



Copyright 2008 Sun Media Corporation
All Rights Reserved
Portage Daily Graphic (Manitoba, Canada)

June 25, 2008 Wednesday

Not all kids are hockey superstars

BY EVAN CLARK

Your child is not going to play in the NHL.

That's true 99 + per cent of the time, and most parents realize it, but still enroll their children in **minor hockey** programs every winter for the skate full of positive benefits associated with playing the sport. But, there are also parents who maintain the belief that

"if he just had a bit more practice..., " and as a result,

there is an entire industry to accommodate them.

For years, [entrepreneurial summer hockey programs](#), unsanctioned by Hockey Canada, have afforded a select demographic of parents the opportunity to **see their child play competitive hockey through those dull summer months** when most rinks are closed.

The programs, which are somewhat parasitic in nature,

employ the personnel and resources developed by Hockey Canada for a profit, and have become a growing concern for Hockey Canada and Hockey Manitoba. The issue was raised once again this year at Hockey Canada's Annual General Meeting, held in Quebec City, on May 8-11.

Hockey Canada's minor schedule runs from September to May, with a four-month break for summer. That's no accident either, according to Hockey Manitoba executive director Peter Woods.

"There's some validity in the argument that the more hockey a kid can play the better, there's no doubt about it," he said. "But, there's also somewhat of a burnout effect, where, come September, the kids aren't as keen as they would be if it were interspersed. There needs to be an opportunity to develop other aspects, social aspects, and developmental aspects from being involved in other sports. There certainly is such a thing as too much of a good thing."

Indeed, total immersion in any one thing at a young age can cause developmental dwarfing.

Take into account the elitist, ultra-competitive culture bred within many of the summer hockey programs, and you have a situation where a child can perceive he has only one acceptable goal; making the NHL.

While Hockey Canada does not wish to dissuade children from that dream, they deserve to be commended for the realization a complete individual is not necessarily one who plays the highest level of hockey.

"The responsibility of both the provincial and national organizations is to provide a positive experience for kids so it's enjoyable. The main focus of our programs are not to be the breeding ground to send players onto the NHL."

Because 99.9 per cent of children never achieve the dream of lacing their skates for the Toronto Maple Leafs, why limit their development as individuals with only one hobby all year round?