



PUBLISHER'S NOTE: This article is the first of a new series called *Living Her Dream*, where Cape Women share their stories of how they turned their passions into careers.

If you are Living Your Dream, or you know a Cape Woman who is and would like to share your story, please email [the publisher](#).

Working Her Avocation

by Mathil Mishalanie

Emily Boosahda Hopkins was an avid Cape athlete for well over a decade. She played in several town recreational programs and was a star on her school teams. Hockey, soccer, basketball – you name it, she played it.

At that time, her sights were set on becoming a sports medicine doctor. She spent years volunteering at Cape Cod Hospital. During school vacations she shadowed Dr. Micheli at the Children's Hospital Boston.

But the fates had a different career in mind for her.

She's combined her love of sports and her desire to make a difference into a successful career as the head coach of Slippery Rock University's Women's Lacrosse team.

Now Emily gets paid to do what she loves: coach young athletes, guide students on and off the field, and develop the student athlete into a successful member of the community.

A dream come true for most athletes and Emily is no exception. She loves her job and she's good at it.



Coaching, guiding, inspiring: Coach Hopkins doing what she loves best.

Emily first started playing sports as a three-year-old at Pittsburgh's West Hills YMCA. She started her long sports career as a soccer goalkeeper. After a few years of western PA sports, Emily's family moved to Cape Cod where she learned to play ice hockey for the Canal team.

Emily played goalie for her hockey team at a time when female hockey players were few and far between. Those who played, like Emily, played on the boys' team. She also tended the goal when

she played soccer for Sandwich, Dennis, Yarmouth, Dennis-Yarmouth, and Bishop Stang.

"Sports always helped me connect with new people and new situations," Emily says. In addition to hockey and soccer, she played baseball, basketball, and tennis. She also skated, rode BMX competitively, and participated in Special Olympics – both as a partner athlete and as a coach.

Emily never played lacrosse until college. Union College's Coach Bev, Linda Bevlander of Falmouth, saw Emily's soccer tapes and gave Emily a call. "How would you like to be our lacrosse goal keeper?"

The year 'round soccer player was surprised, "I've never played lacrosse; are you sure you called the right person?" Bevlander was sure. As a freshman goalkeeper, Emily played on Union College's New York state championship teams in both soccer and lacrosse.

It wasn't all smooth sailing. Emily suffered from undiagnosed Lyme Disease throughout her middle school and high school years, and when – during her collegiate sophomore summer – a coaching injury resulted in an ALC tear and surgery, her Lyme resurfaced.

Emily beat the odds and literally worked her way through the Lyme, and was able to return to the lacrosse field.

She earned both her bachelor of science (2004) and master of education in Athletic Administration and Advanced Coaching (2006) degrees from Springfield College, where she played three seasons of lacrosse and one season of soccer. She led her lacrosse team to an NCAA playoff berth in 2002 and ECAC playoff berths in 2001 and 2003.

A two-year starter as goalkeeper, Emily concluded her collegiate playing career ranked fourth in Springfield history with 346 saves. She had a school-record 8.17 goals against average in 2002, when she made 184 saves, the sixth-best mark in school history.

She discovered her love for coaching while still in college. During the 2003 and 2004 spring seasons, "Coach Boo" served as assistant coach at Minnechaug Regional (Mass.) High School, and helped coach the annual contest against the Martha's Vineyard High School team. She worked a coaching and athletic administration internship at Nichols College.

Before landing at Slippery Rock, Emily did a brief stint as head coach at Illinois' Tri-State University, establishing their women's lacrosse program and working as their assistant sports information director.

"Coach Boo" joined The Rock staff as assistant field hockey and lacrosse coach in August 2007. She took over as head coach of the young Slippery Rock team in 2008 after the program began competing in Division II.



Coach Emily Boosahda Hopkins cheers on her Slippery Rock University's Women's Lacrosse Team. Photograph by Stephanie Boosahda.

Under Emily's lead, the lacrosse team recorded five wins during the 2009 season and topped that mark with seven wins, including the first Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference (PSAC) win, during the 2010 campaign.

Her experiences along the way to The Rock shape her coaching both on and off the field. As part of

Emily's coaching, during the shorter fall season, Emily, now Coach Hopkins, travels the country recruiting.

According to assistant Sports Information Director, Jon Holtz, "Hopkins' recruiting efforts shined through during the 2009 season when freshmen led the team in scoring ... breaking the school's single-season scoring record with 57 goals."

Another solid recruiting year in 2010 saw three freshmen in the starting lineup, bolstering what would become the best team at SRU since the program returned in 2007.

In both 2009 and 2010, Coach Hopkins led her players to All-Conference honors. The postseason accomplishments reached a new level in 2010, when defender Bri Dishong earned All-Region honors.

Coach Hopkins also tutored goalie Ashley Winkelspecht, who shattered the SRU career record for saves. Winkelspecht now owns the PSAC single-season record for saves.

Consistently increasing the number of wins yearly, Emily has moved an initial 0 – 17 team into a three-year career 12 – 39 record.

She isn't the first college student to change her major along the way to graduation. She calls upon her hospital volunteering experiences and pre-med / physical therapy studies when she's coaching, but is very pleased she switched majors and enjoys her work as a professional coach.

In her spare time, Emily enjoys watching and assisting her husband, Kyle, who teaches Physical Education and coaches several soccer club teams.

They live in Slippery Rock with their chocolate lab, Cooper and their twin cats, Bo and Boots, but they often return to the Cape to cheer on nephews Colin and Mitchell as they begin their own sporting adventures playing soccer, hockey, lacrosse, and baseball.

Coach Hopkins can be contacted at emily.hopkins@sru.edu.

Mathil Mishalanie lives and works on Cape Cod.