

CJ WOOD



Goalkeeper for Ladies 1's and U18's

Hockey Career

It was a neighbour and friend of my parents, Rachel O'Donnell, who suggested that my three siblings and I join the hockey club at Teddington. Rachel had returned to hockey herself through the Elderflowers (an England Hockey 'return to hockey' initiative). At that point none of us had any association with Teddington Hockey Club.

My older sister played in goal at the club and so, because I saw her doing it, I became interested in it too.

I joined the club as a junior and played all the way up through the Under 10's, U12's, U16's and ultimately the U18's where I currently play. I have incredibly close friendships with the girls, who I have met in the junior section. They are the best group of girls. We are all really tight as we have played together through all seasons.



I started out in defence when I was learning to play hockey and then was offered the opportunity to go in goal with all the kit. When I put it on, it felt great, and I found that I really enjoyed being in goal. There was no turning back; I had found my position. Of course, I was inspired by my sister. As a role model, she opened up my mind to playing in goal, but I took to it immediately and loved it.

Neil Guilder has been a huge influence in my hockey career. He joined THC when I was in the U10's. He took us to the Nationals at U12, which was a first for the club, and he encouraged me to start playing for the Ladies as soon as I was old enough. He's been instrumental in our collective success and my individual success.

I help coach goalkeeping to our juniors, and I can see potential in those children who are not afraid of the ball, who have good reflexes and have quick reactions. They need to be somebody who is just prepared to give it a real go. They must also be resilient. One of the biggest drawbacks playing in goal is that it you can feel totally responsible if a goal goes in. When it comes to the goalie, you are the last person in defence- there's nobody else and you feel you're playing by yourself. That part has always been tough.

I have been so lucky because I know that I have the support of my coaches, who are always brilliant, my teammates and my parents. In fact, my parents always come along to watch my matches, whether for the Ladies 1s, the U18s or school matches. My school, Surbiton High, have just played in the Nationals at the Olympic Park in Stratford. My grandparents came to watch and support me too, so it was a big family affair. I never take that level of support for granted.



When did you begin and for which teams?

I have been playing for the Ladies' section since I was 13 years old. When I started playing, I was soon playing for the 2nd team before moving into the 1's, where I have been for the past three seasons.

In that time, the 1's have been promoted to Conference level for the first time, but even more exciting, our last match of this '24-'25 season has resulted in a further promotion to Division 1. It came down to goal difference in the end, so you can imagine the pressure. We have played some very tough teams and my goal keeping skills have certainly been put to the test!



The highlight of my career so far.

I was honoured to represent England U18 and receiving my first cap has had to have been the highlight of my hockey career to date. My ambition would be to go for a place in the U21 England squad and ultimately play for Great Britain.

The three words I would use to describe Teddington are:

Community: it offers opportunities for everyone to get involved, whether parent or player, junior or adult. Juniors are encouraged to coach and to help run tournaments. We feel valued. The culture sets it apart from other clubs- that's what makes it successful. It includes everyone and that is special. For instance, my dad managed my brother's junior team and my mum went to the Elderflowers return to hockey initiative. We became a hockey family.

Inclusivity: there is a new program, Flyerz, for people with different kinds of disability. It was set up by Zoe Ardrey and our club president, Gavin Cookman. Michael O'Brien now leads it and Aimee Byrne, a former 1's player, supports him. There are lots of other volunteers too. The feedback has been really good.

Camaraderie: I have formed friendships with people of all ages. I love that age doesn't matter. We all get alongside one another because we share a community. I have made lifelong friends at the club.

My future

After university, I want to return to London and play hockey. For as long as I remain standing, I will always play hockey!