

EDITORIAL

It's a long, hard and expensive road to the big league, and once you get there the pressure to perform can be enormous.

Pay disparity is ice ceiling for women's hockey



PETER BLACK

NHL play-offs are around the corner and it's an exciting and nerve-racking time for fans whose teams have not yet locked up a date for the dance. It's also an exciting time for players, particularly rookies, as they close in on performance bonuses that kick in as they hit certain targets.

For example, let's pick a random player from the Toronto Maple Leafs class of 2016-17. Nineteen-year-old Auston Matthews stands to make \$2 million on top of his \$925,000 entry level contract if he stays in the league's top 10 point-getters at the end of the season. That would be in addition to the half million

in bonuses he has already made for scoring 20 goals and being named to an NHL all-star team.

We don't bring up these numbers to begrudge the success of a young superstar or other exceptional players. The opposite, in fact. Making it to the NHL is a very, very long shot, as it is in all professional sports. A frequently referenced study of the Ontario hockey hotbed found that only 0.02 percent of young players will go on to have a "career" in the NHL, defined as the 400-game minimum to qualify for the player pension plan.

It's a long, hard and expensive road to the big league, and once you get there the pressure to perform can be enormous. But still, the rewards are there and they are undeniably substantial. If a player invests wisely, he could very well be set for life.

Then there are the women. With the possible exception of tennis where salary parity is an on-going debate and there actually are tournaments where women make the same as men, it's a fact female athletes play for peanuts, sometimes not even.

Players in the five-team Canadian Women's Hockey League, for example,

officially play for free. Teams cover travel and accommodation costs, medical care and some equipment needs and provide a per diem on the road, but there is no salary as such. They do share in cash bonuses, however, such as the prize money the Canadiennes de Montreal won recently for their triumph in the annual Clarkson Cup competition.

For many "professional" women players, a job outside the rink is essential. Anne-Sophie Bettez, for example, one of the stars of the Canadiennes, is a McGill University graduate who works as a financial advisor.

The CWHL says it has a plan to pay players in the near future. League commissioner Brenda Andress said in an interview after the Clarkson Cup said: "Do we want to pay them? Of course, that's the dream. When we do pay them, it'll be because everything will be in place."

There's a partnership in the works between the CWHL and the NHL which should bring much-needed marketing and promotion. After all, success and growth starts with building a fan base.

Meanwhile, in the United States, women players in the national program are currently in a stand-off with USA Hockey, demanding better compensa-

tion for their efforts in non-Olympic periods. If the dispute is not resolved the players say they will boycott the world championship tournament at the end of the month.

Team Canada officials say development players get \$900 a month and senior-level players \$1,500 a month outside Olympic years. During the nine months around the Olympics they are "fully supported."

There are about 100,000 female hockey players in Canada, an ever-growing number. One of them, a 20-year-old member of the armed forces, sometimes plays goal with our beer league gang which has some very skilled players and powerful shooters (and then there's me). We're convinced she's good enough to play at the national level in Canada.

Her team recently won the Canadian Forces women's national championship and she was chosen the MVP in the ultimate game. While she still dreams of playing beyond her current level - she plays on two women's and two men's teams - the opportunity, let alone the financial incentive, is not there - yet.

Hockey's "ice ceiling" may remain impenetrable for quite some time.

Come out; come out, wherever you are...

(Reconnecting with your inner child)



THE SCOOP

MABLE HASTINGS

Following a recent article I wrote on the grieving process we sometimes go through when someone dies, I decided to further document recent ex-

periences our family has lived following loss.

In discussions with my husband, we came to realize that when a parent dies, you immediately feel orphaned and like you've lost your sense of childhood. We find ourselves feeling instantly old inside. We wonder if our inner child will ever resurface and if yes, how long it will take? We miss something that we were not even fully aware still lived inside of us. As adults we can forget the little person we once were. The child who believed in Santa Clause, the Tooth fairy and the Easter Bunny who we think we grew beyond but suddenly realize is still residing in our heart being nurtured by our parents who still see us as their

child.

We may find ourselves missing something that we can't quite put our finger on? We sense a longing to feel something....anything besides sadness and loss. The actual funeral long over, we carry a funeral inside our being and it goes on, day after day it seems. Until one day.....

Something becomes funny again and we laugh. For my husband it was a game of hide and go seek with a group of kids and for me, it was a bunch of two year olds jumping on my couch at work. They laughed falling back onto the sofa cushions shouting my name. My inner child heard them even before I did. I laughed thinking about my Mom and how much she would have enjoyed their laughter and the sound of my own. These two spontaneously different things reminded my husband and me that it was okay to still find happiness in the world despite the loss we had been holding onto for weeks. Or the loss that had been holding onto us that found us too tired and sad to try to break free from its grasp.

After grief there is laughter. After loss there is life. After tears there are smiles. And while loss still dances its mournful macabre amidst the moments of joy, it no longer steals the show. In the laughter of my husband, I can hear his father laughing and I trace the smile of my Mom as I touch my own lips as I laugh too.

Teacher, theologian, counsellor, philosopher, John Bradshaw wrote a wonderful book called, "Homecoming," reclaiming and healing your inner child. I would highly recommend this book to anyone who is doing some self reflection and soul searching.

"We first see the world through the eyes of a little child and that inner child remains with us throughout our lives, no matter how outwardly grown-up and powerful we become. If our vulnerable child was hurt, abandoned, shamed, or neglected, that child's pain, grief, and anger live on within us. I believe that this neglected, wounded inner child of the past is the major source of human misery," says Bradshaw.

He goes on to explain that, "The healed inner child becomes a source of vitality and creativity, enabling us to find new joy and energy in living."

As our family continues through this painful loss, I realize that I am learning a lot. I realize too that in the loss of my Mom and then a year later, the recent loss of my father-in-law, no one is spared the experience of grief and grieving. I share these reflections merely as a reminder to others that, you are not alone. Self awareness and reflection are vital aspects I believe, to healing.

As my inner child peaks at me from her hiding place under the table I think to myself, "Ready or not, here I come!" In that moment I know that, we are going to be okay.

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