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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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Leaving a legacy

In terms of what Winny means to girls' hockey in Minnesota and the legacy she's paving, those around her can't speak highly enough of everything she's done. Lindsey referred to her as the Herb Brooks of hockey, putting Winny on the "Mount Rushmore of Minnesota hockey, whether it's men's or women's."

"I call her the baby Jesus of women's hockey in Minnesota," Lindsey said. "Like, she's baby Jesus.

Because there is no player that has gone through the Minnesota pool and gone on to collegiate success or otherwise without at some point her having a hand in it"

Palmquist has seen many of his players go through Winny's OS Hockey program as well. Not only does it help them develop as hockey players, but she's also a great role model for the kids, which is important to have that female perspective, Palmquist said.



Minnesota Whitecaps defender Winny Brodt Brown and forward Nicole Schammel pose with fans following a Jan. 25, 2020 game vs. the Boston Pride at TRIA Rink in St. Paul. (Photo by Collin Nawrocki)

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"She has been that since day one, and that's why she's been such an ambassador for women's hockey in the state of Minnesota, for sure," Palmquist said.

Future Olympian Grace Zumwinkle was in about fifth grade when she was on one of Winny's OS select teams before the company had really taken off. She credits Winny for being instrumental in her development as a player. Zumwinkle was the 2017 Ms. Hockey out of Breck before playing for the Gophers and making her Olympic debut this winter in Beijing, China for Team USA.

Zumwinkle, who was a Junior Whitecaps player, appreciates the increase in opportunities and awareness for girls' hockey that wasn't really around before Winny. One of those things that didn't exist before that was having college coaches watch girls play for three weekends in the summer, Zumwinkle said.

"She kind of took the lead on that," Zumwinkle said.

It's clear that players like Pezon and former Whitecaps defenseman Sydney Baldwin are most definitely grateful for the opportunities and to still be playing hockey after college. Going beyond the hockey rink, Winny also wrote a letter of recommendation for Baldwin, who's going back to nursing school. Baldwin's another one of those players who's had Winny in her hockey life and personal life – as a mentor, friend, coach, teammate – since she was 10 years old.

"I've just been around her," Baldwin said. "I just appreciate her and all that she's done for the Whitecaps and girls' hockey in general here in Minnesota."

The Whitecaps often practice later on weekday evenings, like Tuesday night at 8 p.m. at TRIA Rink. For Pezon, 34, there's nowhere else she'd rather be at that time.

Watching the journey has been exciting and unbelievable, Pezon said.

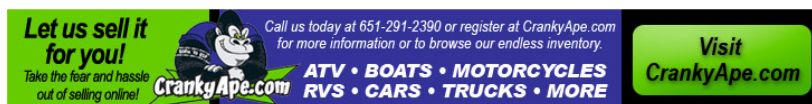
"All the work and stress and hardships that those guys (the Brodts) have had to go through between back when we were part of the CWHL and all that," Pezon said. "I'm just appreciative that I have an opportunity to still play hockey because of those two (Jack and Winny)."

Multiple people interviewed for this story expressed their excitement about telling Winny's story, because she's a humble person who doesn't talk a lot about what she does when it comes to growing the sport.

"Honestly, the scary part is, I think Winny's done so much that I'm afraid people won't appreciate and realize how much she's done until she's not doing it anymore," Wendell said.

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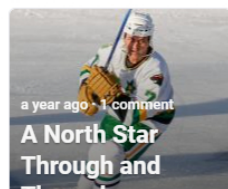
Heather's love for watching hockey started when the Minnesota Wild came to town in 2000. Before that, she caught a few Minnesota Moose games as a youngster, and more recently she's kept up with the Austin Bruins and Fargo Force. She's a writer, freelance journalist and blogger who previously worked as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