

## || FITNESS

# A new breed of hockey moms

These women decided to suit up and play the sport themselves

BY JANE DONAHUE  
For Sun-Times Media

After a decade of watching her kids have all the fun, hockey mom Camy Gould went from the stands to the ice when she decided to play women's hockey.

"I was surprised at how much I enjoyed it," says the Long Grove resident. "I didn't play organized sports growing up and was never really a competitive person, but when you put this gear on and you are out skating, you get competitive. My kids thought it was great."

The 54-year-old said it all started in 2006 when a group of hockey moms were watching their kids practice at Glacier Ice Arena in Vernon Hills. Someone suggested they should do something while they waited. Like what? Play hockey.

They borrowed equipment, secured ice time and convinced a few coaches to volunteer. A women's hockey team was born.

"We had about 30 women show up that first night and it was awesome," says Gould, whose two sons and daughter all play hockey. "Most of us had been around skating and watched hockey, but we were all true beginners. None of us could stop so we would go crashing into the boards. We were laughing so hard, it was a blast."

They continued as an adult instructional hockey program, and played games once a year in a local Puck Cancer charity tournament. In 2008, they got serious, buying uniforms, finding teams to play, and coming up with an official name — Ms. Conduct Chicago.

The all-female hockey organization has more than

## YOU KNOW YOU WANT TO TRY IT!

Just starting out? Equipment that fits properly is a must-have for hockey players of all ages. Along with skates, a helmet and stick, you'll need shoulder pads, elbow pads, shin guards, pants, socks, gloves and a mouth guard. Here are a few places to help you suit up:

- » Gunzo's Chicago, 1501 W. Madison, (312) 432-9433, gunzos.com
- » Xtreme Hockey and Lacrosse (in Glacier Ice Arena), 670 Lakeview Parkway, Vernon Hills, (847) 247-9095, xtremehockeyandlacrosse.com
- » Play it Again Sports Chicago, 3939 N. Ashland, (773) 305-9900, playitagainsportswrigleyville.com

Learn more about Ms. Conduct at [msconduct.com](http://msconduct.com).

50 women players ranging in age from 23 to 55, and three different teams who compete in the Women's Central Hockey League.

"The best part about working with Ms. Conduct, is seeing our players grow in their skill-set," says coach Sean Sodko, 39, who also serves as the program's manager. "Seeing individuals with little to no skating experience at the start of the season learn the sport — and play organized hockey — is very fulfilling. I also enjoy helping growing the game of hockey for women."

Leagues like Chicago Outdoor Hockey League ([www.chicagooutdoorhockeyleague.com](http://www.chicagooutdoorhockeyleague.com)) offer women an opportunity to play coed hockey. Sodko, of Buffalo



Camy Gould opted to get out of the stands and onto the ice when she started playing hockey in 2006. | JANE DONAHUE/FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA

Grove, says Ms. Conduct fills a gap that exists for women who don't want to play with the guys.

"Women need a place to play hockey and there are limited opportunities and leagues (for) women only," says Sodko, whose wife, Mel, is a goalie for Ms. Conduct. "I'm not saying women can't play with the men — they can — but teams like Ms. Conduct give women the opportunity to be part of a team in all aspects, on and off the ice. Women can experience the locker room camaraderie which is a big part of the game."

Veteran player Peggy Ford agrees.

"I do independent sports, I do other things, but I love the camaraderie hockey provides," says the 52-year-old Vernon Hills mom. "Everybody is together, before and after the game. I have gained amazing friends through this."

## VIDEO ONLINE

Watch Camy Gould's on-ice moves at [suntimes.com](http://suntimes.com).

Gould shared the sentiment, and cites hockey as a conduit for meeting women from all over and of all ages. Along with gaining lasting friendships, it's helped her become a "better hockey parent."

"The kids make it look easy and that's part of the problem," Gould says. "After playing, you appreciate how truly difficult it is. It should be a requirement for all parents to strap on some skates at the beginning of the season."

While Gould's oldest son no longer plays, her 19-year-old daughter plays hockey at Miami University and her 13-year-old son plays for a Vernon Hills team. Sometimes they have advice for their mom as well.

"I tell her [to use a] full stride, keep your stick on the ice and look up when you are skating with the puck," says Justin, an eighth-grader who plays for the Ice Dogs. "I think it's pretty cool that she plays. It's not every day you find out someone's mom plays hockey."