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Rink Rat

Nearly three decades later, Winny Brodt Brown continues to leave her mark on women's hockey in Minnesota and beyond

by [Heather Rule](#) February 17, 2022



Minnesota Whitecaps D Winny Brodt Brown skates the puck up ice during a Sept. 22, 2019 exhibition game against the University of Minnesota at Ridder Arena in Minneapolis. (MHM Photo / Rick Olson)

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Winny Brodt Brown, a defenseman, scored her first professional hockey league goal for the Minnesota Whitecaps last winter when she was 42 years old. She also won the Isobel Cup championship in March 2019 and was set to defend the title with her Whitecaps teammates in 2020, until the COVID-19 pandemic shut everything down.

Back with the Whitecaps this season when she turns 44 years old on Feb. 18, it begs the obvious question: How long will she keep playing professional hockey?

"Oh, that's always the question," Winny said. "I don't know yet. I could be Tom Brady... day-to-day."

In some ways, it could be tough to imagine a world where Winny isn't playing hockey. Or more precisely, it could be tough to imagine what the girls' hockey world looks like without the influence of Winny. She's created so many opportunities to help grow the girls' and womens' games.

Another Minnesota hockey standout, Krissy Wendell, might have put it best when describing what Winny means to the growth of girls' hockey.

"I'm scared to think about, if there was no Winny Brodt, what the state of girls' hockey would be in the state of Minnesota, to be honest with you," Wendell said. "I think, single-handedly, she's continued to push boundaries in a way that's successful."

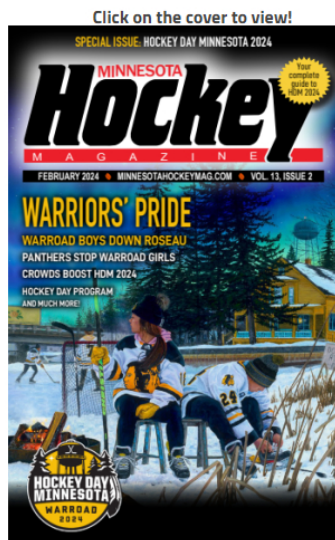
Winny's accomplishments are quite extensive. Here's a sampling:

- Inaugural Ms. Hockey winner, scored 62 goals and 61 assists in 30 games for the undefeated Roseville High School girls' team that won a state title (1995-96)
- Senior Women's A National Champion (1996-97)
- National champion with University of New Hampshire (1997-98)
- Team USA World Championship team (1999-2000, 2001-02, 2002-03)
- Minnesota State Hockey Hall of Fame (2000-2001)

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- National champion with University of Minnesota Gophers (1999-2000)
- WCHA Defensive Player of the Year and top 10 finalist for Patty Kazmaier Award (2000)
- Founded OS Training and Minnesota Whitecaps (2004-05)
- Established Junior Whitecaps (2006-07)
- Western Women's Hockey League Defensive Player of the Year (2006-07)
- Established Upper Midwest Elite League (2007-08)
- Analyst for KSTC-TV Channel 45 state girls' hockey tournament (2006-present)
- Herb Brooks Foundation board member (2008-present)
- Minnesota Whitecaps player for 18 seasons (2004-present)
- Isobel Cup Champion (2018-19), runner-up (2020-21), finalist (2019-20)
- University of Minnesota M Club Hall of Fame Class of 2021
- Roseville Raider Hall of Fame Class of 2021

Former Minnesota Whitecaps player and assistant coach, Laura Slominski, said the fact that Winny is involved with so many different aspects of the game is even more impressive than the fact that she's still lacing up her skates in the Premier Hockey Federation (formerly the National Women's Hockey League) prior to the 2021-22 season.



Ronda Curtin Engelhardt (L) and Laura Slominski behind the Minnesota Whitecaps bench during a Sept. 22, 2019 exhibition game vs. their alma mater, the University of Minnesota, at Ridder Arena. (MHM Photo / Rick Olson)

"She has changed girls' hockey in the state of Minnesota for not just being a pioneer and playing the game, but with everything she does in terms of her job and her camps and clinics," said Slominski, who was an assistant Whitecaps coach through the 2021 season.

Of course, that doesn't mean it was an easy task. As was common for players her age, Winny played on boys' teams growing up, which also meant facing some discrimination and adversity during a time when there was a mindset that girls simply didn't play hockey.

Winny remembers an exchange with a coach during her first spring-league game, a pick-up league without formal teams, when she was 10 or 11 years old. She went up to the coach to tell him she'd miss the next game. He didn't know who she was and even asked if she was a girl.

"And I said 'yeah,' and he said, 'well, I just thought you were a high-pitched hippie, long-haired hippie,'" Winny said. "It was just such a time where you didn't expect to see a girl playing hockey. At all."

She continued to play with the boys until her senior year of high school. Without a girls' team in place, her dad, Jack Brodt, met with the school board and Roseville athletic director to make it happen. She could have played for the Minnesota Thoroughbreds, a U19 team, but she wanted to play high school hockey, Jack Brodt said. She was a clear leader on the Roseville squad, with her 62 goals and 61 assists on the way to an undefeated season and a state title.

Dave Palmquist, the South St. Paul girls' hockey coach from the very beginning of girls' high school hockey, watched Winny play from the opposing benches. He remembers Roseville being a powerhouse the first couple of years in girls' hockey. And when thinking of girls' hockey in Minnesota, one of the first names that comes to his mind is Winny.

"Winny was the first girl that popped on the scene as far as really the amazing hockey skills that she had right from the get-go," Palmquist said.

Slominski, who played for Burnsville, also had a front-row seat in seeing what Winny could do to the competition in high school. She heard the buzz about the Roseville team with Winny and the Curtin sisters, Ronda and Renee, knowing "it was like the whole neighborhood was on the team," Slominski said.

When Burnsville and Roseville faced each other in the 1996 state tournament championship game, Slominski said she didn't know what to expect, other than the opponent would be really, really good.

That played out as Roseville defeated Burnsville 5-2 for the state title.

"I just remember being out there against Winny, and she was just on a different level than anything we had seen before," Slominski said.

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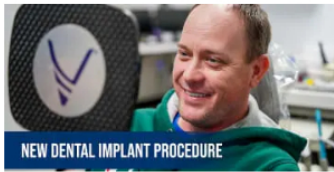
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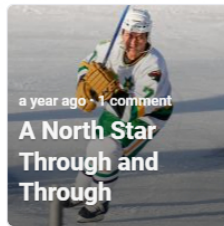
Heather's love for watching hockey started when the Minnesota Wild came to town in 2000. Before that, she caught a few Minnesota Moose games as a youngster, and more recently she's kept up with the Austin Bruins and Fargo Force. She's a writer, freelance journalist and blogger who previously worked as a news reporter in Austin and Fergus Falls, Minn. She enjoys watching sports and closely follows the Wild, Minnesota Twins, IndyCar Series, tennis and prep sports. Heather keeps up her sports blog [Thoughts from the Stands](#). You can follow her on Twitter/X [@hrule](#) or Instagram [@hrule](#).

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