A MAGICAL FIRST YEAR

When the puck dropped at 6:57 p.m. on November 7, 2003, it was the culmination of thousands of hours of hard work by so many people dedicated to the success of UMass Boston women’s ice hockey. Whether the Beacons won or lost that night, they represented the hopes of everything that’s good about UMass Boston. They would symbolize a concerted effort to build a program from the ground up, the right way.

Freshman forward Calli Beskosty netted the night’s first goal at the 4:01 mark of the first period to give UMB a 1-0 edge. Beskosty, would add another goal later in the evening and would combine with classmates, Andrea Ciarletta and Melissa Belmonte for 10 points on the night as the Beacons defeated the visiting State University of New York - Cortland Red Dragons, 5-3.

In a season where just being competitive would have been enough, UMass Boston’s women’s ice hockey team gave the campus a year to remember. The Beacons busted out of the gate, becoming the first program in school history to win its first five games and went on to finish the campaign with a 13-12-1 mark. Along the way, a UMass Boston player was named ECAC East Rookie of the Week on five occasions and twice had the top goaltender for the week and the week’s best player once.

The “new kid” didn’t look so wide-eyed as it consistently tested established programs throughout the season, including a 3-1 Valentine’s Day victory over the nation’s number seven-ranked team, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. It wouldn’t be the last time that the Beacons would surprise an opponent as they upended heavily favored Rochester Institute of Technology on the road, 6-4, on February 28 to advance to the semi-finals round of the ECAC East post-season tournament.

The magical run finally came to an end with a loss to the nation’s number one team, Manhattanville College, but considering UMass Boston didn’t even exist on the women’s ice hockey landscape just one year prior, it was a pretty lofty achievement and those in hockey circles took notice, selecting UMB Head Coach Laura Schuler as the ECAC East Coach of the Year. After leading the nation in scoring with 2.15 points per game, Ciarletta was named the conference Rookie of the Year and was tabbed to the league’s Second Team All-Star squad, along with freshman defenseman Kerri Zizzo. Belmonte finished as the Division III’s number three scorer, was named to the ECAC East Honor mention team and was also a member of the conference All-Rookie unit with Ciarletta and Zizzo. Junior defenseman Jenn Murray was also an honorable mention selection for the Beacons.
In 2000, the University of Massachusetts Boston made a decision to add women’s ice hockey to its athletic program. It would be the first new program added at UMass Boston since 1995 and it was imperative that everything would be done right to give the new program all the necessities to succeed from the beginning.

Former Canadian Olympic Hockey star, Laura Schuler, was hired as the team’s first ever Head Coach in the Fall of 2001. Soon, thereafter, former teammate, Linda Lundrigan, was brought on as her first assistant coach. Schuler spent all of 2001-02 traveling across the region and watching prep hockey games, recruiting future Beacons to fill out the roster for the 2002-03 club campaign.

In UMass Boston’s club season, a group of young women, who would get the puck moving for UMB, competed against primarily varsity teams and also a few club squads, while posting a very respectable 9-7-1 mark. The core of that team returned for UMB’s inaugural varsity season, along with some very good newcomers to form the foundation for UMass Boston Women’s Ice Hockey team.

The Beacons entered the 2003-04 season as a member of the Eastern College Athletic Conference and competed in the East division. Since that first season, UMass Boston women’s ice hockey has experienced enormous success. The team has recorded double-digit win totals in every season to compile an all-time record of 96-80-6, including wins over nationally-ranked teams, five ECAC East tournament semifinal appearances and five home playoff engagements. The Beacons have had a player lead the nation in scoring, a pair of Conference Coaches of the Year, two League Rookie of the Year honorees and 16 All-Conference selections.

Back row: (l to r) Head Coach Laura Schuler, Molly Norton, Michelle Hart, Sabrina Monsen, Gabrielle Goodrow, Katelyn Averill, Kelly Maloney.
Front row: (l to r) Amanda Boucher, Kelly A. Rowe, Hope McCutcheon, Katie Frossard, Audrey Arnold, Katie Reardon, Shannon M. Palmer.