

THE HOCKEY MOM

By Christie Casciano Burns

Being A Goalie Or A Goalie Parent Takes A Special Breed

FORMER NHL GOALTENDER Arturs Irbe compared the position to a minefield where if you make a mistake, somebody gets blown up.

Hall-of-Fame puckstopper Tony Esposito eloquently described the pressure a goalie faces this way: “The only ones that don’t worry are the ones too dumb to know what’s happening to them.”

And legendary hockey writer Jim Taylor described goalies as “three sandwiches shy of a picnic.”

Ouch. That’s no way to talk about the most crucial member of a hockey team. Let’s show a little respect.

The challenges of the position on the ice can be equally difficult for goalie parents in the stands. It’s not easy standing behind your little puckstopper. With the right support and nurturing, you may find goaltending reveals a lot about your child and yourself.

Here’s a little advice to goalie parents from goalie parents:

“I know a lot of goalie parents sit off to the side or alone. I like to sit near center ice with my friends and cheer for everyone. It keeps my nerves in check.”

– Kari Walock, Faribault, Minn.

“Once my son got to high school, I started doing announcing and score keeping. The bonus was making sure there was an accurate shot count for both goalies on the scoresheet. (lol) They’re born with something inside that draws them to that crazy position. Enjoy the ride and invest in industrial-sized containers of Tums.”

– Roni Kilmark, Michigan

“You’re either the hero or the zero.’ That’s what another goalie parent told me. You gotta be able to roll with it and support your goalie.”

– LaJeanna Eckhoff, Detroit Lakes, Mich.



Watch your goalie as a fan, not as a statistician or a coach. Watch from a neutral position in the rink where they can’t see or hear you.”

“Don’t forget to tell them to have fun, and that you love them and you’re proud of them. You never know which game is going to be their last.”

– Todd Bartoszkiewicz, Rochester, Mich.

“When my son was little, his great papa told me, ‘Don’t you dare stand in the way of his dreams because he can do anything he sets his heart to.’ My son has that on his goalie helmet with a portrait of his great papa and embraces the motto.”

– Melissa Parrish-Barr, Wiggins, Colo.

“The stress levels are crazy. I once clocked up 83 minutes of exercise on my fitness watch sitting on my bum during a tournament because my heart rate went so high. But enjoy the ride while it lasts.”

– Linda Aitcheson, Belfast, Ireland

“We always introduced ourselves to the other team’s goalie parents and offered words of

encouragement. It’s a lonely fraternity, but rewarding. When our son stood in net after his mom lost her battle with cancer, many parents from the team acknowledged her to him and let me know how admirable it was that he was there. Hockey helped heal him.”

– Jay Pelligrino, Martinsburg, W.Va.

“Watch your goalie as a fan, not as a statistician or a coach. Watch from a neutral position in the rink where they can’t see or hear you. If you’re standing behind them or tapping on the glass to give them tips, it will only increase their stress.”

– Steve Thompson, USA Hockey ADM Goaltending Manager

Dealing with the highs and lows of goalkeeping is no picnic, but the position reveals something unique about those who play it. They are brave enough and strong enough to navigate those mine fields when most others shy away. ☆