

PHF

# 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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## Creating a place to play after college

Having won national championships at the University of New Hampshire and then the University of Minnesota, Winny fielded a lot of questions after she graduated from the U of M about where she was going to play next, "because they know I'm a rink rat." For sure, she had her sights on WHAM, the Women's Hockey Association of Minnesota, with players ranging in age from 18 through 70+, and organization

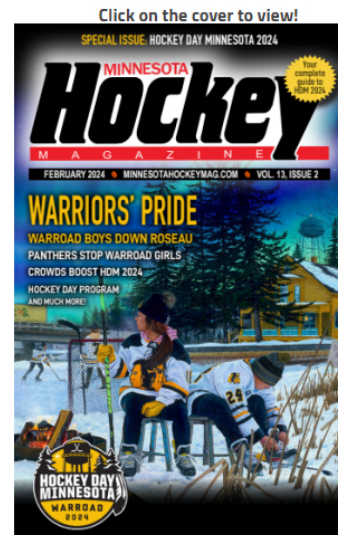


Winny Brodt Brown (second from left) stands with her teammates during the National Anthem prior to the Whitecaps' inaugural NWHL home game on Oct. 6, 2018 at TRIA Rink in St. Paul. (MHM Photo / Rick Olson)

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Winnie's mom, Marlene, still plays with today.

That's when Jack Brodt and Dwayne Schmidgall decided there needed to be something a little bit more high-level for women wanting to play hockey after college. Thus, the Minnesota Whitecaps were born in 2004.

Jack Brodt is one of those people that just gets things done, no matter if it's tough or easy, according to Winnie. Because things like starting a high school program at Roseville and then the Whitecaps have to start somewhere.

"It just doesn't appear and happen and be just awesome at the beginning," Winnie said. "Like every program. Like the NHL probably had lumps and bumps."

The Whitecaps played in the Western Women's Hockey League and then as an independent team after that league dissolved after the 2010-11 season. The Whitecaps' competition were usually college teams, including the Gophers.

When the Whitecaps were the fifth team to join the then-National Women's Hockey League in 2018-19, Jack Brodt and Ronda Curtin Engelhardt joined forces as co-head coaches.

Engelhardt, 41, is now behind the bench in which two of her childhood friends, Winnie and her younger sister Chelsey Brodt Rosenthal, are two of her defensemen on the ice. Engelhardt helped lead the Whitecaps to a championship in the 2018-19 season.

Both Engelhardt and Slominski could still be skating, Winnie said during the 2019-20 season, as could Wendell and Olympian Natalie Darwitz.

"There's some times where I want to be like, 'Ronda, come on put your skates on and get out here,'" 38-year-old Chelsey said, with a laugh.

But there are still benefits to the player-coach relationship with Engelhardt, and Slominski when she was on the bench. There's a bit of ESP going on between all of them, Winnie said.

"We know exactly what we're thinking. We'll look and we don't have to talk," Winnie said.

For Engelhardt, who coached the Breck high school girls' hockey team to a state championship before taking the Whitecaps job, the transition from high school coach to the Whitecaps was a good one.

"It's always fun to yell at Winnie and tell her to get moving, you know?" Engelhardt quipped. "It's cool just to watch the growth and how it's still going. ... Hats off to the Brodt family for keeping it going."

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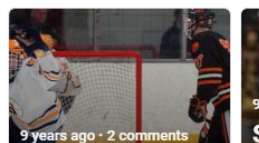
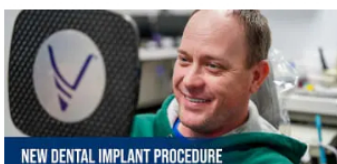
Heather Rule



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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