

RMU Heroes Vint and Richards Add CBHA Crown to Remarkable Careers

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Having both competed at the NCAA level with the Robert Morris Colonials, Rebecca Vint and Kristen Richards helped usher a winning era for the program. Their strong teamwork skills yielded remarkable dividends for the Toronto Shamrocks, one of the signature clubs in the Greater Toronto Women's Ball Hockey League.

Competing with the Shamrocks at the 2015 edition of the CBHA Nationals, the two helped the club capture their second national title in four years. Prevailing by a 2-1 overtime tally against a very valiant Newfoundland United squad, it signified the addition of another milestone to their careers.

For both Vint and Richards (who also played two seasons with the Niagara Purple Eagles), the jubilation of capturing a national championship was enhanced by the fact that the pair was making their debut at the CBHA Nationals. Statistically, Richards logged two points in preliminary round play, earning a pair of assists in a 5-0 win against the BC Benders. During the gold medal game, Richards and Jenny Brine both contributed to Carlyne Prevost's goal, providing the Shamrocks with an early 1-0 lead against Newfoundland United.

Of note, Vint logged an assist in her CBHA Nationals debut, an August 11 match against the Vanier Mooseheads. Assisting on a goal scored by Prevost (also making her Nationals debut), it proved to be the game-winning tally. The chance to eventually claim the national championship with the Shamrocks complemented her 2012 CHA Postseason Championship with the Colonials, in which she and Kylie St. Louis earned the assist on Brianna Delaney's tournament clinching goal.

Richards proudly reflected on the championship win, "It means the world to me. To win the national championship is part of a great time."

“It feels great. It is a proud accomplishment. I feel that to be within this top level of elite girls is nice. To win is awesome. The first time in it and to win it! There is so much heart and determination. Every girl here wanted to win it,” added Vint.

In addition, Melissa Boal and Kristy Zamora, who both played with former College Hockey America rival Wayne State were also part of the Shamrocks roster. Although Zamora, a 2014 Clarkson Cup champion, played the forward position with Wayne State, she stood between the pipes for the Shamrocks.

Zamora paced all goaltenders in shutouts and goals against average during the CBHA Nationals, adding to the CHA pride that was part of the Shamrocks run to the national title. As a side note, former Wayne State and RMU goaltender DeLayne Brian was on the Canadian team that captured gold at the 2015 ISBHF World Ball Hockey championships.

First involved with ball hockey at the high school level, Richards competed at the Ontario Provincials several times. In 2008, she helped her high school capture its third gold medal in four years. Her remarkable performances at the high school level signifying her first sojourn competing at an elite level of play in ball hockey,

“We had some mutual friends and I found out that they played ball hockey. With my high school team, St. Basil the Great Collegiate, I played at the (Ontario) provincials.”

While at St. Basil the Great, Richards also competed in ice hockey, capturing the 2009 gold medal in women’s ice hockey. Scoring the gold medal clinching goal against St. Michael of Stratford, the assist was credited to Thea Imbrogno. Coincidentally, Imbrogno would also play with Richards at RMU.

Akin to Richards, Vint’s ball hockey roots also trace back to high school. Although her focus would eventually lean towards competing on the ice, her return to the sport seemed inevitable,

“I played in high school, but the past few years, I had some knee problems, so I spent more of my time on the ice.”

During four remarkable seasons with the Colonials, Vint graduated with 134 points, on the strength of 73 goals, both program records, in 127 career games. Part of a senior class that included Katie Fergus, the daughter of former Toronto Maple Leafs forward Tom Fergus, the final goal of Vint’s Colonials career came on February 21, 2015 against Penn State, while her final point was an assist against Rochester on February 27.

“RMU was a close-knit family. It was a small campus and everyone knew you there. There was great support for the school in general.”

In her first season with the Colonials, Vint broke the program record for most points and goals in one season. On November 21, 2014, her assist against Syracuse would establish her as the program's all-time leading scorer. In a career that has seen her gain numerous awards, including Rookie of the Year honors, along with USCHO All-Rookie Team honors, Vint was proud of her achievements, but always placed the team first,

"It was nice being recognized. It is also nice to help the team out. Whether it be individual records, also team records, you do it for the team."

Vint's final season with the Colonials resulted in being named to the All-CHA Second Team, joined by teammate Mikaela Lowater. Earning All-Conference selections in each of her four seasons, Vint became only the second player in program history to achieve this, joining two-time Winter Games silver medalist Brianne McLaughlin in such elite company.

The first two seasons of Richards' NCAA career (2010-12) were the final seasons for the Niagara Purple Eagles. After the university discontinued its women's hockey program (which also happened to Wayne State), Richards was one of several displaced players who found opportunities elsewhere within CHA.

Transferring to RMU, she would accumulate 49 points in a memorable span of two seasons, which culminated with recognition as team captain for the 2013-14 campaign. Scoring the game-winning goal in her Colonials debut (an October 19, 2012 match against Yale), the best performance in her final season was a three-assist effort against Vermont on October 26, 2013. Coincidentally, Vint would follow as RMU's captain in 2014-15.

Both raised in the Greater Toronto Area, Richards enjoyed the opportunity to reunite with Vint as teammates on the CBHA national champion Toronto Shamrocks. Of note, Richards grew up in Toronto, competing with the Mississauga Jr. Chiefs, while Caledon-raised Vint was a member of the Brampton Jr. Thunder.

Having both cultivated strong leadership skills as captains at the PWHL and CHA levels, their addition to the Shamrocks brought a new energy and focus. Richards was jubilant in reflecting on the opportunity to join Vint at the CBHA Nationals,

"Absolutely, it is always fun to play with Rebecca. We were teammates for two years at RMU. She is a great player."

With aspirations to continue their careers in the Canadian Women's Hockey League (CWHL), the chance to compete with the Shamrocks provided both Vint and Richards with the opportunity to play with members of the Toronto Furies and Brampton Thunder. As special as the national championship outcome was for both Vint and Richards, the new friendships forged were equally important. For Vint, such an experience was truly positive,

“It is really nice to be able to play with the girls. This upcoming season, I hope to play with Toronto or Brampton. Getting to know these girls, obviously, I hope to play with them. To see how they are, they are awesome people.”

Should one of those clubs also acquire Richards during this off-season, the level of familiarity that she (and Vint) has already established with CWHL players should enable her to quickly adjust to the league. After a year off, the title run with the Shamrocks is poised to propel Richards back into the game she loves, possibly culminating with another title, the coveted Clarkson Cup,

“This has been a good experience. It is awesome to get to meet these girls. It is also a good look at what the future is like and what the level of play in the CWHL is like.

After graduating in 2014, I took the year off. Now I am playing again and I am looking forward to get the skates back on.”

“All quotes obtained first hand unless otherwise indicated”

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