

Pre-Natal League a Hit With Hockey Moms-to-Be

by Con Chapman

MEDFORD, Mass. Peggy and Dave Finnerty admit they're hockey nuts, having spent countless hours carting their two sons to games at the break of dawn. "It's what we love to do," says Peggy, who sports a Boston Bruins scrunchy around her pony tail as she watches a practice at Anthony LoConte Rink in this blue-collar suburb.

"I'm five, but I've been playing for six years."

Peggy is expecting, and the Finnertys are doing everything they can to make sure their newest child gets a head start in the highly competitive world of youth hockey. Every Tuesday and Thursday, Peggy straps on her pads and takes to the ice with other pregnant women in what is believed to be the world's first pre-natal hockey league.

"The contractions are about one shift apart."

“We figure if we can give our kid an extra nine months of ice time, it will pay off when tryouts for the travel team roll around in a couple of years,” says Dave, who played goalie for Bridgewater-Raynham High School. “You want to be prepared for those drills where they skate around the orange traffic cones.”

The parental urge to impart skills to offspring still in the womb began with the “Baby Mozart” movement a few years back. Researchers claimed that children exposed to classical music during their mothers' pregnancies had higher IQs than those whose parents listened to heavy metal and hard rock. Zell Miller, then-governor of Georgia, sponsored legislation to give classical music to every expectant mother in the state, but the program was cancelled when numerous couples tried to exchange the cassettes for Shania Twain tapes.



Shania Twain and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: He does spend more time on his hair.

Pediatricians are skeptical that pre-natal hockey does much to produce future Bobby Orrs. “Hockey requires a high degree of hand-eye coordination that you won't get just bouncing around in your mother's amniotic fluid,” said Dr. Pamela Wysbard of the Brigham & Women's Hospital in Boston. Wysbard said

the possibility of injury to the fetus greatly outweighed any benefit that pre-natal hockey could produce.

“Neutral zone trap!”

“We discourage women from checking while pregnant, unless you're in a neutral-zone trap. There's too much risk of a penalty, and then the other team gets a power play.”

“Deke him, Kyle!”

But Dave Finnerty isn't buying it. “Last year Kyle, our 12-year old, got to the state finals and we lost in overtime when a kid from Melrose blew by him on a breakaway. That never woulda happened if he'd been out there with his mom before he was born,” Finnerty claims.

And how old was Kyle when he began playing hockey? “Four,” Finnerty says ruefully. “He got a late start.”

