

Column - Hockey is life - a cool life

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By: **Greta Petrich, Staff Reporter**, Alexandria Echo Press

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Even though we live in Osakis, a town where basketball is number one, wrestling comes in a close second and hockey doesn't exist, it's still our sport.

So we drive to Alexandria – gasp – three days a week to get our son to practice.

Of course this doesn't come without a lot of grief from those who don't consider hockey the sport of choice.

The response varies...

Hockey is so expensive.

It's so violent.

It's such a long season.

Why hockey? There are plenty of other sports.

I could ramble on about camaraderie, teamwork and fitness – all valid points of why hockey is a great sport.

Instead of getting into all that I'll just say what no one wants to admit – hockey is simply a cool sport, literally and figuratively.

When you put on all those pads, skates and the big hockey helmet you're a couple inches taller, with bigger shoulders and a bit of anonymity. For an 8-year-old that's like becoming a super hero.

Now let's compare hockey to football, a well-accepted sport, and add ice, a stick and some skates. It takes a brave little boy to join a sport where your feet are always two inches off the ground – a ground that's frozen solid – and your opponents have sticks.

Super hero, bravery, that's two points for coolness.

While many think hockey is just a bunch of guys skating around starting fights, it is so much more.

Like every sport there are positions, plays and rules. Just ask my son's grandparents who know absolutely nothing about the sport. Nonetheless they scream and cheer the kids on as best they can. We've already added three copies of Hockey for Dummies to our Christmas shopping list to help them out next year.

Getting a goal means quick thinking – how many people can calculate angles while being pursued by five of your opponents – who, just to remind you, are carrying sticks.

It is a complicated sport that requires quick thinking, agility, cooperation and endurance.

Being a good hockey player doesn't revolve around your size. Just ask my son who faced off last week against a boy who towered over him by at least eight inches.

Yes, hockey is expensive up front. Yet it's one of the most bang-for-your-buck sports out there. Most sports seasons last six weeks or so compared to the six-month hockey season. Some quick number crunching with a fellow hockey mom calculating fees versus time on the ice/field resulted in a difference of about \$6.

When it comes down to it, we don't get to choose our child's passion. What we do decide is whether to fuel that fire or stomp it out.

In our case, that fire involves spending our weekends sitting around a chilly ice rink. I've found you can be fashionable in winter wear with an excuse to buy trendy boots and accessorize with pretty scarves.

Supporting my son's interest is definitely a family priority. We travel many weekends to away games, but always as a family. We've built an ice rink in our yard, where we all skate together. We watch hockey on television and collect hockey cards.

Has hockey become our life? Some days, it seems like it, and what a cool life it is.