

New Dartmouth women's ice hockey coach Laura Schuler started skating at two and slapping the puck around at three. The Ontario native joined the Toronto Aeros at age 11, went on to star as a collegian at Northeastern, skated for two more seasons at the University of Toronto, played on the Canadian National Team from 1990 through the 1998 Olympics in Nagano, Japan – where she earned a silver medal – and has been coaching pretty much ever since.

Whew. That's a whole lot of games, a boatload of rinks, an awful lot of miles, motels and memories, and more than a few years ago. So it should hardly be a surprise that Schuler's recollections of her four games on the ice against Dartmouth are a little hazy.

But one thing is clear as the bell atop Baker Library.

“SHE'S CONFIDENT HER BACKGROUND ON THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL WILL BENEFIT BOTH HER COACHING AS WELL AS ENTICING TOP TALENT TO COME TO DARTMOUTH.”

“What I always remember about playing Dartmouth is the kids were so cerebral,” she said in her Davis Varsity House office this summer. “They understood the game. They played so well from a team perspective. You knew when you played against Dartmouth you had to bring your best game because they were not going to make a lot of mistakes.”

For the record, Schuler's powerhouse teams were 4-0 against the Big Green, with the most impressive of the wins coming by a 6-3 score in 1992-93, when she captained the Huskies.

After earning ECAC East Coach of the Year honors in 2004 at Division III University of Massachusetts Boston, she headed up the Northeastern program for four seasons but never had the opportunity to coach against Dartmouth.

She is thoroughly enjoying the idea of coaching for the Big Green.

“As soon as Dartmouth opened up I applied,” said Schuler, head coach of the Canadian National team for the 2015-16 season and most recently an assistant at Minnesota-Duluth. “I am just really excited about coming on board. This school sells

itself. The academics here are second to none and the environment is absolutely beautiful.

“The program has had a strong history and I look forward to building off the foundation of success that has already been laid out.”

Schuler knows a lot about hockey success, helping Northeastern to a pair of Beanpot championships and three 20-win seasons in her four years skating for the Huskies. She arrived in Boston after playing six sports in high school and helped her Scarborough United soccer team with three Canadian national championships, but hockey and the dream of one day being an Olympian always won the day.

“I remember watching the Canadian team enter the stadium for the opening ceremony when I was really little and thinking I wanted to be a part of that one

day,” she said. “My passion was hockey, but there was no (women's Olympic) hockey at the time.

“My mom was a swim coach so I thought I would invest my time in that but I just couldn't stay away from hockey. Every single chance all I wanted to do was play hockey. Road hockey or whatever type of hockey I could. Hand hockey. Ball hockey. Street hockey. It was just hockey, hockey, hockey.”

The youngest of four siblings and the only girl, Schuler honed her skills playing with her brothers.

“When I was growing up girls weren't playing sports the way they do now,” she said. “My brothers were really good support. Any time I heard someone say, ‘Hey, she can't play,’ my brothers were always there to say if I couldn't play they weren't playing.”

From middle brother David, who played in the Metro Toronto Hockey League at the AAA level, she learned the finesse that would help her lead Northeastern in scoring in her first season. From oldest brother Mark, who played Junior B, she learned how to be a grinder.

And from Scarborough friend Vicky Sunohara, a three-time Olympian who

has been referred to as the Wayne Gretzky of the women's game, she learned about Northeastern.

“She was my best friend at the time and went there, so I wanted to follow her,” Schuler said. “I really looked up to her. She was just a year older than me, but was such an incredible athlete and such a great person.”

After graduating cum laude from Northeastern with a degree in cardiovascular health and exercise, doing graduate work in exercise science at Toronto and playing nine years with the Canadian National Team, Schuler was certain what she wanted to do next.

“I think I always wanted to coach,” she said. “Even as a player I was someone who would go to the board and wanted to help get my teammates on the same page. I was always the one drawing things out. I loved it. There was a passion for it but there wasn't really a viable option to do coaching as a full-time job when I graduated.

“I was very fortunate that I played right up until I was 31 with the national program, and then it seemed as if all of a sudden coaching positions started to open up. So when I retired I applied right away for jobs in the States and ended up at UMass Boston.”

From her first Division III job she moved on to Northeastern and in 1998 cut her teeth as a coach for all of Hockey Canada's Development camps. From there it was assistant coach for the Canadian National Women's team, head coach of the U22 Canadian National Team and leading the U18 National Team.

In August of 2015 she was tapped as the Canadian National Women's Team coach. She's confident her background on the national and international level will benefit both her coaching as well as enticing top talent to come to Dartmouth.

“Having been a part of the Canadian National program for the past eight years I have learned a tremendous amount,” she said. “When you get to be a part of that program you get to work with so many different and amazing coaches from all over the NCAA's, from all over the CIS (Canadian Interuniversity Sport), and from the NHL. It's a tremendous opportunity to continue to learn and bring stuff back as a coach.



for more on women's ice hockey visit
www.dartmouthsports.com

(RE) BUILDING A POWER HOUSE

CORCH PROFILE



LAURA SCHULER
WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY