

Carla MacLeod

Carla MacLeod is heading into her seventh season coaching at Edge School where she recently led their U18 Female Prep team to a 2019/20 CSSHL Championship. Before starting her coaching career, MacLeod played her minor hockey in Calgary, AB before joining the Wisconsin Badgers where she would captain the team for two seasons. Internationally, MacLeod represented Canada numerous times winning gold once and silver three times at the IIHF World Women's Championships, and capturing two Olympic Gold Medals. As a coach MacLeod helped Team Japan qualify for the 2014 Winter Olympics, the first time since they hosted in 1998.

JM: What are you watching on Netflix/TV right now?

CM: My favourite one has been the F1 series. Didn't know anything about F1 but I love a good sports documentary. I just needed to fill time and I really enjoyed it so I actually watched the last race a couple weekends back. So that's been my favourite go to right now but as with everyone else on the planet I think I've watched almost all of Netflix.

JM: What are you're most excited to do once the world gets back to normal/COVID is "over"?

CM: I think for me the biggest thing I've missed personally is I've got a great family, we're nice and close, we all live here in Calgary and we would always have Sunday dinner at my folks' place. There's four of us, my siblings and I and then spouses, and nieces and nephews. But the whole family would go to my parents every Sunday and I'm missing the meals, I'm missing the visits. So, I'm really looking forward to re-establishing that routine because it's one of the favourites in my life.

JM: So, you mentioned family there, what about pets? Do you have any pets?

CM: No, I'm a non-animal person. It's probably a little bit to do with our lifestyles and our schedules and the travel. I grew up with a dog but no pets these days. Trying to wrangle 20 teenagers seems to be enough to fill my cup every day.

JM: You obviously live in Calgary now but you grew up in Spruce Grove?

CM: No, I was born in Spruce Grove but I've lived in Calgary since grade two, so Calgary is certainly my home.

JM: Do you like it there?

CM: Love Calgary, love the community. Played all my days through here.

JM: If you could live anywhere else outside of Calgary, where would it be?

CM: That's a loaded question. Depends on what type of lifestyle I'm living. From places in the world I've lived I liked my time in Wisconsin so it has a special place in my heart but I wouldn't mind somewhere like Belize. I've never been there but I want to golf. I want sunshine and golf. That would be my dream location.

JM: So, dream vacation same type of idea?

CM: Well I think we've forgotten how to dream cause of COVID but one of my biggest passions is golfing. Anything that would take me to a good climate with good friends and play some golf and then relax and enjoy some beach time pool time would be pretty slick in my books.

JM: Did you start golfing pretty young?

CM: I've always enjoyed it but it was a sport post my hockey career that I legitimately started playing and playing quite a bit of it. We lived near a golf course so even going out to the driving range when I was a young punk but I've really grown to love it.

JM: Would you consider yourself a good golfer?

CM: (Laughs) Depends on the day and your definition of good. But yeah, I think there's a bit of connection to hockey and golf but I can't spin a golf ball. I'm so impressed with people that can get backspin. But I can hit a ball.

JM: If you had any job in the world, not related to sports, what would it be?

CM: Great question, my whole life has been sports. I think anything that's working with people. So, I guess from a classic perspective I guess a teacher, it's very similar to coaching. But I love that idea of helping kids, and helping them grow and learn about themselves and the world and all of that so I think teaching was always my back up plan if coaching didn't work out. It's not overly exotic but I think it's true to who I am.

What's something about you most people from around the hockey world don't know about you? Something I can't find with a quick Google search or looking at your Elite Prospects profile?

CM: (Laughs) Am I even on Elite Prospects? Lots of people who know me do know this and it's really nerdy but I don't mind putting it out to the world again but I'm a big country music fan. Reba McEntire is my all-time favourite, and Garth Brooks. And to be honest something people maybe don't know is I've actually been able to meet both of them. I went from writing reports on them to meeting them so I thought that's pretty cool.

JM: Do you go to a lot of country music festivals or just concerts?

CM: Love concerts. I don't go to a truckload of festivals anymore; I think it's an age thing more than anything. I love live music; I love the arts. Because I can't do it all; I can't sing, I can't dance, I can't act, like I'm terrible. So, when I go to these events and I see this talent I'm blown away by what other people can do with their talent, so it draws me in.

JM: I'm the same way, I have zero musical talent so I get that.

CM: Right? If I could choose to be able to do anything, I can't do it would be sing. I wish I could sing; I love music.

JM: I know you said you like to golf and listening to country music, is there anything else you like to do away from the rink or in the offseason?

CM: We're so busy in the year I think it's just about the opportunity to catch up with some friends and spend some time with the people you love. The bulk of the time it is on a golf course but maybe it is renting a place and hanging out on the lake and those things as well. But I don't live an extravagant life style. I'm pretty plain Jane and just kind of love what I love.

JM: Let's dive into your coaching career a lit bit now. How did you get involved with the coaching?

CM: When I retired in 2010 I knew I wanted to be a coach so that was kind of a no brainer but it was just 'what's the path to making it a career' so my first four years of coaching I was actual here in Calgary with Mount Royal University with Scott Rivett and the women's team essentially as a volunteer coach. It was an unbelievable opportunity to just learn from someone who's a great coach in his own right and to this day still a great friend and mentor. The last two years with Mount Royal I was actually coaching Team Japan so I was going back and forth and we we're trying to make the Olympics and ultimately, we did. So, I had those experiences and it felt like the time was right and I wanted to try head coaching and just based on timing and maybe how life works sometimes there ended up being an opportunity open here at Edge. For me staying in Calgary was my number one priority. I had moved away for college and travelled the world with the National Team so I wanted to be back in Calgary with my family. So, I was really just fortunate from a timing perspective to get the opportunity here and I've obviously loved it as I move into my eighth year here.

JM: What about the CSSHL model do you like?

CM: To me the CSSHL is a tremendous league. It gives so many opportunities to coaches and players and families to really experience high end competition. So that's what I really enjoy about it. It involves travel, there's different looks to different teams, you get to build rivalries cause you're playing each other at a decent clip. So, for me where we sit, we get to give these student-athletes the opportunity to prepare for the next level and I think our league does a tremendous job what that looks like. And helping these kids understand time management, how to manage your academics while pursuing athletics. I just think the league is designed so well to prepare kids for the next level.

JM: Best piece of advice you got in life, and it doesn't have to be hockey related.

CM: There's a lot of influencers in my life that I've been so fortunate to come across. One of my junior high teachers had a motto 'Dare to be you' and I think in this day in age where we're maybe inundated with everyone else's maybe reality or fake reality through social media there's

a lot of pressure to be someone other than yourself. So, I think that's one for me that since I was quite young has been a grounding saying for me. Dare to be you, just invest in yourself. So that's one that I've always carried with me. Another philosophy I like to preach is earning it every day and that's another one I try and hold near and dear and live up to. So, any opportunities that I'm trying to achieve, whether it's my goals or team goals I never lose sight of the opportunity to earn it and be proud of the chance to earn it because that's all we can really ask for. Give me the opportunity to earn it and I'll see what I can do with it. So, those are kind of the two that resonate with me on a daily though process.

JM: Last question. Do you have a favourite, or funniest, hockey memory? Or maybe something unique that just kind of stands out.

CM: (Laughs) Oh man I'm too old, I have too many. There's so many, the games been so good to me. It's interesting, I find coaching really rewarding and I find it so neat when kids can see their own potentials but I'll go back to my time with Japan. We are in the Olympic qualifier and they have not qualified prior, since they hosted the Olympics in 1998. So, you can imagine their confidence. So, it's the morning of our first game day and we're in Slovakia and I'm walking through the hotel and I can feel their nervous energy. And I'm thinking oh man, we can't be nervous, we're not going to win if we're this nervous. And there's a language barrier and there's a lot going on with this group but we really do get each other. But we just had a big dump of snow so I tell them to go get their jackets and your mitts, we're going outside. Well we ended up having the biggest snowball fight. It was them versus me. There's a great photo of them chasing me down and it just relaxed them. And all of a sudden, we get into the tournament and we still face some adversity but we kind of maintain that relaxed approach and ended up winning. So, for me that's one of the most rewarding moments. It was just understanding what we needed to be successful and with that group it was pretty darn cool to see them achieve their goal. And that's just a special memory for me because it was such a human connection. It was a simple snowball fight. I think the other teams we're looking out their windows asking 'what are they doing' and I was thinking I'm not too sure what we're doing either but it sure as heck is fun so we're going to keep doing it. I'm not too sure if that's what you're looking for but that to me stands out as a neat moment.

JM: That's an awesome answer because I think most people would think the Olympic gold medals but that's a neat one as well.