
Warrior Coach Walks of Fame

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Achievements made by Women's Varsity Hockey head coach Geraldine Heaney during her early years as a hockey player earns her a spot in the International Ice Hockey Association Hall of Fame.

It's no coincidence that a lot of today's sports superstars started out in their respective sport at a very young age. Sidney Crosby, the Pittsburgh Penguins sniper, began his hockey career at the age of three, meanwhile Tiger Woods, arguably the most dominant athlete ever, took his first golf swings at the age of two. These are two very extreme cases, but still, it isn't very common to see an athlete start a sport in their teens and go on to dominate it internationally — which is just what Women's Varsity Hockey head coach Geraldine Heaney did. Earlier this month, she got admitted into the International Ice Hockey Association Hall of Fame (IIHF).

Unlike Sidney Crosby and Tiger Woods, Heaney didn't begin her player her all-star sport at a young toddler age — she had to wait until her teen years. This is partly because, being born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, Heaney didn't live in a hockey hot spot and therefore was not exposed to hockey in her childhood. She did however participate in games such as soccer, basketball, Gaelic football and even the crazy Irish sport of hurling — which is a contact sport that involves teams running around a soccer field with wooden clubs smacking a ball that is harder than a baseball in mid air. Playing so many sports at such a young age must have improved Heaney's athletic ability. Mix that athleticism with a fiery Irish competitiveness and you have someone who is all set to be a hockey player.

Heaney got her start in hockey at the age of 13 playing for the Toronto Aeros and winning six provincial championships. Known to the many as "the Bobby Orr of women's hockey," she was the only woman to be featured on the Hockey Night In Canada's top ten goals of the 1989- 1990 season. Heaney was always known as a solid defenceman but only started to draw comparisons to the great Boston Bruins offensive defenceman after scoring a very big goal in the 1990 inaugural Women's World Hockey Championship, when she made a tie-breaking shot between Canada and the United States.

Heaney also competed in two Olympic Games. In 1998 her team earned a silver medal in Nagano, Japan, losing to the United States in the Gold Medal match. But in 2002 the Canadian team got their revenge on the Americans after defeating the U.S.A. 3-2 on American soil in Salt Lake City, Utah. This earned Heaney her first Olympic Gold Medal and marking the end of her career as a hockey player.

Some of Heaney's other accomplishments include being named Top Defenceman at the 1992 and 1994 World Championships, and again at the 1999 and 2001 Esso National Championships , a gold medal with team Ontario at the 2000 Esso Nationals, being named OWHA's Most Valuable Defenceman in 1987 1988, 1991-1992 and 1992-1993. In 1992 and 1994 she also took the blades off her skates and replaced them with wheels, competing in the World Roller Hockey Championships — winning gold in 1992 and silver in 1994.

After looking over Heaney's international stats there was no question that she should have been included in the IIHF group with American Women's superstar Cammi Granato, Russian Men's team sniper Igor Larionov, and one of the games greatest players, if not the best, Mario Lemieux. Playing in 125 games internationally for Team Canada, Heaney scored 27 goals, and adding 66 assists for a total of 93 career points; this puts her on top all time for points by a defenceman and fifth overall for Team Canada.

Heaney continues next year as the head coach of the University of Waterloo women's hockey team where she hopes she can lead them to a CIS title.