

TEAM SPORTS

Carly Adams

University of Western Ontario

Setting the Standard for Women's Ice Hockey: The Preston Rivulettes 1930-1940

Hockey is at the heart of Canadian culture and has been a national past time since the latter part of the nineteenth century. Since its conception, hockey has been considered a masculine endeavor despite evidence that women have been involved from the outset. Even today, sports in Canadian culture are still regarded as a way to masculinize men and teach them the virtues of manhood. Like other facets of women's sport, the history of women's hockey has been marginalized by an overbearing history of men's hockey. Uncovering women's sporting experiences as a forgotten part of our past are long overdue.

By the 1930s, women's hockey in Ontario had a strong foundation. The Preston Rivulettes, a women's team from Southwestern Ontario, through their aggressive style of play and dominating reign over women's hockey in Canada played an important role in facilitating women's interest in this sport. During the 1930s, the Preston Rivulettes dominated women's hockey in Canada claiming six Dominion championships and ten Ontario titles. The Rivulettes held a record of an estimated 350 games played with only three losses, a win/loss record paralleled in the history of Canadian women's sport only by the Edmonton Grads basketball team. Despite the Rivulettes' unprecedented victories in women's hockey and dominating style of play, the experiences of these remarkable female athletes are virtually unknown among scholars and the general public alike.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the experiences and achievements of the women from the Preston Rivulettes ice hockey team within the context of the social experiences of women living in the 1930s, generally, and more specifically the social pressures and expectations facing female athletes at this time. The Preston Rivulettes were a proactive athletic group who redefined the place of women in sport during the 1930s. Unlike other women's teams of this era, the Rivulettes did not attempt to project feminine qualities on the ice. They were skillful, aggressive, physically

empowered women, expressing attributes that were neither expected, nor admired in women in sport during this era. The Rivulettes achieved a formidable public position within a traditionally male domain because their skill and ability demanded it.
