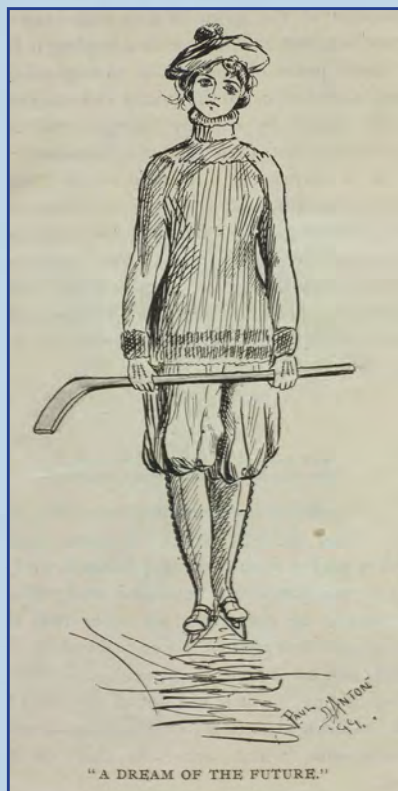


# A DREAM OF THE FUTURE: 125 YEARS OF WOMEN'S HOCKEY IN MINNESOTA

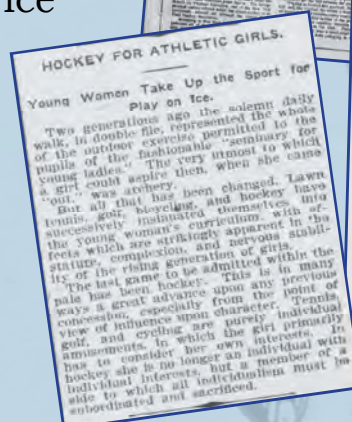


In 1899, in between his two Stanley Cup victories, Montréal Shamrocks player Arthur Farrell wrote a book about hockey where he argued that girls playing the game was what made ice hockey the best sport on earth.

He noted that girls' teams existed in every city worthy of the name in Canada, though their games were rarely recorded in the news. In one of only two illustrations commissioned for the book, he included a sketch of a girl hockey player. And he captioned it

“A Dream of the Future.”

Hockey took its time moving south from Canada for both women and men, but by 1901, Minnesota papers started casually mentioning girls playing ice hockey, often alongside field hockey, in towns and cities around the state. Rather than scandalous, girls adopting the game was seen as positive: unlike many other sports popular with the ideal, athletic woman of the day, ice hockey required teamwork and selflessness. The respectable young lady of the day needed to be physically fit, and hockey was a community-oriented way to get there.



AN EXHIBIT BY THE  
DAKOTA COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# A DREAM OF THE FUTURE:

## 125 YEARS OF WOMEN'S HOCKEY IN MINNESOTA

### WOMEN HAVE ALWAYS PLAYED

At the time, hockey was a seven-player game, with an additional forward called a “rover.” The ice did not yet have zones, so offsides was determined by where the puck was in relationship to a player’s skates. If their skates were between the puck and their opponent’s goal, then the individual player was offsides and could not touch the puck again until their opponents touched it. There was no forward passing as a result, and goals were typically scored after a long drive down the ice, enabled by careful positioning of the four forwards. Teams also only had seven players, total – every player was on the ice for every second of the two-period, 40-minute game, unless they were sent off for a penalty. The length of a penalty was referee discretion. Checking was allowed, but many male players considered it “football tactics” invading their elegant game.

**With Skates in Hand  
Girl Wards Off Attack.**

A pair of hockey skates on the business end of a strap wielded by Miss Frieda Arzt, Third street and Bates avenue, St. Paul, was the means with which she defended herself when two men attacked her on Seventh street east, St. Paul, Saturday night. She drove them both off, holding their heads in their hands and groaning in pain. Then Miss Arzt hollered. Then she ran. Then she cried.



One of several articles about the victorious Miss Frieda Arzt. *The Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 1910, and her portrait that same year.

**The young ladies of the Central High school have organized a hockey team. Miss Irene Walker was elected manager and Lillian Griffin captain.**



Notice of team and photo of Miss Irene Walker. *The Two Harbors Iron News*, 1906.

While girls’ ice hockey was rarely considered newsworthy in the early years, the fragments that appear in the press in the early 1900s offer hints at the bigger culture of the game behind them. In 1906 Irene Walker and Lillian Griffin started a formally organized girls’ team at Two Harbors High School that claimed a few inches in their local paper. Frieda Arzt’s team may be lost to time, but we know she had one, because she fended off a pair of muggers with her hockey skates while walking home from practice on 7<sup>th</sup> Street in St. Paul in 1910. Ice time for women’s hockey was one of the selling points used by the Minneapolis Curling Club when pitching their new rink to the city in 1913. Duluth Parks and Rec had a girls’ league running by 1916.

In 1909, one of the few girls’ games to get a full writeup happened during a Minneapolis Amateur Hockey Association carnival. One of the sisters of the Lake Shore men’s team star Cleve Bennewitz – either Avis or Echo – organized a girls’ team at West High School. Her team drew attention thanks to the connection to the popular men’s squad, and took on other girls’ teams organized at Macalester and in St. Paul. For the festival, the Bennewitz-led girls challenged the boys of the Lake Shore Juniors team to a game. Over the course of two 20-minute periods, Miss Bennewitz’s team showed their speed and skill. While the young men managed a few

goals, it wasn’t enough to stop the ladies’ right wing, Miss Sherman, and the rover, Miss Mason, from scoring two goals apiece, while the center, Miss Bauman, put another in the net. The ladies won 5-3, and Miss Bennewitz got a formal photo in the paper and the headline “Girls Win at Hockey: Lake Shore Juniors Beaten by Team Made Up of Fair Sex.”



The Bennewitz Family. Top: Cleve. Middle: Avis, Nona, Gilman. Bottom: Echo. Photo courtesy Lonnie Francis.



**MISS BENNOWITZ,**  
Local girl who organized a hockey team of high school girls. Her team won from a seven composed of boys last night.

Miss Bennewitz's victory portrait. *The Minneapolis Journal*, 1909



# A DREAM OF THE FUTURE:

## 125 YEARS OF WOMEN'S HOCKEY IN MINNESOTA

### SEVENTEEN YEARS OF SKIRTS, SKATES AND SEVENS



At the University of Minnesota, ladies' basketball ruled the Women's Athletic Association (WAA) through much of the 1890s and 1900s, but formal petitions to start an ice hockey club circulated as early as 1911. In 1915, a

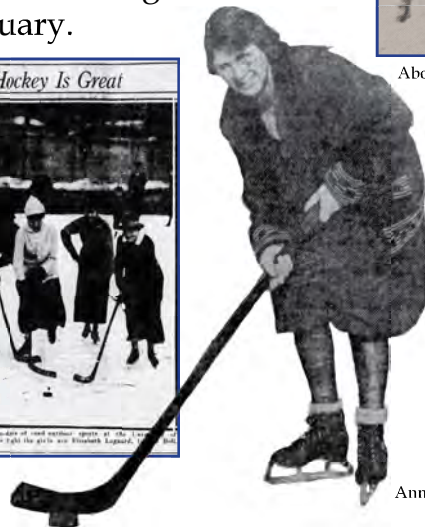
group of university women took their fight for hockey with Dr. Anna Norris, the director of Women's Athletics, to the press. Dr. Norris hated hockey, and felt it was too violent for even boys to play. She warned the women that they would have their faces "scarred for life," by hockey, to which the women responded that just like they found fencing scars appealing, men would think their hockey scars were beautiful. Dr. Norris relented, and junior Kenena McKenzie began teaching classes in hockey in February.



Above and above-left: University of Minnesota Hockey Players c. 1915.  
*The Gopher*, courtesy University Archives.



Practice in January.  
*The Minneapolis Journal*, 1916.



Anne Haedecke lines up a shot during a carnival game.  
*The Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 1920.



Almira Ruchhoft and Birdie Brill skate at practice.  
*The Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 1918.

Between 1915 and the mid-1930s, women played ice hockey at the University of Minnesota every year. They played the majority of their games on the "Armory Rink," an outdoor rink built in a flooded corner of Northrop Field near the Armory, resorting to indoor practices and occasionally booking the Hippodrome when the weather refused to cooperate. From the earliest years, they had the enthusiastic support of the men's program, who volunteered coaches and refereed matches for the ladies. In 1921, when Coach I.D. MacDonald converted the men's varsity squad to six-player hockey for the first time, the women followed suit.



The 1920 Freshman Class Team: Ruby Peterson, Harriet George, Bernice Langtry, Helen Stodola, Lillian Bullis, Jane Sedgwick, Almira Ruchhoft, Rosehelen Hoy, unknown ref.  
*The Gopher*, courtesy University Archives.



Headed to practice in 1921.  
*The Gopher*, courtesy University Archives.



Fun around games in the early 1920s.  
*The Gopher*, courtesy University Archives.



Veronica Krueger shows off her skating.  
*The Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 1920.



Many of the 1922 players with a chicken wire goal frame and assorted skates.  
*The Gopher*, courtesy University Archives.



# A DREAM OF THE FUTURE:

## 125 YEARS OF WOMEN'S HOCKEY IN MINNESOTA

### SEVENTEEN YEARS OF SKIRTS, SKATES AND SEVENS



A game in 1923 on the Northrop Rink.  
*The Gopher*, courtesy University Archives.



The tournament winning 1923 "Blacks" Team: Vivian Holmgren, Faye Farmer, Hazel Smith, Katherine Foot, Elizabeth Bray, and Aili Oja. They beat the "Blues" in a best of five series for the title that year.  
*The Gopher*, courtesy University Archives.



Practice at Northrop in 1924.  
*The Gopher*, courtesy University Archives.



Left: Coach Iverson.

Below: The 1925 turn out with Coach Iverson on the Library Rink.

*The Gopher*, courtesy University Archives.

In late 1924, Coach Emil Iverson was thrilled to discover a women's program in place when he started as the new men's varsity coach, and he enthusiastically took on coaching responsibilities for the women. He also had an exclusive rink built for the women's club near the library.



Above: One of the 1925 Squads: Florence Tenney, Hazel Patten, Marjorie Keyes, Vivian DiMarco, and Bella Herschkovitz Waisbren, who continued University (and playing ice hockey) after her marriage.

Right: A game in 1925.

*The Gopher*, courtesy University Archives.



Left: A game in 1926. Margaret Huttner and Vivian Franti are identifiable in the middle, as is Charlotte Fosberg on the far right.

Below: The 1926 Senior-Soph Team: Vivian Franti, Marjorie Keyes, Charlotte Fosberg, Agnes Bros, Minnie Fineman, and Lorraine Chalmers (kneeling).

*The Gopher*, courtesy University Archives.



A scramble in front of the net, with the very light goalie gear visible.  
*The Gopher*, courtesy University Archives.



The last championship team photographed for *The Gopher*, from the 1930 season. Their names were not recorded.  
*The Gopher*, courtesy University Archives.

A number of years of bad weather cancelled many of the planned tournaments, and participation dwindled in favor of sports like basketball which could be played with or without the cooperation of nature. The exact end of this era of women's ice hockey at the University is unclear, though it remained listed as a sport in the WAA handbook until 1935.



# A DREAM OF THE FUTURE:

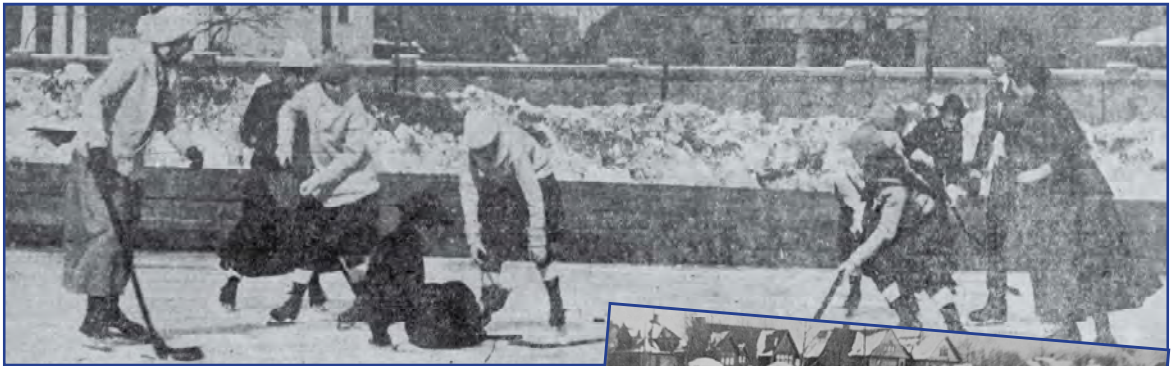
## 125 YEARS OF WOMEN'S HOCKEY IN MINNESOTA

### 1917 - THE FIRST UNIVERSITY TOURNAMENT

Over the first two years, the University of Minnesota women's ice hockey club grew to 100 women. By the spring of 1917, the women felt they had enough talent to formally organize class teams and hold a tournament. The Intramural Sports Committee sponsored a cup, and 28 women made the final rosters, with two women substituting during the actual tournament play, and one other sub known thanks to photographs.

| Freshmen                                                                                                            | Sophomores                                                                                                           | Juniors                                                                                                               | Seniors                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Ione Kadletz<br>Center            |  Winifred Bailey<br>Center          |  Helen Jenswold<br>Center          |  Natalie Grim<br>Center             |
|  Magdalene Huchthausen<br>Rover    |  Elizabeth Lagaard<br>Rover         |  May Kellerhals<br>Rover           |  Kathryn Urqhart<br>Rover           |
|  Eleanor Schwerin<br>Left Wing    |  Jeanette Walker<br>Left Wing      |  Mary Martin<br>Left Wing         |  Roberta Hostetler<br>Left Wing    |
|  Birdie Brill<br>Right Wing      |  Ruth Evenson<br>Right Wing       |  Marian Poole<br>Right Wing      |  V'lora Welch<br>Right Wing       |
|  Dorothy Kueffner<br>Cover Point |  Marietta Fournier<br>Cover Point |  Frances Ek<br>Right Wing (Sub)  |  Amanda Larson<br>Cover Point     |
|  Marian Irwin<br>Point           |  Kathleen O'Brien<br>Point        |  Caroline Helmick<br>Cover Point |  Mary B. Smith<br>Point           |
|  Mabel Edwards<br>Point (Sub)    |  Sarah Paper<br>Goal              |  Margaret Egan<br>Point          |  Harriet Anundsen<br>Goal         |
|  Ethel Wilk<br>Goal              |  Larcom Randall<br>Coach          |  Katherine Yerxa<br>Goal         |  Harold Mergens<br>Coach          |
|  Percy Harrison<br>Coach         |                                                                                                                      |  Albert Danaher<br>Coach         |                                                                                                                        |
|  Alice Rochford<br>Sub           |                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                       |  Arthur McBride<br>Coach at Large |

In the first game, Freshman v. Juniors, on February 23, 1917, Freshman Magdalene Huchthausen was the breakout star. Huchthausen netted three goals, including one after an impressive drive across the entire ice, outmaneuvering the Junior defense along the way. Ione Kadletz scored a fourth goal for the Freshmen. Poor Mary Martin then sealed the Juniors' loss when, in the midst of a scrimmage in front of the net, she attempted a back check and instead knocked the puck in for an own-goal. The Freshmen won 5-0, and advanced to the final.



Above: A rough collision during the Freshman v. Junior Game on Friday, February 23, 1917. The Freshmen are in white sweaters.  
*The Minneapolis Morning Tribune.*

Right: The Freshman team after the game. Left to Right: Birdie Brill, Mabel Edwards, Ione Kadletz, Magdalene Huchthausen, Alice Rochford, Dorothy Kueffner, Ethel Wilk, and Eleanor Schwerin.  
Originally published and captioned in *The Minneapolis Morning Tribune* and later reprinted in the 1918 *Gopher* yearbook, courtesy University Archives.



# A DREAM OF THE FUTURE:

## 125 YEARS OF WOMEN'S HOCKEY IN MINNESOTA

### 1917 - THE FIRST UNIVERSITY TOURNAMENT

During the Sophomore v. Seniors game, on February 24, Sophomore Winifred Bailey was the standout. In a game featuring “close guarding and clever defensive work,” the Sophomores quickly netted two goals in the first half, one by Bailey and a second by Elizabeth Lagaard. Sophomores Marietta Fournier, Kathleen O'Brien, and Sarah Paper put up a masterful defense, and despite the noted efforts of Kathryn Urquhart and V'lora Welch, the Seniors never got close to the Sophomore goal. In the last five minutes of the game Winifred Bailey collided with Amanda Larson on a drive and had to be carried, injured, from the ice, but the Sophomores still won the day 2-0.



Above: A moment in the Senior v. Sophomore Game on February 24, 1917. Winifred Bailey is identifiable on the far right.  
Left: Elizabeth Lagaard, Winifred Bailey, and goalie Sarah Paper celebrating their win with an on ice kick-line.  
*The Minneapolis Journal, 1917.*

The afternoon of Tuesday, February 27, 1917, the weather was chilly and clear, and the Sophomores and Freshmen met for the finals at 12:30pm. Through the first half and the early minutes of the second half, the Freshmen showed excellent team play and were able to keep the puck near the Sophomore net, but couldn't manage to shoot a goal. In the final minutes, the Sophomores became the aggressors, but regular time ended without either side able to penetrate the opposing defense. The game went into the typical 10-minute overtime period of the era, and the Sophomores were dominant despite some bursts of speed from the Freshmen. Back from her injury, Winifred Bailey wound up the “big star” of the game, as she clinched it for her side, 1-0.



Photographs of the Championship Game and teams. The Sophomores (middle right) wore matching darker colored caps and socks and the Freshmen (lower left) wore lighter colored caps and socks.

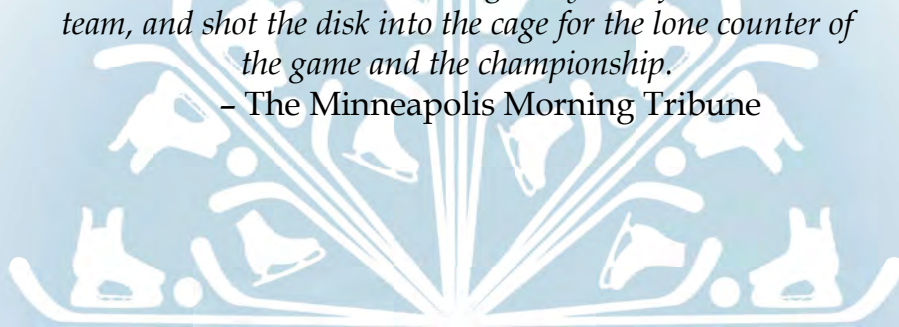
Names were not labeled but Winifred Bailey is identifiable on the lower right in the Sophomore photo, and the Freshman photo appears to be: Standing L-R: Birdie Brill, Eleanor Schwerin, Ione Kadletz, Alice Rochford, Dorothy Kueffner, Seated L-R Ethel Wilk, Magdalene Huchthausen, and Mabel Edwards.

*The Gopher, courtesy University Archives.*



*Miss Winifred Bailey, center for the Sophs, scooped the puck out of the danger zone in front of her own net and wriggled and circled the entire ice, evading every one of the Freshmen team, and shot the disk into the cage for the lone counter of the game and the championship.*

*- The Minneapolis Morning Tribune*



# A DREAM OF THE FUTURE:

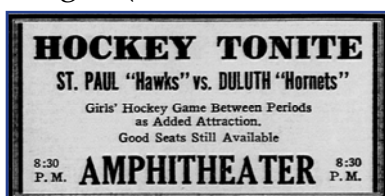
## 125 YEARS OF WOMEN’S HOCKEY IN MINNESOTA

### THE FIRST GIRLS...AGAIN



The Minneapolis Chics and The Minneapolis Roosters, two Industrial Girls' Teams (unmarried working women) from the late 1920s. On the Left, in White, The Chics: Vera "Chic" Stoltz, Violet Evans, Myrtle Johnson, Ruth Botts, Mildred Bjork, and Irene Heier. On the Right, the Roosters: Elsie Stodola, Blanche Stodola, Ruby Peterson, Hazel Bolstad, Grace Hedlund, and Mildred Broms. *The Minneapolis Star*, 1926.

Girls' and women's ice hockey teams and leagues had existed all over the state throughout the University of Minnesota club era, and many of them continued beyond those years. Carleton College had girls' ice hockey in the 1930s, as did the cities of Crookston, Eveleth, and Duluth. Duluth's Industrial "Girls" League (for unmarried working women) ran right up until World War II.



Some women's games were exhibitions held between periods of mens games, as in this 1930 Duluth Herald advertisement.

Despite a commercial and social push to separate boys and girls activities in the years during and after World War II – exemplified by advertising that had once listed girls' and women's hockey skates as well as other skates, but now pushed "figure skates for the girls," and "hockey skates for the rugged boy" – girls never stopped playing. Young girls playing ice hockey was such a "problem" that in the 1940s Minneapolis Park Board employee Loretta Galvin created a game called "snow hockey," explicitly to get them off the ice and away from playing pick-up games with the boys.



Assorted skate advertisements. The top and middle left are pre war and the middle right and bottom are post war.

Girls like Eveleth's Joyce Ellersich, Duluth's Bonnie Shea, and Minneapolis' Judy Westby were all at one point inaccurately called "the first girl to play hockey," when it was discovered that they played on boys' teams through the 1940s and 1950s, and all were outright banned from their leagues to get them to stop. Judy Westby told the press she'd start playing football instead. By 1961, International Falls was proudly, inaccurately claiming to have "the nation's first organized girls' hockey program," and attitudes about girls playing began a slow shift back to the pre-war views.



Burnsville High School's 1967 Snow Week featured "Powderpuff Hockey" (broomball but played on ice skates). While not perfect, attitudes about girls playing were shifting. Photo courtesy *The Dakota County Tribune*, February 9, 1967.

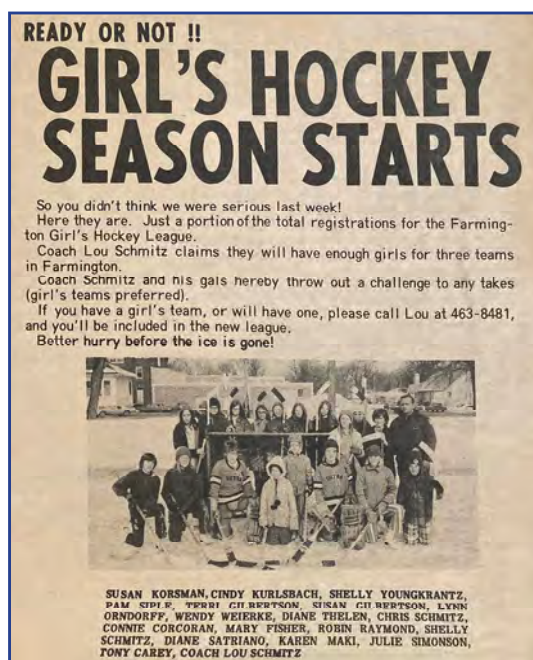


# A DREAM OF THE FUTURE:

## 125 YEARS OF WOMEN'S HOCKEY IN MINNESOTA

### A DECADE OF GIRLS' YOUTH HOCKEY

Louis Schmitz started pulling girls into his Farmington Youth Hockey practices as early as 1965, and Farmington had a full girls' squad in 1970. Across the metro, Mounds View had 30 girls in an intracity league that same year. Multiple teams from Burnsville, Lakeville, and White Bear Lake joined Farmington in the Twin Cities Girls' Hockey League in 1972. By 1973 teams were all over the metro, including new groups from New Brighton, Elk River, Anoka, Edina, Bloomington, West St. Paul, St. Paul Park, Rosemount, Brooklyn Park, Como Park, Cottage Grove, and Minnetonka. Austin, Chislm, and Hibbing all had their own leagues in the outstate.



A full page add for the Farmington girls' hockey team that appeared in an insert in the Dakota County Tribune sometime in spring of 1970. Clipping courtesy Diane Albright.



Connie Donnelly with her seven hockey playing brothers in 1976. She played for the Lakeville girls' team for one season before joining Farmington for several years. Clipping courtesy *The Dakota County Tribune*.



Left: Jane Osiecki in her West St. Paul intracity jersey in the late 1970s. Photo courtesy Jane Osiecki Cashin.

Right: Mary Brown in her Richfield girls hockey uniform in the late 1970s. Photo button courtesy Mary Brown.



Upper: the Northfield team in 1975 at an invitational tournament in Fergus Falls, with Lisa Halvorson in the second row on the far right. Lower: the Northfield team during practice in the late 1970s. Photos courtesy Lisa Halvorson Silkey.



The Farmington team in 1975. Left to right, front row: Shirley Schiller, Pam Siple, Diane Satriano, Pam Jensen, Lori Matson, second row: Manager Lucille Korsman, Sue Magalis, Julie Simonsen, Diana Weierke, Coach Louis Schmitz, third row: Cheryl Magnuson, Sue Korsman, Cindy Krubsack, Karen Maki, and Patty Jensen. Photo courtesy Diane Albright.



The Anoka girls team (in red and white) plays the University of Minnesota club team in the late 1970s. Photo courtesy Sue Ring-Jarvi.



A moment during a Lakeville v. Burnsville game in 1973. The reporter notes that checking featured in the girls' leagues of the 1970s. Clipping courtesy *The Dakota County Tribune*.

In 1974 Lucille Korsman, the general manager for the Farmington girls, became the first woman elected to the board of the Minnesota Amateur Hockey Association (MAHA, which would become Minnesota Hockey in 2000). More than 200 girls' teams sprang up across Minnesota, and formal organization was needed on the state level.



# A DREAM OF THE FUTURE:

## 125 YEARS OF WOMEN’S HOCKEY IN MINNESOTA

### A DECADE OF GIRLS’ YOUTH HOCKEY

Women’s teams proliferated as well, and after playing with a group of mothers—including Marlene Brodt and Judy Westby Jungwirth—a young Sue Ring organized the first women’s club team at the University of Minnesota in almost 40 years. Club hockey continued at the University until the start of varsity women’s hockey in the late 1990s.

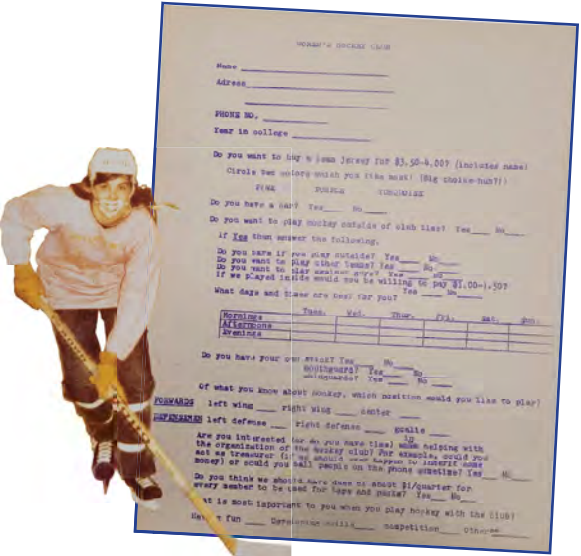


Above: The 1975 University of Minnesota Club team. Because most of the women were brand new to hockey, they chose to wear pink and turquoise jerseys instead of maroon and gold for the first years. Left to right, back row: Sue Ring, Terri Thomas, unknown, Mary Winsor, Mary Teale, Peggy Bradley, Kathy Peterson, Rich Goon, Mary Fick, Joan Cushing, Terry Lindquist, Jackie Barber. Middle: Kris Gangl. Front row: Laura Tiffany, Melissa Whitten, unknown, Jane Ring, Nancy Palmer, Patty Hartley, Lisa Phillips, Kris Vosberg, Sandy Allen.

Right: the sign up form Sue Ring sent out to University coeds to set up the hockey team, with Kris Vosberg in the pink jersey. Photos courtesy Sue Ring-Jarvi.



The original Roseville Ladies’ Hockey, formed from a group of hockey moms and women who had played for boys teams in the 1950s. Left to right, front row: Sue Ring, Helen Swanson, Marilyn Nelson, Judy Price, Carol Aus, Marlene Brodt, Mary Jo MacDonald, Arlene Zwinkel, Marilyn Rose. Back row: Anna Anderson, Betty Meany, Jane Ring, Donna Goff, Ursula ?, Karen Carrier, Karen Nixon, Mary Lou Farr, Jan Nelson, unknown, Mary Lou Nyhus, Katie Farkas, Steve Nyhus, Judy Tekotz, Audrey Gunderson. Photo courtesy Sue Ring-Jarvi.



The first sanctioned girls’ state tournaments were held between February and March of 1974. Girls were split into three age levels: peewees (up to 10), bantams (11-13), and midgets (14-18). Some cities fielded multiple teams at each level, while others had girls as young as 6 and as old as 18 playing together on single “all-ages” midget squads. The 1974 State Bantam Tournament was hosted by Coon Rapids, while the 1974 State PeeWees Tournament and 1974 State Midget Tournament were held at the Burnsville Ice Arena. Lake Region (the New Brighton/Mounds View cooperative team) won at both the midget and bantam levels, while White Bear Lake girls took home the first peewee girls’ honors.

For 1975, Marlys Broberg, who ran the massive, multi-team program in Burnsville, and Keith Howard of Coon Rapids formally organized the Metro Area Girls Hockey Association, bringing Albert Lea, Anoka, Burnsville, Coon Rapids, East Grand Forks, Elk River, Farmington, Fergus Falls, Lake Region, Lakeville, New Hope, North St. Paul, Northfield, Phalen, Richfield, and White Bear Lake all into one large league. That year saw state tournaments again, and both Burnsville and Lake Region sent teams to the first ever girls’ national tournament.



Tournament Errata. Courtesy of Sandy Larson, Patty Mraz, Sue Korsman, and Sue Ring-Jarvi.

Girls’ youth hockey persisted through the rest of the 1970s—state tournaments were held each year, Burnsville again sent teams to nationals in 1976, and in 1977 Burnsville player Robin Boeser was the first girl in the state to make a varsity boy’s squad, playing for Prior Lake High School—but a drop off in hockey participation for both boys and girls at the end of the decade hit the girls’ programs particularly hard.



Clipping courtesy The Dakota County Tribune.

# A DREAM OF THE FUTURE:

## 125 YEARS OF WOMEN'S HOCKEY IN MINNESOTA

### THE FIRST GIRLS' NATIONALS



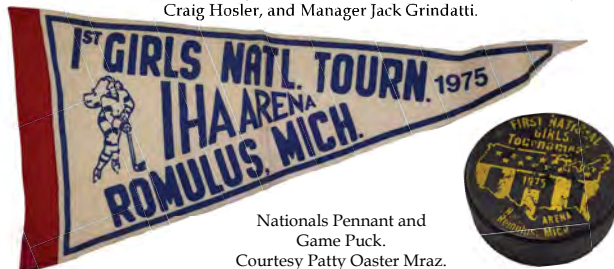
The "Burnsville Bravettes" Teen Team  
L-R Front Row: Cindy Storm, Denise Grazzini, Finny Johnston, De Ferrara, Shelly Boeser. Second Row: Patty Oaster, Wendy Pederson, Natalie Broberg, Jane Breckner, Teri McClure, Robin Boeser. Back Row: Asst. Coach Gary McGregor, Suzie Goldstein, Holly Burkard, Mary Shippy, Ann Thompson, Julie Goldstein, Coach Marlys Broberg.



The Burnsville Junior Team  
L-R Front Row: Dana Sondrall, Lori Hjermstad, Kindra Stirtz, Carol Broberg, Ginny Staudt, Barb O'Neill, Ann Bougetz, Marcie Martin, Kim McDermott. Second Row: Coach Buzz Martin, Jeanne Burgoyne, Heidi Herold, Patsy Sauer, Sue Thompson, Leigh Nordstrom, Bonnie Schultz, Sandy Bredt, Sue Blanchette, Coach Denny McDermott. Back Row: Assistant Coaches Jack Thompson and Jack Bredt. Photos courtesy Sandy Bredt Larson.

For the first time a Nationals Tournament was held in Romulus, Michigan, from April 10-13, 1975. The tournament was organized to serve as both a National Championship and to petition the Amateur Hockey Association of the United States (AHAUS, the predecessor to USA Hockey) to officially recognize and sanction girls' hockey. Six "Juniors" (under 12s) and 12 "Teens" (13-18) teams from state leagues in Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, and New York were invited to play, including both a teen and a junior squad from Burnsville and a teen squad from Lake Region.

Not Pictured: the Lake Region Teen Team, including Carol Ebersole, Sue Szczech, Jodi Bugstad, Nancy Arndt, Lisa Rehwoldt, Teresa Harlon, Sue Thomas, Dean Grausnick, Lee Ann Sexauer, Teri Gregori, Lisa Berry, Ann Grindatti, Sue Smith, Barb Adams, Anita Secord, Gayle Solheim, Linda Arford, Sandy Platzor, Paula Thomas, Coaches Dave Wegleitner and Craig Hosler, and Manager Jack Grindatti.



Nationals Pennant and Game Puck.  
Courtesy Patty Oaster Mraz.

With Burnsville teams at both age levels headed for Nationals, the excitement was high. The *Minneapolis Star* ran a short feature on the girls' National aspirations, giving Marlys Broberg a chance to talk about teen Finney Johnston's spectacular wrist shot, one "most boys would like to have," and 11-year-old Ginny Staudt, with her "miserly" GAA of 0.769 was the goalie to watch on the Juniors. The girls sold lightbulbs and team coffee mugs door to door in Burnsville to raise money for the trip, and received enthusiastic support.



All three Minnesota teams made the semi-finals at their respective levels, and the two Burnsville squads each advanced to the finals. Unfortunately, by Sunday afternoon the toll of the busy weekend caught up with the Minnesota girls, and first the Burnsville juniors fell 6-2 to the Ecorse Mussil's Sport Center team, who claimed the Junior Girls National Championship. That evening, the Burnsville Bravettes teen squad fell as well, losing 9-1 to the Massport A squad but denying them the shutout. When the older girls returned to the hotel, the younger squad lined up outside to cheer them into the building, singing "We're from Burnsville, couldn't be prouder, if you can't hear us, we'll yell a little louder."

Snapshots from the Burnsville Junior Team over the course of the tournament. Top to bottom: Heidi Herold lines up for the faceoff in a game; warmups; faceoff in the final match; shaking hands after the final; Sandy Bredt hoists the second place trophy; the team photo taken at the tournament. Photos courtesy Sandy Bredt Larson.

*The entire trip was a great experience for all the girls and Burnsville and the state of Minnesota should be extremely proud of the representation that these young ladies exhibited in not only ability but also in sportsmanship, enthusiasm and in their general behavior throughout the entire tournament. All the girls played their hearts out and deserve a lot of credit.*

- Asst. Coach Jack Thompson



# A DREAM OF THE FUTURE:

## 125 YEARS OF WOMEN'S HOCKEY IN MINNESOTA

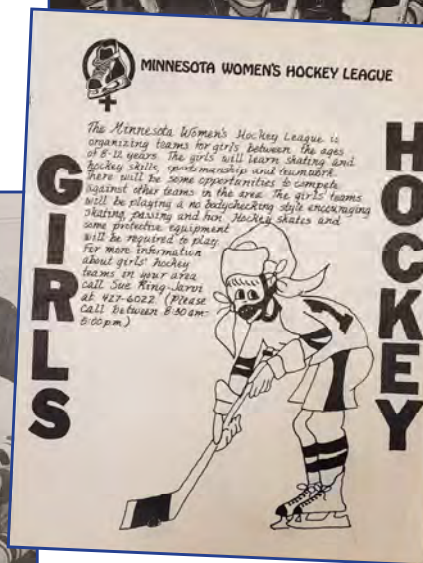
### HOCKEY IN THE NORTH

Women's hockey history in Minnesota diverged heading into the 1980s. All over the state, but especially in the north metro, hockey persisted in women's leagues, elite travel teams, and with girls playing in the boys leagues.

The Minnesota Women's Hockey League (MWHL, later MWA) was formed in 1978 by Sue Ring-Jarvi and her University of Minnesota club teams, alongside teams of women who had either aged out of the youth leagues – like Burnsville player Finney Johnston and her Rink Rats – or who had come to hockey later in life – like Marlene Brodt and the Roseville Strauss. In addition to playing, these teams coached, held clinics, and encouraged young girls to get into hockey however they could.



Above: The Minneapolis Rink Rats in the 1980s.



Photos and document courtesy Sue Ring-Jarvi.

Left: One of dozens of recruitment fliers produced by Sue Ring-Jarvi and the MWHL to encourage girls to take up the sport of hockey. Customized versions for schools around the metro were made.

Far left: The 1980 Minnesota Blue Js (Js for Jane and John Ring). Left to right, front row: Karin Hoppe, Sue Ring, Sandy Brogren, Joan Hallock, Judy Jungwirth, Cindy Thompson, Mary Fick. Back row: Jay Doetkott, Kathy Ehrhardt, Julie Vesel, Martha Schmitt, Peggy Bradley, Kris Vossberg, Dave Vandegrift.

Lynn Olson pushed the women's league to become AHAUS-affiliated in 1983, which they finalized in 1986. That league eventually grew into the Women's Hockey Association of Minnesota (WHAM), an organization that exists to this day and still includes Sue Ring-Jarvi's post-university team, the Blue Js, who have played for more than 40 years.



The Minnesota Checkers  
Photo courtesy Kim Shereck.

Also in 1978, Dr. Bob May formed an elite travel squad, the Minnesota Checkers, from girls on his own Wayzata-based team as well as star players pulled from Burnsville and St. Paul Phalen. With a number of players disqualified for reasons now unclear, the Checkers took second place at Nationals that year.

But one year later, the Checkers were back, and headed to Boston, MA, for the 1979 National Women's Invitational Tournament. The Checkers faced considerably older and bigger teams in the Class B category, which was for all-ages teams that saw fewer than 60 games during their regular season play. Despite their age and size deficit, the Checkers swept their class and faced Cape Cod, MA in the finals. Tied 2-2 with less than two minutes left to play, Wayzata's Laura Halldorson pulled off a backhanded shot from behind the Cape Cod net and the Minnesota Checkers brought home the Open B Class National Championship for 1979 and Minnesota women's first national win. The Checkers kept that title for four straight years, until their streak was broken by a second-place finish in 1983.



Governor Albert Quie's Proclamation in honor of the Minnesota Checkers. The Checkers also attended the Friendship Tournament in Helsinki after their 1979 Nationals win. Photo courtesy Kim Shereck.



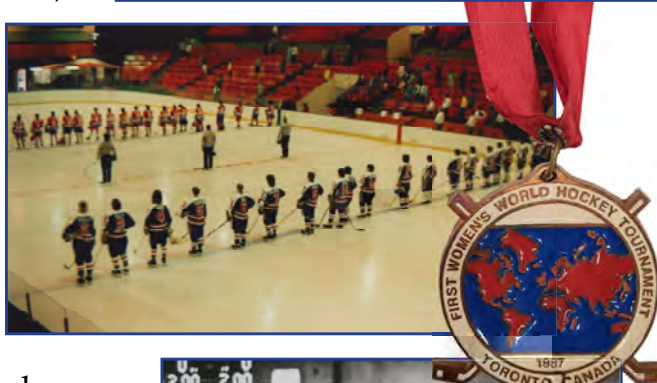
# A DREAM OF THE FUTURE:

## 125 YEARS OF WOMEN'S HOCKEY IN MINNESOTA

### HOCKEY IN THE NORTH

In 1987, the first Women's Worlds tournament was held in North York, Ontario, with the blessings of the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF), though not its formal sanction. Five Minnesota women were chosen for Team USA, all players with either the MWHHA or the Checkers. Deb Ahrens, Laura Halldorson, Mary Brown, Cindy Thompson, and Lori Bivans joined 16 other women from around the country to represent the United States. In the round-robin tournament held from April 21-26, 1987, the US team initially lost to Canada, but then shut out Sweden, the Netherlands, and Japan, and bested Switzerland and Ontario, in route to a bronze-medal finish. Canada took the gold, with the province-specific Ontario team taking silver. Deb Ahrens was chosen as the US Team MVP.

Photos and medal from the collection of Mary Brown. Top: Team USA after receiving their bronze medals. Middle left: The national anthems in the bronze medal match. Middle right: Mary Brown's bronze medal. Bottom: the Midwesterners on team USA. Left to right, front row: Jen Voichick (of Madison, WI), Lori Bivans, Cindy Thompson, back row: Laura Halldorson, Mary Brown, and Deb Ahrens.



The 1988 Girls'/Womens National Ice Hockey Championships Program. A typo in the welcome letter—1890s instead of 1980s—is slightly earlier than current research has definitively uncovered, but it is much closer to the real starting date for Minnesota women's hockey than most knew at the time.

Program courtesy Sue Ring-Jarvi

In 1988, Bloomington was the first Minnesota town chosen to host the Girls'/Women's National Ice Hockey Championships for AHAUS, and Minnesota teams competed at every level. Women's and girls' ice hockey teams, though fewer in number than in the height of the 1970s, existed every year in Minnesota throughout the 1980s and early 1990s.

Other All-Star travelling teams like the Checkers appeared over the years, such as the Minnesota Thoroughbreds, founded in 1987. Joy Woog, a member of the South St. Paul Woog family and cousin of Gopher's coach Doug Woog, was involved in the formation of that team, which continued into the 2000s.

And just like in the 1940s and 1950s, girls kept playing by joining boys' teams. Susan Farniok of Delano became the second woman to play boys' varsity high school hockey in Minnesota when she appeared in goal as a sophomore in 1985. Her coaches cited her history with the boys' leagues as a big part of why the varsity boys immediately accepted her—they'd played with her their whole careers. Jeanine Sobek played boys' hockey in Coon Rapids from second to sixth grade before joining the MWHHA and eventually Team USA. Jenny Hanley of Edina played boys' varsity hockey with Edina High School in 1990, and was the first girl to make it to a section tournament final, just missing the state tournament. Hanley also became the first woman in the US to play for a men's varsity college team, playing for the Division III Hamline University Pipers in 1991. Amber Hegland of Farmington became the first girl to play in a varsity state tournament when she appeared on the Farmington High School boys' team in 1994.



# A DREAM OF THE FUTURE:

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### RINGETTE IN THE SOUTH

In the south metro and certain cities in the outstate, many girls' hockey teams and leagues converted to ringette, a "gentler" hockey-adjacent game popular with women in Canada and Finland that kept players restricted to certain zones and emphasized passing. Developed in Canada in 1965 as a way to encourage girls to play an ice sport, ringette appealed to parents as a less dangerous option.



West St. Paul Ringette in the late 1970s/early 1980s.  
Photo courtesy Jane Osiecki Cashin.

By January of 1979 more than 100 girls signed up to play in West St. Paul's ringette league alone, at three different age levels: petites (10 and under), tweens (11-13), and belles (14-17). The game thrived in Maplewood, West St. Paul, South St. Paul, Cottage Grove, Inver Grove Heights, and Rosemount

Ringette was named a featured sport of Governor Perpich's Star of the North Games throughout the 1980s, and an exchange tournament with teams in Winnipeg, Manitoba, was held annually. In 1992 the first ringette world cup tournament was held in Helsinki, Finland. Twelve of the 14 players on the US National Ice Ringette team were selected from Minnesota including Amy Sievers, Torie Gaston, Lori Gustafson, Molly Milbert, Kari Nelson, Maureen Gramling, Monica Hoban, Lisa McEllistrem, Chris Plan, Shelly Skarda, Vicki Skarda, and Jill Stiff. Defeating France, Russia, and Sweden, they fell to Canada East and Finland, who took silver and bronze in the tournament respectively. Canada West won the gold. Minnesota players continued to dominate the roster of Team USA Ringette throughout the 1990s, and South St. Paul and Rosemount hosted the world championships in 1994.



Clipping courtesy the Dakota County Tribune.

In 1991, the ringette community kicked-off a movement that ultimately resulted in girl's hockey becoming a varsity sport in Minnesota. Frustrated by the lack of opportunities for their ringette-playing daughters, despite the widespread community enthusiasm and participation, a group of parents from five south metro districts filed a sex discrimination complaint with the State Department of Education, asserting that the districts were not in compliance with the almost 20-year-old Title IX law. The subsequent investigations uncovered that the vast majority of Minnesota school districts were wildly out of compliance with Title IX, and that adding a number of girls' sports was mandatory to avoid costly lawsuits.



Clipping courtesy the Dakota County Tribune.

Several districts quickly came on board and added ringette as a varsity sport. On December 3, 1991, the first-ever varsity high school girls' ice ringette game was held at the West St. Paul Ice Arena. Park of Cottage Grove played Henry Sibley High School\* in front of a crowd of 200 fans and television cameras. Tara Jung, a junior from Sibley, scored the first goal in a 10-2 victory for the Mendota Heights girls. Apple Valley, Rosemount, South St. Paul, and North St. Paul/Tartan all joined them in the league.

The Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) did not sanction the sport, but indicated that they would consider it if more teams emerged.

Inadvertently, however, by asking the question "Can we have varsity ringette?" the ringette community had prompted the question, "If we can have ringette, why can't we have hockey?" across the metro. Both the women of the MWWHA and girls playing on travelling and boys' teams began agitating for their preferred ice sport, and the result was ultimately hockey across the state.

\* Now Two Rivers High School

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### READY FOR VARSITY

In Burnsville, the district put the question to the girls, sending out a survey allowing them to rank dozens of sports. Ice hockey was the clear favorite, receiving more than twice the votes of ringette and more than all other ice sports combined. On March 18, 1993, the Burnsville School District voted unanimously to affirm their choice, and Burnsville became the first school in the state to have varsity girls' ice hockey. They hired Bonnie Reimann and Patty Mraz – who had played on the 1975 Burnsville squad that went to the first girl's nationals – to co-coach, and



The 1993-94 Burnsville Blaze Girls' Varsity (above) and Junior Varsity (below). Photos courtesy Patty Oaster Mraz.

the pair instituted a no-cut policy, allowing as many girls in the district who wanted to play to at least play for the year on the junior varsity squad. Other schools quickly joined them, and formed school or cooperative teams including Anoka/Champlin Park, Benilde-St. Margaret's, Blaine/Coon-Rapids, Blake, Burnsville, Elk River, St. Paul United, and Wayzata. These eight teams played for one season, and during the course of the year the MSHSL surveyed girls around the state about sport preferences. Hockey received more than 8,000 votes, and by the end of the first season the league voted to sanction girls' varsity hockey for the 1994-1995 school year. Within months, 16 additional teams were formed, and the stage was set for the first girls' varsity state hockey tournament to be held.



In Apple Valley, Coach Chuck Scanlon was a popular winning soccer coach who was originally asked by the district to take on girls' ringette in order to mitigate some of the backlash from girls "taking" ice time. A former hockey player and fan of the game,

he and his team had been secretly preparing their girls for the transition to hockey, holding practices at the end of the 93-94 season. In South St. Paul, ringette player Melissa Milbert asked Superintendent Dave Metzen to let her make the case for hockey, which she did in a pair of community forums. South St. Paul ultimately made the transition to hockey, and included the young players in the hiring of Coach Dave Palmquist, a former boys' hockey coach.

Both the caution-driven and student-driven hiring decisions ultimately proved successful, as the South St. Paul Packers and Apple Valley Eagles had dominant seasons.

In a series of photos from an early season victory over the St. Paul Academy/Visitation Cooperative Team, the South St. Paul Packers dominate and celebrate their win.

Photos courtesy Melissa Wendland.

Meeting in the final game of the regular season, with Apple Valley undefeated 20-0-0 and South St. Paul with a single loss at 20-1-0, the powerhouses battled to a tie. Packer Megan Milbert traded goals early in the first period with Eagle Betsy Kukowski, only for Aubrey Mull to pull Apple Valley ahead in the first period. Kelly Kegley tied the game up early in the second period, at which point Jen Retka and Jenny Jannett, each in their respective creases, stopped the scoring entirely. Retka made 28 saves, and Jannette 25 to finish the third period and single overtime without a goal. Alongside Henry Sibley High School and Stillwater, these teams roared into the first girls' state tournament.



# A DREAM OF THE FUTURE:

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### THE FIRST VARSITY STATE TOURNAMENT

On Friday, February 24, 1995, 4,085 people packed into the 3,400 seat Aldrich Arena to watch 76 young women compete in the first sanctioned varsity state tournament of the high school league.

Apple Valley and Stillwater took the ice for the first game to a raucous crowd.

Lineswoman Evonne Young, the first woman to work a championship hockey game, dropped the first puck for the state and the nation's first ever state high school girls' hockey tournament. Apple Valley won the game 6-4, and advanced to the finals.

Two hours later, South St. Paul and Henry Sibley took to the ice. For the Packers girls, whose school had sent their boys hockey team to state 26 times, making it in their first year was already a thrill. Dave Palmquist even predicted that the girls might beat the boys to a state title. The stands were filled with clanging cowbells as the Packers won 4-0.



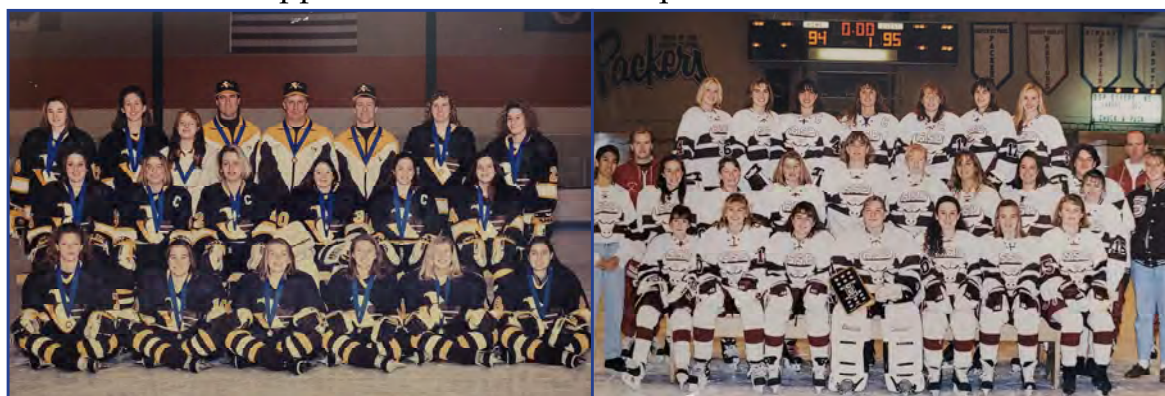
The National Anthem played to a packed arena, with standing room only crowds.  
Photo courtesy Chris Lee.



On Saturday, Aldrich Arena had given priority to a previously scheduled boys' section final, so the consolation game was scheduled for 7pm, with the championship game following at 9pm. Despite the exceedingly late hour, 3,255 fans still came to watch the women play. John Bartz, who organized tournaments for many boys' varsity sports, told the *Star Tribune*, "In the 10 years I've been doing this, this has been the most fun." Parents drove their young daughters from as far as Bemidji to get a chance to see the first final.

A program from the day signed by the entirety of the Apple Valley team and staff.  
Courtesy Chris Lee.

In the consolation game, Henry Sibley High School won 4-2 over Stillwater, with a hat trick from Carrie Stefaniak the deciding factor. Bill Quinn, writing for *Let's Play Hockey*, was impressed with both teams and thrilled that the crowd was enthusiastic for the game, noting that other high school sports often struggled to convince fans to come out for consolation matches. At 9pm, Osseo hockey player Shawna Schuster took the ice and sang the national anthem to kick off the championship match. Minnesota First Lady Susan Carlson dropped the ceremonial first puck.



The 1994-95 Apple Valley Eagles and the 1994-95 South St. Paul Packers.  
Photos courtesy Chris Lee and Melissa Wendland.

In a "highly physical, evenly matched, standing-room-only, nail-biting," game, South St. Paul outshot Apple Valley 18-17, but lost 2-0 in the end. Michelle Sikich, assisted by Heather Priester, scored in the first period for Apple Valley, and Betsey Kukowski put in an extra point on a power play in the third, but it was Apple Valley freshman goalie Jenny Jannett whose brilliant goal-tending made the game. Stopping spectacular shots from Kelly Kegley and winning an up-close scramble with Melissa Milbert, she earned every inch of her shutout. Jen Retka was also brilliant in the crease for South St. Paul, and the reporters in attendance left thrilled with the quality of hockey on display and the potential for growth. Apple Valley finished the season undefeated.

*Their daughters and granddaughters might be playing,  
and these girls can say they were the first team to win a  
state title. We feel really lucky to do that.*

- Coach Chuck Scanlon

# A DREAM OF THE FUTURE:

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### THE STATE OF GIRLS' HOCKEY

After the 1995 tournament, girls' high school varsity hockey almost instantly doubled in size. The state had 49 teams by the time practices started in October of 1995. The Minnesota State High School League was blown away. "To my knowledge, we've never had a sport take off as dramatically as girls' hockey," executive director Dave Stead told the *Star Tribune*. The passage of the Mighty Ducks legislation, which allowed for community grants to build and expand ice arenas around the state, and championed by South St. Paul's Rep. Bob Milbert and Falcon Heights' Rep. Mary Jo McGuire, MN Amateur Sports Commission Chair Tom Duffy, and Executive Director Paul Erickson, was critical to solving the problem of ice time and enabling the leagues to expand.



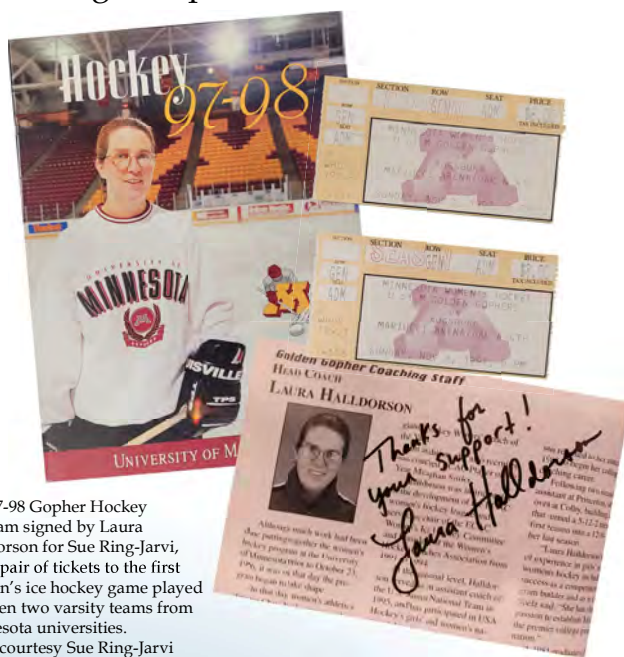
The growth never stopped. In the last 30 years, the Minnesota State High School League has expanded to 123 teams all over the state. The girls' tournament is now a full bracket eight-team state tournament, with both A and AA levels – meaning twice as many teams win their way into the state tournament each year as played at all in the 1993-1994 season. Dave Palmquist's prediction came true: the South St. Paul girls did beat the boys to a State Championship, and brought home the trophy in 2002(AA), 2003(AA), 2005(AA), and 2006(A). To date, the young women of South St. Paul have the most state tournament appearances of all time, at 17, and the most consecutive wins of any team, at 67 from 2001-2003.

Since 1995 more than 500,000 Minnesotans have bought tickets to attend the tournament.

With high schools fully on board, the next step was the universities. Many of the seniors who graduated after playing in the 1995 tournament had to look to schools on the East Coast for ice hockey scholarships, and the loss to the state was clear.

Since the first IIHF-sanctioned Women's World Championships in 1990, Minnesota women had made every Team USA squad, beginning with Kelley Owen, Shawna Davidson, and Jeanine Sobek. Of the three, Owen stayed in Minnesota but did not play hockey in college, and Davidson and Sobek were both lost to colleges back East. Jenny Hanley, who joined the Worlds' squad in 1992, played college hockey but without a scholarship on the men's Division III Hamline University Pipers. Women at the highest levels had been pushing Minnesota schools to consider sanctioning the sport for the whole of the decade.

In March of 1995, Augsburg College announced that they would begin offering varsity women's ice hockey. On November 9, 1995, they became the first Minnesota team to play in a college varsity game when they lost to Dartmouth. That same fall, the University of Minnesota announced that they would roll out women's varsity hockey in the 1997-98 season. Many other Minnesota universities quickly came on board.



The 97-98 Gopher Hockey program signed by Laura Hallderson for Sue Ring-Jarvi, and a pair of tickets to the first women's ice hockey game played between two varsity teams from Minnesota universities. Items courtesy Sue Ring-Jarvi and Chris Lee.

On November 2, 1997, two Minnesota women's college varsity ice hockey teams met for the first time, coached by two Minnesota women hockey players who had been competing and playing together since they were seven years old. Jill Pohtilla's Augsburg squad met Laura Hallderson's Gopher women before a crowd of 6,854. The University of Minnesota won, but history was made.

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### THE STATE OF GIRLS' HOCKEY

On February 8, 1998, at noon in Nagano, women's ice hockey officially dropped the puck as an Olympic sport. Canada, China, Finland, and Japan joined the United States to compete for the first medals. Team USA included Minnesotans Alana Blahoski and Jenny Schmidgall. In the final, the US team faced Canada, as they had done in four previous Women's Worlds finals, taking a silver medal each time. This time, however, Team USA won the gold and the first Olympic glory.

In Minnesota, women's college varsity was going strong, though still playing catch up with their East coast rivals, many of whom had older Minnesotan women on their squads. In one popular rivalry, sisters Melissa and Megan Milbert, who had played for the second-place South St. Paul Packers together in 1995, faced off for two years after Melissa went to Harvard for hockey in the 1995-96 season, and Megan was recruited for the first University of Minnesota team.



Above: Sisters Melissa and Megan Milbert. Left: A moment during a Minnesota v. Harvard game in 1997. Photos courtesy Melissa Wendland.



The first official women's college National Championship, under the auspices of the American Women's College Hockey Alliance, was held in 1998, and the University of Minnesota made it through to the semifinals

before they fell to the eventual champions, New Hampshire, and finished in fourth place. In 2000, the University of Minnesota brought home the

last of the ACHA National Championships in Division I, and Augsburg took second-place in Division III that same year.

In 2001, after the NCAA took over, Minnesotans continued to dominate, winning Division I 11 of the next 16 years. Shannon Miller's UMD Bulldogs would take the National title in 2001,

2002, 2003, 2008 and 2010, Laura Halldorson's Gophers in 2004 and 2005, and Brad Frost's Gophers in 2012, 2013, 2015, and 2016.



The 1999-2000 second in the nation Augsburg Team. Photo courtesy Mary Brown.



Natalie Darwitz on Team USA. During her 11 year Team USA career, which began in 1999 when she was only 15, she won eight silver and two gold medals in Four Nations Cups, five silver and three gold medals in the Women's World Championships, an Olympic bronze medal in Turin and two Olympic silver medals in Vancouver and Salt Lake City. In her spare time, she was part of the 2004-2005 back-to-back National Champion Gophers team. She has been inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame, the IIHF Hall of Fame, and the US Hockey Hall of Fame. Photo courtesy Natalie Darwitz.

Throughout the 2000s, the consistently-medalling Team USA drew many members of its roster from the ranks of collegiate and high school Minnesotans. Both Krissy Wendell-Pohl and Natalie Darwitz were called up while still in high school, and stayed on the squad through their college careers in Minnesota. By late 2005, fully one half of the US population of girl high school hockey players played in Minnesota, and Minnesotan women made up 20% of the NCAA Division I players. A third of the women in consideration for the Olympics were Minnesotans. Team USA coach Ben Smith went on the record that the best line in hockey, male or female, at the time, was the Gopher's Natalie Darwitz-Krissy Wendell-Kelly Stephens line. But getting the fans to take notice – Gopher women's hockey games, the best attended in the nation, rarely broke 2,000 people in the seats – was a problem.

*If we can get people inside the rink to see a game, they'll come back. The problem is getting people to even put it on their list to go.*

- Natalie Darwitz.



# A DREAM OF THE FUTURE:

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### PROFESSIONAL, WITH A MINNESOTA FLAVOR

Minnesota's first semi-professional women's hockey team, the Minnesota Whitecaps, was founded in 2004. Jack Brodt and Dwayne Schmidgall – the fathers of Kerry, Winny, and Chelsey Brodt and Jenny Schmidgall-Potter, respectively – founded the team to create an opportunity for their daughters to continue their careers after college. Early on, players drew no salary or stipend and were expected to sell \$2,000 of program ads or tickets to cover the budgets for their league and ice time. But the quality of competition was at the top of the international pool. In 2010, while playing in the Western Women's Hockey League (WWHL), they became the first US team to win the Clarkson Cup. For several years after the WWHL folded, they operated as an independant team, striving to advance the professional game. After joining the National Women's Hockey League (NWHL) in 2018, they became Minnesota's first fully professional women's hockey team. At the end of their first NWHL season, on March 17, 2019, they won the Isobel Cup.

Two weeks later, the Canadian Women's Hockey League folded, and the Women's professional world was thrown into chaos. The Whitecaps continued to play for four more complicated years, during league boycotts, the NWHL rebranding as the Premier Hockey Federation (PHF), and the formation of a new players union. In 2023, the PHF was aquired by the Mark Walter Group and the new union signed a collective bargaining agreement, creating a new Professional Women's Hockey League (PWHL). While Minnesota fans were initially dismayed by the loss of the Whitecaps, the league quickly assured Minnesota that the State of Hockey was a market they intended to develop.



Minnesotans packing the Xcel for the 2024 PWHL Finals.  
Photo by DCHS.

Lake City's Taylor Heise was the first pick, for Minnesota and for the league – that same month, the team had a roster full of Minnesotan and other talent by November, a new coach by December, and a first game on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024. In a season of ups and downs, PWHL Minnesota came out on top, and claimed the first Walter Cup in a nailbiting five-game series against PWHL Boston.



The focus on supporting and inspiring girls hockey in the PWHL is passionate. Between periods, local girls' teams scrimmage in front of the crowds, like this South St. Paul team got to do during a game.  
Photo by DCHS.

One year later, the newly christened Minnesota Frost were ready to bring the cup back to Minnesota. Another up and down season got them into the playoffs by a single point, but they took down the Ottawa Charge in Game 4 in front of 11,024 fans at home. Minnesota put women's hockey on their list to go.

The first season of the PWHL was a frantic, beautiful experiment in building a league from the ground up in a matter of months. After announcing Natalie Darwitz as the general manager for PWHL Minnesota in September, the league held a draft –



PWHL Minnesota after their inaugural Walter Cup win in Boston.  
Photo courtesy the PWHL.

Throughout, Minnesota fans showed up. For the home opening game, 13,316 Minnesota fans attended, a record for women's hockey at the time, and Minnesota led the league in attendance throughout the season. When the finals went to Game Four, 13,104 fans arrived in hope of a victory at home. They packed the Xcel, chanting "We want the Cup!" before the players were even introduced. The crowd was devastated when the series went to Game Five.



The Minnesota Frost celebrate their back-to-back Walter Cup wins at home.  
Photo courtesy the PWHL.

# A DREAM OF THE FUTURE:

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### HOCKEY FOR EVERYONE

In the State of Hockey, where there is the excellence of varsity hockey for girls at both the high school and collegiate levels, Minnesota women consistently appearing in numbers on every iteration of Team USA for both the IIHF Worlds and the Olympics, a previous professional team that is the only team to have ever claimed both the Isobel and the Clarkson Cups, a current professional team that opened the new league by becoming back-to-back Walter Cup Champions, and Minnesotans making up the largest US source of players in the PWHL, there is no question that Minnesotans can be the best at women's ice hockey. Competition is fun, and we excel at it.

But it is not the only way we think about the game. Here, women have spent nearly a century asking, "Why can't I play?" All people, in all walks of life, get to ask that question in Minnesota. Here, "Hockey is for Everyone." The groups working to spread and promote hockey among non-professionals and pre-professionals deserve enormous praise.

Do you want to play hockey? Or even just support the game? Here are some groups that might be worth checking out:

#### Minnesota Hockey and Your Local Community Association

If you're a kid looking to go the traditional route, you'll start with one of the 135 local community associations that run youth hockey teams. You can find the one nearest you at [www.minnesotahockey.org](http://www.minnesotahockey.org)

#### Mosaic Hockey Collective

An outreach program aimed at kids of color, but open to everyone trying to build inclusivity in the game. Learn more or show your support at [www.mosaichockeycollective.com](http://www.mosaichockeycollective.com)

#### Women's Hockey Association of Minnesota

Founded in 1978 as the MWWHL, WHAM is still going strong, with nearly 100 active teams all over the state. A league with multiple skill tiers open to women of all ages, whether you're in your 20s or your 70s (yes, really, you won't be alone). Learn more at [www.whamhockey.org](http://www.whamhockey.org)



Jane Ring played WHAM hockey into her 80s.  
Photo courtesy Sue Ring-Jarvi.

#### Minnesota Sled Hockey



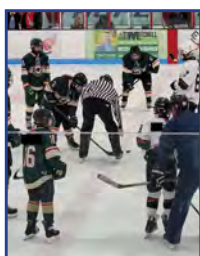
Sled hockey is the most well-known of adaptive hockey games, and the Minnesota organization was founded in 2006 and is currently actively trying to build the women's game here (especially after the awesome gold medal finish of our Team USA women's parahockey team in August). Learn more at [www.mnsledhockey.org](http://www.mnsledhockey.org)

#### Minnesota Warriors Hockey

If you are a veteran of any branch of service with a disability, you are invited to join the Minnesota Warriors Hockey team. Founded by veterans Andy Qualy and Drew Hill in 2010 to provide community and therapeutic support, the organization has both competitive and recreational teams. Learn more at [www.mnwarriors.com](http://www.mnwarriors.com)



#### Minnesota Special Hockey



Minnesota Special Hockey is an adapted ice hockey program for players of all ages with developmental disabilities. With multiple ability levels and adaptations for specific needs, from ADHD to Down Syndrome and epilepsy to autism, individuals do not age out of eligibility and can have a lifetime of hockey if they want it. Learn more at [www.mnspecialhockey.org](http://www.mnspecialhockey.org)

Players, some with on-ice assistants, line up for a face-off during a Jamboree for Minnesota Special Hockey. Adaptations in the league are broad and tailored to the individual.  
Photo by DCHS.

#### Minnesota Blind Hockey

Utilizing a larger, slightly slower puck that makes noise, specialized whistle signals from the referees, a lower net frame, and a few additional rules to facilitate play, blind hockey is open to players whose vision ranges from 10% to totally blind. Learn more at [www.mnwildblindhockey.com](http://www.mnwildblindhockey.com)

#### Minnesota Deaf/HoH Hockey

Deaf/Hard of Hearing Hockey is for the individual who has been diagnosed with a hearing loss. While many deaf and hard of hearing players play in open leagues, the Minnesota program exists to provide additional training and support. Learn more at [www.mnwilddeafhockey.com](http://www.mnwilddeafhockey.com)

#### The Hendrickson Foundation

Many of the above organizations are funded, in part, through the Hendrickson Foundation. Founded in 2010 by coach and player Larry Hendrickson, alongside his friend Mike MacMillan, for the express purpose of supporting diversified hockey. Learn more at [www.hendricksonfoundation.com](http://www.hendricksonfoundation.com)

