



Amanda Strous Left a Legacy at Shippensburg

By Matt Dougherty, NFHCA Director of Communications

CHANDLER, Ariz. – While Shippensburg field hockey moves on with a strong season on the field in 2016, hearts are heavy within the Raiders’ program after the tragic loss of former player and coach Amanda Strous this summer.

Strous passed away on June 18 at the age of 27, but not before leaving a legacy of love and kindness on all who she came into contact with.

“Amanda touched everyone she met and she was concerned and cared about people right away,” said Shippensburg Head Coach Bertie Landes. “She was able to reach each every one of the players in their own niche and she knew what to say and how to say it. She loved the kids and really cared for them and it really showed in what she did.”

What she did for the Shippensburg field hockey program was immeasurable, both as a player and a coach. Strous played for the Raiders from 2007-10, and graduated in the spring of 2011 with a bachelor of science in Psychology and a minor in Art. She played 79 games in her career at Shippensburg, totaling 24 goals and 13 assists for 61 points. Strous scored 11 goals and had five assists as a senior in 2010 while helping her team to the national championship game as a captain.

Strous returned to Shippensburg as an assistant coach in 2012 while also working towards her master’s degree. In 2013, she was the primary assistant on a Shippensburg squad which won its first-ever Division II National Championship.

Landes recalls the key role Strous played on the championship run by instilling her optimistic spirit into the squad.

“In our championship season we lost our PSAC championship in a close game,” Landes said. “She took the kids in the locker room and just motivated them positively and it really led to our championship. Her attitude of being positive just really turned their defeat into a victory.”

Landes continued, "Amanda just had a love for the game, she just blossomed on the field. As a coach she had a coach's mind and really encouraged the kids in a positive way. She knew the game and knew how to coach it well. She gave her heart to our program. She gave everything she could in every way to each player."

Landes saw Strous develop both on and off the field during her years at Shippensburg.

"She came in as a typical high school kid, but she bought into the team philosophy," Landes said. "She didn't really start for me until her junior year. Not only did her own skill improve, but she helped those around her become better. It was never about her, it's always about what I can do for other people."

Strous earned her master's degree in mental health counseling from Shippensburg in 2015, and later moved to Charlotte, North Carolina where she worked as a collegiate counselor at Central Piedmont Community College. She was engaged to her longtime boyfriend Cory McCleaf with a wedding planned for July 30.

"She was within our counseling program and eventually wanted to combine the coaching aspect with it," Landes said. "That was her forte, and she just wanted to mold them into the traits that would be successful in the classroom. She wanted to take that a step further and to be successful on the field too."

Even though she passed at a young age, Strous was able to impact the lives of those around her with her caring nature.

"It was just amazing how many lives she touched," Landes said. "In her short 27 years it was her personal heart for people that just touched everyone in so many ways. She was just alive, her motto was "Live. Laugh. Love." It was how can I help you and how are you doing, and she wanted to know all about the team and what I was going through. She sincerely wanted to be there for you and know how you were. She was just a special young person."

Strous is present in the thoughts and minds of Shippensburg field hockey coaches and student-athletes this season, and the program has dedicated its campaign to her memory. The players wear a heart on their stick that says "22 fly high" in honor of Strous' jersey number, with that uniform number also with the team on the bench each game. The team also has purple stick grips to represent Strous' favorite color, and their huddle always ends with a cheer for "22".

The program has already hosted a handful of days to honor Strous. The Alumni Game on Aug. 20 was the first formal event for the Raiders after Strous' passing, and her former teammates and coaches remembered her throughout the game. Former players Emily Fulton and Katie Shoop both spoke to the crowd along with Landes. McCleaf applied a No. 22 sticker to the 2013 national championship banner, and a scrapbook of memories was provided to Strous' family. Shippensburg also held a "Purple Out" for the Sept. 24 home game against Seton Hill, where a pre-game ceremony included Strous' parents providing a check toward the creation of a scholarship in her name. Through it all the team has experienced great success on the field, holding a 10-1 record and ranking among the top spots in the Penn Monto/NFHCA Division II Coaches Poll all season.

"Amanda left us a legacy that our team has grasped onto and they want to leave that same type of legacy in honor of her," Landes said. "I think they have bonded very quickly. Coming into preseason they

really dedicated themselves to that legacy of caring for each other and keeping that feeling of a team to move us forward and to help shine her light to others. They just want to do their best and honor her.”

While the Shippensburg student-athletes and coaches have been there to comfort each other as well as Strous’ family and friends, they have also received support from other field hockey programs around the country.

“I just want to thank the field hockey community,” Landes said. “I had so many emails from coaches and programs. It’s just so gratifying to know that they also want to carry on her traditions.”