

Passion for the Game Keeps Stacey Hochkins Playing and Coaching Hockey

By Heather Rule, 10/20/23, 12:00PM MDT

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The Michigan native recently helped at a USA Hockey Girls Hockey Weekend event in Plymouth



All hockey players have unique stories about their path to developing as a player.

While girls hockey has seen significant growth over the years, it's not out of the ordinary to see girls to play with boys or on a boys team at some point, especially early on in their hockey journey.

For Stacey Hochkins, who started playing hockey at 8 years old, that wasn't the case.

"I only played with girls throughout my entire career," Hochkins said. "Which is cool because there's benefits to both, obviously. But I think it's nice that girls have the option now to play with just girls if that's what they want to do."



Hochkins, a native of New Boston, Michigan, was one of the volunteer coaches for the USA Hockey Girls Hockey Weekend event held in Plymouth, Michigan, in early October that had nearly 100 girls in attendance.

For Hochkins, trying hockey stemmed from wanting to do everything her older brother, Bobby, did. The two started with roller hockey before transitioning to ice hockey. She also joined some girls on her softball team who started playing hockey.

"From there, I really just never stopped playing. I loved it," said Hochkins.

After high school, Hochkins played for the College of Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, and tallied 102 goals and 187 points in 104 games across her four-year collegiate career, which ended in 2012. She entered her final season as the all-time leader in career goals, game-winning goals and short-handed goals at Holy Cross.

Following college, she went overseas and joined the Salzburg Eagles, a professional women's hockey team in Austria. That experience for Hochkins was cut short, however, when she tore her ACL only a couple of months into training.

Therefore, she returned home to have surgery, recover and get back into hockey-playing shape. Ever since her knee healed, she's spent about a decade playing adult women's hockey in Michigan. She also still plays roller hockey. Her passion for the sport hasn't faded a bit.

"One of the cool things about it is that you can always, no matter what level you're at, you can always learn something new and different and evolve your game," Hochkins said.

Hochkins also loves the sense of community within the sport, as she's met a lot of her best friends, and her boyfriend, playing hockey.

Passion and community were on full display for Plymouth's USA Hockey Girls Hockey Weekend, an event that Hochkins said is a great way to celebrate how far girls hockey has come while still encouraging more growth.

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The event had 8U and 10U girls for one session and 12U and 14U for another session. The 50-minute sessions were spent on the ice doing game-based activities at five or six stations that helped the girls with various skills.

A chalk talk was followed with a panel of Manon Rheaume, Jenny Potter, Heather Mannix and Hochkins. The girls asked the panel about pregame meals, their experience playing with male players and plenty more.

The chalk talk "would have been awesome" to have when Hochkins was a kid, she said. The girls then got to watch the U.S. National Under-18 Team play a game afterward to wrap up the weekend.

Hochkins said the event gave the girls a different hockey experience than they're used to, which is a good thing.

"They get to play with girls that are not on their team, which is also valuable," Hochkins said. "It's a great way to get them excited about things, about hockey, to really encourage them to have fun and love the sport like most of us do."

Hochkins spent time in the past helping with teams sporadically as a volunteer coach. Her first stint with coaching came after college when she was an assistant with a power-skating coaching camp over a summer.

This hockey season, she'll step into a full-time role as an assistant coach for the Orchard Lake St. Mary's-St. Catherine's High School hockey team. The two schools combine to make one team for what will be the first year of the program.

Hochkins is eager to be a part of it all and really dive into coaching. She's also the only woman among the four-person coaching staff, which she thinks will be good so the players can potentially relate with her.

There are a lot of reasons why Hochkins was drawn to coaching, with a major one being the influence coaches had on her as a player.

"When you start coaching, you think of all the coaches that you had yourself, and all the people that maybe have had a hand in shaping your experience and developing as a player," Hochkins said. "So, to potentially play that role in someone else's hockey career is exciting to me."

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