



Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

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Pioneering NU Women's Athletics: Coach Joan Mussmacher



Norwich University's journey in women's intercollegiate athletics owes much to the dedication and passion of one remarkable individual, Coach Joan Mussmacher, affectionately known as Coach Mush.

Before Norwich University merged with Vermont College in 1972, "VC" offered several club sports to its female student athletes. Among them were softball, basketball, gymnastics, track, cheerleading, and field hockey.

Arriving at Vermont College in 1959 to become the chairperson of the Department of Physical Education, Coach Mussmacher coached the field hockey and basketball teams for 13 years. After the merger with Norwich, she was responsible for establishing women's field hockey and basketball at NU, thus launching Norwich's women's intercollegiate athletic program.

Coach Mussmacher was the Assistant Director of Athletics for Women from 1978-84 and coached four sports. As the head field hockey coach for 13 years, her teams produced several Northeast College Field Hockey Association All-Stars.



She also coached the women's basketball team for two seasons and was an assistant coach for the softball team. In 1989, she re-started the men's tennis program after a 50-year absence, achieving an impressive dual match record of 18-4 over three years.

Respected across the region, Coach Mussmacher represented Vermont at the First National Institute for Girl's and Women's Sports in 1964. In 1970, she received the Service Award from the Vermont Association of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation. In 1990, she was honored with the first ever Norwich University Alumni Association Foundation Award from Vermont College, and in 1994 she was inducted into the Norwich Athletics Hall of Fame.

Retiring in 2000, Coach Mussmacher's love for Norwich University persisted. She could often be found on Sabine Field, volunteering in the Maroon and Gold Athletic Association tent, selling items to raise funds for the athletic programs she held dear.

Coach Joan Mussmacher stands as a trailblazer, shaping the foundation of women's athletics at Norwich University. Her legacy lives on through the thriving sports programs and the countless student-athletes she inspired over the years.

Records documenting women's history and experience at Norwich are available through the University Archives. <https://archives.norwich.edu/>

In 1972, Vermont College merged with Norwich University. 2024 marks the **50th anniversary** of the first women to live on the Northfield campus and the first to join the NU Corps of Cadets—two years prior to the US Service Academies!

Share your Norwich experience in the Women Kicking Glass Oral History Project!

Call 1-866-456-1993 or email customerservice@publishingconcepts.com for a personalized link to share your story and photos.

The deadline for contributions is January 19, 2024.