

Cassea Schols

Cassea Schols is currently in her second season as the Okanagan Hockey Academy (OHA) Female U18 Prep head coach. Schols joined OHA after spending one season as an assistant coach at MacEwan University. Schols has served as an assistant coach for Team Alberta on three occasions, winning the gold medal in 2019 at the Canada Winter Games. She was the head coach of the Northern Alberta Xtreme Female U18 Prep team from 2016-2019, and assistant coach with Edge School in 2019/20, where she would win a Canadian Sport School Hockey League (CSSHL) Female U18 Prep League Championship.

As head coach of the Edmonton Thunder Female Midget AAA team from 2012-2014, she guided the team to back-to-back Alberta Major Midget Female Hockey League championships, as well as a silver medal at the 2014 Esso Cup and a bronze medal in 2013.

Prior to coaching, Schols was a standout defenceman in the NCAA with Mercyhurst University, where she posted 94 points (20-74-94) in 144 career games. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts - Criminal Justice, Concentration Juvenile Justice.

JM: The world's kind of going back to normal now. What was the first thing that you did once restrictions eased up or that you're excited to do again? It doesn't have to be hockey related.

CS: Just being able to go out with friends again. If it's a restaurant or being able to get together and watch the sporting events that have been on recently. I think that was probably the first thing that I did was go and have dinner and watch the back half of the NHL playoffs.

JM: Awesome. First thing you would do if you won the lottery.

CS: First thing I would do is probably take care of my family. Make sure that their lives are taken care of. And then same thing, probably buy a house.

JM: Okay. On the topic of family, do you want to paint a picture for me of family, friends, where you grew up, where you're at now, things like that?

CS: Sure. I was born and raised in Edmonton, AB. All my family still lives there, actually. I have an older sister and a younger brother and a lot of our relatives live there. So pretty close-knit family that does a lot together. And then currently living in Penticton BC.

JM: Any pets?

CS: I do. Yeah. I have one dog and a three-legged cat.

JM: Okay. How long have you had the cat?

CS: She's two. She'll be two in August.

JM: Was she born with three legs, or is that something happened?

CS: Yeah, she was born with three. She was born under my deck in the backyard. And we had to rescue a litter of nine kittens and we kept one.

JM: Okay, that's cool. So, you just mentioned dog and cat. Do you have a favorite animal?

CS: I would probably say dogs. Dogs would probably be my go-to. It's the first cat I've owned so far, so. Not like you Jordan.

JM: Hey, I just got two. Biggest pet peeve?

CS: Chewing with your mouth open.

JM: Oh, that's a good one. Drives me insane too. If you could go back in time, what year or event would you go to and why?

CS: What? That's a tough one. I think if I was to go back, I would probably go back to my sophomore year in college. Actually, you know what, I probably even say my freshman year which is 2007. I would probably just take the experience in a little bit more, do things maybe a little bit different on the school side. Just a little bit more attention academically, and make sure that hockey was taken care of too.

JM: Okay, that's a good answer. I don't know if you have one, but what's maybe your go-to karaoke song?

CS: Journey, Don't Stop Believing.

JM: Okay, that's a classic.

CS: It's an easy one for everyone to remember.

JM: Yeah. What's something about you that most people from around the hockey world might not know that you think is interesting or a big part of your life?

CS: I guess in the hockey world most people might know it, but at the youth level, I've played at every provincial event available and I've also coached at every provincial event available. So, everything from Alberta Winter Games to the U16 Challenge, to U18 Nationals, to Canada Games. So, I played in them all and now I've coached on them all.

JM: That's really cool. I bet you're probably the only one in the league who owns that title. So that's pretty interesting.

CS: Yeah, pretty neat. I think last in the league, maybe.

JM: What do you like to do away from the rink in the offseason? I know there usually isn't a lot of an offseason, but what do you do in your spare time?

CS: Slo-pitch. Play a lot of slo-pitch and golfing. A lot of beach time which is new.

JM: Yeah. Well, if you like golf and slo-pitch, Penticton isn't a bad spot to live.

CS: No, it's not.

JM: How did you get involved in your current role in the CSSHL?

CS: I was working with Edge School part-time, just volunteering. And then I was also working with MacEwan University as a skills coach. Just looking more for full-time coaching again, and had a great opportunity that OHA reached out and they were looking for a coach for their female program and trying to create an environment here that was female driven if possible with our coaching staff and just having people that have been around the league and understood what it took to be in the league and the direction of female hockey. Thankfully, my name was brought up when this position was available, so that would be how I was brought into the role that I'm in now. So good timing, but also had some relationships within the league that thought that I would be a good fit for what OHA was looking for.

JM: Okay, awesome. What about the CSSHL model do you like most?

CS: I think it sets the kids up most for college. I would almost say it over prepares them. Sometimes our game schedules are a lot busier than college hockey, but the preparation of being a student-athlete and having to miss a couple days here or there and how that looks, and how to create better time management and communication skills with their teachers. I think academically it does a really good job of really preparing the girls for what their next step is. And then athletically, I think it does a great job of development. There's a lot of time both on and off the ice that the kids get to prepare themselves and really work on their individual skills. And with typically not playing weekday games, obviously, there's the one-off, but your week is dedicated to on and off ice training. And then your weekend is more so your gameplay. So, taking that into consideration for what most kids need to do in their next steps both academically and athletically, I think we set them up really positively.

JM: Yeah, that seems to be a theme that academics, especially among females. Brittany Kirby from Delta had a pretty similar answer to you where as a female, unfortunately, you really only have the one avenue, but it does a good job of setting you up for it.

CS: Absolutely.

JM: Best piece of advice you've ever received in life. It doesn't have to be hockey-related.

CS: I think probably don't take it personally. Sometimes things can be said and certain people, you think it's personally directed at you or that it's something that you've specifically done. But more so, just take it as a learning experience. And whatever it is, if it's about you, if it's not about you, you can always learn something. But don't take as if it's criticism, constructive criticism conversation. Just don't always take it personally, but just use it as a learning experience.

JM: That's a good answer. I like that. This is the last one here. Just your favorite or funniest or most unique hockey memory. Something that when you look back on the game, it will probably just always stick with you. And if you have more than one, that's also fine too.

CS: Sure. As a player one unique thing that stands out to me was in high school, we got to go and play for the Edmonton Chimos. I played women's in high school. And we got to go and travel and play in Yellowknife against the Calgary Oval X-Treme, which at that time was players like Hayley Wickenheiser and Danielle Goyette and all the girls that were in the Olympic program back when there was no PWHPA or CWHL. So, they were kind of all on that Calgary Oval X-Treme team and we were trying to expand female hockey. So Edmonton Chimos and the Calgary Oval, we went out to Yellowknife and played some exhibition games and we got to be immersed in the culture and billeted with local families and dog sledding and kind of just soak in all that environment to what's their local activities, and then also got to play games in front of good home crowds that wasn't a home base for either of us, and then obviously playing against people that were in that Olympic stream. So, I would say that would probably, as a player, be something that really stands out to me.

From a coach's perspective, one of the things that stands out to me most would have been in my third year of coaching. I was coaching Edmonton Thunder, which used to be the Midget AAA program in Edmonton. We were at Nationals and we were having maybe not the best start to our tournament. We went into our round-robin, and we were actually 0-3 and we needed to win the rest of our games to get to the finals. So, we went in with kind of we've got nothing to lose and everything to gain mentality, and we ended up winning out and putting ourselves in a position to actually end up in the finals. And unfortunately, we ended up losing in a shootout in the finals, but from going 0-3 to being able to play for a gold medal, I thought was a pretty awesome experience for both the kids and as coaches that you never know what can happen if you just play the game that's in front of you.