

Bates Bobcast Episode 185: Catching up with Bates coaching pioneer Sherry Deschaine

Sherry Deschaine, at the time Sherry Yakawonis, was hired to teach physical education at Bates in 1968 straight out of the University of Maine at Presque Isle and immediately became the school's first women's basketball coach.

Thirty years later, she retired after having had a hand in almost every women's sport on campus. She served as the head field hockey coach for 26 years and as the head softball coach for 21. Deschaine also at various times coached women's lacrosse and volleyball, and she assisted with the track and field team. She even coached varsity badminton and bowling during her time at Bates.

Yes, Sherry Deschaine did it all, and today, she joins the Bobcast.

Interview Highlights

- “We were already changing before Title IX. It was more of catching up with the amenities. The travel mode and the hotel accommodation and the food that we would get and the per diems. Those were the things that we were catching up with. The other thing was, I remember, because we were housed over in Muskie Archives building, the campus admin gym. That's where the physical education program went out of for women. And then the girls would sneak across the cage and say, hey, what's going on in here? And found out the men were doing all their workouts in the Cage and in the gym. So we quickly tried to move into the facility so we could share the gymnasiums and have better facilities, and those were the kind of things. We had the program there, we were just accommodating for the girls. As far as uniforms, we would share uniforms. Like volleyball players, and then the basketball players would wear the same uniforms. And catching up with things like that was the biggest thing.”
- “The toughest thing was sitting in a staff meeting and trying to impress upon the other coaches that we needed some things. And knowing very well that the money pie was only so big and if you add another sport, then that means the old sports were going to get less money, they would get less things. So that was the difficult part. They didn't mind adding the program, they just didn't want to give anything up.”
- “I was a farm girl. So that'll tell it all. I actually played softball in the fields with my neighbors and my friends. High school, again, we were in that play day era. I was basketball, my brother was a basketball player. We both were captains two years apart. And then play days. Matter of fact, I broke both arms doing the long jump. Won first place and was going to run the hurdles and they decided I better go to the hospital and have my arms set. So I was competitive, but I enjoyed it. I just enjoyed sports. To me it's made me feel good about myself when I could do something or accomplish something. During high school, when I was

looking to go somewhere else and do something for a career, my coaches actually really thought that I would do a good job in physical education or coaching. So they mentored me.”

- “When you say you do three sports, well, in a way that was a good thing because it just kept me alive. Every time I turned around there was something new to learn, something to do. The years went by fast. And I look back through a lot of the athletes that I had and I think my gosh. Sometimes I can dream about these athletes and I think gosh, I can't believe I can remember so many people. And they're not great athletes, a lot of them. A lot of them are just unique people. So I think the kids themselves, kids. I just enjoyed working with them. Early on I was very close to their age so it wasn't hard for me to be their friend as they got out of school.”
- “The players that remember me. They'll come back from whatever, if I go to an alumni game or something like that, the players that you don't think that you had any impact on or didn't even know if they'd even remember you will come back. And it's like, wow, didn't know that. So it's a good feeling. I'm going to call them the little guys, not the big superstars, but the little ones that say, 'Gosh, if I didn't have sports, if I didn't play field hockey or whatever at Bates, I don't think I would have enjoyed my four years there anywhere near as much as I did.'”

Interview Transcript

Aaron: Graduating college, U-Maine Presque Isle, what was your first step in your career into coaching? How did you decide you wanted to become a coach out of college?

Sherry: Well, I really didn't right out of college because in those days coaching really wasn't a career path. I was really thinking just in education, physical education and Bates happened to open up and it led me to that. So it was really teaching and education rather than coaching. Then coaching was a byproduct of it, because they only really had intramurals. And even at Bates, I think they might have competed with a couple neighbor schools, but not anything formal. I really wasn't looking for coaching.

Aaron: How many years out of college were you when you came to work at Bates?

Sherry: I was right out.

Aaron: Right out of college.

Sherry: Right out of college. I graduated in '68 and went to Bates in '68.

Aaron: Pre Title IX, what were women's sports like there? Right before Title IX Bates had a few sports, like field hockey for women. What was that like?

Sherry: When I started coaching it, I was very much tied to the Maine Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women, which is the Maine collegiate association. And matter of fact, I was one of the presidents as a student in college, and then went to Bates and got the organization

going. And we introduced Maine championships and competitions and stuff. So we were trying to play all the schools in Maine that had a program, but nothing formal at that point. And then once had the schedule, then we developed the state championship. I went from play days to, very quickly, to state championships.

Aaron: I was talking with Nancy Ingersoll Fiddler, and she mentioned that she came to you her first year, saying, hey, can we start a women's lacrosse club. What was that like in terms of... because you told her, well, I don't have any background in women's lacrosse, but let's get this going. What was that conversation like in terms of starting women's lacrosse?

Sherry: That was funny because she went from field hockey and cross country skiing and became an Olympian and didn't play field hockey anymore. And then she wanted to play lacrosse. And we were game for anything then. I said, sure, we'll get a few players that know how to play the game and I can organize it and pick up the skills and use my coaching skills. That's what we did. They were excited. We didn't have a spring sport then. That was an open season for women to plug something in because they were without any competition at all in the spring. So that was an easy fit. With me, it was difficult. I was like, I'll coach this!

Aaron: Because you were being asked to coach a lot of different things. I know you coached women's basketball there early on.

Sherry: That was my only true sport that coming from high school, that was my sport in high school. And then we just did intramurals and college level. Everything else was brand new to me. Well, track and field, I did that in high school too, but I didn't take that on until later at Bates.

Aaron: So when Title IX, 1972, passed, how quickly did women's sports change, the nature of it at Bates, or was it a slow process?

Sherry: It was pretty quick. We were already changing before Title IX. It was more of catching up with the amenities. The travel mode and the hotel accommodation and the food that we would get and the per diems. Those were the things that we were catching up with. The other thing was, I remember, because we were housed over in Muskie Archives building, the campus admin gym. That's where the physical education program went out of for women. And then the girls would sneak across the cage and say, hey, what's going on in here? And found out the men were doing all their workouts in the Cage and in the gym. So we quickly tried to move into the facility so we could share the gymnasiums and have better facilities, and those were the kind of things. We had the program there, we were just accommodating for the girls. As far as uniforms, we would share uniforms. Like volleyball players, and then the basketball players would wear the same uniforms. And catching up with things like that was the biggest thing.

Aaron: Because there was one separate department almost for men's sports and women's sports. Those merged right around Title IX or before that?

Sherry: Just before that. I remember... I'm trying to think when we moved over to the other building. When that building got taken over by Muskie Archives, we were full out in Title IX. If you found that date you'd probably find when we were really grouping together.

Aaron: And for you, you mentioned, what, basketball was the only sport you really had a background in, is that fair, in terms of coaching?

Sherry: Yeah. Basketball was the only kind of formal training, and then everything else was intramural. And I was coached, I was taught how to teach volleyball and badminton and bowling and all those other sports that we were just teachers. We had to go out and be prepared to teach them.

Aaron: I saw that there was a varsity badminton team.

Sherry: Oh yeah.

Aaron: We don't have that now, I don't think. What was that like though?

Sherry: It's really comical, because people chuckle at it, but it was probably the most competitive sport that I'd ever been involved in. I think I coached five years and I might have had one loss. It's a good sport. Matter of fact, I kept playing badminton after I was done coaching. I love the sport. And we would go around. And we sent one girl to the nationals and she ended up second place in the nationals in badminton. So that was a good sport. Not well known, but it was a good sport.

Aaron: Who was that? Who was the girl who went to nationals?

Sherry: Carolyn Sauer. S-A-U-E-R, I think. I think she was from Illinois.

Aaron: Who were some memorable women's sports athletes in the early days of your career? Maybe her and a few others who really stand out that you coached early on?

Sherry: One of the early ones was Priscilla Wilde. I think she was in '77, something around there. And she was in Who's Who Hall of Fame. And she was a field hockey and a softball player. I think she scored like 120 some goals in field hockey. Just a natural athlete and she's passed away now as I understand.

Aaron: What made her so good at field hockey?

Sherry: She just naturally... Her skills were natural as far as goal scoring in field hockey. She'd work quietly. You'd go up on the field and there she is up there working with somebody who's giving her cross passes and then doing all those extra little things that... but she enjoyed it. It was just a break from her studies. And she was a good basketball player. She just had a natural gift for you could show her one way of doing something and she would just pick it right up and fall right in with it if she didn't have it already. And she was a joy to work with because she had a good attitude.

Sherry: I remember Sandy Korpela who played with her would say, 'oh, I never get the ball. I'm on the wing out here in field hockey and she's always scoring. And I'd like to score' is what Sandy said. And I said, 'well, when you play wing, very often if you've done giving the pass across, then you're cutting for the goal and taking the rebound.' Well, she wouldn't cut in. But the next game anyway, long story short, she'd say, 'Priscilla be sure to feed me. Give me the ball so I can score.' So the very next game

she went out, she passed the ball across to Priscilla and Priscilla immediately passed it back to her. Like a diagonal back pass. She looked like, oh, now what do I do, and she passed it back to Priscilla again. Was like, oh, I guess I don't want to do this. And so it was just funny because Priscilla was not a ball hogger or anything like that. She just was naturally in the right place at the right time. And some of the girls just said, oh my God, how does she get so many goals? I think she just put her stick down there and landed it.

Aaron: After you helped start the lacrosse program with Nancy there, you handed the reigns over to Patricia Smith. Tell us about her, one of your fellow coaches during that time, I guess.

Sherry: I'm trying to think, lacrosse, I think I would have coached it one season. And Pat Smith was hired the very next year. And so she came in. And I knew Pat Smith. I had known her from before, and she was just into lacrosse. She was a big lacrosse player. She was a Northeast lacrosse player and all that. And I said, hey, I said, 'I'm sure you can do a good job with this team.' And Pat didn't have another season to coach and we still were coaching three seasons. That was the one thing about Title IX that hadn't caught up yet. That we were all expected to coach every season. So Pat wanted to coach it and it was an agreeable thing. So that was an easy handover to her. I knew the girls were in good hands and she did a good job with them.

Aaron: It seemed like for you your sweet spot ended up being field hockey and then eventually softball, right, there in the spring?

Sherry: Yeah.

Aaron: What made those two sports what you ended up doing long term at Bates?

Sherry: It's hard to tell because I really loved volleyball. But because volleyball dropped into the field hockey season, so that was a conflict of interest. And so softball was a fairly new sport in, and Gloria Crosby, who came into Bates, talked me into being her assistant in softball. And I had played it a little bit at high school, but not a lot. And so I said, okay, I'm going to have to need your help and everything. She was from Iowa and she said, hey, she says, it's all yours. I said, oh, gee, thanks a lot. She just dropped it in on me there and it gave me that third sport again. I had to pick up another sport. So that third sport to pass over. It's a natural too, because a lot of, at least in New England, a lot of field hockey players do play softball, except for in the prep schools. It's usually field hockey and lacrosse. The public schools, it's mostly field hockey and softball. So a lot of the players were the same players.

Aaron: It sounds almost overwhelming to have so many sports that you're responsible for, some overlapping. So how did you make those adjustments season to season?

Sherry: Well, you just never stop. You just drop from one thing to another, and that's why I think it started to get overwhelming later on when recruitment really came in. And that's a whole season in itself, and doing all that and trying to picking up all that. But you just do it. It's just one thing after another, and like I say, you just do them. You don't even know what to do with yourself if you have a little time off. And then I started doing intramurals, which gave me a little break, but still, they had put me into track and field with Carolyn Court. I started that program too with Web Harrison as his

assistant.

Aaron: Web was the first women's track head coach. They brought in Carolyn Court shortly after that. Is that how that went?

Sherry: Yes.

Aaron: What was that experience like, working with the track athletes?

Sherry: Working with the athletes, it was a new experience because it's an individual sport and it was just a new mindset. In team sports you've got an opponent over there that you're competing against and the strategies and the plays, and now you're working with an athlete who's competing against themselves and their records and their efforts and all that. It's just everything was make everything out individually. I remember doing time sheets for Carolyn Court, lap times and all this stuff. There was no, what I call the... there certainly is a strategy in track and field, but not like in a team sport where you've got to find out who you're going against and they do this and you do that. Not in track. You do what you do and you do it according to your best. So that was what was different about track. I loved it though. I really do love track and field. It was just it was so exhilarating for me to see somebody...

Sherry: I remember Andrea Kincannon. My God, her jumping abilities. She was raw athlete, but she just had a lot of... To do a long jump, you'd just wait for her to just explode in some of the stuff. It was really fun. I respected them a lot because it just seemed like in team sports you could get through the game, you take your breaks here and there, but in track you don't just get through it. You know the time you step on the track you're there, you're in full mode.

Aaron: Certainly. We could go all over the place with this interview because you did cover so many sports. Just going back to softball real quick, Colleen O'Brien is the only All-American in Bates' softball history and you coached her. What made her so great?

Sherry: She, again, was one of those, just a natural. She was an infielder. She had good experience, good high school experience and everything else. And just, in my opinion, she wasn't my greatest softball athlete, but she was the most recognized one in all around skills. She stood out. I could put her with probably at least four other players who didn't get All-American experience or recognition, but she happened to be... And she was well known in soccer too.

Aaron: And you also, in softball a few years earlier before her, had some great volleyball players who were also great softball players. Rachel Clayton, Michele Feroah, what do you remember about them?

Sherry: Rachel was a beast. Oh my gosh. She was a good hitter. I think she has records. I don't know if she still has them or not, for hitting home runs and triples and slugging average. She always wanted to play... She had knee injuries. She always wanted to play shortstop and she played it but she just was a power player. I don't know, she just was like, people just said, oh God, here she comes. They'd move the outfield as far as they could to the fence or left or right and they just said, okay. And she would do the old, who is the baseball player that would point to the outfield?

Aaron: Rachel would call her shot?

Sherry: She'd call her shot, oh yes. She'd point and the girls would go, oh God, here we go. And then, of course, Michele Ferroah, I think she's probably got to be the best pitcher I ever had. Just really good. I trained a lot of the other pitchers, but she had good experience, good training and she just had good speed and good stuff. So I remember her really well.

Aaron: Emily Gabler holds a few pitching records at Bates still as well.

Sherry: Emily does. She's one of my... She never had picked up a ball before she even came to Bates. So we said, Emily, you want to pitch? She goes, sure. So she did and she might put two balls in the strike zone and maybe one into the batter. It was like, we'll move away from the plate for this girl. But she did. She was a better hitter than she was a pitcher, but when she was on she was on, she was somebody to be reckoned with.

Aaron: You touched on recruiting earlier. When did recruiting become a thing? Was it a different timeline for different sports, or did you notice recruiting becoming important in all the sports on a similar timeline?

Sherry: Didn't really come in until later, equally all the sports. But I would say I felt the pressure of recruiting to go into the softball program more than I did field hockey. Because field hockey almost had its own reputation and brought the players to me. So even though I recruited hard for it, it wasn't as difficult to get the players there. And I can't remember, Aaron, what year we're talking here. I got done in, what, '97 actually, so it was probably maybe 10, 15 years, maybe 10 years before that that it was really getting to be you got to recruit.

Aaron: And how did you adjust to that in terms of... Because before, as you mentioned, people just came to you, but now you had to go get them. What was that like for you, at least from a coaching perspective?

Sherry: Well, I still tried to do... I'm still coaching three sports and doing intramurals, so I still had to rely a lot of them having the word about our program and coming to me and then doing more of a follow up type thing and getting the athletes involved with the recruits coming in and entertaining them and then doing the mailings and stuff. It was still I relied a lot still on other parts helping me, the kids and the program itself helping me get it out. I wasn't savvy on the computer and I still am not, so that was a drawback. Had to learn that too. It was difficult for me because it just seems like I spent so much time on recruiting and it was either they were going to come or they weren't. You knew it probably right from the get-go. You just take your best shot and say, I think I got a chance at this person, but I don't at this person.

Aaron: Going back in time a little further, I was talking to Nancy, she mentioned that from her perspective, Bob Hatch also had a lot to do with helping get things going after Title IX in terms of... What was your relationship like, I guess, with Bob as the AD in terms of getting women's sports a more prominent place at Bates?

Sherry: I think he was. Because Evelyn Dillon, who was the women's athletic director, she transitioned over and was really under Bob Hatch, but was a... She was a tough women's advocate. Evelyn really was. And I think she kept very close to Bob Hatch and just pointed out the needs and the things that the program was going to have to have to really jump ahead. And we were already doing things without stuff. So it was like, wonder what we can do if we just give them a little thing? But I thought Bob was a good advocate. I thought he really... He'd come to our games, he was always sending the captains letters or me a letter or something in support of whatever happened and all that. It was tough during Title IX, the toughest thing was sitting in a staff meeting and trying to impress upon the other coaches that we needed some things. We needed, and knowing very well that the money pie was only so big and if you add another sport, then that means the old sports were going to get less money, they would get less things. So that was the difficult part. They didn't mind adding the program, they just didn't want to give anything up.

Aaron: Evelyn Dillon, so that's a name I have not heard before, but it looks like there's an award named after her from the Bates College Key, so obviously a huge presence for Bates. You mentioned she was a big time advocate. Tell me more about her and what she was like to work with.

Sherry: Oh boy. I remember when she hired me. She coached the archery team and she wanted... That was the only thing she didn't get me to do was coach that one. She reminded me a lot of my own athletic director at Presque Isle. She was just from that era of women in sports and she was very competitive. If you're going to put a team out there you're going to put the best out there. And she expected the records to be good and this wasn't intramurals anymore and all that. She was really very professional.

Aaron: How'd you see women's sports change over the years? Starting in the late '60s, end of the mid '90s for you, what were some of the biggest changes you noticed that really stand out?

Sherry: It's almost broken into three eras. In the '60s and '70s and then the '80s and then the '90s. In the early part, it was more of that bridge between intramurals and competitive sports, but we still would cut up oranges for halftime and we still did the things, the cookies and all that stuff. And then added the flavor of a Maine championship in between. So it was a lot of intramurally type feeling. And then the middle part, in the '80s, I'm going to say that was when things really, really... You have to have a sport for every person. With Title IX everything got going and we had... Gloria Crosby came in, we had the Olympics come in with handball and all that stuff. So women started to really get involved in everything. If there wasn't something there then we'll start it, even if it's not a coached program but it might be something that's like handball. Handball was one of the typical ones that she introduced. I guess the kids were a lot the same. They started to ween away from being a three sporter or two sporter. And then, of course, in the '90s and down, I think they more became one sport type athletes, where that's what they did. They were specialized and you would get a few, the two sporters, like I say, softball, field hockey were some, but it was still one sport was always stronger than the other.

Aaron: Gloria Crosby, tell me more about her and her impact.

Sherry: She was younger. She came from a big program, very much into Title IX. She wanted to make an impact that way. She just had everything... had to look right, it had to be right and all that. She

was a Title IX advocate. She was tough. She was tough. She got into administration and then let go of her coaching one by one and got that filled in with that. But did it in a way that she really felt that whoever took over, she felt it was a good person to take over that program and lead it. She didn't just drop it for her own gain.

Aaron: It seems like from almost day one, field hockey and volleyball were very successful. What about those sports made them so successful, you think, early on at Bates in terms of wins and losses, I guess?

Sherry: Volleyball, for one, I think, I know Maureen LaChapelle came in after I did and she had a great volleyball experience. And I think those we competed against in volleyball, they didn't have the experience, their athletes didn't have the experiences that ours did, or their coaches didn't have the experiences. Power volleyball was, the first year I coached it, that was the first year in 1968, which is just a whole different game. You don't throw the ball around, you actually bump it up and move it around. So volleyball was almost about coaching, I think. I think the coaching was really better than a lot of our components until later on.

Sherry: And field hockey, I guess me, Aaron. No. I don't know. I always had a philosophy that they wanted to be good. They were good, and then when they got done playing they just enjoyed the experience so much that they just wanted to do more. They weren't hard to train. Some were, but most of them just wanted to be in the game and they got the relief out of it, so it wasn't hard to motivate it. And some more of my opponent coaches said, oh, you're so lucky to have not only intelligent athletes at Bates, but they also have the skills. Well, that's partly true. Yeah, they certainly were intelligent and a lot of them had experiences that were different than our opponents, but that came up as the years went on. We were competing against schools like Tufts and Wellesley and all those that were like our experiences. As in the early days, we were competing against the Maine schools, so their field hockey experience wasn't as good in the high schools as the Bates' girls were.

Aaron: Did Bates ever play against U-Maine Presque Isle, your alma mater?

Sherry: We did. On one experience. I took them for a trip. I told them it would be a good experience for them, and then because I wanted to go up too. But halfway up through the trip, one of the athletes, Jane Davis, comes to the front of the bus and says to me, coach, I didn't realize this was a sleepover. And she says, I didn't pack any clothes. So I went, oh my gosh. Anyways, that was a... They didn't have any idea how long Maine was, how long the trip was or anything. We had a good experience. They treated us well. We played hard and the girl with no clothes ended up... They had a dance for the girls and all the guys were looking for the girl and she had to borrow all the kid's clothes, all her teammates' clothes. So she made out. But we did go back to Maine. We played UMO too for a while. We did well. Laurie Sevigny wanted to tell you about, she's an alumni who has good stories about UMO and some of the trips that we took.

Aaron: Because I've talked to many athletes from that era and they mentioned how Bates played U-Maine quite frequently. Did you come in thinking you were an underdog, or come in and thinking, no, we're pretty level with this team?

Sherry: We did. We came in, at first, thinking I think we can do this. And because I really felt my girls

matched up. They came in with better experiences and I believe the coaching. My staff, I think we did a better job putting it together. That was in softball too, which was short lived because all of a sudden Orono got their act together and started putting more experienced staff into their programs. So it wasn't long before they challenged us quite a bit. Actually, in hockey, I think they stopped playing us and went on their own schedule before they got into that position where they were expected to win and when they didn't it wasn't good for them. So they were in a no-win situation really. But in softball, we dragged it on for a few years. And when you got a good hitter, you got a good hitter. When you got a good pitcher, you got a good pitcher. So if you can match up with a couple players, you have a game.

Aaron: Take us back, growing up, how'd you first get into sports just in general?

Sherry: I was a farm girl. So that'll tell it all. I actually played softball in the fields with my neighbors and my friends. High school, again, we were in that play day era. I was basketball, my brother was a basketball player. We both were captains two years apart. And then play days. Matter of fact, I broke both arms doing the long jump. Won first place and was going to run the hurdles and they decided I better go to the hospital and have my arms set.

Aaron: Wow.

Sherry: So I was competitive, but I enjoyed it. I just enjoyed sports. To me it's made me feel good about myself when I could do something or accomplish something. During high school, when I was looking to go somewhere else and do something for a career, my coaches actually really thought that I would do a good job I physical education or coaching. So they mentored me.

Aaron: And you came to Bates straight out of college, as you mentioned, and then you stayed for many years.

Sherry: I stayed.

Aaron: What made you love Bates to stay for so many decades? I think that's a long time for anyone to be at any one place, and so what made Bates so special for you, I guess?

Sherry: I guess looking back, I think that just the change of things to do. When you say you do three sports, well, in a way that was a good thing because it just kept me alive. Every time I turned around there was something new to learn, something to do. The years went by fast. And I look back through a lot of the athletes that I had and I think my gosh. Sometimes I can dream about these athletes and I think gosh, I can't believe I can remember so many people. And they're not great athletes, a lot of them. A lot of them are just unique people. So I think the kids themselves, kids. I just enjoyed working with them. Early on I was very close to their age so it wasn't hard for me to be their friend as they got out of school. And they look back and look at me. I remember Laura Biscoe, who's passed away now, and she went from being involved in the sport to being a manager and just loved it. Just enjoyed the relationship with the kids and closeness with me. It was a close, I mean till perhaps the last years where I talk about the specialty, people starting to come in where they're just one-sporters. That was harder for me, I think, to do that, because I only saw them one season and then you let them go.

Sherry: But I enjoyed it, Aaron. I really did. I enjoyed working with them and I miss being with the students a lot. Matter of fact, my nephew keeps bugging me, Aunt Sherry will teach me this and teach me that. But I guess you either enjoy it or... It can drive you crazy, but I did enjoy it.

Aaron: I know a few years ago you got to go to the 50th anniversary celebration of the field hockey program. What was that experience like?

Sherry: I felt old. I couldn't believe it. I said, oh my God. I was one of the oldest ones there. I think Ginny Harrison played field hockey when she was at Bates. And I started thinking back, and she's not much older than I am, I don't believe, but I think back at 50 years ago, my God. Lena Walmsley was the athletic director. I guess I just didn't... You're thinking 50 years, you think there's a lot of old people out there. Well, I guess I was one of them but I didn't know it. But it was a good experience. The kids were great. Making me feel very comfortable. I enjoyed watching them. A lot of new things. The turf going on and all that was certainly different than when I coached it. Even though we played on turf at times.

Aaron: Well, field hockey, the college level is played on turf, but I know in high school they still play on grass sometimes. When you were the coach of field hockey, was it grass at first and then switched to turf, or how did that go?

Sherry: Yeah, it was grass always when I was there. And then it didn't flip over to the turf... Well, some of my competitors, I'm trying to think. I think Clark University had turf and maybe Tufts had turf. There was a few of them that when I was still coaching they came in with turf. WPI was one. That was a turf game. And then I begged for turf up on our fields because of our climate and everything else. And of course they've got it now. It's not a completely different game but it's certainly faster. Or I shouldn't even say that, because I think the girls learn quickly that once you send the ball out, you know it's going out, you don't run your butt off to go get it because it's already gone. So maybe it's not so fast, who knows. That was something that was very, very different, the turf.

Aaron: For sure. You mentioned you still remember a lot of the athletes. Maybe they weren't the greatest necessarily athletes, but memorable personalities, I guess. Who were maybe one or two who really stuck out in terms of their personality and what they brought to a team, any sport really?

Sherry: I think Mary Raftery. She was one of my old softball pitchers. She was also a field hockey player. She just... quiet, and she would giggle. It was like you'd tell her something to do and everything else and she knew it was probably something that was a little beyond what she wanted to do but she would giggle or she was like, okay, coach, I'll do that. I'll try. Sue Doliner was a great competitor. There's just a lot of them. Gosh. Carla Fitzgerald. Her hands would go numb in the softball game because it was cold and she would stand there on third base and say, I can't feel my fingers. Keep the ball in your glove till the last second then throw it. But oh gosh. Georgeanne Ebersold, she was a good softball outfielder. She didn't weigh probably a 100 pounds. God, there's so many of them. There's so many of them. Piep Van Heuven was a great goalie. She was probably one of the best goalies for the style of field hockey in those days. Heather Chichester, a good plus catcher. Good attitude, good team morale. There's dozens of them there. Carolyn Campbell, she would always come up with a poem or a story or something. Good player. Tough as nails. She'd

come out with more bruises than anybody.

Aaron: Well, because she was the first All-American in the women's lacrosse program's history, but I guess you would have coached her in field hockey?

Sherry: I coached her in field hockey.

Aaron: Any memorable games that still you think back on today?

Sherry: I'm not sure of the date on it, but there's one, there's a big picture and a lot of the... if you're going back in time and looking at field hockey, and it's Carla Fitzgerald, Laurie Sevigny, and it's got to be in the '80s, I would think. Trying to think. Carla Fitzgerald. It's a championship game and they're all running towards the goalie, which would have been Janet Bursaw. And I'm thinking that Carla Fitzgerald probably made a penalty stroke and we won the state championship game. But it was just the excitement of the team and we all just pig piled. Not literally, but they all ran towards the goalie and they had won the game. That was in the '80s. A lot of good ones. A lot of good ones between Bowdoin that we had, state championships. And just usually one goal we'd win it.

Aaron: So in the early '80s, was still mainly just the state of Maine or were you traveling out of the state by that point?

Sherry: Oh, we were out of state by then because I remember Janet Bursaw. We were going to Wenham, let me try to... They were in Massachusetts schools and stuff. And a lot of the girls, too, because we didn't have the opportunity to play for a national championship, or even the Northeast championship. NESCAC was the next thing that came in. But we went to... The girls got selected for Northeast tournaments and they went as individuals. And that was quite an honor because they were now stacked up against all the schools that could go beyond their own state.

Aaron: Interesting.

Sherry: That was something that during the Title IX, later, after the '70s, that they pushed that. I remember Janet Bursaw and Sue Doliner. I'm trying to think of that group. Carolyn Campbell. A lot of those players got selected to go play in those Northeast tournaments.

Aaron: As part of an all-star team almost?

Sherry: They didn't go and play on a team, as they would be selected for... there was maybe three different Northeast teams and they would go and play for A team, B team, C team, and not in terms of level but in terms of designation just as it was. Matter of fact, we even connected up with the Olympians one year. They came out and played against a couple of the Maine teams.

Aaron: Oh nice.

Sherry: And that was the way to get to the Olympics. If you were bound for Olympics, then you would go through that process.

Aaron: Did you ever coach any of those quote-unquote "all-star" teams or was that not something you were interested in?

Sherry: Well, I coached the all-star team that went against the Olympics. The Olympians. I did that. But that was more of a promotional type thing.

Aaron: Scrimmage.

Sherry: They came to Maine and we played against them. I was involved quite a bit with the Northeast program's selections of all-stars and stuff like that. It was interesting.

Aaron: You weren't the first field hockey coach but you were very close in line. There was a Katherine Ranney and a Nancy Willard before you. Did you know them or is that...?

Sherry: I did. Kathy Ranney, as a matter of fact, graduated from University of Maine Presque Isle. And she was at Bates, I think, a couple years before I went there. And then Nancy Willard actually went to Bates the same year I did. So she did the field hockey and I did the basketball. And then I think she only stayed a year.

Aaron: And then field hockey was all yours for decades there.

Sherry: That's right, field hockey was...

Aaron: Awesome. Let's see. What else.

Sherry: You don't know about my bowling record.

Aaron: Tell me all about... because some of these sports, obviously they're not varsity sports at this point, but so bowling, tell me about the bowling program.

Sherry: That was one of those that Dr. Dillon, she was the coach, and the girls came to me one day and said, I think we could use your help, so would you take it over. And that was when, I think it was '74 and '75, a couple years I did it. So I said, sure, I don't know much about bowling. I used to bowl with candlepins, so I really didn't know a lot about it other than there's lanes and there's a ball and strikes and spares. So I took that on and we became state champions both years. And the amazing thing to me was somehow the Maine association decided that, those are Maine champions, that the champion would be decided on not scratch score but on net score. And so it's like we get done the match and one year it was like, what do you mean we're not champions? The team that come in second place is champions because we were scratch and that blew my mind. It's like, oh my gosh, we got to change this rule. But Anne Greenbaum, she was one of my first bowlers, I remember her. She was beside herself. That was a real experience. Those were the early years.

Sherry: I think the only sport I probably didn't get involved in was... And I did get involved with skiing. Actually went out there and helped time and stuff, but I wasn't coaching it.

Aaron: Oh, nice. Were you timing Nancy Ingersoll Fiddler at any point?

Sherry: I did go and watch her just as a spectator and a support. I was disappointed that she didn't stay with the field hockey program, but I was happy that she got into a sport that she really, really had passion about, which was her cross country running.

Aaron: For sure.

Sherry: Allyson Anderson, I don't know if I mentioned her. She was a great field hockey player. Matter of fact, her sister Wendy, I believe, was on the Olympic team in field hockey. She was one of the good ones.

Aaron: So just recapping here, volleyball, women's track and field, softball, women's lacrosse briefly for one year, field hockey, helping out timing skiing, bowling, badminton. Anything I'm missing there?

Sherry: I don't think so. I think that covers it. I can't even think of any more sports. I guess they got squash now but I never touched that. I didn't do tennis. As a matter of fact, when I came out of college and knew I was going to be coaching at Bates, Dr. Dillon would send me things that I would be doing and be involved with, and one of the things was teaching tennis. And that was one sport that I had never picked up a tennis racket. I had no idea how to play tennis or anything. So that summer before I went to Bates, I had one of my friends who was also a Presque Isle grad and she taught me how to play tennis and taught me all the rules. So I felt I can do this. I believe in learning from your students. I learned so much from my students and from my opponents and that was almost as good as going to clinics and not in place of it, but that was... I feel like a Belichick at some point. If you've got a play that looks good and you've used it on me, you'll probably see me using it on somebody else the next week. Taught some golf in the PE program but never took it up until my retirement years actually. Didn't get involved in the golf.

Aaron: So nowadays, you still golf today then?

Sherry: I do. Too much.

Aaron: Nice. Any other sports you stay involved in or is that it?

Sherry: I stay away from those combative sports. I got bruised up.

Aaron: Final question for you before we go. Looking back on your career, what maybe you're most proud of about your time of Bates that you remember the most fondly perhaps?

Sherry: I guess just the players that remember me. They'll come back from whatever, if I go to an alumni game or something like that, the players that you don't think that you had any impact on or didn't even know if they'd even remember you will come back. And it's like, wow, didn't know that. So it's a good feeling. I'm going to call them the little guys, not the big superstars, but the little ones that say, 'Gosh, if I didn't have sports, if I didn't play field hockey or whatever at Bates, I don't think I would have enjoyed my four years there anywhere near as much as I did.' I'm glad that I made their career in the sports not just competitive but pleasurable and can use it afterwards too, even though

their team sports they relate back to others. I play golf, and I'm sure a lot of them do too. Which I had no impact on, but just being in sports, I guess, is what I'm trying to say.

Aaron: For sure. Sherry, thank you so much for joining us. Really appreciate your time. Thank you again.

Sherry: Thank you, Aaron. Good luck.