

Learning to form bonds, in the lab and the arena

Meghan Duggan '06 has no doubt about her original motivation for attending Cushing. What else would you expect from a young woman who started playing hockey at age three?

"I was interested in finding a program where I could excel as a female hockey player and hopefully better my chances of playing hockey at a division one college program."

Older brother Bryan played in the local Danvers, Massachusetts, youth league. Trying to follow Bryan's skate-steps early set young Meghan on a path that led to winning a women's hockey national championship with the University of Wisconsin Badgers last year. During that freshman season, Duggan continued 'keeping up with the big kids,' contributing 26 goals and 26 assists.

But balance, not scoring, has kept Duggan performing on college ice. "Time management is obviously a challenge in the lives of student athletes," she explains, "Because spending too much or too little time with one can cause the other to fail." Cushing, in Duggan's experience provided that balance of training:

"It may sound like a cliché but going to Cushing was the best decision I

could have made. I learned everything there. I was challenged academically and athletically."

Duggan may have started out following her brother. But, as a women's hockey player, she now feels

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she has one benefit her brother never will. According to Duggan, "The main difference between women's and men's hockey teams is that women bring much more emotion. My team here, just like all other women's teams I have been on, has grown to become like family. You get attached and the bonds that we share off the ice make it easy to create chemistry on the ice."

The chemistry metaphor comes easily to Duggan, who spends plenty of time in the lab. "I am currently majoring in

Biology and have always dreamed of going to med school and becoming a pediatrician." Before she gets there, however, she has an immediate task. "My number one goal right now – one that I have been working towards my entire hockey career – is the 2010 Olympics."

Duggan's team chemistry was solidified by the presence, on the Badgers roster, of former Cushing roommate, Erica Lawler '05. Lawler helped Duggan form those bonds with new teammates that often take years to forge. As a freshman last year, Duggan had to transition to big-campus life, "from a school where everyone knew everything about everyone, to a school where you can pass 200 people walking to class and not know one of their names."

The two Cushing alums have already shared play on an international level. In addition to U. Wisconsin, they traveled last year as part of the U.S. National Women's Under-22 Team, competing against teams around the world. Their play at such intense international levels raises one question: Can Lawler and Duggan keep that Cushing chemistry going, all the way to the 2010 Olympics?