

An Open Letter to the Newport Whalers:

August 29th was indeed “**a GREAT day for hockey**”. Especially Women’s hockey. The **new Professional Women's Hockey League (PWHL)** was officially revealed Tuesday with six inaugural franchises and a 24-game regular season that begins in January 2024. This is a monumental day for the future of hockey for all female athletes. What this means exact is yet to be determined, but what I believe it represents is that for every young boy who grew up with the dream of playing professional hockey, that dream now exists for our female players. It means the potential for female hockey superstars and female hockey role models for girls to idolize and look up to. It means the potential for more girls to have an interest and play the most incredibly rewarding sport that exists, hockey.

For anyone involved in the sport of hockey, they understand that it is somehow special and different from all other sports. Why? For one, it takes a special type of person to gravitate to it and take on this uniquely challenging sport. Before a player can even enjoy the simple pleasure of scoring a goal, breaking up a rush or making a save, they must first take on the long and arduous task of learning how to skate. This process takes the average player 2 to 3 years before they are proficient enough to start playing the sport. This alone is a monumental accomplishment for person and a wonderful life lesson in delayed gratification and that hard work does pay off. Another incredible aspect of hockey is the culture. It is arguably the ultimate “team sport” where having the best player in the league does not automatically translate into wins or championships. Each shift takes playing together in 5-player units (6 including the goalie) to have success. It is often said that the difference between the team who raises the Stanley Cup and the one that doesn’t isn’t talent or skill, it’s team chemistry. The culture of hockey is also deeply rooted in a value system where things like work-ethic, respect, dedication, leadership, accountability, perseverance, and integrity are innate. These are traits that seemingly anyone will agree are important if you plan to be successful in life, both professionally and personally. I have found hockey to be the greatest conduit for teaching these life skills. I think it is safe to assume that people who grew up playing the sport of hockey or even those who are just die-hard hockey fans, are just as in love with the culture of hockey, as they are with the intensity, speed, physicality, fluidity, and beauty of the sport itself. For me, hockey has always felt like an amazing friend that you absolutely love and would do anything for and when you do, it always finds a way to give you back more than what you put in.

Something that has always bothered me is why, even when all these great aspects of the sport exist, do even the lowest salaries of the average baseball, football or basketball player far exceed that of the top NHL hockey players? As much as I hate to admit it, those sports have more fans. They sell more tickets, more merchandise, and they have more TV viewers. At the end of the day, the brutal reality is that the world of professional sports is just another business. While a lot of the responsibility of whether the Professional Women’s Hockey League will thrive resides with the leadership group and the execution of a sound business model and smart commercial strategy, it will not be enough to “hope” it succeeds. For it to be a success, we will need to help it survive and thrive. Simply put, that means being a fan. That means going to games, it means watching the games on TV, buying merchandise or the jersey of your favorite team or player and just as important in today’s world is engaging in social media with the league, it’s sponsors and the players.

One of the things I am very proud of being a part of with the Newport Whalers organization is that we have a very robust enrollment of female athletes who have chosen to play the sport of hockey and experience all the great aspects it has to offer a person. In fact, some of the best players to come

through our organization are females. It is my sincere hope this league has success and grows into a viable self-sustaining entity. Having a professional women's league will not only attract more girls to play our amazing sport with all of its great life lessons, memories and transferable skills, but it will also allow any female player to share in the dream of "playing in the pros someday". While that dream will only come true for a very small select few, and I would argue that in this instance the pursuit of the dream is more meaningful and impactful than the dream itself, it is also important for the dream to have a chance of becoming a reality. So, when the team names are announced, the logos are released, the Instagram and Twitter pages are made, the draft takes place, the schedule is set, my sincere hope is that you will join me in being a fan of the PWHL.

[PWHL — Professional Women's Hockey League \(thepwhl.com\)](http://thepwhl.com)

Go Whalers & Narwhals!

-Coach Chuck