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Rooney's Hard Work Takes Her to Olympics for Team USA

By [Heather Rule](#) - February 11, 2018

Goaltender Maddie Rooney played high school hockey just like a lot of kids in Minnesota. The difference is that she played her senior season on the boys' team for Andover High School in 2015. Her coach, Mark Manney, was in his sixth season leading the Huskies at the time. He commented

that during his tenure there, he'd seen four players show up each and every day just to be hard workers.

Rooney was one of those four.

"[She] goes home and probably thinks about what she could've done better," Manney said during a 2015 interview.

As the old saying goes, hard work pays off.

Rooney, 20, went from Andover boys' hockey to playing for the University of Minnesota-Duluth women's team competing in the WCHA. It's all preparation for the biggest stage of her young career: The 2018 Olympic Winter Games in PyeongChang, South Korea.

She's turned into the top goaltender for Team USA's women's hockey team as the squad hopes to finally take home the gold medal again. These Olympic Games mark 20 years since the women's team won gold in Nagano, Japan.

The 2018 Winter Olympics got off to a great start as the USA women – with Rooney in net – defeated Finland 3-1 in the wee hours of the morning back here in Minnesota.

Rooney led the Andover girls' team to their first-ever state tournament appearance and consolation championship in 2014, then she shifted over to play for the boys' team her senior season.

Actually, she returned to play with the boys. Rooney spent most of her youth hockey days playing boys' hockey, up until her freshman year of high school. She played on the girls' team at Andover as a sophomore and junior.



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Stop 'em all Maddie!

Go for the Gold!#HuskyNation #HuskiesHS



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She wanted to get “the ultimate challenge,” and that turned out to be playing with the boys her senior year, Rooney said back in early December 2017 after a game on the U.S. national team.

With boys’ hockey, every move she made in between the pipes had to be precise and faster than in the girls’ game.

“Girls’ hockey, I felt like you could get away with a little bit more because it was a little slower,” Rooney said in 2015. “I practiced my lateral movements a lot.”

Manney, who remains the head coach of the Andover boy’s hockey team, saw the improvement Rooney made every day in practice. They were a little protective of her early on, but she earned the respect of her teammates and opponents.

“She channeled her aggressiveness to where it’s working to her advantage,” Manney said during a 2015 interview.

She went 9-10-3 in 24 regular-season games her senior year for the Huskies with a 2.83 GAA, .910 save percentage and two shutouts.

That extra competition playing with the boys helped prepare her for a hockey career at the University of Minnesota-Duluth and now the Olympic stage.

“Just their faster release, faster pace of the game, more physical,” Rooney said. “It definitely prepared me for where I am today.”

She got her feet wet with 19 games as a freshman with the UMD in 2015-16, going 5-12-0 with a 3.18 GAA and .899 save percentage. Last season, she went 25-7-5 with a 1.65 GAA and .942 save percentage, plus seven shutouts. Coming into the Olympics, she’s 1-0-2-0 with a 1.96 GAA and .922 save percentage with the U.S. National Team.

She even got to play in front of her home fans, friends and family when [Team USA faced Canada as part of “The Time Is Now Tour”](#) in early December at Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul. Unfortunately, Rooney took the loss in a 2-1 decision in overtime.

Still, she came up with plenty of good saves in the third period when Canada made a push for the win. At the time, she said the experience with the team, training and preparing for the Olympics was “really humbling.”

"I'm just trying to take it all in day by day," Rooney said. "I can feel myself improving and just looking forward to what's to come."



Maddie Rooney
@maddie_rooney35

Opening Ceremonies! What a breathtaking experience. So humbled to have been there with my teammates! ❤️❤️🇺🇸



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That would be representing her county and home state of Minnesota in the Olympics.

Rooney is the second-youngest player on the team ahead of 19-year-old Cayla Barnes, a defenseman from California. They share the ice with Minnesota natives in Olympic veteran Gigi Marvin, 30, the oldest player on the team from Warroad, Lee Stecklein of Roseville and Hannah Brandt, who hails from Vadnais Heights.

They're led by coach Robb Stauber, an assistant coach for the women's team at the 2014 Olympics. He's a former goalie coach at University of Minnesota (men's team, 2000-08) and UMD (women's team, 2004-08).

They'll face Canada in the preliminary round at the Olympics with a game at 9:10 p.m. CT on Feb. 14 televised on NBCSN. Unless the unprecedented happens, USA and Canada would expect to meet again in the gold medal game on Feb. 22 (10:10 p.m. CT, Feb. 21).

USA has won silver medals at the 2002, 2010 and 2014 Olympics, while Canada won the gold medals. Canada beat the United States 3-2 in overtime to earn the 2014 gold medal in Sochi.