

## 1970s Teams Knew How To Play

By Trudy Kelly Forsythe

**SUSSEX** – This era of the Sussex Sonics is not the first to represent the high school at the female level of hockey. That honour goes to a group of girls who played with the team in the 1970s.

Cindy (DeVine) Coates and her older sister Sally (DeVine) Colpitts both played on the original team. Colpitts said their interest in the sport developed from watching hockey with their father, both on television and at the rink.

“I played because I could,” said Colpitts. “There wasn’t a whole lot to do in the winter.”

“It was just something we always did,” said Coates. “We played with the guys out on the pond

So when Larry Donovan of Sussex organized a recreational Sunday morning league at the old Kings County Stadium, they jumped on board.

Donovan got the recreational league together after his second daughter Margaret came home from school one day in 1969 and said she wished she was a boy.

“When we asked her why, she said so I could play hockey,” recalled

Donovan. “So I said, ‘If you get enough together I’ll coach you.’

“She came home the next day and had enough for two teams.”

Donovan coached one team and Len Robertson of Sussex coached the other.

Several of the girls on those two teams ended up in high school at the same time and in 1972 a female high school hockey team was formed.

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### **The first year, most of the girls used figure skates and skated in their jeans**

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“The first year the only equipment the girls had were helmets, a pair of gloves and their sticks,” said Coates. “Most of the girls used figure skates and skated in their jeans. In the second year, they went to full uniforms.”

Joan (McCullum) Miller started playing defence for the team that second year when she was in Grade 9. Hockey was supposed to be in her blood.

“It was one of those things,” said Miller. “All of my brothers played

hockey so it was assumed I’d be a good hockey player. My four brothers played on the high school boys team.”

While she said she wasn’t quite as natural at hockey as was expected, she had a lot of fun playing on the team. She even played a second season in 1974.

“The team was good and supportive,” said Miller. “We had a lot of good times. It was a good experience.”

The biggest challenge at first was finding other female teams to play.

“There were not a lot of schools that had girls’ hockey teams then,” said Coates.

Since many of the players played in the Sunday morning recreational games, the Sussex Composite High School team knew what they were doing. Like the team of today, they were provincial champions the first two seasons they played.

“It was fun,” said Coates. “We didn’t take it too seriously. We had a great time.”

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