

CWHL Writing Portfolio

Merisa Boyd

Press Releases, Previews, & General Coverage

BLADES PLAYERS RECEIVE FIRST CWHL PAYCHECKS

On September 1, the CWHL announced it would be paying its players for the first time in the 2017-18 season. This past Thursday night, Blades players each received their first paychecks for playing the sport they love.

“It’s an exciting and historic time for us. We have always maintained that our goal was to pay our players and we had a strategic plan in place that would allow us to do so beginning this season. The continued success of our teams, players, and league have been key in getting us to where we are,” Commissioner Brenda Andress stated in the original CWHL release.

Goaltender Lauren Dahm spoke of what this first paycheck means to her.

“It’s sort of validation for all of the hard work we’ve put in up to this point. Obviously we do this because we love it, but getting that actual paper check is just validation,” she stated.

Team captains Kristina Brown and Megan Myers also spoke of what these paychecks mean for women’s hockey overall.

“It’s a huge milestone...Growing up, you didn’t realize it would be a real thing for you. Playing boys, they have the NHL to look forward to. Now we’re kind of creating something for little girls to look forward to. They can grow up and say they want to be a hockey player and they can really be a hockey player and not have to worry about anything else,” Brown said.

“I think it’s a really awesome experience to be one of the first in our league to get paid this year,” Myers stated. “I can’t imagine what it’s going to look like in 5, 10, 20 and 50 years down the line where women can be playing hockey and that’s all they have to do instead of working full-time jobs and coming to play hockey. It’s going up and up and that’s something we look forward to.”

The Blades are now looking forward to playing Markham this weekend at the Thornhill Community Centre and then heading to China to face Kunlun and Vanke the following week. Fans can keep up with their away games by following [@BostonCWHL](https://twitter.com/BostonCWHL) on Twitter.

BLADES TO HOST ANNUAL YOU CAN PLAY NIGHT ON FEBRUARY 2

WORCESTER, MA – On Saturday, February 2, the Worcester Blades will host their annual You Can Play Night. It will be celebrated ahead of their matchup with the Markham Thunder at 8 p.m. at Fidelity Bank Worcester Ice Center.

You Can Play games aim to raise awareness for the You Can Play Project and the work they do for the LGBTQ+ community and their allies. Their mission statement reads as follows:

“You Can Play works to ensure the safety and inclusion of all in sports – including LGBTQ athletes, coaches and fans.

You Can Play works to guarantee that athletes are given a fair opportunity to compete, judged by other athletes and fans alike, only by what they contribute to the sport or their team’s success.

You Can Play seeks to challenge the culture of locker rooms and spectator areas by focusing only on an athlete’s skills, work ethic and competitive spirit.”

This year, the Blades are proud to host Worcester Pride, OUT Metrowest, and Safe Homes to the game.

Worcester Pride have been celebrating the LGBTQIA+ community for over 42 years. Information and history of the group can be found [here](#), while those interested in participating in the 2019 Central MA Worcester Pride Parade can register [here](#). Pride Week in Worcester is September 4-7 and will feature a pageant, parade, festival, youth dance, and an after party.

OUT Metrowest’s mission is “to build communities where LGBTQ+ youth can thrive.”

The organization has been running youth programs since 2011 and has served more than 1,000 youth as well as provided trainings for local schools and more. For more information about OUT MetroWest, visit their [website](#) or call 508-875-2122.

Safe Homes is a program supporting the LGBTQ community ages 14-23. Safe Homes is a program of Open Sky Community Services and is led by youth peer leaders, professional staff and volunteers.

Their mission and vision read as follows:

“Our goal in offering support to LGBTQ youth throughout Central Massachusetts is to decrease isolation and foster general health and well-being. Our mission is to provide safe and supportive services for LGBTQ youth so that they feel nurtured and validated in all aspects of their identity.

There is something for everyone at Safe Homes. Whether you are looking for advice, information, or new friends, we hope you will consider checking us out.”

More information on Safe Homes can be found [here](#).

Prior to the game, Peter Bacchiocchi of Worcester Pride and Brigitte Manseau of OUT Metrowest will be dropping ceremonial pucks.

Tickets to You Can Play Night can be purchased [online](#) as well as at the door on game day.

BEGINNING IN MARKHAM: WORCESTER WEEKEND PREVIEW

It's October and the CWHL season is ready to begin. Everything you need to know about this weekend's set of games is here.

The Blades' Offseason Recapped

The Boston Blades became the Worcester Blades this past August and have new management and coaching staff to start them off in their new city. Fidelity Bank Worcester Ice Center will play host to all Blades' home games this season.

Training camp provided some tough decisions for management given the talent exhibited throughout September. Last week, the team's roster was announced along with some news from Derek Alfama, the General Manager.

This Weekend

The Markham Thunder will host the Blades for the first regular season matchup of the season at Thornhill Community Centre. Game 1's puck drop is set for 7:30 p.m. while Sunday's game will begin at 12:30 p.m.

Markham Player to Watch

Jocelyne Larocque #3 (*Defense*)

The Thunder Captain returned to the league after the 2018 Winter Olympics in March of this past year. The two-time Olympic medal winner is beginning her fifth season with the Thunder, who is looking to repeat their championship winning season from last year.

Worcester Player to Watch

Meghan Grieves #17 (*Forward*)

Grieves is entering her third CWHL season. She was second on the team in scoring last year with 6 goals and 8 assists in 28 games played. With a new roster and city, she's expected to bring in some veteran leadership to the rookies in Worcester.

How to Follow This Weekend's Games

To keep up with the Blades this weekend and all season, follow the team on Twitter, @WorcesterCWHL. Those in the Markham area can purchase tickets online here.

LAUREN DAHM AND BOSTON BLADES SET TO HOST YOU CAN PLAY NIGHT ON FEBRUARY 3

On Saturday February 3, the Boston Blades will be hosting their “You Can Play Night” ahead of their matchup vs. Montreal. They’re aiming to raise awareness for the [You Can Play Project](#) and all of the work they do for members of the LGBTQ community and their allies.

You Can Play’s [mission statement](#) reads as follows:

“You Can Play works to ensure the safety and inclusion of all in sports – including LGBTQ athletes, coaches and fans.

You Can Play works to guarantee that athletes are given a fair opportunity to compete, judged by other athletes and fans alike, only by what they contribute to the sport or their team’s success.

You Can Play seeks to challenge the culture of locker rooms and spectator areas by focusing only on an athlete’s skills, work ethic and competitive spirit.”

Since their partnership with the CWHL [back in 2012](#), You Can Play has partnered with various leagues and organizations such as the National Hockey League and the NHL’s Player Association, Major League Soccer, the Canadian Football League, and the National Women’s Hockey League.

In the original press release about the CWHL partnership it states, the “You Can Play Project will work with the CWHL to find new and creative ways to ensure that lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender athletes are ensured a safe environment, free from homophobic language and other actions that may contribute to athletes feeling uncomfortable or unsafe.”

Boston’s starting goaltender, Lauren Dahm, recently spoke of what the CWHL and You Can Play’s ongoing partnership means to her.

“Women’s hockey has a notable amount of people who identify as members of the LGBTQ community. The fact that the CWHL was the first league to partner with You Can Play shows it’s commitment to leading the way in making sure all their players feel supported,” Dahm stated.

“It is a great example of the incredible pioneers and advocates for the players of which the CWHL is comprised. This continued partnership is beneficial to both groups because while You Can Play promotes acceptance of all athletes, coaches, and staff, I feel as though these members

of the CWHL are incredible representatives of the community that the You Can Play team can be proud to support as well,” Dahm said.

She also spoke highly of those in the women’s hockey community for their acceptance of one another both on the ice, in the locker room, and in the community.

“The diversity on women’s hockey teams, I think, helps players be more accepting of different types of people they meet throughout life. This acceptance comes from the top of the league and it transcends to the staff, coaches, players and fans. We are lucky to have people who have shared about their personal lives publicly, like Jessica Platt, Charline Labonte, and Julie Chu, just to name a few,” Dahm said.

“I think for some fans or people more on the outside looking in, it might be challenging to recognize the impact that women’s hockey has on the LGBTQ community and vice versa, since for as many ‘out’ members there are, there are many others who also identify as LGBTQ, {but have not come out}. This is completely okay because people come out, or don’t, at their own pace,” she also stated.

Dahm was also sure to note the impact the league’s had in supporting their athletes.

“...knowing the CWHL as a whole is so supportive of the LGBTQ community within the league helps people to know they are not alone and that who they are is more than good enough. Seeing the league advocating and applauding these brave athletes who have shared their stories shows they also support the countless others who identify as LGBTQ perhaps more privately,” she continued. “On personal levels and within the tight-knit community, women’s hockey possesses a bond between those who identify as LGBTQ as well as our straight ally teammates and peers, so that definitely contributes to the camaraderie and safe space culture we feel.”

Dahm is looking forward to the opportunity for the Blades to interact with LGBTQ in the Winthrop community and beyond, as well as raise more awareness for the You Can Play Project and their mission. She also noted how proud she is of the CWHL for hosting these games annually as Boston participated in the You Can Play game last year [in Calgary](#).

Dahm closed by highlighting what’s truly important about the sport she loves and why organizations such as You Can Play are vital partners to the CWHL.

“When you come to the rink, step on the ice, score a sick goal, make a beauty of a save, you’re simply a hockey player. I think this 100 percent embodies the You Can Play team’s mission of proving that ‘if you can play, you can play.’ The sport is what it is all about and anyone who is

able to play, should be able to, and they should feel completely fine being their true self while doing so,” she concluded.

Tickets to the Blades and Les Canadiennes “You Can Play” game for February 3 can be purchased [online](#) or at the door on game day. It will be played on Boston’s home ice, Larsen Rink in Winthrop, MA.

Game Recaps

DAHM DOMINATES DESPITE SHOOTOUT LOSS TO VANKE

The Boston Blades (0-4-1) hosted the Vanke Rays (2-1) for their first matchup of the season on Saturday November 4 where the Blades scored first, but would eventually fall in the shootout, 2-1.

Lauren Dahm started for Blades where she faced Rays goaltender Elaine Chuli. Chuli faced 27 shots, making 26 saves and Dahm would save 54 of 55, as recorded on the [CWHL game report](#).

First Period

The game started strong with both teams exchanging scoring chances. The Blades would strike first at 11:19 with Erin Kickham's first of the season assisted by Elizabeth Aveson and Casey Stathopoulos.

The Blades came up short on their only power play of the period after Vanke's Emma Woods took a holding penalty at 17:29. The scored remained 1-0 Boston going into intermission.

Second Period

Dahm took over the middle 20 minutes of the game, as Vanke occupied the Blades end of the ice for most of the period. At the 5:48 mark, Blades forward Kate Leary took a hooking penalty to give Vanke their first power play opportunity of the night.

Dahm lost her stick and had to play most of the penalty kill with a player's stick. This didn't stop her from saving all 3 shots from the Rays during 2 minute kill.

Vanke almost pulled even in the second, but their goal was called back for a distinct kicking motion and the Blades would head to the locker room still up by 1.

Third Period

Leary had 2 back-to-back scoring chances early, and the Rays countered with two shots in the first 5 minutes. Kate Leary took a body checking penalty at 7:36 and Sato Kikuchi followed with a holding penalty at 9:12 to give the Rays a 24-second 5 on 3 chance.

Leary had a breakaway opportunity following her penalty, but came up short. While still on the power play from Kikuchi's penalty, Vanke's Hanna Bunton scored her third of the season to even the score at 1-1.

Kristina Brown took a body checking penalty at 10:38 in the period to put Vanke back on the powerplay, but the Blades kept them scoreless on it. Meghan Grieves provided a good chance late for the Blades while Kikuchi had a shot block in the final few minutes to keep the game tied.

Vanke's Brooke Webster put the Blades on a powerplay for 45 seconds, but the period ended with the score remaining tied.

Overtime

Boston started the 5 minute period with 1:15 remaining on the power play, but were unsuccessful in the man advantage. The Rays had the first scoring chance of overtime, but neither team was able to capitalize as the clock ticked down to zero.

Shootout

It took 5 rounds with Leary scoring for Boston and Webster scoring for Vanke in the first round before Rays defenseman, Ashleigh Brykaliuk, scored the game winner.

The Rays would take the first game of the weekend by a final score of 2-1.

Post Game

With 54 saves on the night, Dahm spoke after the game about what she wants to see her team improve on for the remaining two games against the Rays.

"I think we need to put more pressure on them. When we were working the puck and pressuring them, they couldn't handle it as well so I think the more time we can spend not in our zone the better," she stated.

Blades Assistant Coach, Mark Bates, also saw the shootout loss optimistically, focusing on what the Blades can improve on when they're playing with the lead in the future.

"Today was our best game I think as a unit...we kind of got content in our second period. First period we really made the play to go up 1-0 and then second period we came back and instead of

really pushing the pace, we waited back. We allowed them to get some confidence and then some late penalties cost us our flow in the third period,” he stated.

“I’d like to see them play 60 minutes. Definitely need to stay in the game. We’re a young team. We haven’t really played with the lead much at all this season so it’s a good experience for us today and we’ll try to do better tomorrow,” Bates said.

What’s next?

The Blades will have a chance to even the series on Sunday at 2:30 p.m. back at Larsen Rink as they look to notch their first win of the season.

BLADES HOST LUPUS AWARENESS GAME, COME UP JUST SHORT TO MARKHAM

For their final game of the 2017-2018 season, the Boston Blades faced the Markham Thunder in their Lupus Awareness game. Lauren Dahm got the start from Boston, and Markham's netminder, Liz Knox, got the nod from the Thunder.

Boston played with a much greater effort than in their previous matchup with the Thunder, but weren't able to hang on and dropped their final game of the year 3-1.

First Period

The Blades got off to a strong start, dominating offensive and neutral zone time. Markham saw their first offensive zone time after a tripping call was made on Blades' defender, Dru Burns, at the 4:09 mark.

The Thunder would score first in this one on this power play with Nicole Kosta's unassisted second of the season.

Boston would continue bringing the puck up into Markham's end with physicality, forcing Knox to make a few saves. Dahm would go on to face a couple shots in her own end, but would stop each one.

The Blades' defensive work continued to perform with Dahm making a full stretched out save as the clock ticked down with three minutes to go.

With 1:30 to go, the game would see some 4-on-4 play as Sato Kikuchi was called for roughing and Devon Skeats was called for holding simultaneously. Dahm made one final stop as the horn went off, and Boston would head to the locker room down by 1.

Second Period

The Blades started the middle period in their own end with some more impressive goaltending from Dahm as she poked the puck out of the front of her net.

Kikuchi would head to the box at the 5:42 mark due to a holding call. The Thunder power play would only last 57 seconds though, as Jocelyne Larocque took a hooking penalty to make it 4-on-4.

The Blades would see a 5-on-3 opportunity after Megan Bozek was called for slashing. They got off a few good shots, but Dahm was forced to make a left-to-right save after Larocque found herself with the puck on a breakaway chance after leaving the box.

Boston was unsuccessful in their personnel advantage, but saw another power play chance soon after when Kristen Richards took a cross checking penalty. The Blades' scoreless run against Markham this weekend would come to an end on this one with a goal from Kate Leary, assisted by Meghan Grieves and Melissa Bizzarri.

The play would go back to a brief 4-on-4 as Kristina Brown and Jamie Lee Rattray took matching penalties. Boston would find themselves short handed after Burns was called for spearing. Both penalty boxes would empty with the score remaining 1-1.

With just under two minutes remaining, Dahm faced a 2-on-0 situation and poked the puck away to keep the game tied. She would make another spectacular save just before the 19:00 mark of the period.

The clock ticked down to zero and both teams would head into the last intermission of the regular season tied.

Third Period

Both teams exchanged offensive zone time and shots early, and Dahm continued her dominant play through the first quarter of the last period.

Kaitlin Spurling followed this with a great scoring chance, but Knox was there to cover the puck. The Thunder goaltender made another great save even as she lost her stick.

Markham would retake the lead with just under 11:30 left to go in the game as Laura McIntosh would grab the assist on Rattray's goal.

Boston would go on the penalty kill after Burns took a body checking penalty. The score remained unchanged after the 2 minute Thunder power play.

The Blades had a power play opportunity late in the game after high sticking was called on Markham's Richards. Megan Myers had a good chance to tie it back up, but Knox held the post to keep her team ahead.

With 2:26 remaining, Boston called a time out to strategize how they'd potentially tie the game.

Dahm wasn't able to leave the net for the extra skater as Markham continued to bring the pressure to Boston's end. The Thunder would tally their third goal of the game with Richards' goal.

The Boston goalie wasn't giving up as she flashed the glove with under a minute to go as Boston was then able to pull her for a 6-on-5 chance.

The Blades were unfortunately unable to capitalize and would drop their final game of the season by a final score of 3-1.

Post Game

Blades Head Coach, Kacy Ambroz, spoke post game about her overall impression of her team's final weekend of the season vs. the Thunder.

"I think we had major adversity yesterday, That's a great team that we played. They were amazing, but I think we let that one get out of hand. That being said, I was proud of the way the girls recovered, reflected, and came out tonight," she stated. "They played their butts off tonight, and that's all we could ask. We talked about attitude and effort all year and they have nothing to hang their head about for the last game of their season."

She went on to reflect upon the Blades entire season.

"As a whole, I think we hit a lot of bumps in the road. We've come a long way and as a whole one thing that we talked about in the locker room was that this group never stopped working. I'm a huge work ethic person so that was very inspiring to me," Ambroz said. "I think that we hit a lot of adversity, but we also overcame a lot of adversity. It was fun to be a part of and I'm so grateful to have been a part of this group this year."

Three Stars

1 – Nicole Kosta (Markham)

2 – Laura McIntosh (Markham)

3 – Dru Burns (Boston)

Thank You

To all Blades fans: thank you for following along with us and coming to the games this season! Be on the lookout for our offseason coverage and updates throughout the coming months to be posted here as well as [@BostonCWHL](#). We look forward to seeing you all in October.

BLADES AND NEW HEAD COACH KACY AMBROZ SCORE FIRST WIN OF THE SEASON

The Blades faced the Toronto Furies for the first time this season on Saturday night and skated off at the end having secured their first win of the season by a final score of 4-2. The Blades had four different goal scorers followed by goaltender Lauren Dahm making 37 of 39 saves in this one.

First Period

The Blades started out physical and at the 5:49 point of the first period, Furies' Alexa Aramburu took a hooking penalty to put the Blades on the power play.

With about 20 seconds left in the 5 on 4 chance, the Blades would get on the board first with a goal from Meghan Grieves, her fourth of the season assisted by Melissa Bizzari.

Bizzari made her presence known again a few minutes later as the Blades would add on another goal with her assist at the 11:12 mark scored by Michelle Ng.

The Blades continued their dominant play as they tilted the ice in their direction, but Toronto managed to get a 3 on 2 chance up the ice. With just under four minutes left in the period, Toronto cut Boston's lead in half with Emily Fulton's unassisted sixth goal of the season.

2 minutes later, a turnover in front of the net led to Toronto's tying goal. Assisted by Hayley Williams, Danielle Gagne scored her second of the season.

The teams would head into the middle period with the score tied at 2 and shots on goal tied at 14 a piece.

Second Period

46 seconds in, Toronto would earn their first power play opportunity of the night after Grieves took a body checking penalty. The Furies would go unsuccessful on the power play and following the penalty, Grieves set the Blades up for multiple scoring chances.

After a save by Toronto's Sonja van der Bliek, the Blades would score off the face off with Taylor Wasyik's first of the year assisted by Casey Stathopoulos and Chelsey Goldberg.

Almost halfway through the second, Boston's Sato Kikuchi would take an interference penalty. The Furies stormed Dahm, but she held them scoreless during the 2-minute advantage.

Megan Myers was dominant in this period setting up multiple scoring opportunities and blocking a shot from the point with about 7 minutes left.

Kikuchi gave the Blades a good final chance to score with under a minute left after stopping the puck from going past the blue line, but the period would end with the Blades up 3-2 and total shots on goal in Boston's favor 31-24.

Third Period

The Furies and Blades went back and forth with scoring opportunities through the first two minutes of the third. Toronto began to see more scoring chances after the Blades iced the puck twice in a row.

Boston's Myers found herself on a breakaway a couple minutes later, but van der Bliet stood her ground on the play. Shortly after, Kate Leary skated behind the net and then sent a pass in front of the goal, which forced Toronto's Michelle Saunders to take a body checking penalty, putting the Blades on another power play.

After an unsuccessful 5 on 4 attempt, Stathopoulos had a potential breakaway chance, but the puck was sent a little too far in front of her as the clock ticked down with 10 minutes to go. Furies' Jenna Dingeldein followed with a breakaway chance of her own, but shot the puck too high.

The Blades would extend their lead off yet another breakaway opportunity. This time Myers entered the Furies' zone and passed it over to Leary where she buried her fourth goal of the year.

Dahm continued to make saves as her team played more and more in the Toronto end, but the Furies would earn another power play chance after Kristina Brown took an interference penalty.

During the penalty kill, Dahm made two impressive back-to-back saves to keep her team up by 2. The Blades would go from facing a 5 on 4 disadvantage to 4 on 4 play after Toronto's Gagne took an interference penalty about a minute into their power play.

Following the Blades power play, Dahm would face a 2 on 1 scenario where she would make the save with just under 3 minutes to go in the game. A few seconds later, she would make another 2 saves to keep her team up by 2.

Toronto then took their time out and emptied their net with 2:15 left to go. The Blades had a couple opportunities to score on the empty net. By the end, any empty net goal went unneeded as Boston would walk away with their first win of the season by a final score of 4-2.

Post Game

Head coach Kacy Ambroz spoke after the game about what her team's first win means for her in her first home game as the team's head coach.

"It feels amazing. It feels very deserving with what the girls put out there tonight. They worked for one another and were super positive the whole game and everything had to do with the girls and how they performed," she stated.

She was then asked if there had been any recent shifts in play or if she thinks this first win is a reflection of a season's worth of hard work.

"It's been a process. I knew this whole season that our first win wasn't going to be easy and the girls just kept at it. They never got down," Ambroz continued, "We had some games that I feel could have gone either way and they still just kept going and never gave up. I think it was just a lot of hard work coming together."

Three Stars

1 – Melissa Bizarri (Boston)

2 – Hayley Williams (Toronto)

3 – Lauren Dahm (Boston)

Next Game

The Blades will be back in action later today, Sunday January 7 at 2:30 p.m. at Larsen Rink in Winthrop.

Feature Stories

BREAKING BARRIERS

It's 4:45 a.m.

Some might have still not gone to bed. Some might be sleeping for just a little bit longer, but Blades goaltender Jetta Rackleff is turning her alarm off to start her day. She wakes up and grabs breakfast to-go so she can get a quick lift and run in before the break of dawn.

She then begins her day job as a General Engineer in the United States Air Force, working in risk management for the Weather Department.

Meanwhile, Kristina Brown is a Blades forward with a similar morning routine. The Project Engineer's destination is John Moriarty Construction. She and her team are currently working on building an apartment complex near the Yawkey Way Commuter Rail Station.

Brown works both in the field and in an office, which is a trailer just outside the worksite. Here, they create drawings and coordinate the people needed to make sure the building comes together smoothly. Her team has previously created City Target and the Pearce Project in Boston.

These two teammates have unique jobs that they have worked incredibly hard to get to, alongside playing professional hockey.

"In college, I studied chemical engineering with a minor in mechanical engineering," explained Rackleff. "Many of my routines have been structured around engineering, workouts, and hockey together for six or seven years now. On the tough days, I remember that I love solving problems and I love playing goalie. Having a 'why' to what you are doing makes the 'how' seem simple."

Engineering and professional sports have historically been considered male-dominated fields. Approximately only 14 percent of current engineers in the US are female according to the Congressional Joint Economic Committee and of the 1.2 million Canadians over the age of 15 who play hockey, only 102,000 were women according to Statistics Canada.

However, Brown, Rackleff, and many women today have proved that they're just as capable of thriving in both fields.

“If you love to do something and you’re passionate about it, you show up,” Brown stated. “Even if you don’t know everything, I’ve learned it’s all about just being confident. When you walk into a room, walk in like you belong there, and work hard.”

Breaking through barriers is a testament to an individual’s desire. It is also a reflection of the environments we choose for that path. Rackleff weighed in on her experience within her hockey and engineering settings.

“In regard to hockey, I often find most high-level players are respectful, taking the approach of ‘if you can play, you can play.’ Regarding engineering, I have found it to be an open environment too and for me, it is great to work in such a diverse office with the Air Force and at RIT,” she said.

While their day jobs provide incredible talking points, hockey is still on the forefront now that they have the opportunity to play professionally.

“I think what’s been awesome is that I have gotten to play hockey in Austria, I was able to play hockey in Finland, but when I came home I didn’t think playing hockey professionally here would be something I could do. The CWHL has given me that opportunity,” Brown said.

Rackleff echoed that sentiment.

“I’m very grateful for the opportunity to play at the highest level of professional women’s hockey while at the same time working in my field of engineering with the Air Force to make a difference for the USA. Opportunities for women in hockey and engineering is growing and I’m so happy to take witness and be a part of it,” Rackleff stated.

Brown and Rackleff are both now looking forward to the upcoming 2018-19 season. They’ve been prepping almost every day with the same goal in mind: opening night in October.

“It’s fun to train and all that, but there’s nothing better than being on the ice,” Brown said of her offseason workouts. “I think I’m excited to see where our team ends up and see what we can do this year. I think we have some exciting young players and a lot of people are working really hard.”

AN UNLIKELY OPPORTUNITY

“I saw a post on Facebook for the 2015-16 Boston Blades prospect camp and figured, ‘why not?’

This was the beginning for Lauren Dahm and her journey with the Boston Blades just two seasons ago.

The Clarkson Golden Knight alumna would not only make the team coming out of that social media marketed prospect camp but would also become the Blades starting goaltender and one of the most notable figures in the Canadian Women’s Hockey League.

“When I decided to try out for the Blades, I was grateful just to have that chance,” reflected Dahm following the end of the 2017-18 season. “When I made the team I was so happy, then to be the starting goalie my first season [felt] unimaginable. Every weekend, traveling the continent, donning that jersey, competing against the best players in the world, making memories with my teammates, it has been incredible.”

The Blades workhorse netminder began her hockey career at six years old, following some of her tee ball teammates who wanted to learn how to play. As Dahm grew up, she mainly played for the Syracuse Stars. While she did find her love for the position at a young age, her first two seasons in the game saw her team rotate everyone through each position, and whenever it hit her turn to play in net there was no question in her mind where she belonged.

“I was immediately hooked. After all, I had been begging my parents for a while and those games showed it was in my blood. I don’t blame them for not giving in easily though, ‘goalie parent’ is the toughest job out there.”

From there the Baldwinsville, New York native went on to compete in the 2004 USA Hockey Nationals with the Stars, which then led to her becoming a Clarkson University Golden Knight in the early years of the perennial powerhouse program, and allowed her to dawn the USA crest as a member of USA Hockey’s Under-22 squad.

However, while the desire to play competitive hockey has always been in her blood, following graduation from the burgeoning NCAA juggernaut Dahm took five years off from playing at a high-performance level, returning to Syracuse and joining a recreational team.

“I think that time was good for me and my love for the game,” reflected Dahm. “I got to just play for the fun of it and reconnect with a few teammates from before college. The winter of 2015-16 I started playing with the top men’s leagues in the area and noticed the women’s pro leagues

catching more attention. This is when I caught the Blades prospect camp, the timing and opportunity ended up working out pretty much perfectly.”

Now a team leader with the Blades, Dahm mentioned two historic events as moments of personal pride from the 2017-18 season.

The first, a road trip to Shenzhen, China to compete against the expansion Kunlun Red Star and Vanke Rays.

“It was a blast from start to finish and we were treated so professionally over there. Even though we didn’t win we had a couple really tight and exciting games for the big crowd. It was also the most cohesive that our team was this year and served as a great bonding experience for us all.”

The second monumental event, the first paycheck for players in CWHL history, a moment she spoke about fondly in terms of how financial compensation has allowed players to feel a little less stress off the ice.

“It is empowering to know that as women we can be paid to play the game we love and to which we have devoted our lives to be the best we can be. The money we got paid by the CWHL certainly allowed me to focus more on my game and I think that showed as I was able to bring my game to another level in comparison to my first season.”

Being a part of this kind of league history is something Dahm is incredibly thankful for, along with the countless other opportunities she’s received around the game. Her parents have been a huge support system throughout her career, as many hockey parents are. She concluded with the gratefulness she’s come to feel over the years, along with the praise she’s begun to receive for inspiring the next generation.

“I am just so grateful to be able to play in the CWHL and it is always heartwarming realizing the impact we have on fans, young players, and their families. When I came back home after this season to my summer softball teams, a couple of my teammates who are mothers of 10-year old girls came up to me and just thanked me for doing what I’m doing. They were saying how proud they are to know me and to know what our league is accomplishing in giving young girls a vision for the future. I absolutely love hearing that and it is incredibly humbling that they’re thanking me for simply doing something that I love.”

FROM RINK TO RINK

It's no secret that CWHL players are forces both on and off the ice. Whether it be furthering their education or working 40 hours a week alongside their already busy practice and game schedules, time management is a skill professional women hockey players have down to a science.

Megan Myers of the Boston Blades recently reflected on her hectic schedule. On top of being an assistant coach for the Becker College Hawks women's hockey team, she also works Monday through Friday as a physical therapy aide.

Before Her Professional Career

Myers spent all four years of her college career at Utica College, where she met Eliza Kelley, Becker Hawks head coach. Previously, Kelley was an assistant coach at Utica and took on the Becker job in 2014 for their inaugural season. From there, she took on Myers as an assistant.

"Liza has been an amazing mentor to me and has played a big part in helping me grow as a coach while also helping me continue to follow my dreams as a professional hockey player," Myers stated.

Day-to-Day Life

After her shift at Worcester Physical Therapy, Myers balances working on a practice plan for the Hawks, the usual two-hour practice, discussing their game plan for the week, and sharpening her players' skates as needed.

From there it's off to Winthrop, MA where she makes the 60-75 minute drive for Blades workout and practice. If the Blades aren't meeting on a particular day, she'll stay in Worcester to monitor athlete tutoring hours once a week.

Weekends mean it's game time, for both the Blades and Hawks, and Myers' schedule varies each weekend. Becker typically plays on Friday and Saturday while Boston usually plays on Saturday and Sunday.

"Often, I find myself missing Blades games to coach, but more times than not, I am playing for the Blades on Sundays," Myers said. "My schedule is definitely a huge puzzle. I am always trying to find ways to make more time for each of the teams, but whether it's the Blades or Becker, I am always trying to be at my best."

Managing It All

Myers admitted that there are times where managing everything can be difficult, but she wouldn't give up or change any of it.

“Between playing, coaching, driving, recruiting, community service events, and meetings, it becomes a whirlwind. Still though, over the last three years of living this lifestyle, I've gained an incredible amount from doing it all,” she stated. “Being a coach has made me a better hockey player and being a hockey player has made me a better coach. The two go hand-in-hand and I believe the positives of both outweigh the difficulties.”

Myers offered some helpful advice meant for anyone dealing with a similar situation. She stressed the importance of time management and communication. For her, she feels lucky to have Kelley and Boston Blades Head Coach Kacy Ambroz both understanding and willing to work with her schedule.

“I couldn't thank them enough, but I think the biggest piece of advice I can give is to have as much fun as you can. Coaching and playing professional hockey means that every day revolves around the best game on earth and that sounds like the dream to me,” Myers said.

Becker Hawks junior captain, Brittany Aiello, spoke on her assistant coach and the impact of seeing Myers play professionally.

“Being able to watch Megan play for the Blades and accomplish her goals has a big impact on me and my teammates,” she stated. “She is always available to us at Becker, as I'm sure she is for the Blades. Whether she's getting on the ice early, staying late, or going to open ice to help us improve our own skills, she's always pushing us to be the best players that we can be.”

Aiello also spoke of how Myers and the CWHL give college players something to look forward to after graduation.

“Having Megan as a coach, and a role model, proves to my teammates and me that we are able to accomplish our own goals by following her lead,” Aiello said. “Watching her play for the Blades gives us the encouragement to pursue hockey, even after graduation. Being able to support the Blades at their games, and in return having them support us at ours is something special that we get to be a part of.”

The Big Picture

Myers is one of the many athletes in this league that shows her commitment to the game she loves throughout her day-to-day life. While she admits that her schedule might appear (and actually be) crazy at times, it's incredibly rewarding for her to reflect upon.

“The girls of Becker College women’s ice hockey and my amazing teammates with the Boston Blades have changed my life for the better. I couldn’t do it without the amazing support I have from all of them. Both teams have led me to be the hockey player and woman I’m proud to be today.”