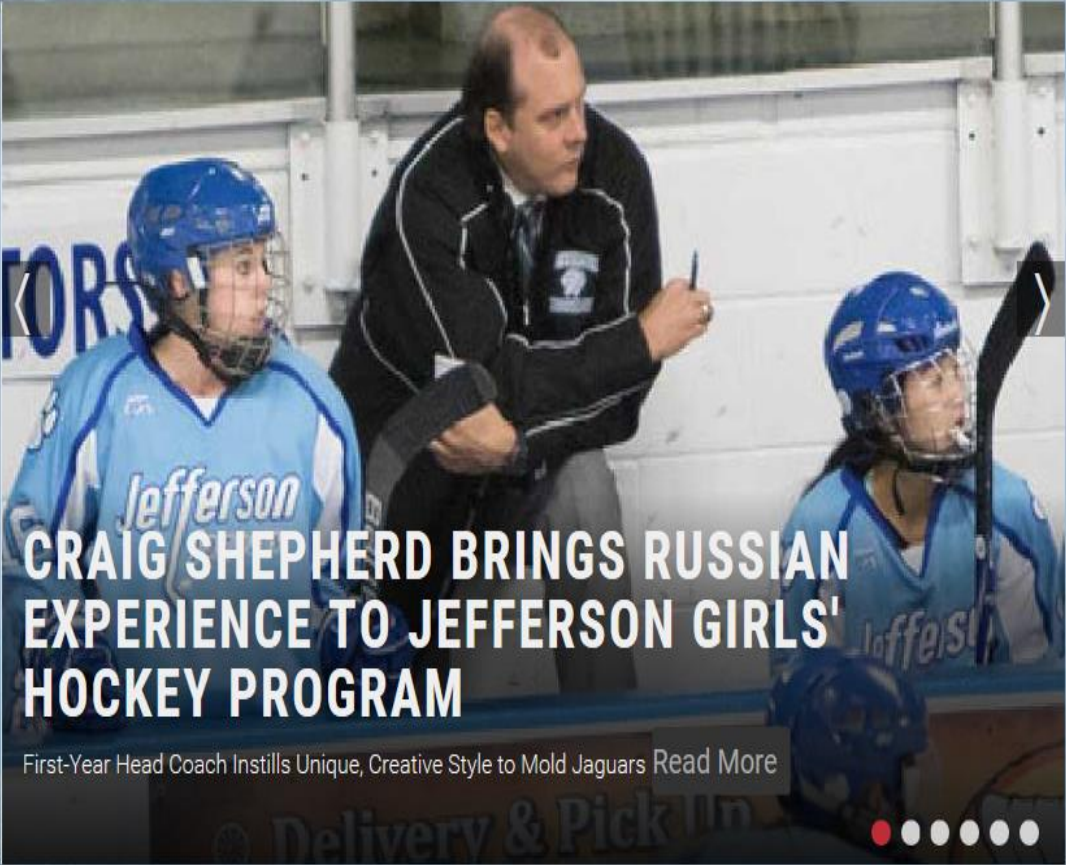


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# CRAIG SHEPHERD BRINGS RUSSIAN EXPERIENCE TO JEFFERSON GIRLS' HOCKEY PROGRAM

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First-year Head Coach Craig Shepherd brings a unique and broad perspective to the Bloomington Jefferson girls hockey team.

Shepherd's global experience includes time both as a player and coach at various levels. He is a USA Hockey Level 4 certified coach and a National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist. Shepherd has coached for 21 years and has experience at the high school, junior and professional levels. Most recently in Minnesota, Shepherd was an assistant coach in the Burnsville High School boys program. He was selected Section 2AA Assistant Coach of the Year for the 2014-2015 season.

But what really stands out on Shepherd's resume is the distinction of being the first-ever, non-Russian player to play with Dynamo Moscow in the former Soviet Elite League (now known as the KHL).

“When people remember the hockey teams of the former Soviet Union, they remember teams that played with unmatched skill, speed, conditioning and creative playmaking,” said Shepherd. “Not since the fall of the former Soviet Union has the world of hockey witnessed anything that compares to the way the players on those teams played the game. This, in turn, has led many people to wonder exactly how they did it. How did they train to get those results?”



*Once per week, the Jefferson varsity team is coached by a Russian chess expert. The practice helps the team learn the chess thought process of visualizing the opponent's next move. Credit: Jon Fasching.*

Shepherd has incorporated many of the ideas and philosophies that he learned in Russia and leveraged them in coaching the Jefferson girls hockey team. The practice has brought discipline, excitement, education and charitable giving to the program. For example:

Each Wednesday the varsity team is coached by a Russian chess expert to learn the chess thought process of visualizing one's next move and then how to translate that skill on the ice.

Shepherd, who is fluent in Russian, taught the girls a Russian cheer (meaning "hard work") that the girls yell together before each game.

Once per week the team skates to high energy music while they fly through drills in time frames similar to shifts on ice in a game, to build endurance and conditioning.

Shepherd has also taught the importance of giving back. The varsity team will be visiting the Ronald McDonald House in December to play floor hockey with the patients and deliver a full set of floor hockey sticks and nets to the kids.

The team has also incorporated weight vests into their practices to help conditioning and strength.

Coach Shepherd runs a dry-land training program in the summer that he developed based on his training in Russia which concentrates on agility and endurance.

Team meals after each home game are sponsored and organized by parents and help the team build unity.

“My job as an educator is to instill in my players the right core values and in doing so ensure success in their lives after they are done playing hockey,” said Shepherd. “My classroom may be an ice rink, or perhaps an open field, and my tools may be a hockey stick and a puck, or, a tree and a rock. I know that by instilling these core values into my players, not only will they become better people, but success on the ice will follow as well.”



*Credit: Cyndi Nightengale.*