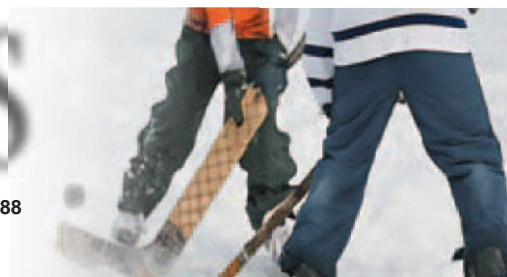


SPORTS

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My parents are my greatest coaches



There were two people in my life that I considered to be my greatest sport coaches; and yet, not once were either of them behind my team's bench.

The first was my father, Colin. He grew up in Medicine Hat in an age where team sports were not organized. They were lucky to see a parent at the field watching the pick-up game of baseball that would last until the street lights turned on. Every child got there on their own by walking or bumming a ride on the handle bars of another teammate's bike.

They were there because they wanted to be. No one forced them.

Today, there are many opinion articles and even research studies talking about the professionalism of kids' sport. That for various reasons sport has started to lose its simplicity and children are to act in a world created by the adults around them.

I don't know if my father consciously realized this societal shift was occurring but the biggest thing he engrained in me through my athletic career was that sport needed to be fun. It sounds so simple, but yet is such a hard goal to manage when the pressures of those in the sport system surrounding you seem to be asking for something different.

So how did my father fix this? Every day he kicked me out of the house. He dropped me off at the outdoor rink. We would go to the soccer field or ball diamond. Summers were spent at the swimming pool and golf course. His goal was that I learn as many sports as I could so that when I grew up I could always be active and continue to love sport.

My second greatest sport coach was my mother, Christine, also raised here in Medicine Hat. My mother was possibly one of the most influential people in my life as she helped to shape my belief that women belong in sport. It was not just that they belong in sport, but that they belong in any sport they chose, including what some may call male-dominated sports.

She played hockey, soccer, football and basketball just to name a few. When I took my first Hockey Alberta coaching course at the age of 15, guess who sat in the chair beside me also taking hers? My mom.

Why is this a big deal? According to University of Toronto professor Bruce Kidd, as of 2015 there are fewer women in coaching positions at every level in Canada than there were 20 years ago. My mother essentially influenced me to go against the grain of what was happening around me. To this day, I still attend coaching seminars and clinics where I am the only female in the room. It is my goal as a female leader to help do what my mother did for me and through example teach other women that they also belong in sport.

My parents taught me lessons that national organizations are now working tirelessly to instill in the minds of youth and their parents. Canadian Sport for Life (canadiansportforlife.ca) is a group of global experts who focus on long term athlete development and physical literacy. Remember when I said my father tried to teach me every sport under the sun so I could be active for life? Well that in essence is the goal. The hours he spent with me at the park teaching me how to catch, throw and run — you've got it, that's physical literacy.

The organization I associate with my mother is the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport (caaws.ca). This organization was founded in 1981 and has played a major role in getting closer to their vision of creating a Canadian sport and physical activity system that is equal and fair for girls and women. I feel very fortunate that I was born into the family I was and realize that not everyone will have had the same experiences that I did. But, I want people to know that there are organizations out there that focus on ensuring that any individual has the resources to become a leader in sport.

All you have to do is take the first step.

Tara Chisolm Training Matters



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