



Hockey family lives at the rink

BRIAN CALDWELL
RECORD STAFF

WATERLOO REGION

Forget about skating, shooting, stickhandling or butterfly-style goaltending.

The skill that makes hockey tick in the Wang family -- the thing that makes it possible at all -- is meticulous time management.

With eight of nine kids playing minor hockey this season -- Yo, 16, Yi, 14, Maggie, 13, Maddie, 11, Michelle, 10, John, 8, James, 7, and Monica, 6 -- there is no other way to pull it off.

"I've got to have it down to 15-minute intervals," said father Dave, the scheduler and chief driver. "Everything has to run like clockwork."

One recent weeknight, four kids in the Elmira family were supposed to be on the ice at four different times from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

With his wife, Jodie, working, Dave arranged rides with other obliging parents, made several trips back and forth to rinks himself and managed to get dinner ready between runs.

"I'm sure 10 years from now I'll be saying, 'Oh man, what am I going to do with all this spare time?' "

Home base is a former bed and breakfast the family moved into from a suburban Kitchener house this summer, in part because it is only a block from the Elmira arena.

The kids can now walk to many of their games and practices, easing what had become an almost impossible juggling act.

But keeping track of their comings and goings, plus getting them all there on time, is still quite a challenge.

Four of the kids play on travelling rep teams. The two oldest girls -- goalies Yi and Maggie -- play for multiple girls and boys teams, with a ringette squad also in the mix.

The nerve centre for all that activity is a BlackBerry crammed with contact information and a running calendar of ice times -- usually about 20 hours a week.

Dave, an electrical and computer engineering professor at the University of Waterloo, was wearing it on his hip, as usual, as he watched Yi and Maggie play a recent afternoon game for their Elmira high school team.

"Everything has to come through this," he said. "I think we should be a BlackBerry commercial at some point."

Jodie, a family doctor with a cosmetic laser clinic and a small general practice in Waterloo, joined him in the stands after starting work early to get there on time.

"I hate missing their games," she said, a blanket across her lap for warmth. "There's nothing I love more than sitting with a Tim Hortons and watching my kids play."

Exactly how hockey season got this hectic is a matter of both faith and fate.

Devout Catholics, the couple put the size of their family in God's hands, Dave said, and "just got blessed over and over again."

Their first child, Yo, took to hockey when he was young, then passed the game down the line like the coughs and colds that regularly make the rounds. The commitment got more serious as the family grew and several of the kids moved up to play at competitive levels.

They soon learned to tie their own skates, take responsibility for their equipment and see their parents rushing off in opposite directions.

"It just sort of happened," Dave said. "We really did fall into this."

Adding to the organized chaos is the fact that the six youngest kids are home-schooled.

"It's crazy, but I wouldn't change it," Maggie said. "When I go to somebody's house and everybody stops talking when the phone rings or something, I'm weirded out."

Neither parent has played the game or can skate to speak of, but it helps that they've both been passionate Montreal Canadiens fans since



Record staff

childhood.

Whoever happens to be home watches the team's games on TV -- in French to get the full experience.

Next hockey season will be even trickier when the youngest in the family, Jordan, 4, takes to the ice as well.

But the Wangs should have plenty of practice by then at keeping yet another ball in the air -- all nine kids are already signed up for minor soccer this summer.

bcaldwell@therecord.com

The **R**ecord.com

<http://news.therecord.com/article/463999>



© Copyright 2007 Metroland Media Group Ltd. All rights reserved. The reproduction, modification, distribution, transmission or republication of any material from www.thespec.com is strictly prohibited without the prior written permission of Metroland Media Group Ltd.

