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Stops and Starts: Ideology, Commercialism, and the Fall of American Women's Hockey in the 1920s

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Early-twentieth-century expectations that the female athlete was about to assume her rightful place in the sun were disappointed. . . . The twenties were remembered as “The Golden Age of Sports.” In reality, women’s sports entered a period of stops and starts. . . .

ALLEN GUTTMANN, *WOMEN'S SPORTS: A HISTORY*

AN INTRIGUING IMAGE GRACES THE COVER of the *Saturday Evening Post* for the week of February 23, 1929.¹ On it are three young women dressed as “flappers”—thin, boyish figures clad in stylish cloche hats, tight-fitting turtleneck sweaters, and bloomers. This image of the New Woman in America was repeated extensively in popular magazine art and in other places throughout the Jazz Age and indicated that important changes to

[†]A version of this paper was read at the “Women’s Hockey: Gender Issues On and Off the Ice” conference sponsored by the Gorsebrook Research Institute at Saint Mary’s University, Halifax, Nova Scotia in March of 2004. Thanks to Stephen Hardy and Maggie Lowe for their comments on an earlier version of this essay.

contemporary gender roles were afoot. Impudent and self-assured, the flapper was the most ubiquitous and, in historian Elizabeth Stevenson's words, "the most effervescent symbol of the twenties."² What sets this particular piece of art apart from others, however, is the activity in which its subjects are engaged: seemingly competitive, fully uniformed and equipped team ice hockey. The artist of the *Post* piece, Blanche Greer, may have been aiming at capturing the New Woman's freedom and challenge to convention with a seasonal flavor; after all, what was more "winter" than hockey? Even so, presented at the end of the decade, this image was decidedly anachronistic. If in 1929 the flapper image still prevailed, competitive women's ice hockey in the United States, for all intents and purposes, was dead, and it would not be resurrected for another four decades.

Part of the intrigue about this image is that women's ice hockey, for a few years anyway, had lived and thrived in the U.S. In the years immediately before and right after the nation's entry into World War I, the women's game held promise as a legitimate expression of athletic prowess. By the mid 1920s, however, that promise was spent. In northeastern and midwestern colleges and universities, fledgling women's ice hockey teams were stunted by an ideology that militated against competition for women collegians. Moreover in northeastern cities, newly formed women's amateur hockey clubs were soon nudged out by the demands of commercialism and the control that arena capitalists and male promoters had on the game. Though on different scales, women's ice hockey and the flapper image shared the same sort of mercurial rise and precipitous fall in 1920s America. Here the similarity ends. The flapper posed a successful challenge to tradition and became an important element in America's collective memory of the twenties, while women's ice hockey in the Jazz Age has been almost entirely forgotten because of the forces of commercialism and concerns about female frailty.³

Until recently, the history of women's ice hockey in the United States has received very little scholarly attention. The American women's game has suffered historiographical neglect in several compounding ways. Not only have most historians of the game focused primarily on men (especially male professionals) in their writings, but they have focused largely on Canada and Canadians, the primary and most celebrated source of players of and passion for the game.⁴ While the peculiar contexts and meanings of hockey in the United States have been explored in some creditable scholarly depth, these studies are still too few and tentative to point to any large conclusions about how place, politics, character, and circumstance made American hockey different or distinct.⁵ Moreover, among the few effective historical treatments of women's hockey, at least two disconcerting trends are discernible. Recent writings on the women's game tend to treat Canadian and American women's hockey histories monolithically, as though they had similar roots with identical challenges, an indication that they were and are necessarily of one piece. Finally, much of the writing on women's hockey bears an understandably presentist perspective. Motivated by both the growing popular enthusiasm for women's hockey in the late 1980s and 1990s and by the movement for equal opportunity in sport, these works deal principally with the current issues and challenges in women's hockey. As such, they employ history mainly as colorful background for discussion.⁶ Consequently, there is a great deal more to be studied and written about the history of American hockey, women's hockey, and, of course, American women's hockey.

Women's hockey—like all sport—was contested terrain. The opportunity for women to play was hardly universal and always influenced by contemporary beliefs about gender and class identities. Not a prominent issue during America's "Roaring Twenties," women's hockey was nonetheless an entity of some discussion and debate. In short, early American women's hockey was a small part of a larger social problem: whither American womanhood? American women's hockey faced challenges in the 1920s that were peculiar, if not unique. Sport reflects the larger discourse and preoccupations of communities that foster it; therefore, the history of American women's hockey in the 1920s need not be seen as merely a smaller, southern branch of a celebrated *Canadian* phenomenon because early American women's hockey has its own historicity—its own roots, appeal, and reasons for decline.

The early history of American women's hockey can be divided credibly into two general periods: the era of "first starts" before 1916, and the years between 1916 and about 1922, when more serious, structured, and perennial women's hockey competition came into being. Women began to play ice hockey in the United States not long after the game first appeared below the 49th parallel in the closing years of the nineteenth century. The game's beginning was tentative and sporadic. In the 1890s and 1900s, the historical record provides scattered instances of women "hockeyists." An 1896 photograph, for example, depicts female students at Mount Holyoke College in western Massachusetts skating, holding hockey sticks, and presumably playing the game.⁷ A newspaper report in the *Ottawa Citizen* refers to an ice hockey match played between women's teams in Philadelphia in 1899.⁸ In 1907 (as another surviving photograph reveals), a team of women players was formed in tiny Hannah, North Dakota, and named the "Hens." And, as women's hockey historians Joanna Avery and Julie Stevens have written, women students at the University of Alaska played the game from the early 1890s and by 1908 had formed an ice hockey club playing "pick-up games against any willing opponent." These pioneer events hardly signaled the dawn of a new sporting fad or cultural "craze." In hindsight, these instances were tenuous, infrequent, and inauspicious. Women's hockey in the U.S. really began as lighthearted curiosity or experimental fun. In Hannah, the Hens, "played men, [and] the men had to use brooms."⁹

Serious, competitive women's hockey in the U.S. did not effectively begin until about 1916, half way through World War I.¹⁰ Whether or not the war triggered this sporting phenomenon is difficult to say. Social historians of this period have argued convincingly that the Great War shook the ground in which prevailing gender roles were rooted and that it precipitated change. During the war, women took on unconventional, "manly" roles as munitions workers, medics, and ambulance drivers and served in other capacities to help "make the world safe for democracy."¹¹ Moreover, for many American women, the war brought to the surface ideas about womanhood and energies that had been growing since the 1890s. Between the 1880s and the 1910s, the doctrine of separate spheres in American society was belied by the new realities of women's lives. In an age when the numbers of women college students, professionals, and wage workers increased considerably, there emerged a new sort of American woman, a "strenuous woman," whose contribution to society was through "body power" (and intellect) over domesticity and charm. A central part of the strenuous womanhood ideal was physical development and athletic

training. Though contested by many, the doctrine of strenuous womanhood was responsible for the impressive turn-of-the-century growth of organizations such as Girl Guides, Camp Fire Girls and, especially, the Young Women's Christian Association, "by 1890 . . . the country's foremost purveyor of women's athletics."¹² The U.S. entry into the war in 1917 was thus seen by some advocates of women's athletics as a symbolic test of strenuous womanhood and an opportunity to cement the doctrine nationally. If the popularity of women's sport and female participation in the physical education movement (and, arguably, the new physicality of the flapper) in the postwar United States were any indication, it was a test that American women passed with flying colors. Athletes like Babe Didrikson, Helen Wills, Hazel Wightman, Gertrude Ederle, and Glenna Collett became the "respectable heroines" of 1920s America.¹³

Women's ice hockey developed in the shadow of this transition. In the late 1910s, American women's hockey became something more than a series of sporadic contests and a makeshift pastime. In a very short time frame, the game found its feet, but it did so in a distinctive way. Early organized women's hockey in the United States was not a "grassroots" phenomenon in the same way it was in Canada. To be sure, many American women learned the game alongside their brothers and fathers on the bogs, ponds, lakes, and rivers of the country, in much the same way Canadians did. But they organized themselves differently, in different contexts. "By the early 1900s and certainly by World War I, women's teams were organized in communities small and large throughout Canada," notes M. Ann Hall in her recent book, *The Girl and the Game* (2002), "from the Maritimes to British Columbia and as far north as the Yukon. They played . . . mostly among themselves, although leagues made up of teams from neighboring towns and cities began to be organized."¹⁴ Women's hockey in Canada was truly a national phenomenon, though one—before the establishment of a women's national championship in the 1930s—that was experienced locally. Early Canadian women's hockey was, borrowing critics Bruce Kidd and John MacFarlane's term, "community hockey" in its purest form.¹⁵

The contrast with the roots of the American game is notable. In the United States, competitive women's hockey developed during and after World War I in two specific and peculiar contexts: first, in women's colleges and co-educational universities; and second, on commercial urban rinks. These venues offered both promise and vulnerability. Though women's hockey rose to some popularity in the years after 1916, it fell quickly in the early twenties. Arguably, the game declined in the 1920s precisely because of the nature of the contexts that had cradled it. This latter point is an important correction to the historical record. Women's hockey in the U.S. did not decline when the "Depression of the 1930s crippled the nation," as some histories have asserted.¹⁶ Instead, the game was undermined by a 1920s ideology that argued against competitive sport for women and by commercialism: a belief among rink owners and hockey promoters that the women's game could never draw enough spectators to make the venture worth it.

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, women's athletics in American colleges and universities was the subject of considerable concern and debate. As Margaret Lowe demonstrates in her recent book on body image among American students, the prolific growth of female students in higher education in the late nineteenth century brought with it a wave of argument in both the popular press and professional discourse. College

study would harm women, it was argued, both physiologically and culturally. Intensive study, many medical professionals held, would compromise the female constitution, drawing nutrients and energies to her brain and away, naturally, from her reproductive system. If allowed, advanced scholarship meant future generations of weakened children and increased barrenness among women. Women permitted to pursue college study would be compromised culturally, as well. Such an independent, cerebral creature could hardly expect that a college degree would do much for her in the way of “marriageability.” Significantly, women educators fought these prognostications successfully, as climbing turn-of-the-century enrollments in both all-female colleges and coeducational institutions have indicated. Advocates for women in higher education argued effectively that intensive study could not harm a *healthy* young woman, and they took great strides to ensure this by insisting that physical education and sport be central elements of a standard college curriculum. “Long before Title IX and the late twentieth-century explosion of female athletics it generated,” Lowe writes, “late nineteenth-century college students embraced rigorous physical activity and competitive sports.”¹⁷

By the early twentieth century, advocates of women’s higher education had assuaged the worst popular fears about the health of college women, and schools regularly asserted the healthfulness of their charges, pointing to annual physical examinations and the array of athletic opportunities available. The bigger challenge, however, was to combat the notion circulating by the 1910s that this emphasis on sport—especially gymnastics, field hockey, and basketball—may have gone too far, making college women competitive, masculine, and unbecoming. In these years, professional and amateur men’s sports—especially hockey and football—were cast as unnecessarily violent and playing to the basest aspects of popular interest. Violence and degradation—sacrificing practiced gentility to the will to win—were seen to be the logical outcomes of an emphasis on competition in sport. Violence and foul play reflected poorly on men’s characters in contemporaries’ minds, but they were wholly unacceptable qualities for women. Women’s education advocates faced the challenge, then, of promoting physical culture among female students without exposing them or encouraging them to take on the more unseemly characteristics of sportsmen.¹⁸

The leaders of women’s sport in America felt compelled to act on this belief. Members of the Women’s Division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation (NAAF), the preeminent American organization of female physical educators, feared that competitive athletics threatened the moral well-being of girls and women. The NAAF’s sixteen-point “Athletic Creed,” adopted at the body’s inaugural meeting in 1923, gave voice to a sentiment that had been percolating among female physical educators for at least a decade. The document pushed “play for play’s sake” among girls and women and deplored “the exploitation [of female athletes] for the enjoyment of the spectator . . . or commercial advantage of any school.” Throughout the 1920s, “play days” replaced intercollegiate competition for women and, in several sports, “girls’ rules” were instituted to distance women’s games from their male counterparts. Then, too, a campaign was started to replace male coaches of women’s sports with females.¹⁹ The consequences for women’s sport were profound. The acceptance of the NAAF platform in 1923 “meant the elimination of intercollegiate athletics and marked the end of competitive women’s sports for women on

most college campuses,” declares sport historian Gai Berlage. “[M]any female educators [were] convinced that women should reject the male model of sports competition for a women’s model that stressed limited competition.” Moreover, this new policy direction affected some sports more adversely than others: “Ice hockey epitomized what some female educators saw as the evils of the male sports model. It was aggressive, violent and commercial.”²⁰

This view ensured that women’s collegiate ice hockey, wherever it was played, would be strictly an intramural event, where passions for the game could be held in check. A few examples demonstrate this pattern. At the University of Minnesota, women students began to organize hockey games as early as 1916. Two years later, the school yearbook noted that there had been “four strong teams” in place, “with subs for each one: They didn’t need to learn how to skate, for they were already experts, so they devoted arduous hours of practice under skilled coaches to developing teamwork. This resulted in a tournament of fast games which called forth an unusual amount of interest, and convinced people that girls really could play hockey.”²¹ As Avery and Stevens document, at least two teams of women were organized at the “U” throughout the 1920s, and in 1929, a separate skating rink was constructed especially for women’s hockey. But despite its popularity and success, women’s intramural ice hockey was played at Minnesota “only until the early 1930s.” At Carleton College, in Northfield, Minnesota, women’s ice hockey actually became something more than an intramural exercise. Formed in 1928, the Carleton women’s team played against “town teams” and other nearby college teams of women, co-eds, and men. By 1932, however, the only hockey played at Carleton was by two women’s teams, against one another.²² A third example is also illustrative. In February of 1931, the *New York Times* reported that students at Smith College had organized themselves into ice hockey teams by dormitories, playing a series of games on a natural ice rink at Paradise Pond. Organized originally in the winter of 1930, intramural women’s ice hockey ranked as “one of the most popular Winter sports at the Northampton institution. . . . [B]y next year it is expected that regular class sextets will have been formed.”²³ Yet, by 1932, interest in the game had fizzled; the *Smith Yearbook* for the remainder of the decade reveals no such winter activity.²⁴ In each of these cases, female students demonstrated great enthusiasm for ice hockey, but the sport’s promise was limited by an administrative impulse to keep the games local. In American colleges and universities during this era, intercollegiate play of women’s ice hockey never had a chance.

By the 1920s, most competitive women’s sports in North America were pushed outside the academy to urban clubs and industrial leagues. Women’s hockey was among them. Here, without the financial support and facilities that higher education institutions could offer athletes, women’s sport entered uncertain territory. Summer sports, such as track and field, tennis, and softball, could be accommodated relatively cheaply through minimal club membership dues, subsidies from local governments, and, if necessary, ticket sales. But winter sports such as speed skating and ice hockey were, by nature, almost always more expensive to produce and involved greater challenges. In much of the United States, for example, few outdoor ice surfaces could be wholly relied upon for skating races or a regular schedule of hockey games and practices. Speed skaters and club teams were at the mercy of the weather. By the 1910s, however, in several major American cities, indoor

arenas provided an answer to uncertainties of climate. For hockey teams, certainty came at a price.

Early hockey entrepreneurs in Canada and the United States were rink owners and managers who made their profits by selling ice time to recreational skaters and to a growing numbers of schoolboy, university, and senior amateur hockey teams. The first arenas were physically limited, containing slightly more space than the ice pad and its boards or boundaries. Seating capacities, where seats existed, were small. Before World War I, most ice arenas in North America had natural ice and few, as architecture historian Howard Shubert notes, could “accommodate as many as 3,000 standing spectators.” The earliest rinks were hardly sites of great comfort; seating arrangements were cramped with obstructed views of the ice, and poor ventilation added to the discomfort. But with clever recruiting of skilled teams, affordable ticket prices, and favorable publicity in the local press, arena capitalists could still do well. Gradually, rink owners and managers in the American cities of Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Boston, and New York began to realize that much more profit could be made from the spectacle rather than user fees alone, even if rink owners were compelled to give a share of gate receipts to better drawing teams.²⁵

Cleveland had an indoor ice arena (the Elysium) equipped and available for competitive ice hockey as early as 1907.²⁶ In New York City, St. Nicholas Arena, the crucible of commercial ice hockey, opened in 1896 near Central Park with a “state-of-the-art artificial ice plant.” That same year, it became home to the first club hockey circuit in the United States, the American Amateur Hockey League (AAHL), which entertained paying fans until World War I. A perennial AAHL member, the St. Nicholas Hockey Club also hosted challenge matches against top Canadian amateur teams in its home rink.²⁷ The Boston Arena, housing an indoor, artificial rink, opened in 1910, but the original building was destroyed by a fire in December of 1918. The city reconstructed it, and the new, 5,000-seat Boston Arena opened with great fanfare on January 1, 1921, quickly developing a reputation as the most important commercial site for hockey in the eastern U.S., at least until the mid 1920s. In addition to Harvard, Boston College and MIT games, the arena hosted the Boston Athletic Association Unicorns, the Shoe Trades Club, the Westminster Hockey Club, and the Père Marquette team, all Boston area squads populated by the best local players peppered with recruited talent from Canada.²⁸ In Philadelphia George F. Pawling’s 4,000-seat Ice Palace opened in February of 1920. Throughout the 1920s it served as the home rink of the Philadelphia men’s amateur hockey league and the site of a number of celebrated feature matches between Princeton University and its Ivy League rivals.²⁹

By the late 1910s, well before the arrival of the National Hockey League (NHL) in places like Boston (1924) and New York (1925), commercial hockey had become a fixture. Commercial hockey was a very different creature from the community-based game. “Community hockey was built on love of the game particularly, love of sport generally, and community loyalty,” states Kidd and MacFarlane. “Commercial hockey capitalized on these sentiments for private profit. The . . . community and commercial traditions were not compatible. . . . Whereas the community tradition would have sustained hockey wherever it was possible, the commercial tradition would see to it that hockey survived only where it was profitable.”³⁰

Competitive women's ice hockey in the United States developed in this commercial crucible. In urban commercial rinks, women's hockey was organized and sold as spectacle first and foremost. A prominent event of this sort was planned for the Cleveland Elysium in December of 1916 when the local newspaper and rink management promoted a three-game series between two Canadian teams, the Cornwall Victorias and the Ottawa Alerts, for the "ladies' hockey championship of Canada."³¹ In the four days leading up to the scheduled matches, the *Plain Dealer* both promoted the games and attempted to explain the curiosity of women's hockey to an unfamiliar audience: "Several speedy skaters will be seen in action here, for every one of the players who represent Ottawa and Cornwall are perfectly at home on the ice. . . . [A] spirited duel is looked for," though in these news items it was made clear that the women's game avoided many of the unsavory aspects of men's hockey (for example, fighting) that might threaten female character. Not only had there never been any "attempt to in any way professionalize the game," the girls' teams always traveled with a "chaperon and nurse."³² On the ice, as Canadian newspapers reported, the Cornwall women swept Ottawa in the three-game series. Oddly, the local newspaper in Cleveland did not cover any of the matches.³³ Moreover, the pre-game splash in the *Plain Dealer* seems not to have made much of an impression on prospective local women players. "If there are any Cleveland girls who play hockey they will have a chance to compete in Boston," the *Plain Dealer's* sports editor related from a wire story in late December, 1916. "[T]he first call for candidates for a Boston girls' team is tomorrow."³⁴ No response came from Cleveland women. Even so, in Cleveland the promotion of women's hockey trumpeted something new and significant. Beyond colleges and universities, women's hockey made its earliest appearances in the United States as a commercial enterprise.

It was east of Cleveland, however, in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, where American women's club hockey really took off. In New York City, women's amateur club ice hockey preceded the Cleveland spectacle by about one month. On November 16, 1916, the *New York Times* reported that the St. Nicholas Rink had been the site of a "hockey battle" between the St. Nicholas Blues and the Manhattan Reds, "New York's first hockey game between women's teams."³⁵ Boston women were not far behind. In late December, Canadian Ruth Denesha, a Sargent School graduate, "expert skater," and "clever stick handler" led fourteen young women through the first women's hockey practice at the Boston Arena. By March of 1917, the Boston Girls' Hockey Club had been practicing "faithfully for . . . several months" and "nightly" throughout the current month, in preparation for a series of matches against the New York team.³⁶ What explains the timing of these teams' appearances is difficult to say. The popularity of men's amateur club hockey in Boston and New York was high in the pre-war years (one might say, the Hobey Baker years) and the appeal of the men's game may have rubbed off on women athletes. Moreover, women's hockey in Canada was growing in the late 1910s when, according to Brian McFarlane, players and spectators began "taking the game seriously." Spectacles like the one planned for the Cleveland Elysium may have carried the "Canadian" game to American women, either as demonstrations of the game or challenges to interested players south of the border. In January of 1917, for example, the sports editor of the *Boston Herald* published an appeal from N.A. Guertin, secretary of the four-team Montreal and District

Ladies' Hockey League, under the caption "Here's Your Chance, Girls!" Enclosing the secretary's mailing address, the editor noted: "The managers of [these] teams are looking for dates for exhibition games in the United States."³⁷

Whatever the source, women's club hockey in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston was embraced by its players with a decided interest and a competitive spirit. In 1916-1917, the first season of women's club hockey in New York and Boston, women in each city formed two practice squads that scrimmaged against each other and one intercity team that played a series of challenge matches. On March 22, 1917, the St. Nicholas Girls' Hockey Club traveled to the Boston Arena to take on the Arena Girls' Hockey team, and on March 24 and 30, the Boston girls returned the favor. Despite predictions that the more experienced New York players would sweep the series, the Boston club performed well, winning 3-2 at home, and losing two close games (1-0 and 3-2) at St. Nicholas Rink.³⁸ More remarkable than the scores, however, was the mixed reaction of enthusiasm and curiosity carried in the local press. Prior to the first game, sportswriters announced somewhat hopefully that the contest "promise[d] to be a big attraction" and that hockey fans should not miss "the opportunity of comparing the men's game with that of the fair sex."³⁹ Post-game reports were complimentary but qualified. The first meeting of the teams, one brief entry in the *New York Times* reported, "was fast and exciting from the start." While the play was "ragged at times," *Herald* reporter John Hallahan wrote, "there were spells when some excellent work was displayed."⁴⁰

Although women's ice hockey made a successful start in Boston and New York, poor timing limited intercity play for the 1916-1917 season. Scheduling women's games at the end of the season in late March when by early April artificial ice would no longer be available at indoor rinks made it difficult to attract new clientele and develop a fan base. There was little to do except hope that the momentum gained could be carried over to the next season. But the entry of the United States into World War I on April 6, 1917, adversely affected the women's game. There is no record of women's ice hockey in Boston or New York for the remainder of the war. "[B]y the 1917-18 season, hockey operations were suspended for St. Nick's and the entire AAHL," reports hockey writer Shirley Fischler about the New York scene.⁴¹ In Boston, matters got worse. Though men's hockey continued on a more limited basis in some places throughout the war, disaster of a different sort created a new challenge for the women.⁴² The 1918 fire that leveled the old Boston Arena left women hockey players without a home rink and created even greater competition for ice time among men's and boys' teams. Tellingly, women's ice hockey did not reappear in Boston until the construction of the new Boston Arena was completed.⁴³

World War I, however, did not kill the women's game; it merely delayed the experiment. Competitive intercity women's hockey reemerged during the post-war years with considerable promise and fanfare. By December of 1920, the women's game returned as a regular fixture in New York City, while in Boston it reappeared with renewed vigor as the city christened its new palatial arena. At Philadelphia, the newly constructed Ice Palace gave female players there a home rink for hosting intercity contests that grew out of challenges they made to teams in Boston and New York. So optimistic were members of Boston's Back Bay Hockey Club that they began devising plans for the development of a formal intercity league. "Plans for an ice hockey league composed of women players were

announced today by the Back Bay Hockey Club,” and notices published in the *New York Times* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in mid-December 1920 read: “It is proposed to have teams from Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.”⁴⁴ The league never developed as planned, and a team of Pittsburgh women hockeyists did not materialize; nevertheless, the proposal for a women’s intercity amateur hockey league—comparable to men’s leagues—clearly indicated that women’s hockey in eastern U.S. cities had the potential to recruit and develop talented players and attract a popular following.

The reemergence of women’s hockey in Boston was greeted with considerable enthusiasm and demonstration as two teams were organized, one in December of 1920 and another in January of 1921. The first of these, the Back Bay Hockey Club, was a veritable reincarnation of the pre-war Boston women’s team that had skated against New York in 1917. “The Back Bay H.C. is made up of veteran players,” the *Boston Globe* reported, while the Girls’ A.A. is a new combination.” Immediately, a natural rivalry emerged between the two clubs.⁴⁵ Appearing in the *Globe* on the day after Christmas in 1920 was a team photograph of the Boston Girls’ Hockey Team under the caption: “Boston to Have Rosy-Cheeked, Sturdy Girls’ Hockey Team.”

When the Arena is finished and the ice floor is smooth and glossy, the patrons will have the pleasure of seeing a team of rosy cheeked, fluffy haired girls in a hockey game. . . . The leader of this group of girls weighs only 115 pounds and is only 5 feet 2 inches tall. She has grit, however, and the muscle, for she says, she is as strong as many men who weighs [*sic*] twice as much as she. Her name . . . is Dorothea M. O’Donoghue, and she works at the peaceful occupation of making figures in the Insurance Department of the State in the State House. . . . The team, as planned at present, will consist of Miss Gertrude Hawkes . . . business manager and forward . . . ; Miss Agnes Seamans . . . forward . . . , Miss Mary Campbell . . . cover point [and] . . . Miss Helen Sheehan. Miss O’Donoghue will attempt to enhance her reputation which she made as goal tend for a girls hockey team that Boston had several years ago. . . . Intercity games with all sorts of girls [*sic*] teams are sought. . . . Her girls, she says, will wear white sweaters and bloomers.⁴⁶

In early January of 1921, “[s]ixteen candidates reported to Gertrude Hawkes of the Boston Girls’ Hockey team at the first practice” held at the arena. “Coach ‘Dutch’ Ayer[s] of the Boston team sent the girls through a spirited workout.”⁴⁷ When the two clubs faced off in late January, more than local bragging rights were at stake: the winner, it was agreed, would play the first intercity match of the season against the Philadelphia Hockey Club.⁴⁸

In Philadelphia, women’s ice hockey emerged with a similar burst of energy and enthusiasm for the game. In early December of 1920, women formed two teams, the “Thorns” and the “Roses,” from among the members of the Philadelphia Skating Club. Avid competitors, the two squads had already played four games against one another by mid-December. The contests were newsworthy enough for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* to include them in the newspaper’s sporting cartoon.⁴⁹ In addition to those teams, female members of the Philadelphia Cricket Club and the Merion Cricket Club organized teams in 1920-1921 (though some members also skated for the Thorns and Roses). These games received regular coverage by the Philadelphia press which wondered about women competing successfully in a game with such a rough reputation. “The game itself had all the ups and downs that mark a regular football game,” the *Philadelphia Inquirer* mused about a

match between the Philadelphia Cricket Club and the Merion Cricket Club. "There was line smashing, stick swinging, spills, downs and flocks of slides. Three ten-minute periods were played and at no time did any of the gliding girls ask time out for lack of condition."⁵⁰

The intercity games, however, received the most attention from the press and promoters.⁵¹ These games appeared in local sports pages as prominently as the men's amateur league games. Team and individual photographs of the players were featured, and headlines such as "First Intercity Women's Ice Hockey Match" and "Deciding Match Tonight" announced the events in the days leading up to the contests.⁵² Box advertisements also heralded the matches: "GIRLS' ICE HOCKEY TONIGHT AT ICE PALACE . . . Phila. vs. New York." Moreover, the ticket prices charged to spectators for women's games were exactly the same as those for the men's contests. Ice Palace patrons paid \$1.10 or \$1.65 to stand in the balcony; \$1.65 or \$2.20 to sit in the amphitheatre and watch hockey, men's or women's.⁵³

New York visited Philadelphia on three separate occasions in 1920-1921. In the first game, on December 28, the visitors took the honors. "Father Knickerbocker's girls' hockey seven vanquished William Penn's feminine chasers of the rubber disk in their intercity clash . . . by a score of 2 to 0," a *New York Times* correspondent gushed. "The contest was witnessed by a large crowd and produced plenty of excitement."⁵⁴ But then the Philadelphia club rebounded with a 1-0 overtime triumph over its New York City rival in a return engagement.⁵⁵ The rubber match produced the same result in spite of the New York players' best effort to bring home a victory. "Philadelphia won the girls' intercity ice hockey championship by defeating New York in the third and deciding game at the Ice Palace last night by 1 goal to 0," the *Inquirer* proclaimed. "Last night's game was the fastest played between these teams. Philadelphia [is] now qualified to play Boston for the Eastern Championship."⁵⁶

In Boston local newspapers gave intensive coverage to the developing local rivalry between the Boston Girls' Hockey Club and the Back Bay Hockey Club. In December and January, the two clubs prepared to do battle against one another. "Just how well the women have taken to the game of hockey will be ascertained tonight when the Back Bay Hockey Club and the Girls' A.A. play at the Arena," the *Globe* reported on January 27. "The game is no innovation for the fair sex, having been tried with success a few years ago at the old playing surface. . . . There is an incentive to the contest," the *Globe* continued, "as the winner will have a chance to play the Philadelphia girls' team in a home-and-home series."⁵⁷ Ultimately, the Back Bay seven held the day and retained local bragging rights, winning 2-1 on a spectacular goal following an end-to-end rush by cover point Lena Doucette.⁵⁸

Beyond the results of these individual matches, a number of detectable patterns emerge. In particular, three striking characteristics stand out in the organization and conduct of these games that provide useful information about the place and prospect of women's hockey and gender roles in 1920s America. Newspaper coverage introduced the female players to the public and revealed something about their identities. It depicted the organizational patterns and structure of female hockey teams, and it unveiled the larger commercial interests that were behind putting women on ice in the first place.

Who were these female hockey players? The answer is difficult and complex because period newspapers in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia have provided only glimpses of their identities, and reporters were more interested in the biographical details of sportsmen rather than sportswomen. Nevertheless, some details are discernible and helpful. Most notable is the revelation that female ice hockey players in eastern U.S. cities during the period from 1917 to 1921 were remarkably talented athletes, many of whom made names for themselves in multiple sports. Agnes Seamans of Somerville, Massachusetts, and the Boston Girls' Hockey Club, was the New England speed skating champion, 1913-1916, and a challenger for the United States speed skating championship in 1917. Her teammate, Lima Bowen of Belmont, the *Boston Globe* noted, was "rated as one of the best women skaters in the country."⁵⁹ New York's Otilie Barth and Mildred Truslow raced as speed skaters in the American time trials at Brooklyn in 1921, "skating in wonderful time." Both competed in the international championships in February of 1921, though with little success.⁶⁰ Some Philadelphia players had commendable records in both skating and tennis. Gertrude Pancoast's name appears on a list of speed skaters who had won "a medal at Nationals," while Phyllis Walsh made a name for herself with a second-place finish in 1917.⁶¹ Walsh was even more accomplished at tennis. "There are many . . . players of real promise coming to the front," declared men's tennis champion William Tilden in his 1921 book, *The Art of Lawn Tennis*. In his chapter on "Famous Women Players," Tilden praised the talent of Phyllis Walsh.⁶² Like Walsh, Philadelphia team captain Margaretta Sharpless excelled in tennis, having played in the U.S. Open Singles Tournament in 1919.⁶³ Often, writers' promotions and descriptions of the games alluded to these women's accomplishments as testaments to the legitimacy and caliber of the competition.

Perhaps the most celebrated female hockey player was New York's Elsie Muller. Born in 1895 in Brooklyn, Muller grew up skating on the Hudson River. Shortly after her family moved up-river to Hastings in 1910, she began competing as a speed skater at St. Nicholas Rink. In a twenty-two year career, Muller competed at the highest level of national and international speed skating and counted among her titles Eastern States Outdoor Champion (1916-1920), National Outdoor Champion (1927), North American Outdoor Champion (1928), and International Outdoor Champion (1931). For a time during the 1920s, she held the 220-yard outdoor world record and the 440-yard tandem record (with Bill Taylor). In 1932, she represented the United States in the winter Olympic games at Lake Placid, New York, and was among the first women to compete in Olympic speed skating.⁶⁴ In hockey, Muller was the most talented and recognized leader of the St. Nicholas women's team. "Miss Elsie Muller, one of the best amateur skaters in the East," the *Philadelphia Inquirer* noted, "will captain the New York All-Star girls' ice hockey team that meets an All Philadelphia team at the Philadelphia Ice Palace on Tuesday night."⁶⁵ According to game reports, Muller scored goals in virtually every game she played and proved herself to be among the very best women ice hockey players of her era.

Despite the talent and athletic prowess of female players, sport reporters, nevertheless, made any connection that they could to male sports in order to provide some sort of cognitive anchor for prospective fans. Some women players were family members of male athletes (some of them hockey players) who had gained local renown for their perfor-

mances on the field, court, or rink, and the link was invariably drawn. For example, Mildred Conley was notable among members of the Boston women's hockey team of 1917 because she was the wife of Farrell "Pop" Conley, the diminutive star of the B.A.A. Unicorns hockey club. One of the Boston Girls' Hockey Club hopefuls at the 1920 tryouts was Loretta Hughes, distinctive to Boston sportswriters as the sister of Leo Hughes, the Boston College hockey standout. And Philadelphia's Pansy Scott helped bring respectability to her hockey club because she was not only a medal-winning downhill skier but also the sister of former Lafayette College football great Johnny Scott. Decades before Cammi Granato and Judy Diduck escaped the shadows of their more famous hockey-playing brothers, the "little sister principle" (to borrow Elizabeth Etue and Megan Williams' term) was in vogue. To some degree, male athletic bloodlines had legitimized women's hockey.⁶⁶

The male connection to female hockey was even stronger in the administration of the game (the second characteristic), because all of these women's ice hockey clubs were organized, promoted, and directed by men. During the same period in which female physical educators across the country sought to replace male sports authorities with women administrators, ice hockey went the other way. Male authorities cultivated and controlled the women's game from top to bottom. Rink managers like George V. Brown in Boston and George F. Pawling in Philadelphia determined whether or not a women's team should or could play ice hockey and, if so, when. For example, it was arena manager Brown who "arranged for a contest between two girls' teams for Thursday night," the *Boston Globe* observed in late January of 1921.⁶⁷ Women's clubs in eastern U.S. cities were managed and coached by men, as well. The Boston women's club was coached in 1916-1917 by Harry Denesha, a sibling of player Ruth Denesha. The team was assembled by "Manager" Hawkes, a relative of one the team's best players, Gertrude Hawkes.⁶⁸ In 1920-1921, Denesha continued behind the bench for the Boston Girls' H.C., while another man, "Dutch" Ayers, directed the new Back Bay Hockey Club.⁶⁹ In New York, St. Nick's women's coach was Tom Howard, himself a player who had gained a reputation as one of the more violent members of the St. Nicholas men's team.⁷⁰ The point here is obvious. Those who put the women's game on the ice were not the ones who had the most at stake. Women athletes might play hockey, but they had little influence over how it was structured and presented and, ultimately, little control over its success or failure.

The third characteristic that emerges from this examination of early women's ice hockey is equally plain. The matches were expressly commercial events, designed to make money and only in a secondary way to provide recreation and pleasure for their participants, or to add a new activity to the panoply of women's sports in 1920s America. That they were pitched to the paying public in the great commercial arenas of New York, Philadelphia, and Boston suggests as much. In this, the local press played a conspicuous role. The press was transparent in its role as handmaid to the arena managers and hockey promoters. The way it characterized and criticized sport reflected, to a great degree, the commercial imperative.⁷¹

The importance of this footing should not be underestimated. Women's ice hockey in World War I-era America was set up to succeed or fail as a commercial venture. The 1920s were marked by a new sort of sports capitalism, as sport historians Allen Guttman,

Stephen Hardy, and Bruce Kidd have demonstrated. Sports entrepreneurs sought out new ways to sell games to profit from spectacle. But to do so, it was critical to create a product that was uniform, high-caliber, reliable, abundant (but not too abundant), and appealing broadly to consumer tastes. Sports had to be “branded,” so that consumers knew what to expect every time they shelled out money to watch games. The growth of commercial sport in the 1920s was, according to Kidd, “slow and uncertain,” but by the end of the decade “brand-name” professional sports had become a fixture in modern American life. It was during these years that the National Hockey League standardized its product, broadened its markets, captured the main talent pools, and, in effect, guaranteed its monopoly over the “brand” of hockey for the remainder of the century.⁷²

For hockey to succeed among the commercial sporting spectacles in the 1920s, it had to undergo a sort of distillation process. To sell, hockey could no longer be many things; it could only be one thing. There was no room for an array of “versions” of the game. Hockey promoters in Boston and elsewhere aggressively sold that fact. Their game, Stephen Hardy argues, was one composed of three consistent elements: individual skill, collective strategy or “science,” and violence—“bloodshed and mayhem.” Paying customers in the Boston Arena and other venues should be able to expect these ingredients to be delivered, virtually every night. Hardy writes: “By the mid-1920s, hockey was firmly placed as a special brand on the Boston sports scene.” Arguably, that brand had reached the other major eastern American cities, too.⁷³

Even so, initially, hockey promoters and the press in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia seemed at least willing to try on women’s hockey and see if it fit. Here, the close relations between rink management and sports journalists were apparent and little effort was made to hide the connection. Fred Hoey was simultaneously a *Boston Herald* writer and publicity director for the old Boston Arena; John Hallahan covered the hockey beat for the *Herald* and was employed as a public address announcer for the new Arena.⁷⁴ These men and their colleagues promoted women’s games as “features” or “attractions” alongside top local amateur men’s clubs and university teams. Sportswriters promoted the local events scheduled at the Ice Palace, St. Nicholas Arena, and the Boston Arena. They praised the spectacles that filled the Arena, and they criticized the people and events that threatened their success and profits.⁷⁵

Consequently, the “branding” of hockey in 1920s America did not bode well for the survival of the women’s game, for obvious reasons. Women’s hockey was in its infancy in American cities in these years and, despite the athletic talent that many of the earliest players brought to the ice, there were very few polished players. The women’s game was not likely a place where spectators could regularly expect to see brilliant individual plays, canny combinations, or violent episodes. In fact, in the 1920s, there were likely few people who would really have wanted to see the latter activity in any forum. The women’s game fell outside the accepted and promoted brand of hockey in 1920s America. Women’s hockey was a different game from the one promoters and the growing number of hockey followers accepted, and because of this difference—a difference that women’s hockey in 1920s Boston, Philadelphia, and New York could never overcome—the game ultimately failed. “Hockey at the Arena got away to a flying start Saturday night,” wrote *Boston Herald* columnist Bob Dunbar, enthused about the first Boston Athletic Association men’s

home game in late December of 1917. "It was a rattling fast, virile game, and the crowd was pleasingly large."⁷⁶ The equation to Dunbar and others was clear: speed and "virility" produced spectators. The contrast with the women's game was stark. "[T]he girls do not expect to deliver a game quite up to the standard exhibited by the opposite sex," the *Boston Globe* noted in March of 1917; nor, apparently, did many other observers.⁷⁷

Despite a promising reemergence in the winter of 1920-1921, American's women's ice hockey fizzled as a competitive sport. Importantly, it fizzled because it was not a viable commercial brand of hockey. "Women may be good skaters," one *Boston Globe* sports-writer wrote in late January of 1921, "but their inability to shine as hockey players was demonstrated when the Back Bay Hockey Club defeated the Girls' A.A., 2 to 1, last night at the Arena. There was a small attendance."⁷⁸ In this environment, no statement could be more damning. Hallahan of the *Herald* (and the Arena) agreed: "Bostonians are not likely to see another girls' hockey game. Last night's contest was interesting enough, but did not attract, and it lo[o]ks as if the proposed intercity series between Boston and Philadelphia will not materialize." The next day, in an article entitled "Hockey Team Needs Reputation to Draw," Hallahan followed up his requiem with a similar message: "That Bostonians really enjoy first-class hockey has been proved on more than one occasion this season at the Arena. It is the great rivals who have been the magnets for the drawing of full houses, all of which makes it unfortunate for those teams who have no traditions."⁷⁹ It seems no coincidence that a similar phenomenon happened in Philadelphia and New York as well. There, after such promising starts, competitive, women's team hockey did not return in 1922.⁸⁰ In Boston, the record reveals that the only women's hockey played for the rest of the decade were the occasional winter pageants that matched Radcliffe College women against society girls from the Boston Junior League to raise money for the Ellis Memorial Settlement House and other philanthropic projects.⁸¹ Women's ice hockey, where it did continue, sadly reverted to its pre-war form as mere novelty.

The story of women's hockey in 1920s America constitutes only a brief episode in the history of American sport and of American women, but its rise and fall is instructive. Competitive women's hockey in the Jazz Age epitomized the conundrum that serious female athletes and indeed all women faced. Emboldened by World War I, the Nineteenth Amendment (which gave women voting rights in the U.S.), the physical education movement, and the flapper image to participate in society and in sport as never before, New Women were simultaneously blunted by popular expectations when they tried to participate. Women hockey players succeeded when they cast aside traditional strictures that declared them physically unfit to play such an aggressive and dangerous game. But at the same time they were blunted when they would not or could not play ice hockey in the ways that men had "branded" the game and sold it to growing audiences. Women's hockey in the U.S. started with a burst of enthusiasm, but it stopped equally quickly, and we have forgotten about it as the popular image of hockey as a man's game was invented, sold, and enshrined by rink owners, hockey entrepreneurs, advertisers, and male players themselves. "It is the dominant view," Nancy Theberge wrote in a recent literature review on gender and sport, "that men's hockey is the 'real' game."⁸² That equation, drawn in the 1920s and every decade since, has had devastating consequences and illustrates the ways that men and markets have constructed twentieth-century American sport.



¹*Saturday Evening Post*, 23 February 1929, front cover. Clearly, the artist here wished to make the connection between the New Woman and an “active” outdoor life. The image of women playing hockey appears elsewhere, too, but oddly, not normally as a team player, but as someone casually chasing a puck on a frozen pond. See, for example, “The Winter Sports Girl,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer (Sunday Magazine)*, 23 January 1916, p. 5; and “Society at Winter Play” *Cleveland Plain Dealer (Woman’s Magazine)*, 23 January 1916, p. 1. For a variation on this theme, see the advertisement “Earn Prizes and Cash!” *Saturday Evening Post*, 16 February 1929, p. 153.

²Elizabeth Stevenson, *Babbitts and Bohemians: The American 1920s* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 139.

³On women’s status and roles in 1920s America, see Dorothy M. Brown, *Setting a Course: American Women in the 1920s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987); Margaret A. Lowe, *Looking Good: College Women and Body Image, 1875-1930* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), esp. chap. 5; Paula Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), esp. 23-25, 280-283, and 306-310; Stevenson, *Babbitts and Bohemians*, esp. chapter 9; and Beatrice M. Hinkle, “Women and the New Morality” in *The Culture of the Twenties*, ed. Loren Baritz (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), 280-288.

⁴The literature on Canadian (and largely men’s) hockey is too broad to capture with a comprehensive list here. Some of the most notable and scholarly works include Richard Gruneir and David Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada: Sport, Identities and Cultural Politics* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1993); Bruce Kidd and John MacFarlane, *The Death of Hockey* (Toronto: New Press, 1972); and Gerald Friesen, “Hockey, the Prairies, and Canada’s Cultural History,” Inaugural Seagram Lecture, *Working Papers from the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada* (Montreal: McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, 1996). The most recent edition of the most comprehensive hockey compendium reflects the historiographical bias toward the men’s game. Of the 1,974 pages in Dan Diamond *et al.*, *Total Hockey: The Ultimate Hockey Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. (Kingston, N.Y.: Total Sports, 2000), only nine address the women’s game, in whole or in part, and very little of it speaks to the pre-Olympic history of the women’s game.

⁵See Stephen Hardy, “Memory, Performance, and History: The Making of American Ice Hockey at St. Paul’s School, 1860-1915,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 14 (1995): 97-115; and Andrew C. Holman, “Playing in the Neutral Zone: Meanings and Uses of Ice Hockey in the Canada-U.S. Borderlands, 1895-1915,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 34 (2004): 33-57. Standard histories of hockey in the United States before the 1980s mention nothing about women’s hockey. See, for example, S. Kip Farrington, *Skates, Sticks and Men: The Story of Amateur Hockey in the United States* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1972). A more recent survey history of American hockey includes one brief chapter on the women’s game. See Kevin Hubbard and Stan Fischler, *Hockey America: The Ice Game’s History, Growth and Bright Future in the U.S.* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Masters Press, 1997), chap. 15.

⁶See, for example, Barbara Stewart, “In from the Cold” in *Nike is a Goddess: The History of Women in Sports*, ed. Lissa Smith (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1998) 269-289; and in her larger work, *She Shoots. . . . She Scores! A Complete Guide to Girls’ and Women’s Hockey* (Toronto: Doubleday Books, 1998). Separate chapters are dedicated to Canadian and American women in Joanna Avery and Julie Stevens, *Too Many Men on the Ice: Women’s Hockey in North America* (Victoria, B.C.: Polestar, 1997). Even so, the authors do not conduct an explicit “comparative review of the social, legal, and historical factors which . . . have resulted in different forms of development” (p. 14) for the years before 1970. Their treatment of women’s hockey history after that date does provide an effective scholarly comparison—especially in its discussion of the role of the state (*Title IX* legislation in the U.S. and the struggle for public funding in Canada). A presentist tone is notable in Elizabeth Etue and Megan K. Williams, *On the Edge: Women Making Hockey History* (Toronto: Second Story Press, 1996); and in Brian McFarlane, *Proud Past, Bright Future: One Hundred Years of Canadian Women’s Hockey* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1994).

⁷Dorothy Sears Ainsworth, *The History of Physical Education in Colleges for Women* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1930), 76. These women may have been playing ice polo; the campus arena at which they skated was called the Rinkle Polo Club. Ice hockey had been dropped as a sport at Mount Holyoke by 1910. Female students at Vassar College had an ice hockey rink available for their use as early as 1900, but like Mount Holyoke, the sport had been dropped at Vassar by 1910 (pp. 44-45).

⁸As cited in McFarlane, *Proud Past, Bright Future*, 23.

⁹"Hannah, ND Hens Hockey Team 1907-08," photograph and accompanying manuscript commentary, Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota; Avery and Stevens, *Too Many Men on the Ice*, 84.

¹⁰Though the United States did not formally enter the war on the side of the Allies until 1917, the war had important economic and psychological effects on Americans from its beginning in 1914. The war dominated American newspapers daily and debates over commitment to the war wracked virtually every community. See David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

¹¹"[T]he flapper . . . was born perhaps in the experiences some few women had in the war of 1917-18," Stevenson writes, "when all sorts of freedoms and equalities with men occurred during the exigencies of Red Cross and other welfare work among the soldiers. . . . Travel, informality, closeness of contact between the two sexes in situations of danger changed the relations between men and women" (Stevenson, *Babbitts and Bohemians*, 139).

¹²Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 148.

¹³The term belongs to Allen Guttman. See his *Women's Sports*, 146. "The stereotype of the weak and shrinking violet was challenged by a cadre of athletic champions," Dorothy Brown writes (Brown, *Setting a Course*, 42). See pp. 42-47; and also Stephanie L. Twin, "Jock and Jill: Aspects of Women's Sports History in America, 1870-1940" (Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers University, 1978), 219.

¹⁴M. Ann Hall, *The Girl and the Game: A History of Women's Sport in Canada* (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2002), 37. See also McFarlane, *Proud Past, Bright Future*, 11.

¹⁵Kidd and MacFarlane, *The Death of Hockey*, chap. 5; Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 190-196.

¹⁶Avery and Stevens, *Too Many Men on the Ice*, 86. The assertion has been repeated in Hubbard and Fischler, *Hockey America*: "The growth enjoyed in the United States during the 1920s . . . was stunted by the Great Depression and World War II" (p. 272).

¹⁷Lowe, *Looking Good*, 47.

¹⁸"The excesses which have come to characterize men's athletics are beginning to spread to athletics for women," sportswriter John R. Tunis opined in 1929 (John R. Tunis, "The Business of Sport," *Harper's Magazine*, July 1929, p. 212). "All who care for real athletics the country over are behind . . . efforts to keep women out of that great new commercial undertaking of the twentieth century: The Business of Sport" (p. 221). See also Twin, "Jock and Jill," chap. 6; and Gregory Kent Stanley, "Redefining Health: The Rise and Fall of the Sportswoman, A Survey of Health and Fitness for Women, 1860-1940" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1991), esp. chap. 6.

¹⁹Guttman, *Women's Sports*, 138. This "separatist" strategy is very ably analyzed in Susan Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth Century Women's Sport* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), esp. chaps. 1, 3. See also Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, chap. 3.

²⁰Gai Ingham Berlage, "The Development of Intercollegiate Women's Ice Hockey in the United States," *Colby Quarterly* 32 (1996): 62. Some male educators, including Harvard's Dudley Sargent, agreed: "[W]e can readily see that there are certain sports that would be likely to prove injurious to most women if played in the form in which they are played by men. In this group, I should include . . . ice hockey. . . . In all athletic exercises in which women engage, good form rather than great records should be striven for" (Dudley Allen Sargent, "What Athletic Games, If Any, Are Injurious for Women in the Form in which they are Played by Men?" *American Physical Education Review* 11 [1906]: 179-180).

²¹University of Minnesota Yearbook 1918, quoted in Avery and Stevens, *Too Many Men on the Ice*, 85.

²²Avery and Stevens, *Too Many Men on the Ice*, 86.

²³"Hockey Grows in Popularity at Smith; Class Teams in Prospect for Next Year," *New York Times*, 22 February 1931, sec. X, p. 4. The story was accompanied by a photograph of seven of the Smith College hockey players, each wearing skates and holding a hockey stick.

²⁴*Smith Yearbooks, 1931-1940*, Smith College Archives, Neilson Library, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts.

²⁵Howard Shubert, "The Evolution of the Hockey Arena: Building Better Barns, 1860 to 2000" in Diamond *et al.*, *Total Hockey*, 553-559. See also Howard Shubert, "The Changing Experience of Hockey Spectatorship: Architecture, Design, Technology and Economics" in Colin Howell, ed., *Putting It on Ice*, vol. 1, *Hockey and Cultural Identities* (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Gorsebrook Research Institute, 2002), 59-63. In the early years, commercial hockey was conducted by rink owners and managers: "arena capitalists." But after World War I, professional hockey created a new sort of hockey entrepreneur, the team or franchise owner. On the transition between arena capitalism and team franchise capitalism, see Kidd and MacFarlane, *The Death of Hockey*, chap. 6; and Russell Field, "Passive Participation: The Selling of Spectacle and the Construction of Maple Leaf Gardens, 1931," *Sports History Review* 33 (2002): 35-50.

²⁶Built in 1907 by David Humphrey and Dudley S. Humphrey II, local amusement park capitalists, Gene Kiczek notes that the Elysium "was not built for hockey. It had a huge ice surface to accommodate as many recreational skaters as possible and held approximately 2,000 seats" (Gene Kiczek, *High Sticks and Hat Tricks: A History of Hockey in Cleveland* [Euclid, Ohio: Blue Line Publications, 1996], 8). Even so, a local amateur league was assembled in the first year of the rink's existence and by 1910 the city had its first traveling team, the Cleveland Athletic Club, that played games all over eastern Canada and the U.S. and hosted the top amateur teams. The Elysium operated until 1937, when it was replaced by the Cleveland Arena. Professional hockey came to Cleveland only in 1929-1930 in the form of the minor league Cleveland Indians of the International Hockey League. Kiczek, *High Sticks and Hat Tricks*, 8-10, 12-13, 37.

²⁷Shirley Fischler, "St. Nicholas Hockey Club," in Diamond *et al.*, *Total Hockey*, 450. The St. Nick's Rink also hosted regular games among the members of the Intercollegiate Hockey League: Columbia, Dartmouth, Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and (after 1910) Cornell. All of this competition, Stan Fischler has written, "whetted the appetites of New Yorkers for more and better hockey" (Stan Fischler with Tom Sarro, *Metro Ice: A Century of Hockey in Greater New York, Starring Rangers, Islanders, Devils, Americans, Rovers, Raiders, Ducks, St. Nicks* [New York: H&M Productions, 1999], 19).

²⁸Stephen Hardy, "Long Before Orr: Placing Hockey in Boston, 1897-1929," in *The Rock, The Curse, and the Hub: A Random History of Boston Sports*, ed. Randy W. Roberts (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 245-272. During the great interregnum between the old and new Arenas, indoor hockey could be played at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Pavilion, but the facility paled in comparison to the Arenas. The ice pad was much smaller and the capacity for paying customers miniscule. Moreover, the MIT rink could not accommodate the great demand for ice time and pushed many teams back outdoors. The problem was compounded in January of 1919 when mild weather caused a long postponement of high school and college schedules. See the repeated commentary in the *Boston Herald*, January 1919. On the MIT Pavilion's drawbacks, see "By Bob Dunbar," *Boston Herald*, 5 January 1920, p. 9. On the grand opening of the New Arena, see "Skaters and Hockey Players will Come into Their Own Tomorrow," *Boston Globe*, 31 December 1920, p. 6; and "Crowd of 7000 at New Arena Opening," *Boston Globe*, 2 January 1921, p. 14.

²⁹"Hockey Centre Here," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 10 December 1919, p. 14. Paul Christman, "Philadelphia Ice Palace and Auditorium," <<http://www.angelfire.com/sports/mrwrestling/ArenaStory.html>> [3 January 2004].

³⁰Kidd and MacFarlane, *The Death of Hockey*, 106.

³¹"Captain of Girls' Team Shows Speed," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 14 March 1916.

³²"Canadian Girls to Settle Hockey Championship at the Elysium," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 13 March 1916 [FIRST QUOTATION]; "Girls Will Stage Three Games at Elysium Rink This Week," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 12 March 1916 [SECOND QUOTATION]. See also "Canadian Girls Begin Series of Games Tonight," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 15 March 1916. Some histories of women's hockey have asserted and repeated the error that this event constituted an international "tournament" involving American and Canadian teams. The evidence does not support that characterization. See Avery and Stevens, *Too Many Men on the Ice*, 84; and Hubbard and Fischler, *Hockey America*, 272.

³³See "Three Straight for Cornwall Ladies," *Ottawa Citizen*, 20 March 1916, p. 7; and "Hockey," *The Freeholder* (Cornwall), 23 March 1916, p. 4.

³⁴"Wants Hockey Contests," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 29 December 1916, p. 9.

³⁵"Girls in Hockey Battle," *New York Times*, 16 November 1916, p. 12.

³⁶"Candidates for Girls Hockey Team to Meet," *Boston Herald*, 27 December 1916, p. 7; "Girls Ice Hockey Team Organized at Arena," *Boston Herald*, 28 December 1916, p. 5; "Girls Practice Hockey," *Boston Herald*, 30 December 1916, p. 5; "Boston Girls Play New York Tonight," *Boston Globe* (evening), 22 March 1917, p. 7; "B.A.A. Night at Arena Sure to be a Success," *Boston Herald*, 20 March 1917, p. 7.

³⁷McFarlane, *Proud Past, Bright Future*, 45; "Here's Your Chance, Girls!" *Boston Herald*, 6 January 1917, p. 4. On Baker's contemporary effect and legacy, see John Davies, *The Legend of Hobe Baker* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966). It may also be true that many of the first generation of women ice hockey players were practiced field hockey players who had an interest in trying their skills at the ice game. The Back Bay Hockey Club and the Boston Girls' Hockey Club, one Boston sportswriter noted in January of 1921, "made up of girls who played field hockey in their school or college days" ("Passing the Puck," *Boston Globe*, 26 January 1921, p. 12). Moreover, the team uniforms worn by the Philadelphia Girls' Ice Hockey Team in 1920-1921 were field hockey uniforms ("Philadelphia Girls' Ice Hockey Team," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 30 January 1921, p. 21). Perhaps an interest in ice hockey had been latent among these women; the timing of their teams' organization, then, may have been linked to the availability of reliable ice time, which came with the arrival of indoor, artificial ice rinks in the eastern U.S. in the 1910s.

³⁸The Boston women's team was "not likely to be as expert as the New York seven," the *Herald* noted, "which has played several games" ("B.A.A. Night at Arena Sure to be a Success," *Boston Herald*, 20 March 1917, p. 7); "Hockey Season Will Wind Up With a Bang," *Boston Herald*, 21 March 1917; "New York vs Boston Tonight in Women's Hockey Game," *Boston Globe* (morning), 22 March 1917, p. 6; "Boston Girls Defeated," *Boston Herald*, 25 March 1917, p. 5; "The Boston Girls' Hockey Team Will Go to New York," *Boston Globe*, 28 March 1917, p. 7; "Girls' Hockey Teams Will Play Third Game Tomorrow," *Boston Globe* (evening), 30 March 1917, p. 7; "St. Nicholas Girls Win," *New York Times*, 1 April 1917, sec. 1, p. 18.

³⁹"Girls to Play Hockey," *Boston Herald*, 22 March 1917; "B.A.A. Night at Arena Sure to be a Success," *Boston Herald*, 20 March 1917, p. 7.

⁴⁰"St. Nick Girls' Seven Loses," *New York Times*, 23 March 1917, p. 6; John J. Hallahan, "Boston Girls' Hockey Team Triumphs" *Boston Herald*, 23 March 1917, p. 9. One day after the Boston women's team defeated New York, the *Globe* puffed: "Miss Theresa Weld [a prominent fancy skater] and the Boston girls' hockey team have added to the prestige Boston has in sports" ("Sportsman, Live Tips and Topics," *Boston Globe* [morning], 24 March 1917, p. 5).

⁴¹Fischler, "St. Nicholas Hockey Club," 451.

⁴²Though Harvard cancelled all varsity competition during the Great War, it allowed "informal" play to continue among groups of students representing various branches of the college. The Harvard Radio School, for example, iced a team in 1918. The war prompted several prominent local hockey players, such as Raymie Skilton, to enlist in the Navy. Skilton and others were located strategically at the Charlestown Navy Yard and could continue to perform on the ice for the war's duration as members of the Boston Navy Yard hockey club. See, for example, "Bob Dunbar's Sporting Comment," *Boston Herald*, 3 January 1918, p. 13.

⁴³Moreover, the Boston Girls Hockey Club participated in the gala opening, putting on a "tableaux pageant . . . so that the public may see them all dressed up, and not in sweaters and short skirts . . . [a]s they will appear when garbed for hockey" ("Boston to Have Rosy-Cheeked, Sturdy Girls' Hockey Team," *Boston Globe*, 26 December 1920, p. 18).

⁴⁴"Women Plan Ice Hockey League," *New York Times*, 17 December 1920, p. 22; "Women Ice Hockey League," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 17 December 1920, p. 21.

⁴⁵"Girls' Hockey Has the Call Tonight," *Boston Globe* (morning), 27 January 1921, p. 7.

⁴⁶"Boston to Have Rosy-Cheeked, Sturdy Girls' Hockey Team," *Boston Globe*, 26 December 1920, p. 18. O'Donoghue made the proposal in December of 1920 for an Intercity League of women's hockey teams in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh.

⁴⁷"Passing the Puck," *Boston Globe* (evening), 10 January 1921, p. 6.

⁴⁸"Passing the Puck," *Boston Globe* (evening), 25 January 1921, p. 6.

⁴⁹See "Skating Club Organized," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 2 December 1920, p. 16; "Thorns Beat Roses," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 8 December 1920, p. 21; "Fair and Clever Hockeyists Seen on the Ice," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 9 December 1920, p. 16; "Quaker City Regulars Win 8 to 5 Hockey Tilt," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 December 1920, p. 20; Charles Bell, "A Week of Sports," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 20 December 1920, p. 14.

⁵⁰"Philadelphia Ice Hockey League Standing of the Clubs," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 20 December 1920, p. 14; "Phila. Girls Win Ice Hockey Game," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 21 December 1920, p. 16.

⁵¹The exception here is New York. Though the women's game returned in 1920, it did so with comparably less notice than in Boston or Philadelphia. Why this was so is not clear. There were no female sportswriters in these cities who wrote about hockey in the 1920s and 1930s, unlike in Toronto and Montreal, where the *Toronto Star's* Bobbie Rosenfeld, *Macleans Magazine's* Alexandrine Gibbo, and the *Montreal Star's* Myrtle Cook penned occasional columns on women's sport. See Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 110-113; and Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, esp. chap. 3.

⁵²"First Intercity Women's Ice Hockey Match," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 28 December, 1920, p. 12; "Deciding Match Tonight. Phila. All-Star Girl Team Will Meet New York Fair Ones Here," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 31 January 1921, p. 13.

⁵³"GIRLS' ICE HOCKEY TONIGHT," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 17 January 1921, p. 12. See also "THE GAME OF THRILLS: ICE HOCKEY," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 26 January 1921, p. 14. On January 29, 1921, the fee schedule was amended—all seats seventy-five cents—but the new schedule was applied equally to men's and women's games. See "ICE HOCKEY TONIGHT AT ICE PALACE," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 28 January 1921, p. 16.

⁵⁴"New York Girls Win," *New York Times*, 29 December 1920, p. 12. The *Inquirer* declared the game "sensational." See "All-Phila. Hockey Girls Beaten, 2-0," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 29 December 1920, p. 15; "New York Girls Win," *Boston Herald*, 29 December 1920, p. 8.

⁵⁵"Philadelphia Girls Win," *New York Times*, 18 January 1921, p. 12; "Phila. Girls Win Ice Hockey Game," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 18 January 1921, p. 14.

⁵⁶"Intercity Ice Hockey Title for Phila. Girls," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 1 February 1921, p. 14. Canadian hockey followers would have been surprised to read the account of the match in the *Times*. "The victory," it noted, "gives the Philadelphia girls the international championship" (Philadelphia Girls Win," *New York Times*, 1 February 1921, p. 13).

⁵⁷"Girls' Hockey Has the Call Tonight," *Boston Globe* (morning), 27 January 1921, p. 7.

⁵⁸"Women's Hockey Teams Have Hot Struggle," *Boston Globe* (morning), 28 January 1921, p. 9; "Girls' A.A. Trails Back Bays, 2 to 1," *Boston Herald*, 28 January 1921, p. 11.

⁵⁹"Miss Seamans Challenges for the U.S. Skating Championship," *Boston Globe* (evening), 22 March 1917, p. 7.

⁶⁰See "Skaters Prepare for Title Events," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 24 December 1920, p. 19; "Joe Moore Wins Skating Crown," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 13 February 1921, p. 18.

⁶¹<<http://www.putcom/Skate/sk/medals.htm>> [4 January 2004].

⁶²William T. Tilden II, *The Art of Lawn Tennis* (New York: G.H. Doren Co., 1921), chap. 17. See also, for example, "Phyllis Walsh Loses Final to Miss Cassel," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 25 February 1922, p. 13; and "Miss Walsh and Partner Win Doubles' Net Title," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 26 February 1922, p. 19.

⁶³"U.S. Open Singles Results," <<http://www.wtaworld.com>> [4 January 2004].

⁶⁴Jonathan Struthers, "Elsie Muller McLave: World-Class Speedskater," *Hastings Historian* 21 (1992): 10-12. Muller McLave was elected to the U.S. Speedskating Hall of Fame on May 18, 1968. See <<http://www.speedskating.org/hall-of-fame.hof-skaters.html>> [4 January 2004].

⁶⁵“Miss Muller New York Captain,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 27 December 1920, p. 12; Skaters Prepare for Title Events,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 24 December 1920, p. 19.

⁶⁶See “Women’s Hockey Teams Have Hot Struggle,” *Boston Globe* (morning), 28 January 1921, p. 9; “Miss Pansy Scott Wins Medals in Ski Contests,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 30 January 1921, p. 22; “Thorns Beat Roses” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 8 December 1920, p. 21; Etue and Williams, *On the Edge*, chap. 2.

⁶⁷“Hockey Every Night This Week,” *Boston Globe* (evening), 24 January 1921, p. 7. Brown’s role is mentioned similarly in the *Herald* (“Passing the Puck,” *Boston Herald*, 20 January 1921, p. 11).

⁶⁸See “Hockey Notes,” *Boston Herald*, 4 January 1917, p. 4; “Boston Girls Play New York Tonight,” *Boston Globe* (evening), 22 March 1917, p. 7. The male Denesha may have been the same “Henry” Denesha who skated for the New York Athletic Club in 1904 and who was laid unconscious by an aggressive confrontation with the Crescent Athletic Club’s Ernie Dufresne. See Fischler, *Metro Ice*, 16.

⁶⁹“Boston to Have Rosy-Cheeked, Sturdy Girls’ Hockey Team,” *Boston Globe*, 26 December 1920, p. 18; “Passing the Puck,” *Boston Globe* (evening), 20 January 1921, p. 14.

⁷⁰“St. Nicholas Girls Win over Boston Hockey Team,” *Boston Globe* (morning), 1 April 1917, p. 14. Howard was suspended for violent play in 1904, Stan Fischler notes, not by the AAHL, but by the management of the St. Nicholas Arena because it reflected poorly on the rink’s “product.” See Fischler, *Metro Ice*, 16. Oddly, the coach of the Philadelphia women’s teams cannot be determined from the press reports.

⁷¹“In the absence of criticism,” Kidd and MacFarlane write, “sports reporting becomes little more than free advertising. Most hockey writers and broadcasters are simply press agents for the owners of professional hockey” (Kidd and MacFarlane, *The Death of Hockey*, 149). What is interesting to note about this relationship in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York in these years is that it was a “clubby” one even before the arrival of the NHL and the establishment of team public relations departments.

⁷²Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 187. More generally, see Mark Dyreson, “The Emergence of Consumer Culture and the Transformation of Physical Culture: American Sport in the 1920s,” *Journal of Sport History* 16 (1989): 261-281.

⁷³Hardy, “Long before Orr,” 260; Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, chap. 5; Gruneau and Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada*, chap. 4.

⁷⁴Hardy, “Long before Orr,” 261; *Boston Herald*, 5 February 1922, sec. B, p. 6.

⁷⁵“Hockey Every Night This Week,” the *Globe* announced in late January of 1921. “Shamrocks From Canada, B.A.A.-Shoe Trades Second Clash, Harvard vs. Princeton and Girls’ Teams in List of Attractions” (“Hockey Every Night This Week,” *Boston Globe* [evening], 24 January 1921, p. 7).

⁷⁶“Bob Dunbar’s Sporting Comment,” *Boston Herald*, 31 December 1917, p. 7.

⁷⁷Boston Girls Play New York Tonight,” *Boston Globe* (evening), 22 March 1917, p. 7. The game between the Boston Girls’ Hockey club and the Back Bay hockey club on January 27 “should be interesting,” Hallahan predicted, and something of a change from seeing the men perform” (John J. Hallahan, “Fine Points Come Often in Hockey,” *Boston Globe* [evening], 27 January 1921, p. 12). Occasionally, writers took the opportunity to poke fun at the women’s efforts. “The St. Nicholas Girls had their revenge on the Boston girls in an exhibition hockey game here [New York] tonight,” one *Globe* writer asserted. “It was the most humorous burlesque of a hockey match ever seen in the St. Nicholas Rink” (“New York Girls Get Even with Their Boston Sisters,” *Boston Globe* [morning], 25 March 1917, p. 15). Unlike basketball, there were in these years no “girls’ rules” for hockey; women’s teams seem to have played under exactly the same rules as did men, with the exception of the time clock. Women’s teams played, variously, two ten-minute periods, two twelve-minute periods, three ten-minute periods and, on one occasion, two twenty minute halves. See “Boston Girls Defeated,” *Boston Herald*, 25 March 1917, p. 5; “St. Nicholas Girls Win,” *New York Times*, 1 April 1917, sec. 1, p. 18; “New York Girls Win,” *New York Times*, 29 December 1920, p. 12; and John J. Hallahan, “Fine Points Come Often in Hockey,” *Boston Globe* (evening), 27 January 1921, p. 12. Seven-skater hockey was played throughout this period in the eastern United States. Only in 1922, after the women’s game had declined, did six-man hockey become common practice.

⁷⁸"Women's Hockey Teams Have Hot Struggle," *Boston Globe* (morning), 28 January 1921, p. 9.

⁷⁹"Passing the Puck," *Boston Globe*, 28 January 1921, p. 12; "Hockey Team Needs Reputation to Draw," *Boston Globe*, 29 January 1921, p. 7.

⁸⁰By 1923, schoolboy hockey suffered a similar fate in Philadelphia and Boston. "Philadelphia schoolboys have had to abandon ice hockey because the Arena officials there believe matches between the youngsters are not satisfactory as a business proposition" ("By Bob Dunbar," *Boston Herald*, 8 February 1923, p. 16). See also "School Hockey Still without Indoor Ice Surface for Games," *Boston Herald*, 15 January 1923, p. 8.

⁸¹See, for example, "Will Play Hockey in Ellis Memorial Benefit," *Boston Herald*, 5 February 1922, p. 6; "Plans Costume Ball on Skates," *Boston Herald*, 8 February 1922, p. 17; "Boston Junior League Hockey Squad," *Boston Herald*, 12 February 1922, sec. B, p. 4; "Skating Carnival at Arena Raises \$5000 for Ellis Memorial Fund," *Boston Herald*, 15 February 1922, p. 17; "Girls Play Hockey at Radcliffe Carnival," *Boston Herald*, 16 January 1923, p. 15; "'Tis Radcliffe Night at Arena: Fancy Skating and Girls' Hockey for College Fund," *Boston Herald*, 23 January 1923, p. 15; "Junior League Plays Radcliffe: Extensive Program for Ellis Memorial Fund," *Boston Herald*, 27 February 1923, p. 10.

⁸²Nancy Theberge, "Gender and Sport," in *Handbook of Sports Studies*, ed. Jay Coakley and Eric Dunning (London: Sage Publications, 2000), 325. See also Nancy Theberge, *Higher Goals: Women's Ice Hockey and the Politics of Gender* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), esp. the book's Introduction.