ders (and then some) above the net. Goalies that tall are a rarity in the women’s game. “I’m closer to six-three with my helmet and skates on,” she says. “I sometimes forget that I’m intimidating when I’m on the ice.”

Throughout her freshman year with the Crimson, Reed proved a mostly unsolvable puzzle for opponents. She made 927 saves altogether, setting a program record, and in 17 of the 27 games she played, she stopped at least 30 shots. Three games were shutouts. Her .940 save percentage led all freshman collegiate goaltenders by a wide margin, and she finished the season ranked number three in the country, with a goals-against average of just 2.18. This season, she—and the team—came out playing similarly strongly.

“It’s nice to know that if somebody goes by you, she’ll make the save,” says defensemen and senior co-captain Ali Peper. “I mean, Lindsay’s special... When she’s on and rolling, she brings a totally different energy to the team.”

“She’s a gamer. That’s what I’d call her,” says sophomore forward Anne Bloomer, who was also Reed’s friend and teammate on the U.S. National under-18 squad (and whose father, Andrew Bloomer ’88, played hockey at Harvard). “She’s always very dialed in, very, very focused. Everything she does has purpose.”

The energy and intensity that Reed’s teammates describe are impossible to miss on the ice: the diving toe saves, the vaulting leaps, the flash of her glove—or stick, or whole body—across the mouth of the goal.

“Plus, her consistency,” says Katey Stone, the Landry Family head coach. “She’s very reliable back there.” That’s one of the things that first prompted Stone to recruit her. At 19, Reed plays like a seasoned goalie. Part of that is vision and perspective: in high school, during the months when she wasn’t competing on the ice, she played field hockey—not as a goalie, but as a forward. The experience helped broaden her game in both sports, she says. “When you’re in goal, you realize what the forwards want you to do”—opponents as well as teammates. “And you can use that.”

But for good goalies, confidence can be as important as vision or skill. “For me, mental toughness is the biggest thing,” Reed says. “Because you’re back there by yourself the entire time—you almost never get to go to the bench with the others, and so you don’t get the same team culture throughout the game.” It’s important, she says, not to think too much, not to dwell on mistakes or missed chances, but instead to just let discipline and instinct and trust in her teammates guide her. Communicating helps, too, she adds—by which she means yelling down the ice at the top of her lungs. “Talking to your teammates, even if they can’t hear you from all the way back there in the goal, is really important. I like to think that you, when they pass the puck, it’s because of my yelling, because I told them to,” she says, with a laugh. “I try to be a quarterback back there.”

This season, Harvard had its best start in more than a decade. After blazing through Dartmouth, Brown, and Yale, the Crimson upset seventh-ranked Princeton 6-2 on their own ice in early November, a game in which Reed stopped 40 shots and Bloomer, one of the top goal-scorers in the country, scored twice; junior forward Becca Gilmore, a nationwide leader in assists, had four. The following day, Harvard won in overtime against Quinnipiac. “That one felt good,” Peper says. “In my time at Harvard, it’s been hard for us to win once the game goes to overtime.”

This season’s team is deep. “Lindsay’s a huge part of it,” Stone says, “but it’s a complementary effort.” In the Princeton game, nine players tallied points on the stat sheet (recording either a goal or an assist). Peper says she, too, feels a level of depth and strength on the team this season that propels her own play. “When you’re playing well, you can usually feel it, like your body feels different,” she explains. “One thing I pay attention to is passing—if I’m hitting people’s sticks, if I’m setting people up right.” Another is her gap—the space between herself and an opposing forward: “You know if you’ve challenged people, if you were able to take the puck from them and turn it the other way.” Reed’s goal-tending, she adds, often makes those other plays possible. “With Lindsay out there, you can take some chances,” Peper says. “You never want to hang her out to dry, but knowing she’s there allows you to try some things.”

Harvard’s first goal in the New Year’s Eve game against Boston College looked something like that. A minute and a half into the first period, the Eagles made a rush in the Crimson’s zone; Reed deflected one shot and then another, and then swallowed a third in her glove. In the ensuing faceoff, Peper came away with the puck and, sidestepping a defender behind Reed’s net, bounced it up the ice toward freshman forward Shannon Hollands, who made a pass to Bloomer, already sprinting ahead for a breakaway. When Bloomer lobbed the puck into the Eagles’ net, there were cheers and hugs on the ice, then a string of high-fives from the bench. Reed skated toward center ice to tap the goal-scorer’s glove in congratulations, before gliding back to her own net and crouching into position, eyes forward, shoulders squared, ready for the next shot. —LYDIA LYLE GIBSON

“The Ideal Sheet”

Matt Gilmore sits straight up on the Zamboni’s elevated seat, his left hand guiding the steering wheel, his right controlling the water spurting out the machine’s back. He leans leftward, his eyes trained on the few inches of space between the vehicle and the boards. Hitting the wall with the five-ton machine would be one of the worst things he could do, but his 14 years of experience ease the concern. “Once you’ve done the pattern for long enough, you can basically do it with your eyes closed,” he says. But Gilmore’s focus is palpable as he handles the Zamboni; a self-described “social butterfly” and popular figure at the Bright-Landry Hockey Center, he’s noticeably less talkative behind the wheel. He doesn’t even seem to notice the half-dozen people who have gathered to observe the legendary vehicle in action.

The quality of the ice affects the quality of the game. Bad ice—chipped, slushy, sticky—can lead to slow skating, errant passing, sloppy attacking, and even broken bones. Highly variable ice conditions are a problem that has plagued the National Hockey League for decades. Some of the world’s best players find their speed and skill squandered on rough ice. Quick, precise exchanges are easiest when the ice is level, smooth, and cold (but not too cold). On a Thursday afternoon, rink manager Scott Anderson and Zamboni operator Gilmore perform “ice maintenance.” During this three-hour period, they restore the rink to ideal conditions, repairing any spots affected by the gradual wear-and-tear of hockey, figure skating, open-skate sessions, and even broomball—each of which leave different “scratch patterns.” Figure skating produces divots and holes, but hockey produces a more even shave of the ice, with the most wear in the rink’s center. Anderson and Gilmore begin by drilling 23 holes into the ice at specific locations, to
measure its depth. If a spot’s too high, they’ll shave it with the Zamboni. If it’s low, they can “flood” the area with cold wash water. Anderson, who’s been working at Harvard since 1978—as the head men’s lacrosse coach between 1988 and 2007, director of athletic facilities, and assistant director of athletics for facilities and operations—knows how high the ice should be kept at each spot. Because the concrete base beneath the rink is not completely even throughout, the ice thickness ranges from about one to one-and-a-half inches. Within the concrete, glycol-filled pipes keep the surface stable and quickly freeze any added water to between 20 and 22 degrees, the hockey coaches’ preferred temperature. Figure skaters tend to prefer a temperature in the mid-to-high twenties for softer landings, but colder ice makes it easier for hockey players to push off and fly down the ice, and creates less slush. A temperature in the teens could mean brittle, easily fractured ice. Temperature in the teens could mean brittle, easily fractured ice.

The Zamboni revolutionized ice resurfacing, cutting the total time to around 10 minutes, and removing the need for a team of dedicated squeegee men. It’s become so popular that Zamboni (the name of inventor Frank Zamboni’s company) has become the de facto name of the machine for those unfamiliar with its less catchy, technical name: ice resurfacer.

The machine itself is a picture of efficiency. A long, heavy, razor-sharp blade shaves a thin layer—typically about one-thirty-second of an inch—from the ice’s surface. A horizontal auger gathers the shavings and pumps them into a vertical auger, which sends them into the snow tank. Cold water is fed from a wash-water tank to the “conditioner,” which rinses the ice as dirty water is vacuumed, filtered, and returned to the tank. Finally, warm water is delivered through a pipe, and spread by a cloth towel across the floor, which gives the ice its glossy, even coat. “The ice resurfacer is really a brilliant machine,” says Zamboni operator Joe Marrero. He takes the responsibility of driving it seriously: “I’ve been here for 14 years. It doesn’t matter how much you perfect it. I get anxiety every single time.”

On a Friday night two hours before a women’s hockey game against Quinnipiac, Marrero, Gilmore, and a small group of others prepare for action. Once all the youth-hockey athletes clear off the ice, two men remove the goals, and Marrero backs the firetruck-red Zamboni around a tight corner, ducking his head under a metal gate as he approaches the ice. He heads straight for the boards, angling himself parallel to them, a fingertip away. “He’s about as flush as he can be,” Gilmore tells me from behind the glass. “Joe’s been doing it for a long time, so he has a big range.” As he slows down on tight turns, he decreases the rate of water delivery, making sure the machine’s speed variation doesn’t affect the evenness of the ice. Marrero hopes to hit the sweet spot: a nine-to-10-minute ride, with clean passes (not much overlapping), that uses about two-thirds of the machine’s water and fills up about three-quarters of the hundred-cubic-foot snow tank. This time, he nails it. “The ideal sheet,” he announces as he pulls into the garage. “Three-quarters.”

The crew stays vigilant as the game continues. Commercial breaks and time-outs are a good time for a quick sweep in front of the benches and goals. When a Quinnipiac player tumbles into the Harvard net, knocking it out of place, Gilmore runs on to re-anchor it in two flexible Marsh goal pegs. The 15 minutes between periods present the greatest stakes. As Marrero sits in a back room, filled with extra clothing, shoes, and boots, Gilmore sticks his head in and nods, indicating the second period’s end. About two minutes later, when the “Chuck-a-Puck” challenge is over and the crowd’s rubber pucks have been cleared off the ice, Gilmore nods again and Marrero climbs atop the Zamboni. This time he completes his rounds in a tight seven and a half minutes. Given the time restrictions, it’s a good shave.

After 60 minutes, Quinnipiac comes out on top, and the ice, thankfully, has played no part in the outcome. Most of the crew leaves, and after about 14 hours straight at the rink, Marrero does too. Gilmore, the last man standing, is proud of their work tonight. “For me it’s fun,” he says, “It’s an honor. You’re being trusted to make ice for a nationally televised game. I know it’s not a big deal, but it is in my eyes.” He takes out the Zamboni one last time. The nine-minute ideal-sheet time comes and goes, and he’s still on the ice, traveling in neat concentric ovals. As he pulls back into the garage, he explains that he did two ices in a row, filling the whole tank completely with snow. I check my stop-watch: 18 minutes—perfect timing for two flawless, glistening sheets.

~JACOB SWEET

Matt “Happy” Gilmore smiles behind the wheel. Zamboni-driving takes focus, but Gilmore says that he loves waving to children in the crowd and making their day.
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