

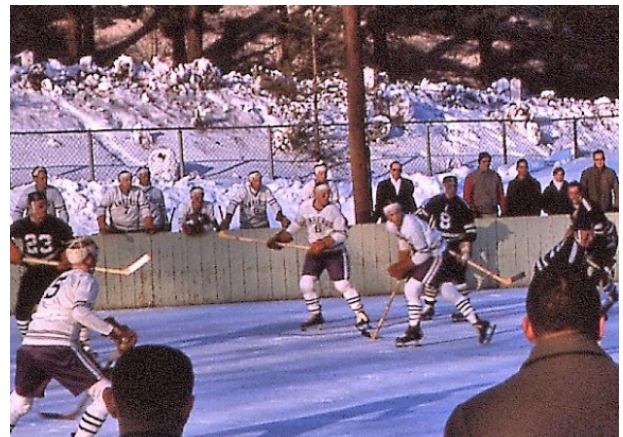
Sixty plus years ago (1960) UConn ice hockey began as a “club” sport before transitioning to become what it is today, a significant men’s and women’s varsity sport and a competing member of Hockey East. **Looking back, UConn hockey, like all good things, started with a vision.**



Coach John Chapman talks things over with his goalie Dale Carpenter.

That vision belongs to **John Chapman** who in 1960 was the backfield coach for the UConn Varsity football team. Prior to this time, there was no serious thought about establishing a UConn hockey team or even the need for a nearby ice rink to practice. Because of **Coach Chapman’s vision**, UConn formed a hockey club and through his persistence, he discovered a practice location at the Chaffe Loomis School in Windsor, CT. This was an outdoor rink approximately an hour from the university by bus... UConn hockey was born.

Coach Chapman graduated from Dartmouth College, an Ivy League school located almost 200 miles north of Storrs, CT. Dartmouth had a perennially competitive hockey team and flourished in an environment that welcomed winter sports.



As a student at Dartmouth, John participated in hockey, football and lacrosse.

John formed his hockey “club” in 1960 with 17 players – all from New England – who would form the nucleus of UConn’s first varsity team. These players included many accomplished high school hockey players from several of the more developed hockey markets, including players from the north shore of Boston (Danvers/Billerica, MA), and also from the hockey havens of Hamden and Norwalk, CT. In addition, the club had a recruit from the UConn football practice team who had never played any type of organized hockey prior to his 3-year stint at UConn as its goalie... required less skating.

In those early years, the hockey team had few practices on ice. Much of its “conditioning” consisted of running around the campus track and up and down the football field’s stadium steps. Eye/hand coordination was



developed by playing handball at the Field House gymnasium and taking shots at the goalies. Actual “ice time” practice consisted of suiting up at UConn, taking the hour-long school bus ride to Loomis Chaffee, practicing one to two hours on the ice, and riding back to campus, before hitting the showers. Since this scenario was relatively infrequent, it was only natural that the early Husky teams played better as the season progressed because each game added more valuable “ice time.”

Players on that first year 1960-1961 “club” roster included Dave Kenes, Roger Nelson, Johnny Dello Stritto & and Danny Zucchi from Hamden, CT, Bill Turenne from Danvers, MA, Ralph Raymond from Stamford, CT, and Bruce Vogel, V. Luciani, Dave Cronenberg, J. Brunell, Steve Gravereaux, Walter Hurley, John Galluzi, R. Berry, and J. Lee. Goalie duties fell to **Chuck Mitchell** (who was already an accomplished high school hockey veteran) and Dale Carpenter, who had never played one minute of hockey prior to UConn...A few like Chuck, graduated after that first year as a club and the others were around the following year to help launch UConn’s first varsity season (1961-1962).



First row: D. Zucchi, J. Dello Stritto, C. Mitchell, B. Turenne, D. Kenes, R. Nelson. Second row: Manager V. Scilla, B. Vogel, V. Luciani, R. Raymond, D. Cronenberg, J. Brunell, Coach R. Chapman. Third row: D. Carpenter, S. Gravereaux, W. Hurley, J. Galluzi, R. Berry and J. Lee

## “2022 marks the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of UConn varsity hockey”

The first official UConn varsity hockey team took to the ice for the 1961-1962 season. **2022 marks the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of UConn varsity hockey.** The eleven players from that first varsity season included returning players Dave Kenes, Roger Nelson, Danny Zucchi, Bill Turenne, Dave Cronenberg, Steve Gravereaux and Dale Carpenter. Playing their first year of UConn varsity hockey were Phil Ventrella, Mark Stoehr, Richard Affleck and A. Ritchie.



FIRST ROW: D. Cronenberg, D. Zucchi, Co-capt. R. Nelson, Co-capt. D. Kenes, W. Turenne, D. Carpenter. SECOND ROW: Manager G. Ammirati, M. Stoehr, A. Ritchie, S. Gravereaux, R. Affleck, P. Ventrella, Coach J. Chapman.

In their first year as a varsity sport, the “Huskies” played eleven different teams and went 4-6-1. They played their first game against Brown University after having practiced only two hours on ice. Despite Brown’s having 67 shots on the net, UConn held their first opponent to only seven

goals, with 60 saves by the goalie. All the “Huskie” games that year were played “away” and many were played in outdoor rinks.



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UConn fared better their second year as a varsity sport in the 1962-1963 season. While their schedule shrank to seven games, they earned their first winning record, a surprising 4-3. The fourteen-player lineup that year included Team Captains Danny Zucchi, Dale Carpenter, Dave Cronenberg and Johnny Dello Stritto. In addition, our successes would not have been possible without Bruce Vogel, Phillip Ventrella, Richard Affleck, Carl Westberg, Richard Kupec, William Setten, Steve Gravereaux, Mark Stoehr, Richard Andrews and John Walton.



PHILIP VENTRELLA (left), DALE CARPENTER (center) and DANIEL ZUCCHI (right) preparing for the contest which kicks off a seven game schedule. Last year up in Cambridge, UConn came out on the wrong end of a 6-1 score. (UConn Photo)

Today we possess information about those formative years thanks to those players who have forever

imbedded in their memories the highlights of those times and have shared many of them here. We also thank UConn's own **Connecticut Daily Campus**

excellent reporting. UConn is preserving all of those stories, which can be found online in the UConn Digital Archives at <https://archives.lib.UConn.edu/islandora/object/20002:860169623>.



HOCKEY  
First Row, L-R: Bruce Vogel, Daniel Zucchi, Dale Carpenter, David Cronenberg, John Dellostritto. Second Row: Phillip Ventrella, Richard Affleck, Carl Westberg, Richard Kupec, William Setten, Coach John L. Chapman. Third Row: Manager James Farrell, Stephen Gravereaux, Mark Stoehr, Richard Andrews, John Walton.

During those early years, player protective equipment was sparse and lacked many of the must have items

that exist in today's hockey. However, the early UConn teams had access to all of the equipment employed by other teams of that era. For the skaters, facemasks and suspension helmets were unheard of, but the gloves, hip pads, shin guards and shoulder pads were comparable to the competition. One major difference between those first years and today was the use of the straight hockey stick, as opposed to the curved stick first produced on a commercial scale in 1965 and used ever since. The curved stick gives the skater greater control of the puck and a faster, harder, and more precise shot.



One of the most glaring differences between personal hockey equipment of 60 years ago and today is the protective equipment for the goalie. Along with development of the curved stick that helped produce harder and

faster shots, goalie equipment evolved that was designed to counter the advantages being gained by the shooter. The goalie equipment of 1961 consisted of leather leg pads, standard hip and thigh pads similar to those worn by football players, various rudimentary styles of face masks (Remember, **only a few years earlier, most goalies did not wear a face mask or any type of protective head gear... even in the National hockey league.**), a chest protector similar to what a baseball catcher would wear, a poorly padded catching glove with a very small "pocket", a wooden goalie stick, and a flat blocker mitt for holding the goalie stick and deflecting shots.

Dick Wargo, the UConn Athletic trainer was instrumental in designing and constructing a unique fiberglass goalie's facemask that was like nothing on the market at that time but almost perfect for the job at hand. Remember, it was only a few years earlier when hockey goalies did not wear any masks (if you can even imagine that).



Dick got the idea for a fiberglass face mask from a mask that had been only recently created for Jacques Plante, the Hall of Fame goalie for the Montreal Canadiens in the National Hockey League. The mask was made from a Plaster of Paris mold using drinking straws to provide breathing while the mold was hardening. The mask provided some protection from the impact of the puck (was worn flush against the face) but was very effective in preventing cuts. It gave full



protection for the face and especially the eyes and teeth.



Goalie protection today includes numerous lighter but larger components to include larger chest and full upper body protectors, full wraparound face masks and helmet with throat protectors, padded head gear, elbow and



knee pads, the standard goalie skates, goalie thigh and hip pads, pads for the sides and the back of the legs, and specially engineered goalie pads designed with landing gear (pads) to accommodate the current "butterfly" movement, which is an essential component of today's goal tending style.

About the only thing that has not changed in competitive ice hockey over the years is the size and hardness of the puck. It still travels at amazing speeds and tends to get your attention if it hits you, regardless of the amount of protective equipment.





Today, UConn ice hockey is a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division 1 college ice hockey program. UConn hockey is now entering a new phase of development with the much-anticipated opening of the \$70 million on campus hockey arena that will be one of the most modern and featured-filled skating facilities in New England. Both the men's and the women's programs will be in full compliance with Hockey East Association requirements. The new arena will be the home for both men's and woman's varsity hockey. Currently, the men play their home games at the XL Center in Hartford and the women play their home games at the Freitas Ice Arena on the main campus.



UConn hockey teams have already seen success in Hockey East competition, since the UConn women joined the conference in 2002-2003 and the men in 2014-2015. The addition of the new arena is expected to be a major asset in recruiting some of the world's best hockey players. While UConn already boasts excellent players from across the US, Canada, and many countries from the other side of the Atlantic, the new facility at Storrs will provide an additional incentive for those elite hockey players that may have previously considered other schools because they offered superior training facilities and high-level competition. With the new Storrs facility, UConn will be able to compete with any hockey facility in the United States.

Everything has a beginning and beginnings start with a vision... John Chapman's vision for a robust UConn Varsity ice hockey program was no exception. **Thank you John Chapman — Father of UConn Hockey.**