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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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All-female OS Hockey staff

It's the all-female coaching staff that helps make OS Hockey unique, Madeline Wethington said. Summer camps are run by college players, so young girls get the chance to work with players from the Gophers, St. Cloud, Bemidji or other schools and ultimately build connections for the future. It also shows the girls that they can have a future in hockey, said Madeline, who's helped out with OS hockey for a few years and finds it very worthwhile.

The staff takes their cues from Winny in working with the kids, and even things like knowing the kids' names is a big deal, because the kids recognize the coaches.

"They just want to know that you care about them, or you know them," Winny said.

Winny started out as a coach for Lindsey Brown as well, a bond that turned into a working relationship and deep friendship. Lindsey asked in high school if she could help out with OS Hockey in lieu of paying for hockey.

But Lindsey remembers that personal aspect of

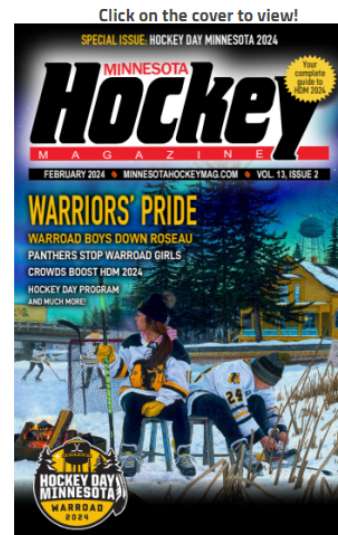


Minnesota Whitecaps defender Winny Brodt Brown high fives fans on bench prior to a Jan. 25, 2020 game vs. the Boston Pride at TRIA Rink in St. Paul. (Photo by Collin Nawrocki)

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Winnie during her first day at OS Hockey when she was about 12 years old.

"She still can't tell you how to get to Braemar Arena, but she'll remember your name," Lindsey said. "She'll remember details."

Chelsey hasn't helped out as much with OS Hockey – yet. But as her Winnie pointed out, that's probably going to change with Chelsey's daughter Haley playing hockey.

"And then Haley will probably be running OS in about 25 years," Chelsey said.

Winnie agreed that her niece will be the one to do it.

"That'd be a perfect time for my retirement," Winnie said.

That sends the sisters into a brief fit of laughter.

"I just thought of that right now," Chelsey said, laughing.

In addition to OS Hockey, Winnie also runs the girls' Elite League and prospects camps where college coaches come in to the benches. She runs power-skating clinics for youngsters. She also visits youth programs throughout the winter in places like Stillwater, Roseville and Woodbury, running a practice on Monday night or a weekend. In the past, Winnie also ran WHAM 101, or adult mites hockey, teaching women to skate and play the game.

When it comes to hockey, Winnie is one of the most passionate people Madeline knows.

"And her willingness to give back, too, is just I think one of the characteristics that really defines her," Madeline said.

But everything started with an eight-week camp, training girls. Winnie took 40 girls and trained them. That training needed some fun games, too, so she started a spring league with about 10 games. It was a chance for kids to play with all kinds of different players of different abilities.

It's like yin-and-yang, mixing it up, Winnie said.

"Where too many times people are just worried about always playing at the top," Winnie said. "You can't always play with the best, because then you're missing out of growth in your own game."

Among the initial group was her niece, Hanna Brodt, and 2018 Olympic gold medalists, 2022 Olympians and former Whitecaps players Hannah Brandt and Lee Stecklein.

A Roseville native, Stecklein grew up playing for the Brodt family, too. She had Vic Brodt as a coach in the winter and Winnie as a coach during the summer. Another player with plenty of hockey accolades, including success with the Gophers, Stecklein scored the overtime, game-winning goal to win the Isobel Cup with the Whitecaps in March 2019.



Former Whitecaps D, Lee Stecklein, defends U.S. Women's National Team teammate, and former Metropolitan Riveter, Amanda Kessel in Minnesota's Oct. 6, 2018 inaugural home game at TRIA Rink in St. Paul. (MHM Photo / Rick Olson)

Stecklein, a defenseman, then joined the Professional Women's Hockey Players Association. She said she's learned so much from the Brodt family, soaking up their hockey knowledge.

"They've been a huge part of my life and my career growing up," Stecklein said. "I'm still very grateful to them for everything they've done for me and continue to do for hockey. Winnie's still creating so many opportunities for young girls in the state."

Stecklein said she felt lucky growing up, because there wasn't a struggle to find a place to play hockey in the offseason. It's because of Winnie.

"She was looking at that and anticipating those needs," Stecklein said.

The number of girls who've come through Winnie's programs at some point in their young hockey careers is in the thousands. Just the eight-week summer camp alone is probably a thousand kids a year, Chelsey said. Then there's a couple hundred Junior Whitecaps and another thousand in spring

leagues.

Winnie doesn't have enough hours in the day to do everything folks in the hockey world would like her to do. On a Monday during the summer, for example, she'll be on the ice for three hours in the morning with a college skate for three more hours that night. Tuesdays and Thursdays it's ice time from 7:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. at SPA before heading to Bloomington from about noon to 4 p.m.

Even phone calls or texts with her own family can be a challenge.

"I can't get ahold of her," her dad said, exasperated. "Because if you call Winnie, it goes to a mailbox. You can't leave a message or anything."

But when Whitecaps practices are on during the season, he does know where to find her.

It's a bit of a running joke that Winnie is hard to reach, because she's always busy doing something, Madeline said.

"I'll call her twice and leave a text, and then she'll respond," Madeline said. "She's always busy. We always have to plan ahead when we're going to hang out or something like that."

But with everything Winnie does, her work has never been a job. Once it is, then she said she won't be good at it anymore. She said she does all these things and puts in the time because she loves it.

On a Sunday in early March 2020, Winnie spent the morning setting up for a jamboree for youth hockey. Then she headed over to TRIA Rink to play the regular-season finale with the Whitecaps, a 3-1 victory over Connecticut that afternoon. By 7 p.m., she was off to Brooklyn Park to work with the Minnesota Whitecaps futures kids.

"Because it's my time, and I care about it," Winnie said. "It's my passion. No one's telling me I have to do it. I want to do it."

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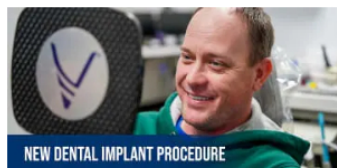
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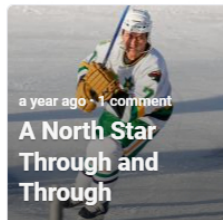
Heather's love for watching hockey started when the Minnesota Wild came to town in 2000. Before that, she caught a few Minnesota Moose games as a youngster, and more recently she's kept up with the Austin Bruins and Fargo Force. She's a writer, freelance journalist and blogger who previously worked as 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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