

Played Minnesota Caribou Colleen Charles: The Rise and Fall of a Hockey Legend

Colleen Charles, a hockey player from Minnesota, made history as one of the first women to play in a men's professional hockey league. Her journey to the rink was filled with challenges and triumphs, making her a true inspiration to aspiring athletes. This article explores the life, career, and legacy of Colleen Charles, the Minnesota Caribou.

Early Life and Hockey Beginnings

Colleen Charles was born on April 9, 1958, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Growing up in a hockey-loving family, she developed a passion for the sport at a young age. However, opportunities for girls to play hockey were limited, so she often resorted to playing with her brothers and neighborhood boys.



Played (Minnesota Caribou Book 2) by Colleen Charles

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Despite the lack of organized girls' hockey programs, Charles' talent and determination were evident. She honed her skills on frozen ponds and rinks, impressing coaches and opponents alike. In high school, she became known as a gifted skater with exceptional stick-handling abilities.

Joining the Men's League

After graduating from high school, Charles faced a dilemma. There were no women's hockey leagues at the time, and her options for continuing her hockey career seemed limited. Undeterred, she decided to try out for the Duluth Hornets, a men's semi-professional hockey team.

Charles' tryout was both daunting and transformative. She faced skepticism and resistance from some players and coaches who questioned her ability to compete with men. However, her determination and talent prevailed. She impressed the Hornets' coaching staff with her speed, agility, and hockey IQ.

Making History with the Hornets

In 1974, Colleen Charles became the first woman to play in a men's professional hockey league. She made her debut for the Duluth Hornets in the Northern Minnesota Hockey League (NMHL). Charles' arrival in the league sent shockwaves through the hockey world.

Charles proved to be a valuable asset to the Hornets. Her quick reflexes, keen sense of the game, and ability to set up plays made her a favorite among teammates and coaches. She quickly gained respect and admiration from her opponents and the hockey community.

International Recognition and the NHL

Charles' success with the Hornets caught the attention of the international hockey community. She represented the United States at the first Women's World Hockey Championship in 1977, helping the team win a silver medal.

In 1979, Charles made another historic achievement when she became the first woman to be drafted by a National Hockey League (NHL) team, the Calgary Flames. Although she never played in an NHL game, her draft selection was a symbolic milestone for women's hockey.

Obstacles and Controversies

Colleen Charles' path to success was not without its obstacles. As a pioneer in women's hockey, she faced skepticism, discrimination, and backlash from some quarters of the hockey world.

There were times when Charles was met with hostility and harassment from opposing players and fans. She also struggled with the lack of equal opportunities and recognition for women in hockey.

Retirement and Legacy

Colleen Charles retired from professional hockey in 1983. She finished her career with the Minnesota North Stars, having played in both the NMHL and the International Hockey League (IHL).

Charles left an indelible mark on the sport of hockey. Her groundbreaking achievements helped pave the way for women's hockey by challenging traditional barriers and stereotypes.

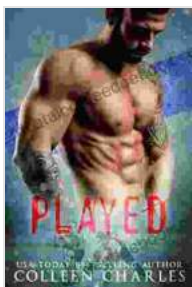
Honors and Recognition

Colleen Charles has been honored for her contributions to hockey. She was inducted into the United States Hockey Hall of Fame in 2000 and the Minnesota Hockey Hall of Fame in 2001.

In 2018, the University of Minnesota established the Colleen Charles Scholarship for female hockey players.

Colleen Charles, the Minnesota Caribou, was a pioneer who broke down barriers for women in hockey. Her determination, talent, and unwavering spirit inspired countless athletes and paved the way for future generations.

Charles' legacy extends beyond her on-ice accomplishments. She became a role model for young girls and women, proving that they could achieve their dreams in any sport, no matter their gender.

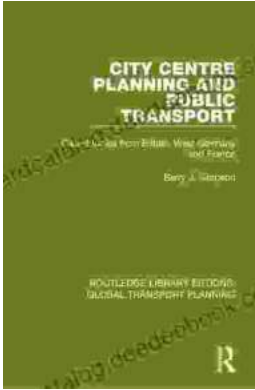


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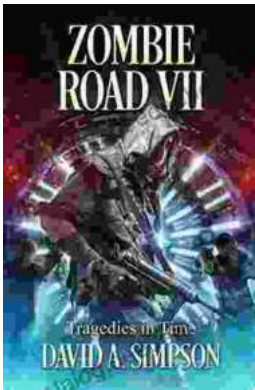
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