

## IN THEIR OWN VOICES: WOMEN COACHES RAISING A FAMILY

**For women with a family pursuing a career in coaching, some problems seem insurmountable. It is relatively easy to understand their spirit and commitment and, above all, their passion. How, though, to explain their fortitude in coping with the demands of the profession?**

By Sheila Robertson

Cyndie Flett has spent the past three years running the Coaching Association of Canada's Women in Coaching program. Over and over, women coaches tell her about the difficulties they encounter in trying to manage their twin passions—their families and their coaching. Most, in order to earn a decent living, hold down a “day” job as well.

Kathy Shields, coach of the University of Victoria women's basketball team, eloquently captured their reality.

“In Canada, coaching is a great life, but it's a tough life if you've got a family. I've had the longevity because, one, I love the game, and two, I don't have children. I admire so much women coaches who have been able to balance both. In Canada, to be able to stay in coaching with a family, to me those women are the real heroes in this country.

“For the first two months, we're on the track at 7 in the morning. I'm then in the office most of the day and at 3 o'clock, we start the coaches' meeting and players drop by to talk. We practice from 4:30 to 6:30 or 7:00. I get home about 7:30. That's pre-season. In the season, from the end of October on, we don't have the early mornings so I get in at 9:30. You're on the road or have games every weekend. We leave for road trips on a Thursday night and get home on Sunday afternoon. If you have children, you can't do that very well.”

Certainly the life Shields describes is tough, and inevitably, there's a high fallout rate. It is Flett's hope that learning firsthand about each other's experiences will provide supportive commonalities.

In researching this article, extensive interviews were conducted with a broad cross-section of Canada's women coaches in every part of the country. Common threads quickly emerged: the passion for their families and their sport, in that order; the absolute necessity of a supportive spouse; schedules that can only be described as frantic; and inequitable coaching salaries.

It was expected that the article would unearth solutions and suggestions to help Canada's overburdened women coaches in their struggle to remain in the profession. Such solutions have proven elusive for many of the coaches interviewed. The demands, often self-imposed, are just too great. Self-imposed because each of these women take their responsibilities very seriously, and aim for a high standard in everything they do—running a household, working outside of coaching, taking advanced coaching education, and being the best possible coach. Certainly hiring a housecleaner and in-house childcare are options, but in most families, finances do not permit such luxuries.

Some solutions did emerge. Putting the coaching career on hold until children are independent is one option. Another more positive approach is job sharing such as two Calgary track and field coaches have begun to do. Judging from their reactions, this solution holds strong appeal for women coaches, and across Canada, others are eager to track how their two colleagues fare.

There's synchronized swimming's shared leadership model, but even that groundbreaker proved unable to totally ease the head coach's burdens.

What follows, in their own words, are the personal stories of 17 amazing women, every one a dedicated, educated, passionate coach.

## **PATTI HOWES, Fencing**

In 1988, my husband and I moved to the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia. We had fenced for Carleton University, where I got a degree in communications. There was very little fencing in the Annapolis Valley. If we didn't teach people how to fence, we were not going to have anyone to fence with, so we started the Greenwood Fencing Club. There were no thoughts of a coaching career – that didn't exist in the professional sense the way it does now – we just really enjoyed the sport. Coaching, I discovered, was something I really enjoyed. It kept me involved in the sport, and opened a whole new dimension.

At first it was like a hobby and then I started to cross a line. Why do I do this? Why do I take this so seriously? This is a very demanding lifestyle and yet I don't want to give it up.

In 1993, we moved to Winnipeg. My husband is in the Forces and we convinced them to let us start a fencing club. It started with eight fencers and we are now up to around 75 regulars. Over the past seven years, I've gone from being a 3M NCCP Level 1 coach to working on Level 4 and I've coached at two Canada Games.

I had been running a telecommunications centre. The intensity of that environment is just incredible. It's a very big, booming industry. The reward is materialistic. At the end of the day, you'd have bonuses, incentives, but did you really feel good about yourself and your day? The reward I feel coming home after teaching three hours of fencing to little kids at summer camp is enormous. In today's business world, your day begins and ends – maybe it doesn't end because you're on a pager 80 hours a week – and do you get that human contact and gratification of being involved in your own life and the lives of other people?

It came to a point where my business world was saying my "hobby" was interfering with my business growth. My happiest place was coaching and the rewards I was getting beyond the reward of a salary. I was really connecting with people and having an impact. This was becoming more and more important to me and I enjoyed it more than the work I was doing in the "real" world.

In 1999, I decided to take a risk, leave my profession, and become a full-time professional coach. I was a recipient of the Petro-Canada Olympic Torch Scholarship, which allows me to go to the National Coaching Institute – Manitoba and do Level 4. So that's my life. I go to school, run my club, do contract work for various organizations, work for the Canada Games program, and I'm starting to work with high performance athletes. Last year I went to the junior world championships with a fencer I work with.

My husband is still working full time in his position, but he is also taking courses at the NCI. Both of us have a goal of eventually doing high performance coaching. I don't know how coaches function if their spouse is not in sport because no one really understands your career choice unless they, too, are involved. It's a career you live. My phone can ring at all hours. I'm always troubleshooting, always handling the next situation, dealing with an athlete or another coach, and that's what makes it exciting. Every day is new and different with challenges to face. You're interacting with people, you're guiding and helping people, and you're making a difference.

Coaching is about goal setting, about healthy bodies and minds, about people becoming effective. The most effective people are those who can prioritize their lives, achieve their goals, and find balance. You're always searching for that peak performance, that best ever, and to achieve that, you have to have incredible control over everything around you, and yourself as well. If a coach can help someone to achieve that, that's nothing you're ever going to do in the business world.

Whether an experience is positive or negative, it's very real. This is what makes sport and coaching so dynamic and such a passion. Every day you know you are going to really live and experience what it is to be human at its best, its worst, and everything in between.

I don't think there is such a thing as normal hours for a coach, but I don't know that there are for most people nowadays. I work during people's leisure hours, evenings and weekends. During the day, I do my homework and things like that. My daughters, who are 10 and eight, are very accustomed to our lifestyle.

I started coaching just before I had my two daughters. For five years, I didn't work outside the home other than coaching, and that was a few evenings a week and Saturdays. My husband had a job that allowed me that option. Once the oldest one went to school, I increased my coaching and eventually returned to the workforce. I was able to pursue coaching because I have a stable and supportive home environment. My husband supports what I am doing so the kids feel that's the way life is supposed to be.

My parents also contribute to my stable environment. My dad said that if you're happy in what you do, you'll never work a day in your life. I love that saying and I think about it all the time. How many people can get up and go to work in a pair of shorts and a T-shirt and make people smile and laugh and help someone achieve their goals? That's a dream job as far as I'm concerned.

My daughters don't think my wanting to coach is bizarre at all. It is what I do, and this in their minds is very normal. At a store where I buy teaching aids, there was a bulletin listing all the different professions. Coaching was not among them. My passion in life doesn't yet exist in mainstream society! That's OK, because part of the passion is knowing you're doing something that not everybody is willing to do. That's a really important thing for my two girls to see.

The kids understand that travel is part of my work. It's not that we don't miss each other. We go through all of the emotions of being apart from each other, but what's really important is that they see me happy in what I'm doing. I want them to know that although they are incredibly important to my life, I'm also a human being who has a life of my own outside of them and when they grow up and leave, I will still have my life. I'm mother and I'm coach and I'm wife. I am so many things other than just mother. I want my girls to grow up and know that you can be somebody's mommy, but you also have to be yourself.

## **KIM CHAPDELAINE, Athletics**

I was on the national team for several years and had a track scholarship to Simon Fraser University, where I studied kinesiology and biomechanics and had a minor in child psychology. I met my husband, Jacques, who was playing professional football with the B.C. Lions. Around '83, when I was pregnant with my first child, we talked about who was going to stay home. Professional football players do pretty well financially, certainly compared to track, so I stepped out of it.

The main reason I coach today is because of opportunities that were given to me – I really appreciated the time all my coaches invested in me – and because I get such satisfaction out of my athletes doing well and making teams. At no time did I think I was going to end up being a coach like I am today.

My husband was traded to Montreal, Hamilton, then Calgary, where I started off as an assistant coach. When John Cannon started Calgary International, I became head of the sprints component. In the early '90s, my husband was offered a job at Bishop's University. Richard Crevier, the head coach at the University of Sherbrooke, asked me to become jumps coach for his high performance team and I also started a track program at Bishop's. The two teams trained together, which was unique because it was a French team and an English team. It was really a great experience for all the kids because they became one unit, and that really motivated me. I took the Bishop's program from absolutely nothing to having athletes at nationals.

Our three children – Kayla, 14, Matthew, 12, and Justin, 9 – have grown up in a coaching environment. My husband is now the head football coach at Laval University and I was the head track and field coach until I resigned last season because it was putting so much pressure on the family. I took them from fifth in the conference to second position in two years. We had 135 athletes and it was extremely demanding because I had the administration as well. I dealt with the hurdles, sprints, and jumps and had assistants who had the development team, the distance team, and the throws team.

I came to the realization that I had given so much to the Laval program that I was choosing between coaching and my kids. It was an ugly picture, and I couldn't believe I had done this. You get on a roll, and you know you're going towards success, and it gets out of control. I had to make a choice, so I resigned even though leaving was very painful.

Now I'm under contract with the football program to coach their speed, agility, and weights. It doesn't demand time that conflicts with the kids. I also coach the high performance program at Sherbrooke, which is 250 kilometres away, and have six athletes. It's a situation that is a compromise for my kids. I coach just enough to keep my national affiliation. It's coaching on a smaller scale, but it's exciting because my athletes are the best in Canada. To give it up would mean that my career was finished. High performance is where you get your points in order to be picked for national programs. You've got to produce top athletes.

We had a good situation at Laval because my husband's team is privately owned. His office is extremely nice, with a kitchen, a microwave, and big screen TV. The kids came there from school, did their homework, and then could go onto the field with Dad or onto the track with me. I made their meals at the office, but we wouldn't get home until 7 o'clock. This is how it went for about two years. Kayla has been in sport her whole life and has absolutely no problem. She is on the provincial basketball team and trains when the football players work on the speed component with me, so she knows what I'm giving these athletes. She sees that this is not just development in athletics; it's development in a human being who wants to become something special and be able to represent Canada. She does well academically and so does my 12-year-old, but I saw a

real decline in my little guy because I wasn't there for him. Coaching is a constant struggle for me, struggling with my decisions and whether it's taking time away from my kids.

When Marnie Temple, Vickie Croley [of the University of Western Ontario], and I are at a track meet, all you'll hear, when we're not watching our athletes, is about our kids, our husbands, how we manage. You're not going to get men coaches standing around doing that. It's a real, constant struggle for women coaches.

Fortunately my husband understands the sacrifices and is extremely supportive. His football season is not during my track season so he was Mr. Mom when I was doing track. I really cannot understand how it would work being married to someone who is not in sport.

Jacques and I are major family people. Our kids are **the** most important thing. If I have to make a choice and I feel that they're struggling, I'll back out. When my kids were little and my husband was a professional football player, he only played for six months; the six months they were off was when I coached. When his season started, he trained from 9 until noon and played on the weekends, so his afternoons were off. Never have my kids gone to day care or been taken care of by somebody else. It's always me or Jacques because that's what I believe in. For me that was a very important issue. Your kids are going to grow up fast enough and you'd better hope you had some sort of effect on them.

Not long ago I was offered a prestigious track job. The majority of the hiring committee were women and they were hiring because the previous coach had a family and found it overwhelming. Whenever I've been offered a position, I have always said, "Don't ever, ever ask me to choose between my kids and this job, because it will be my kids." This hiring committee asked what that was supposed to mean, and I said, "My kids are on the track," and they didn't like or want that. It is the first time I have ever run into that. My kids have grown up on the track. They understand the rules and regulations, they know I'm on the track to service the athletes, they stay out of my way.

As a coach I have a great relationship with my athletes. They're my friends as well as my athletes and they are part of my family. I'm not just a coach in their technical development; you have to coach all around, in their social, educational lives. They know they can come to me for anything. When they feel they are part of my family, well, my kids are part of that situation.

I walked away from the position. My husband is in one of the best jobs in football in Canada. He told me that if I wanted the job, he would walk away from his situation. This is the kind of guy I'm dealing with. In this lifestyle, you would have to have a husband like that. The spouse has to be extremely supportive and understanding of what you're trying to do. It is unbelievable, the conflicts you deal with.

## **SHEILAGH CROXON, Synchronized Swimming**

I got into coaching in 1981 as a part-time job working with junior athletes when I was a psychology student at the University of Toronto. I had been involved in synchronized swimming as an athlete. I had a love for the sport and enjoyed the coaching aspect, even as an athlete.

When the kids started to win national titles, I got really interested in coaching as a profession. I went to Calgary for a year and studied under Debbie Muir and when I returned, started to build a club at the Etobicoke Olympium.

I became a national coach in 1988. I worked with the youth team, the B team, and then the A team, and in '96 became the assistant Olympic coach. We centralized for one year and I moved to Edmonton with my nine-month-old son, Nicholas, and my husband, Jean, who took a leave of absence and moved, too. There was no way we could manage if I was in Edmonton and he was in Toronto. After he got over his initial resentment and we adjusted to living in a one-bedroom apartment, it turned out to be a really good year with a lot of quality family time. The move was possible because Jean said he would come. Otherwise, I don't think it could have worked out. Being able to share in the experience made my family more connected to what I was doing.

The reason it has worked for us is that we are opposites. I am very much a driven, type A person and he's very laid back.

I had Natalie in April 1997. Having two makes a difference. What's really hard is that my family's needs and my career demands are at their peak at the same time. It's a constant challenge to try to keep my own personal balance and perspective, but with an event like the Sydney Olympics, there was an end in sight. It's very tunnel vision but you say, OK, when it's over, I'll take a big break to give more to the family side of things.

I have a great nanny who travels across the city every day. Usually I am the first one gone in the morning and Jean leaves for work when she comes at 8 o'clock. She leaves when I come home at 4 o'clock. If her daughter gets sick, we get a phone call, usually when I've already gone, so a couple of times, Jean has phoned me and said, "You've got to come home." There's always a chance that my mom can help, even though she's busy and doesn't live that close to us. One time I just couldn't leave so our team manager came over.

Although we don't have evening practice, as a coach the work never really leaves me. I do the work after the kids go to bed or manage my time so that somehow I get it done during the day. The fact of the matter is at this stage of life—they're three and five—they are not self-sufficient. Nor do I want to miss out.

What makes coaching different from other professions is the passion. It's all-consuming, like any "helping" profession where you are always giving of yourself to other people's children so you kind of get it sucked out of you. The challenge is to have something left.

First and foremost for me is that I have an amazing and understanding husband. He's patient and far better than I think most men are with kids. It wasn't possible for me to take much time off work, so he took paternity leave both times. I have no benefits in my job, and doesn't that suck? We work on a year-to-year basis with no security, no benefits, no recognition of the fact that I have two children, nothing. Being the head coach of an Olympic team does not make it easier. Basically, we work as self-employed consultants. As if you could take another contract when the job is so all-consuming! And you couldn't say yes or no to what we were doing; once you accept the responsibility, it falls on you to fulfill it.

What I got out of it was the satisfaction of helping these great women achieve their goals. It's not just athletic goals; it's seeing them grow as people. The biggest reward is when you can make a difference to the whole person. When I think how some of the girls were when they came two years versus how they are now, I feel really good about everything we've done. That's the reward for me. I've learned a lot, too. That's what you get out of it.

Another factor that enabled me to do the job is the other coaches I worked with. Biz Price was the assistant who was there all the time. Others were there at different times, like Sherry Vanin, through the apprenticeship program, who came from Edmonton for a couple of weeks here and there. Lesley Sproule, who's from Calgary, has a family as well, so she could really relate to me. When you have people around you who are living the same thing you are, there's a support system.

I understand that there are only 11 full-time women national team coaches in Canada. While the goal of the Women in Coaching Long-Term Coaching Apprenticeship Program is to increase that number, it is also important to keep the ones we have, and unless the culture changes ... With the centralized program, we tried to share the leadership and bring in outside experts, but as a coach, and I know this is partly my personality, in order to feel like I am doing a really good job, I have to be really hands-on. To be a good coach, you have to be totally in touch with your team, to have your hands always on the pulse of the team. If you're not in tune with what the athletes are feeling, it is really hard to do your job well. Somebody's got to take that responsibility, and that's the head coach.

What changes in the culture would make it work? Money, for one. We're among the best in the world at what we do and the pay doesn't reflect that. Benefits. Job security. Coaching is a never-ending job and when you're always trying to be the best in the world, you have to stay on top of everything. Everything you read on leadership says the trend is towards a more human approach, a more balanced lifestyle, not working 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but how to bring that approach into the coaching environment? It's easier said than done.

Before I had Nicholas, I had no idea how tough it was going to be. You don't know what you're getting into when you have kids. Nothing in your life parallels having children. The job is a distant second as far as I'm concerned. Sometimes it seems like it's not, but if I had to make a choice, I would choose the family – and it may come to that point.

For the Olympics, we were away for three weeks. I came back before the Closing Ceremony. I hate being away for that long. Anything more than a week is unbearable. I phoned home every day. There was comfort in the fact that it was the Olympics and the end of this chapter. Nicholas started Grade 1 and I was only there for the first two days of school. That breaks my heart because I wanted to be there for him.

The way to go for women coaches is more of a team coaching approach. That takes years to figure out, but pooling expertise makes sense. No one coach has the expertise in all areas, so working towards that kind of leadership style is the way of the future. What we have been doing is a step in that direction. We need to form a network of support, especially those of us with children. Coaching has to be made more attractive and professional. When I took the job, I was asked what I saw as some of the long-term issues, and I said you need more kids doing the sport and you need to increase the profile of coaching as a profession. Good people are everything. All women coaches are groundbreakers and it is about educating people in the organization about what you're doing. There's a lack of understanding about what goes into coaching so they question how it can be a full-time job.



Definitely, it makes you a better coach when you have kids. You learn to be more patient. For sure it changes you. You become more accepting. You learn to let the guard down a little. You don't sweat everything. Parenting is an education in itself.

## **MELANIE SIMBOLI, Freestyle Skiing**

I competed on the American world cup freestyle team for five years and won the Olympics in aerials in '88 and was combined world champion in '89.

I coached in the summertime while I competed. I moved to Ottawa, where Chris, my husband, is from, and coached with a local ski program for a couple of winters. Then we went to Windsor and I did an education degree and coached there for three seasons. We moved back to Ottawa and I coached the Ontario team for three years before having our daughter, Madison, in 1998. I took a year off and now I'm back as an assistant coach with Ontario.

There's not a lot of money in coaching as a career, especially because it is seasonal, but there are people who do make a living at it, mostly men. A number of us women were commenting this past winter, "Take a look at the finish area where the coaches stand; have you ever seen so many women coaches?" Freestyle has always had a "free" attitude so gender is not a big concern. I've been fighting to have a woman coach with the national team, and they agree with me, but, unfortunately, nobody is qualified enough or has the lifestyle to accommodate the position. Being on the road eight or nine months of the year is not conducive to a family lifestyle.

I like diversity and juggling a lot of things. It's nice to have a family and stay at home and do the best I can with that. It's also nice to bring out my individuality through my coaching. I have 15 years of experience and why should I throw that away? My husband earns enough to support us, so money's not an issue; it's more the love of it. It justifies that when I am away I'm getting paid, but I mostly do it for the pure satisfaction I get out of coaching.

When I'm not skiing, I substitute teach in the fall and the spring.

Day care is the number 1 issue around being a coach and raising a family. It all depends on your spouse. Mine is a lawyer and typically he doesn't get home until 7 or 8 in the evening, and day care ends at 5. This past year we did it without an in-house nanny and it was extremely stressful. We've agreed that if I still want to coach, we need to find a nanny, and it's difficult to find a part-time nanny. Then you're back to finances. You won't make any money from coaching if you have a nanny come in all the time. Even though it's not my primary concern, it's still nice as a woman to have your own spending money and feel independent.

Once, when we had junior nationals at Blackcomb, so I could be there for the full week – normally I'd go from Thursday to Sunday. I took Madison with me and the provincial association paid for my mother to fly there to help me. That was very supportive and accommodating, but it was too difficult. By the time my job was finished, we'd be looking at dinner at 7 or 8 o'clock. When I walked in the door from skiing, normally I'd have some down time, but my daughter was eager to play after not having seen me all day. Rooming with her meant I wasn't getting a good sleep. I wouldn't do that again. I don't think you are a good coach in that situation. You have to be at the disposal of the athletes. They're not going to come and ask to watch a video in the evening if they know you have a kid there. They deserve that extra attention.

The Ontario Freestyle Ski Association employs me. It is run primarily by volunteers and parents. With the cuts to government grants, difficulty finding sponsors at the provincial level, and administration costs, we had to go to this kind of a structure. It's working fine, but it taxes the volunteers much too heavily. People criticize the volunteers, which isn't fair. The parents and the volunteers have been incredible in accommodating me. When I was on the road with the team, they paid half of my day-care costs, or \$15 a day. They are also extremely flexible around my time. I tell them the time I can give them and they say, OK. I know it has to do with the lack of qualified people, because if there was somebody who could just be at their disposal, then I don't think I would be in the same situation. You're going to have a much better program if you have

two full-time people rather than one person full time and one part time. I've worked with all these kids who are coming through the system. so it's not a big transition when I hop in and hop out. In my situation, it works very well, but if I were somebody who wasn't as qualified or didn't know the kids, then it wouldn't work.

As far as situations like breastfeeding, we follow a code of ethics. I am lucky to work with teenagers who are mature, who've had sex ed in school. When I coached Canada Winter Games in Corner Brook, Madison was seven months old. I was still breastfeeding, so at the Games I had to pump because I would have blown up otherwise. Quarters were very tight, but luckily the coach I was rooming with was great. I told my athletes beforehand that they might hear a funny noise coming from my room and explained that because I was breastfeeding, expressing is what I have to do. They didn't have a problem with it, but of course I wouldn't have done it in front of them if it had bothered them.

I personally believe that a coach shouldn't have her kids at practice because it takes away from the athletes and that's why you're there, that's your job. If you worked at a computer store, you wouldn't consider bringing your baby to work. You have to be very professional about it. The biggest thing I've learned is that each situation is unique. If you could generalize, I would say that if it obstructs your ability to coach properly then your child shouldn't be with you.

To an employer I would say that flexibility is the biggest thing for coaches with kids. Communicate everything upfront. Try to go over every possible scenario; for example, what would be done if your kids got sick and you couldn't make an event? Would you have a standby person who could fill in for you?

I have aspirations in coaching, definitely. I think that's one of the hardest things, balancing the two. When I'm home with my daughter, I'm really into it and when I'm coaching, I'm really into that. I want to do the absolute best job that I can in freestyle, but there is only so much of me. Constantly having to sacrifice, in both ways, sacrifice job for child and child for job, pretty much all parents have to deal with that, choosing to go back to work or stay home.

I was surprised at how difficult it is to juggle my husband's schedule, my schedule, and my daughter's schedule. I thought, what's the big deal? I'll just go back and coach. That reflects my naiveté about parenting. You really don't understand the time commitment until the baby arrives, and then it's, WOW.

There's the fact of being prepared. If you know you are going to plan a family, get all your coach education completed and make yourself as marketable as you can, so that you can have the flexibility because people will know your credentials and will want you. If you aren't marketable to begin with, it will cause a lot of heartache rather than being a nice situation where you can work and be flexible.

If you put your coaching career on hold, that can be years, and if you just sit and wait, your skills are going to be so outdated that you've lost the game. Staying at the club level is not a bad thing because you still obtain your skills, get to know the kids. If we had a choice of 20 different coaches, I would put some of my best coaches at the entry level because that's where the basic skills start and you need a strong set of basic skills to be a champion. You might have some really talented kids, but if they don't have a good start, then you're constantly correcting. Coaching at the club level allows you to stay home; it is much easier to balance a schedule. I could take my baby to the ski area and put her in their day care. That way, your skills stay current and you're still involved with the high performance people. You see other coaches, so they know you're involved and still in the loop as far as information goes; you know what's happening within the association.

## **ANONYMITY REQUESTED**

I started my sport in high school, and I got pulled into some of the junior national programs. I took a hiatus to have my first child. I was invited to start playing again and eventually I was asked to re-start with the national program.

I didn't have coaching in mind as a career. A coach had just started a new women's club and he asked me to help him out at practices because I was a national team athlete. That progressed to me taking over the team as he got pulled away by work. By the end of the year, it ended up being me, with head coach of the women's program at a club being run by me, a single mother.

At that point I had no idea what I was going to do for a career. I enjoyed coaching because the athletes were great and the schedule was very flexible when I had to go away for weekend training camps, because I was still playing with the national team. I had already become a pro at trying to balance things.

At the time, I was doing an education degree. I chose teaching, not necessarily because I thought I'd enjoy being a teacher, but because of the flexible schedule. Being a mother and having the summers off is super important, and you can do so much with an education degree. Even if I didn't end up in the classroom, it would be really good on a resume.

Then I got married and we've had another child.

At first, everybody was really accommodating. We're a small town and to have someone take over the women's program, well, nobody ever wants the women. I was really committed. I loved coaching and working with the girls so I had a lot of parents' support. It was great. I took my kids to practice when they were little and nursing, and the parents were really supportive. I took on the program director's job so at the start of the season I was working all hours of the day and night to get things organized. I applied for a grant because I was already doing the hours, and after I got it, it seemed like things were going really well. Lately, however, there's been problems.

A couple of parents started complaining about my kids being at the facility, and me not being focused. Before the youngest started moving around, I'd take him to competitions. Parents started complaining about that and me not having 100 per cent focus on the athletes. They ripped me because I have a family and I have sick kids and can't make a practice. I've talked to a few other coaches across Canada and they can't believe it. After all, you don't even come close to being compensated for the hours you put in.

At a board meeting, I was told I was unethical, immoral, disgusting. How do I stand up and be strong and defend my family and myself and be a really good leader and run my programs successfully without being labelled an ornery bitch?

A couple of women came forward saying this girl has given her life to run our program and help us out. They said I take care of their kids, I'm their friend, they call me when they're in trouble, parents call me to ask for advice. Even the people who were ripping me said the quality of my coaching was excellent. They have no complaints about what their kids have accomplished; they have complaints about my work ethic because of my family.

The club hasn't offered day care, nothing. My first performance evaluation was stars and stripes. It was fireworks. It was amazing. And then I had my second evaluation and it was like it was a different person. All year I put forward ideas and program development stuff, and they never wanted me to follow through with anything. Now they say that I didn't give the board enough feedback about the program. We'd have board meetings and there'd be no room for me on the agenda. When I spoke anyway, they'd say, just go ahead.

In my self-evaluation, I stated very clearly that I've been asking board members for help with communication. I've been asking for help so that we can make the programs better, and they have done nothing.

I have two kids, and I can't afford financially to lose my contract. I have to find a way to make this money. If they decide to screw me on my contract, then I can't coach anymore. I've got to find another job. The men's coach makes the exact same amount of money even though I coach three different teams, three different programs, run two introductory programs, and am the program director for everything. He makes the same amount of money to coach one team. That's a kick in the ass. If I can work through this, I am going to be able to work through anything.

I want it in my contract that if my kids are sick, I don't come to practice. I want an assistant coach to take over for me when I'm gone, if my kids are sick, or I can't find a babysitter and have to bring them to practice.

My husband was furious when all this happened. He phoned the president of the club and said, "How could you let this happen to her? If that was your wife and some man was talking to her like that, he raped her." It took him to say that for my president to realize what had happened. He was so apologetic, but he hadn't realized how traumatic it was.

I'm the kind of woman who doesn't like using being a woman as an excuse. It's, just do your job. I've never run into a situation before because of being a woman or even a mother putting me at a disadvantage. It's never even crossed my mind. I had a daughter and I still played on the national team. I coach, and I plan on coaching internationally, with two kids and a husband who is an amazing support, and friends and family. I'm positive my problems are because I got a grant, because I'm a woman, and because I'm running things really well.

I want them to respect me, to say, she found a way to fix this problem, and she didn't need to go crying to someone else. If I were a man, if I asked somebody to help me, it wouldn't even be an issue. But I'm a woman and if I can't fix this by myself, then it's even more negative because I needed somebody to come to my assistance.

I try so hard to make things work with everybody. I never demand things. I never say this is what I need. It's like that's been a strike against me; it's like I'm not a strong enough person because I try to be accommodating. I don't understand why people are angry because I've tried so hard to make things better for the club, not just for the women, but for every program.

When my youngest was a baby, I was only coaching women and I would breastfeed at practice. They didn't mind because it was all girls. This year I had multiple programs going at once so it impossible for me to breastfeed at practice, so I didn't do it. Even away on tournaments, it was pretty easy because it was all girls. I've been very discrete, very accommodating, in case someone might find it offensive. It was raised that it was inappropriate for my child to be on tournaments without proper childcare 100 per cent of the time. Were they going to pay for me to take someone to care for the kids? I can't afford it. Do they want me to stay home? What is it that they want?

## **BARB DESJARDINS, Team Handball**

My brother-in-law got my husband, Duncan, involved in team handball as a goalie about 15 years ago. I did stats for him and then started playing and taking more of an active role. My husband started coaching and I always had comments and suggestions for him. When he was going out for the provincial team and 3M NCCP Level 1 was a requirement, he suggested we do it together. It was fun and very interesting. I liked knowing more about the game and understanding the different positions and I started playing different positions. I always seemed to take the game more seriously than my teammates.

My husband became assistant coach of the provincial team and that required Level 2. So we did that and again I found it very interesting even though I don't have a background in education or phys ed; my background is day care. At that point, in 1991, I was assistant coach/manager of my husband's provincial team. I had a great time. Then a senior women's provincial team needed a Level 2 coach on their bench so I did that. The coach asked what I could do, and I said I could do anything, even though I knew very little compared to what I know now. I always dive right in. He was happy with my suggestions and we got the silver medal at the provincial championships that year. I've always been very lucky with coaches. I am the baby of a big family and working with males has never been intimidating to me.

I took over as head coach of the senior women and was still assistant coach for the senior men until 1996, when I decided I didn't have enough time for both so I concentrated on the senior women. My husband, who is on the Canadian Team Handball Association executive, told me there was going to be an international coaching symposium in Quebec and he said we needed to go, which meant we had to be Level 3! We did it, kicking and screaming, and the symposium was amazing. There were 82 coaches, and two were female. Several times we were told, "Our wives are going shopping today. Why don't you go shopping, too?" I'm not a very shy flower, so you can imagine my response.

Now I'm a Level 4 coach, the only female in Canada for team handball, and I've one more course for Level 5.

We adopted my son in 1996 when he was 11 months old. After 12 years, I had burned out in day care and was accepted into a computer technology program when I heard that we would adopt my son. I gave up school because they want you to spend at least six months with the child. My husband took over my team and I didn't leave my son for six months – a big mistake because I was burning out again. My doctor insisted that, for 20 minutes a day, I had to do something stress free for myself. Going back to practice was fine, but it was not to count as time for myself. I found that very difficult.

Anything that comes up, my husband and I discuss what we're going to do as it comes up. It helps that he has a lot of holidays because he's been with Canada Post for 20 some years.

My son understands handball. He knows we go to practice. He talks about what he is going to do when he has his handball team. We try not to take him to games too often. He never comes to practice, unless it is outside practice on the track.

In '97, I told the National Coaching Institute – Manitoba that I wanted to take some Level 4 courses, but didn't know what I could afford. [NCI director] Bruce Pirnie had some grants; one was the Women in Coaching NCI scholarship, which paid for my courses, and the other was the Women in Coaching Pan American Games Apprenticeship Program. I went to seminars, and I went to Argentina to watch the Pan American qualifier. We also got a grant from the national federation for my husband to go, too. My sister had played a really big part since we got my son, and she moved into the house and took care of him. We were very lucky.

There was some trouble with my position with the national team leading up to the '99 Pan American Games because the head coach is from Yugoslavia and speaks French. I am trying to improve, but our communication wasn't that good so I didn't know what he thought of my coaching. I found out when he gave me the choice between being an apprentice coach or being his assistant coach and working alongside him. He was absolutely great with me. He and the other assistant coach and I worked as a team. He made sure of that. He said he felt confident that I could do the job. Now they are trying to get me to move east and my husband isn't against the idea, but I am taking care of my stepmother, who has Alzheimer's. I will probably be ready for a move once my responsibilities change.

Last summer, while I was with the Pan Am team, we put my son into home care a few hundred feet away and around the corner. We had to do that because my husband starts work at 6:30 when most day cares aren't open. He was fine for a while. We explained to the caregiver that he had gone through a lot because my dad had died and so had my sister, very suddenly. I think adults don't recognize that children have to grieve and they don't do it like adults. His fear was of mommy going away, like my father and my sister. Little things would set him off and it didn't dawn on us that he was grieving. I was very lucky because my head coach understood whenever a problem arose at home. Eventually we took him out of home care and my niece came and took care of him. That took a lot of pressure off him.

I don't see myself being a head coach for a while. Some of the coaches in Eastern Canada have a lot of European experience and started their training when they were very young. The only way I can catch up is to work with them. I am doing one year at a time. My plan is to train other coaches in the west. I am pushing for more qualified coaches for my western program, everything from brand new coaches to coaches who are certified Level 3. I am applying for grants for a national training centre in Winnipeg. There's one in Montreal, but that isn't much help to the girls from the Prairies. It's looking possible, especially since we won the silver medal at the Pan Ams and a couple of western women were on the team.

This is my career, for now. I had planned to go back to university this year to work on sport psychology, but I think we'll put that off until the new year. My son wants a baby sister, or a puppy, or both, and we're at the top of the list for a baby girl.

A lot of what makes it worthwhile is the challenge. I love to challenge myself. Plus the fact that I think Western Canada needs someone like me who is going to do something here. I believe in getting off my butt and doing it. I want an all-round program to bring Western Canada up and the only way we can do that is to develop athletes and coaches. I firmly believe that unless you take that first step, and have belief in yourself to do it, you're never going to go anywhere.

## **DIANA (DEE DEE) HAIGHT-ARN, Alpine Skiing**

After I retired from skiing in 1987, I got married and lived in Switzerland for three years. It was quite a difficult and challenging time; not only had I changed my career as a high performance athlete, I also changed countries and languages. I only had a Grade 10 education, because I was named to the Canadian team the day after my 15th birthday, and I wanted to further my education so we decided to come back to Canada so I could get a degree. Of course, I couldn't get accepted anywhere. I ended up doing an accounting diploma at a college in Kelowna. Then I went to Alberta and got a degree in international trade and management. I was going to get a chartered accountant designation, but found it wasn't my cup of tea.

I had started volunteering with the BC Alpine Ski Association as the chair of its Nancy Greene program. It was great to be back in skiing so I put together a proposal to work on the development programs. I worked as a volunteer for about six months and then started in full time in 1996. My title is technical director and I'm responsible for all program development and coaching development in the province, and I act as the regional coach, working with kids up to the provincial team. I've done about 80 per cent of my 3M NCCP Level 4. I also coach at the club level on weekends.

What I find really important is the administrative stuff. I like to assist coaches and clubs, especially the volunteer boards (which have very little experience) to provide leadership. A lot of the clubs, because volunteers run them, have no consistency in their boards. Parents will stay on a board as long as they have a child in the program. Very few are altruistic enough to contribute to the organization after their children are gone. I can provide those clubs and those boards with lessons we've learned so the same mistakes aren't made over and over again.

I am currently on maternity leave, and, as I plan ahead, the issues of day care, travel, and breastfeeding are very pertinent. Being on the hill, coaching the provincial team is a 24-hour-a-day job, and that's really tough. Working at the club level is also very demanding, and with a child it's almost impossible. The demands the kids and the parents put on the coach plus the demands of having your own family become a real problem. Your values and what is important to you start to be put on the line because most people coach because they are passionate about the sport – that's how it is in my case. It becomes real turmoil as to how I'm going to deal with it.

I've been off four months and this is something I think about every day. I can do a lot of my work from my home in Squamish. I've arranged that I'll go work from home three days a week for BC Alpine and spend one day in the office in Vancouver. The way I'll deal with it at home is to bring somebody in, at least for the first year or so. I can be flexible with the hours I work, and my husband can help out as well. I don't feel comfortable going to a day-care situation with such a young child.

My PSO (provincial sport organization) is very supportive. Family is very important and they believe that if the core family isn't sound, you're not going to be worth anything. If you're having problems, especially as a coach, how can you be effective on the hill? They've given me all the time I need and have been very supportive in granting me things that are going to make me effective on the hill, such as working out of my home and setting me up at home with e-mail and various technologies. My husband works out of our home as well. We are both self-motivated and high achievers, qualities you find in high performance athletes. Those skills just get transferred into new areas.

They've also protected me while I've been on maternity leave by fielding all my calls and giving me the time I need for myself. I am very proud to be part of the organization because they are first class. I think, by law, an individual is allowed to take six months off for maternity leave and



can go back to her position, or a similar position. As of 2001, it's going to be a year off, so organizations really don't have any choice, at least in B.C., where it's stipulated.

In alpine skiing, you see women coaches with the 11- and 12- age group, but beyond that, when travel becomes a big issue, which it is for our sport, I can think of only five or six women in the country who are making coaching a career. It's a big concern for Alpine Canada and for the PSOs as well. When I was on the team, we never had a female. In the 21st century, parents are demanding female staff, but the problem in ski racing is that you're never home and so family life and raising a family is almost impossible.

I'm involved with volunteer work at the national level as chair of the high performance advisory committee. That provides a forum to try and seek ways to do things better. We are setting up a sub-committee to look at women in coaching. That was an initiative of me and Joze Sparovec, Alpine Canada's program director. With his insights and experiences and some of my work at the provincial and national levels, we recognized the need. He is the ultimate coach. If anyone is passionate about the sport of ski racing, he is. He's done an incredible amount, not only for the national team, but the whole system as well.

PSOs can write all the policies they want, but our society doesn't value coaching, especially female coaching. It's a cultural thing. In Europe, coaching is seen as much more important. Here, in the professional sphere, coaches are recognized as having a valid job, but at the amateur sport level, you always get asked when you are going to get a real job. Until that starts to change, and until people start to recognize that the coach can be a major socialization factor of life, I don't think there's going to be a glut of female coaches.

When I travel as an administrator, I will take my daughter with me and have somebody travel with me. When I go as a coach, I will leave her with my husband or a caregiver. Coaching is so demanding that it would put the individual in a very awkward situation. She would be really torn. As a coach, you have to give so much to your athletes. I knew exactly when my coach believed in me and felt I could do well and I knew exactly when he was putting in time. My father, who was a schoolteacher, taught me to never underestimate the shrewd appraisal of a student. That is also true of athletes. They know when the coach is really behind them.

For years, male coaches have had to leave their babies and I can't imagine that it's much easier for them. As women, we have a career and we have a family and we have to balance it, and it's going to tear our hearts out sometimes, on both sides, because when you are as passionate as many coaches are, it's the ultimate conflict. The difference between someone who lives sport and someone who's just doing it is passion. That's what it comes down to. It's the passion and the sport is in your blood.

Speaking for myself as somebody who wants to achieve a lot in my whole life, all of a sudden I am in a position where I have to make a decision. What is really important is finding the balance and finding what works for the individual. There's nothing written in stone. We can be as creative as we want. In my experience, if you come to an organization with good ideas that are sound, have validity, and make sense, the organization will accept them.

Before the birth, I never anticipated the emotional pull. Not at all. The birth really is the best thing that's ever happened to us. I could never describe how wonderful being a mom is, but there certainly are career conflicts.

## **DEBBIE FISHER, Speed Skating**

Because there was no speed skating club in Fredericton, there was no opportunity to skate so I steered myself away from competing to coaching. I was married in my third year of phys ed at the University of New Brunswick, and my husband, Rod, and I decided to make Fredericton our home and started the Fredericton Amateur Speed Skating Club. No money, no ice, no skaters. I was told it had been tried before, it didn't work, and I wouldn't get it going either. I was probably naive enough and determined enough to show them. I was the head coach for 21 years, and now it's a very successful club with a huge learn-to-skate program, three different levels of competitive skaters, and numerous Canadian and North American champions, and kids who have gone on to the Canada Games and the Olympics. I put my whole life into that program.

Life takes its turns and in 1979, my 18-month-old son, Chris, was diagnosed with cancer. Keeping involved with speed skating is what got me through. It was my lifeline. He was on treatment until he was three. I had another son, Alan, in '83. I didn't want to focus full time on teaching so I got a part-time job at the hospital and ended up in the operating room, working as a communications clerk. That left my weekends free to coach. I didn't make a lot of money, but I was able to have more time at home and put more time into my coaching, which was what I wanted to do.

I was provincial coach from '78 to '83. I wanted to keep that job, but it was non-paying. I had two small children and it was becoming very hard to travel. Another girl, with no children, took the position. It was very hard for me, and frustrating, because I didn't want to give it up. People weren't willing to look at remunerating coaches. When I approached the club to be remunerated, I think if it had been a man going after money to supplement his income, it might have been more favourably looked at. I put a lot of hours and energy into the club, and comments were made that she was going to do it anyway, so why pay her? I carried on with the club and developed many of the skaters who went on that provincial team, probably 60 per cent or more.

In the later years, I was remunerated a little bit for my coaching, but it was getting to the point where financially, it was tough. I wasn't making enough resources to help supplement my husband's income. He is a pressman at a printing company.

I stayed with it because of my love for the sport and my love for working with kids. Many times it got very frustrating working with amateur sport and parents and boards, but what kept me going was that if I didn't do it, who would be there for the kids? I had lots of other coaches helping me because when you run a program of 150 to 200 kids, you can't do it on your own, but I was driving the program and I didn't feel I could leave. This sport has been an internal passion of mine since childhood. I was there before I had kids, there with my kids in the program, and I'll be there after my kids are gone. Some people find that strange.

Because Rod is a Level 4 referee, we were going to many of the competitions as a family. I wasn't travelling without him, and we took the kids with us. Nobody minded. He was refereeing, I was coaching, so we had to get other people to look after our kids. Sometimes my dad would travel with us or my step-mom or my sister would look after them, or people at the rink, or other relatives. Speed skating is a very close-knit community, and at the rink, our friends would look after the kids. I don't think it hurt them any.

After 21 years, I decided to make a life change; I needed a challenge, a different situation. I applied for the NCI – Calgary and a Petro-Canada Olympic Torch scholarship to help offset the costs, and both accepted me. That was when only eight scholarships were given out so I was pretty happy. I left home for what I thought would be a year. My youngest son was 14 and Chris was just starting university. (He's a survivor, and doing very well) so my husband and my kids stayed back while I spent the year in Calgary, getting home periodically. Because of our financial

situation, we had to find a way of recouping the money I was losing from not working so we took out a line of credit on our house.

Rod is so supportive. When we got married, he changed jobs and moved to Fredericton so I could finish my degree. When I started coaching a lot, one parent had to be home so we made the decision that my efforts would go to really working hard at coaching. He was home in the evenings and did most of the cooking and grocery shopping. When I came to the NCI, he stayed back and looked after everything. I knew the family would be fed because he had done it for so many years. I couldn't have done what I've done without him. Not at all.

Jacques Thibault, who runs the Olympic Oval, felt I had skills in the developmental area so I was offered a position here at the university in a new program called "Advanced Training Systems."

Accepting it was a big decision. It would mean Rod changing jobs after 25 years. We were hoping he might be able to stay within the same company, but we had to arrange the switch so he wouldn't lose his seniority and benefits. It took an extra year for us to arrange that. My younger son was in Grade 9, a hard time to move, so we decided to keep everybody back for another year. They all arrived in July 1999. Rod was able to transfer his job. The transition has been very good for Alan because he is really taking an interest in the competitive side of speed skating and is now going to the National Sport School. He's a developing athlete on his way up and he certainly showed that this year. Chris went from speed skating to swimming to air pistol target shooting. He's in college at Barrie, Ont., taking automotive marketing.

I work as a consultant and can be contracted to do developmental work anywhere. One contract is with the Alberta Speed Skating Association. I also do development work at clubs all over Alberta and help the coaches with their organization, ice utilization, games, drills, whatever will help them in developing their clubs, and I organize their developmental camps. I have been contracted to do the coaching coordination for the Calgary Speed Skating Club itself. Last year I had 25 coaches working for me – we have a membership of over 400 – and I was doing the entire program and coaching coordination.

When I have any spare time, I try to keep my hand in the top end and do support work with national coach Yvon De Blois for the Oval short track program. I don't want to lose touch with the top, because to get kids there I have to know what's going on.

I have a very busy schedule. I like it, though; I love doing what I'm doing. The remuneration is getting better every year, and it seems like the Oval is appreciating my work and my performance because I got a pretty good sized bonus at the end of the year.

I would not have been able to leave my home in New Brunswick without having a full-time job. My whole family is there so it was very difficult to leave and my parents haven't been very well so I find that very stressful. But ... I'm a full-time employee of the University of Calgary and I receive full benefits, medical, pension. It's the best situation. I am one of those rare coaches in Canada who has a measure of job security and if my performance reviews continue to be as good as they are and I continue to work as hard as I do, I hope to be here for a while.

To the young women entering the coaching profession, I would say, don't let go of your dream to be a full-time coach. That was my dream and I've succeeded. In speed skating, there are not very many full-time coaching jobs in this country and I look at this building, the Oval, every day, and say WOW.

I love my sport and I love working with the athletes and seeing them develop. That's what drives me. And I'm getting lots of new skills in this job, leadership skills, things that no matter how long this job lasts, I'll be able to take with me to wherever I go.

## **SUE WISE, Athletics**

I completed my undergraduate degree in physical education at McMaster University and then took a master's in coaching program at the University of Western Ontario. As a pentathlete, I competed at the 1978 Commonwealth Games and 1976 World Student Games. In 1979, I got a job as head coach at McMaster. In '85, I moved to the University of Saskatchewan to coach at the high performance centre. In '86, a grant from the Women in Nontraditional Roles program created a head coach position for me at York University so I came back and was there for the next 13 years.

At McMaster I started with a nine-month appointment. I was then asked to become the administrative coordinator for a sport fitness summer school program involving 750 kids and 40 staff, which meant I now had a 12-month staff position. After two years, the program started to interfere with my development as a coach. It was difficult to get time away from the school in order to travel to out-of-province competitions. My typical summer day began with a staff meeting at 8 a.m. and ended with a three-hour track practice that started at 5 p.m. And every weekend it was track meets. At this point, my only life was my job and track!

What became frustrating for me was how other coaches with the same education were hired as faculty and not expected to work at the same intensity during the summer. The fact is, track is a year-round sport, and there is very little time off from coaching.

I left McMaster, mainly because they didn't have an indoor training facility and I felt I was limited by how far I could go as a coach. My replacement was a male who was hired for more money and didn't run the sport fitness program. As a female, I feel you have to do more to prove your worth.

In my interview for Saskatchewan, they asked me if I planned on having kids. I said, "Not in the immediate future." I should have said that it was none of their business, but that would have been hard to say at that time.

I came back to York because of the opportunity to work at an excellent facility and it was closer to my family. I grew up in Pickering, Ont., so York was great.

Initially, the working conditions were very good. Unfortunately, due to a limited budget, I had to take on funding responsibilities for the track club and the varsity program (which increased from 16 athletes to 60). I ran bingos, which raised \$40,000 and hosted a large high school meet annually to raise funds. It becomes part of your job description and it's expected that you do it. With cutbacks, my teaching workload also increased significantly over the years. It was interesting that what started out as volunteer fund-raising work became a part of my ongoing, ever-expanding job description. My position as "professional management," not faculty, left me vulnerable to this increased workload.

The pay was not equitable at York. My salary was eventually raised, but it was never in line with my male counterparts at other universities who were making at least \$10,000 to \$15,000 more without a master's degree. When I left York, after a total of 20 years of coaching and teaching, I was making \$44,000 a year. My replacement, a male, with three years of experience as an assistant coach and no master's, is starting at my salary.

I met my husband at York where he is the head hockey coach. We both loved our jobs, and put countless hours into them. When we had our children, life changed drastically. I had four months maternity leave with 100 per cent of my salary. During both leaves, I still coached at York a couple of times a week.

On one occasion, I brought my six-month-old son to the Metro Toronto Track and Field Centre at York in a Snuggli. We were both sick, but the CIAU [Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union]

championships were coming and three people were vying for two spots on the relay team. I wanted them to run a time trial to see who would make the team. The facility manager, who saw me there daily, said that on the grounds of safety, I wasn't allowed to bring my baby in. I told him I'd be gone in 20 minutes, but he called York Security who told me the baby had to leave. I handed him the baby and said I'd be out in 20 minutes. Later, the city sent me a letter threatening that if I did that again, they would take action. I was not allowed to coach with my baby! After 10 years, the rule still exists, but there seems to be some flexibility with certain coaches.

My parents and my husband's parents have really helped us. They understood the commitment necessary to do our jobs well and helped us with child care the many weekends we were both away.

Our children are now nine and 11 and both play Triple A hockey. Last year I resigned from my coaching position. We found that with their practices and our practices, we were relying on everyone else to take care of our children. We were so involved with other people's kids, yet we couldn't take our own to their games. The least we owed our own kids was to be there for them. It was ridiculous how busy our lives were and that's why I had to stop.

In 1996, I took a year off. That year was good, but it's just never-ending. Burnout is not something one year can solve.

Leaving coaching has been difficult, as I've lost part of my identity. I like to think I'm taking a sabbatical as opposed to retiring. Things have worked out well. I enjoy working, so when Tudor Bompa took partial retirement from York I was asked to teach his class. Another professor was on sabbatical so I taught the Art and Science of Coaching course. The money is good for the amount of time spent working. My first year of teaching was a lot of work because I had to prepare the lectures from scratch, but the opportunity was great. In the near future, the department will be hiring a replacement for Tudor. Unfortunately, I have no chance of getting that position because I don't have my PhD. I've spent 20 years working at the practical application of the theories of training. Other faculty members don't have their PhDs, but they were hired 15 to 20 years ago. Not being hired as faculty has come back to haunt me.

I am totally out of the track coaching loop, but once a week I do the dryland training for my kids' hockey team. I also teach coaching certification clinics in the community. I was asked to coach at the local track club in Stouffville, where we live, but I was enjoying free summer weekends for the first time in a long time. I'm also writing a book called **The Hockey Mom's Handbook**. Hopefully it will be an informative book with practical suggestions regarding all aspects of the sport

Without spousal support, it is almost impossible for a woman with children to have a coaching career. Our problems were compounded because my husband is a coach and almost every weekend we were both working. Obviously, it would be beneficial to have a supportive husband who works regular hours.

If I were to do it again, I would be a high school teacher. The hours are much more suitable to raising a family. I would have still been able to coach, with the option of coaching in the summer. I also think co-coaching, like Marnie Temple and Gwen Ridout are doing, is an excellent idea. In order to do this, your employer has to understand what women coaches are dealing with. The counter to this is, what do male coaches do? How do they cope? Whether it's societal values, or instincts, women tend to feel guiltier about spending time away from their children. How do you explain that? I don't know.

## **VIRGINIA SMITH, Swimming**

When I was five, I learned to swim and joined a team when I was seven. I guess I considered myself to be a water baby; I loved the environment. There were times along the way when I had difficulties with the competitive aspects of swimming, but the medium and the sensations and the hard work ethic have never left me.

I swam in university in the United States in the '60s. I was one of those individuals who weren't pleased with the government's decision about Vietnam. I and another woman had to train ourselves at a military base, the irony of all ironies, and sometimes we trained in kidney-shaped pools and at hotels, but we were quite driven. At that time, women simply didn't have any access to sport at the university level and weren't considered valuable enough as athletes to put any money into it.

My husband and I immigrated to Canada and lived in the Gatineau. I studied psychology at Carleton University in Ottawa, had two children, and worked as a head lifeguard on three beaches. I thought that down the line I'd like to get back into competitive swimming. I helped start a parent cooperative at Carleton because my husband and I needed day care. It worked out beautifully because all the parents were students. I was the administrator and we all had to take a certain amount of responsibility for our own children. Everybody had to donate two hours a week, men and women. I have to say that my husband has always been a very generous person with his time. He coached and we both had other jobs, and we've always worked around it. He's just a generous person.

We moved to Nova Scotia in 1972, near Yarmouth, and I was in a home where there was not a lot of running water and only wood heat, so I'd go into the "Y" to take a shower. It has the only pool in the area, a four-lane 20-yard pool. I was asked if I was interested in helping with the swim team. I assisted the coach for a year and when he left, I became head coach. I really didn't know what I was getting into, but I said 'okay' with some trepidation, little knowing I would still be there in 2000.

I had lost a son in a drowning accident and I guess I was looking for something that was meaningful to do so I started out volunteer coaching, and it just never stopped.

In order to have access to information and coaching practices, I started writing away for correspondence courses. In 1976, I did a number of pre- and post-Olympic conferences. I decided I needed to upgrade and that's when I took 3M NCCP Level 1 and then Levels 2 and 3. I volunteered for a number of Atlantic-area coaching tours and got involved in the delivery of the SNC [Swimming/Natation Canada] development camps in Atlantic Canada. I thought that was a very good premise upon which to build swimming in Atlantic Canada. So many organizations have come and gone. It's the distance and the cost that have made it problematic for us.

Every five years, I had someone who was a national-calibre athlete so I had to work very hard to get them out of the Atlantic area and give them exposure elsewhere. In 1987, I accompanied Nigel Kemp, head coach at Dalhousie University, on a tour of Great Britain. We took a group of youngsters that included my son to the British Nationals. That was the closest I ever came to an international competition off mainland Canada.

My team has always supported my travel. When my son was swimming, I often didn't ask for reimbursement when I went to a national meet because he, in part, was getting support.

I've offered recreational programs and sometimes I've involved learning-disabled kids because I knew it would be healthy for them, but because of the travel and the demands on the families,

and because I only have four lanes, it never has worked out to do other than a competitive program.

Almost always since the early 1980s, I've had swimmers who've come back to the community for one, two, or three years and offered to coach. So I've always had a whole range of swimmers who've come back to help me coach. Always.

I'd agree that my situation is really unique. I know a few others who have done something similar, but they don't normally stay quite as long and I don't know of any other parent/coaches who were involved primarily before their children and stayed after their children left. I would be the first to say it is more difficult if women coaches don't have the support or are single.

I have an education degree from Dalhousie and have qualifications in other areas. I have always had a parallel career to coaching. After going to Dal, I came back to my community and taught until 1981, and in 1982 I became an administrator for special programs with the board of education, and did that for 18 years until amalgamation. I've been an assistant coach and coach at three Canada Games. I am the head coach of the Nova Scotia swim team for 2001.

To get time off for national events was possible because of our collective agreement. For Fridays and Mondays, I've often had to take days without pay and my club paid my expenses, but they don't pay me a salary because I'm a volunteer. My employer, the school board, has agreements that allowed me to take days without pay and that's not been easy. The "Y" doesn't "employ" me, because I'm a volunteer.

They restrict our hours because the "Y" is a non-competitive environment. If I wanted to get up at 3:30 a.m., I could start my practices early. It depends on what sacrifices you want to make. There is a day-care program at the "Y" and I think I could have used it, but it would not have helped on the weekends. If I had been a single parent, I would have had difficulty. My son trudged along with me for many years before he was a swimmer.

About breastfeeding. I was really bold. I just breastfed whenever I felt like it with both my boys. In fact, with my first child, I whipped out my breast and fed him right in class. I was not modest and maybe that's the swimmer in me, or the mother in me, or maybe it was the time, the '60s and early '70s. I just did not let anything stop me. I wouldn't do things to try to aggravate, but I had expectations that people would be civil.

My advice is, don't be intimidated. Mothering is important. If you care about your own children, you are obviously going to know and understand what it is to care about somebody else's child. I have always said that I care about other people's children and I treat them and respect them in the same way that I would care and respect mine. Shouting and belittling and undermining have never been a part of my coaching.

To explain my long commitment to coaching: I love the sport; it's just a part of me. I love being in the water and being surrounded by water. There's the work ethic that allows me to get up at 4:30 in the morning and just keep on. It's a kind of ethic you have to have, but I don't think it's for everyone. There's my husband's generosity in our relationship, his willingness to be as supportive as he is. After a time, I began to have all these youngsters come back and share things that enriched my life. The youngsters who have grown and come back and lent their personal lives to me has meant so much.

## **CHRISTINE GRANGER, Canoeing**

As an athlete, I competed at the junior worlds, but I didn't think I had the qualities to keep on to the senior level. It was hard for me to stop because I really love the sport. My brother, Mark, was coaching the Quebec team, and he encouraged me to start helping the athletes and I agreed because I thought that would be a nice way to stay involved. I was going to do a degree in phys ed at the University of Quebec, so coaching was a good part-time job for me, especially because I live right beside our club, the Lachine Canoe Club.

When I went to university, I coached every year. The first year, in '88, I helped the Quebec team at the training camps and coached the provincial-level athletes at my club. The year after, I coached at the national level, and the year after that I put one athlete on the junior worlds team and two on the national team. My husband, Frank Gomez, is the head coach so we coached together and that helped me a lot. Today, the two of us run the club and it is the club the two of us grew up at.

I am not coaching this year. I took a break. I have two children. My daughter is three years old and my son is 10 months. I coached the summer I was pregnant with my daughter and had her in September and then I got a part-time job teaching phys ed. I did another summer at the canoe club, and that September I got a full-time job with the school board.

I would rather coach than teach, but it's the money. If I made the same salary coaching, I would not teach. It wasn't hard to decide to take the teaching job because I was offered a full-time, permanent position, but it me made crazy to even think about it. Coaching was a lot more fun, but not very well paid and there's no security. I couldn't pass up the opportunity because it is almost impossible to get jobs teaching phys ed. In a way, the canoe club helped me get the job because we always invite all the schools in Lachine to the club every year for a free class. So the school principals know me and that made it easier for me to get in.

My experience in organizing and planning at the club helps a lot at school; that's what I love the most, planning big track and field days and a lot of outdoor activities.

I had no trouble coaching when my daughter was a baby. She was an easy baby. I coached in the morning and I fixed the stroller so it would not move and I brought her with me in the motorboat. We would come back home for lunch, and in the afternoon, I went back to the club when she was sleeping and just put her in the shade and worked on the grounds, fixing boats. When she woke up, I coached on Rollerblades, using the baby jogger. There is a bicycle path, so I could follow the kids who were on the water and coach them like that.

No one at the club would ever have objected to the presence of a baby. A lot of the kids babysat her. Even now I am at the canoe club every afternoon and when I go paddling, my kids stay with one of the paddlers. That was easy. What was hard was the winter training camps. I couldn't go to those anymore because you can't coach a high level of athletes with kids around.

What I'm doing now is all the paperwork at the club and I am thinking, maybe next year, when they're older, when the baby is two, I'll start back at coaching, but only one workout a day or one group of kids for one or two hours a day. It's important for me to stay connected to the club and to the sport. We all go to regattas every weekend and by doing the paperwork, I stay in touch.

If I go back, I don't think I would think of it as a career unless there was the opportunity for a full-time job with security. As I said, my decision was financial. If Frank had a permanent job doing something else, maybe I could have stayed in coaching, but he only does the canoe club and during the winter he does personal training contracts. That is good for us because it means I don't



need a babysitter. During the day, he stays home with the kids and when I get home, he leaves to coach.

I have 3M NCCP Level 3 and have been thinking of going to the National Coaching Institute – Montreal to do Level 4/5 in a couple of years. I might be able to arrange with my school board to miss a couple of days every couple of weeks to do that. I don't think I would go back to coaching international-level athletes. They need and want too much of a coach for me to do that. I enjoy coaching the younger kids and sharing all my experience with them and knowing they are on the right track. I pass them on to Frank, knowing all the basics are done. It is so important to have good coaching from the beginning.

My goal was to make my athletes go fast so they could make the national team. They knew that was where our work stopped. We didn't have the funding to work with national team athletes.

For a woman with children to coach, you have to be really well organized. You can't expect people to take care of your kids for you so I just brought them with me. I used a backpack and at regattas, my daughter spent the day on my back. It made a difference that Frank and I were in it together. We never had problems with the board because we are on the board. The volunteers are not there to tell us what to do; they are there to help us and make it easier for us. And that's the difference. Boards can create a lot of problems for coaches, but not with us.

It also makes a difference that we live and work in a smaller community with family around. It is incredible how much family helps. But it was hard to stop coaching just as it was hard to stop paddling. If I had a job like my brother, who coaches the national team, it would be a problem because they are in Florida from January to April and I could never do that. If there were more full-time club jobs, probably more people would stay in coaching, but there aren't the jobs.

## **MARNIE TEMPLE, Athletics**

After I was unsuccessful in getting myself into a coaching job at the University of Calgary in 1999, I was going to lessen my commitment to track. I had given my word that I would do that. That happened in March, but by June or July, I wasn't able to manage that decision too well. What was great was talking with the other women coaches when we did retreats as part of the Pan American Games Coaching Apprenticeship Program. I decided I could make it [as a coach]. The question was how. First I had to explain to my husband why I had changed my mind and that took several conversations before we worked it out.

In high school in Onoway, Alta., I was running and throwing and jumping. John Cannon encouraged me to come to Calgary. When he found I was useless as a sprinter, he passed me on to Les Gramantik and I did combined events with Les from '83 to '86. I was studying teaching and thought coaching would help me to get a job. Now it has totally taken over my life. I started in 1990 at a high school and when Les heard that, he encouraged me to work with him at the university. Then I joined a local track club so I was coaching three age groups, and only stopped with the high school last year. I have been teaching the whole time, but it is coaching that is my passion. In '95 I started doing junior national teams and in '98 Athletics Canada approached me to apply for the apprenticeship program, which was supported by the Women in Coaching program.

All my teaching experience has been in high-needs schools, with kids who have issues in their lives that disadvantage them in a number of ways. With coaching, the people who come to me want to be there. The motivation is so different. I am a coach who thinks more about the athlete as a person rather than concentrating on developing their skills. (Before I had kids I was much better at it because I could spend more time developing those relationships. Now my life is more split up because I have my husband, Andrew Smith, and my six-year-old son, Drew, and my four-year-old daughter, Tyra.)

I can't explain my passion for track in words; it's more than a job, and that's what's so exciting. I am thankful for the Women in Coaching apprenticeship opportunity because it made me realize what I can do.

And now something really exciting is happening. I'm involved in starting a new high performance club – the University of Calgary Athletics Club. Les, who is the head coach of the varsity team, was thrilled when I said I would do the work to get it off the ground – the paperwork the bylaws, getting it registered – because he had been talking about doing this for years.

Gwen Ridout and I are sharing our coaching responsibilities, each of us doing two different nights and I'm hoping to get in one session during the day for some good technical work. Her kids are eight and six, and she has been coaching for years at the high school level. It matters a lot to me that she is with me at the university because that's the only way I could do this, if we move together. In March, after the indoor season ends, the varsity team didn't have anywhere to go, so our idea was to let them keep training at the university by setting up the new club. We also have some athletes who are going to Mount Royal College or are still in high school. Les has his group of athletes in this club and we have ours. There are about 60 athletes, but Gwen and I are only looking after six.

When Drew was a baby, I sometimes had to bring him to the track. As he grew, he needed more attention, and that was not acceptable anymore and babysitting became the problem. Having two kids really complicated things. I was still teaching full time and coaching four to five times a week. The biggest stress was not my kids or my job; it was my husband. There was many a conversation around my commitment as a mother, whether I was doing my job as a mother, so both of us were questioning me. We both have a lot at stake, raising our kids. Because of the

passion, coaching is different from a job, so the spouse is not just competing with the time spent; he's competing with the love of the sport. That's where a lot of conflict starts. The higher you go, the more difficult it becomes.

When I was breastfeeding, I would excuse myself and go to the bathroom. A couple of times I did it during practice, more out of desperation because I was getting really tired of missing what I needed to see. I wouldn't do that again. I should have tried harder to have something else in place like a babysitter there, but it's hard to find babysitters, period, especially at that time of day, between 5 and 7. Sometimes I felt like a single parent. My husband's job is very important. Mine is, too, but my most important job is raising those kids. If I was bringing in \$60,000 a year as a coach, I could afford the help and it wouldn't be any big deal. I always had a problem with having to bust my butt to get home. Male coaches don't rush home. It's not part of their agenda.

When the kids were small, instead of day care I had an excellent nanny who came in for two years, and she was like a second mom. Now that I am only working half time, I no longer have her.

My next challenge is doing the NCI [National Coaching Institute], being a stay-at-home mom, the new club, and part-time teaching. It is my responsibility to get the kids to school between 8 and 8:15, and they're at two different schools, and I had to be at my teaching job by 8:30. Now, with the NCI, I have to go to my classes. One of my athletes, who's a student at U of C [University of Calgary], and I are going to try to work out a schedule so that we can share the mom situation. I'll share the coaching, share the kids ... all my course work will have to get done in the evening, and that's typical; that's when most of my work gets done.

I often wonder how people manage. I don't want to quit. I'll quit when I'm ready, for my own reasons, not because I'm having pressure from my family. Maybe my kids will one day have the power to tell me to quit. No one else has that power. I want to do this. It's taken a long time to get to this point.

I love to contribute to the greater good of others. I don't feel like I'm finished. I don't think I'll be 65, walking around with a cane and still coaching, but I'll know the point when to stop. A lot of people do something forever, but I don't think that will be me.

I feel like I am on the road to recovery. It's making something happen with Gwen. It's Les being so understanding of being a parent, and that's been great. It's my husband being really supportive of this new club. He thinks it's a great idea because it is associated with the university. So there's way more support now. It's just not me wanting to do this "thing."

## **GWEN RIDOUT, Athletics**

I was on the national team for about 10 years, and held the Canadian record in 400m hurdles from '83 until '92. After I decided not to do track anymore, I got married and had two kids, who are eight and six. I've been a schoolteacher with the Calgary board of education for 14 years, and my major is art and my minor is phys ed. I've always coached high school sport.

Last year at a high school track meet, I was approached by a coach of a local club and asked if I was interested in coaching outside of school. I said I'd get back to him because my husband, Brian, worked out of town two weeks out of the month and it would be almost impossible for me to coach outside of school. Fortunately for me, Brian got a new job and now is only gone a week here and there. We talked it over and agreed I would start off with one night a week and see how that went. Marnie Temple and I ended up coaching together at the club and we just clicked because our philosophies are the same. She wants the best for the athletes and I believe in the same thing. It is so exciting that we are now co-coaching at the University of Calgary Athletics Club.

This past winter I got my 3M NCCP Level 3. It took a lot of weekends, but it's worth it. I loved it. It was nice to take these courses. It was also nice to confirm that I wasn't off the deep end in my coaching all these years. Although there is no requirement for a high school coach to have certification levels, my school even paid for my substitute. Now they have a Level 3 track coach and this year, we won divisionals, cities, and provincials.

As a high school coach, I had an excellent situation when I had my kids. I took my maternity leave, which was a year, and then I took a year's leave of absence, both times. When I did go back, I did a job share and didn't have to come back until the second semester. I got 2 1/2 years off with my son and I spent close to the first five years of her life with my daughter.

I always wanted to coach past the high school level, and once I got bitten by that bug there was no turning back.

A friend asked me how I could sacrifice my family, coaching other people's kids. I asked her, "Does your husband coach?" She said, "Oh yeah, he coaches hockey and lacrosse and baseball." So I asked, "What's the difference if a man coaches or a woman coaches? My husband doesn't coach." She didn't say anything. What's the difference? In our situation, I'm the one who coaches.

The nights I coach, Brian is home. If for any reason he can't make it, I'll bring the kids with me and he'll swing by and pick them up. They love track and ask me to teach them things.

You have to be extremely organized to do job shares, which I am. Marnie and I got our program done right away. Of course you go into a workout and things change, and we discuss it. I'll call her after her practice, or she'll call me, and we discuss how it went, how the athletes were doing, what the times were. We're always on the phone or at each other's house. It's communication.

Some people think athletes can't deal with that kind of thing, two different coaches, but they can. Sometimes we see totally different things, and that's great. I might get along with an athlete better than she does, and vice versa, so all the bases seem to be covered.

I continue to teach full time and Marnie is part time while she gets Level 4. I'd also be interested in doing that sometime. I can see setting myself up for the day when coaching takes over, especially with the university, because I think it's the place I'd like to be. I love my job at school; I'm an art teacher and it's the best job in the world, but I don't want to do it for the rest of my life.

The club gives me an outlet to do something else I really like, but right now, teaching pays the bills. If I were offered a coaching job paying the same as teaching, I'd consider it.

The Calgary school board isn't too bad, but if you're going to a track meet, you have to pay for your substitute. The summertime is nice to have off because then I can totally concentrate on my track and not feel guilty about going out for a couple of hours at night because I am spending all day with the kids. It is a real asset that the practices are in the evening.

I've never really thought about it, but if I were to coach full time, I would look for flexibility in the work arrangements. Usually you're told what the job is and are so keen to coach, you just take it. What they started to do at our track club, and it was something that Marnie and I suggested, was having somebody look after our kids. Our husbands can't be home all the time to help us look after the children, so they provided child care for us. A girl came to the track especially for that and to take them off to do track "stuff" while we did coaching. The kids really liked it because they were doing track, too.

Travel is tough. When I am coaching at a track meet, I can't be watching the kids. I am pretty intense, and even when Brian swings them by, it's "Hi. Bye". I'm lucky. Divorces can and do happen from track. You're away lots of weekends, so it's kind of nice that Marnie and I can share that. I have had to be in two places at once, and Brian was gone, so I had to get my mom to come from Saskatoon to look after the kids. Marnie offered, but she was busy at a track meet, too. If it were a male coach, would he even think to ask his spouse if he could go away for the weekend, or worry about that? No. We have to ask to make sure it's OK and it's a big production to go away, making sure all the sheets and towels are washed, the food is in. Everything has to be ready before I leave – and so you come home to a disaster.

When I started back to work, I got a house cleaner and now there's no more fighting about it. That money is worth gold to me for the pressure it takes off.

Brian wouldn't like it if I was gone every weekend, and I wouldn't either. That's why it's nice with Marnie and me.

I do it because I love track and field. I put so many years into the sport and now here's my chance to be able to help some athletes and move my way up in the profession of coaching.

I'm a better mom because I work. You take that away from me, and I'm not happy at all. Brian knows that. He says, "You are a better person because you are doing what you love to do." I'm lucky because you can't marry somebody and change them. He knew what I was like before he married me, with that passion for track.

## **PASCALE GAUTHIER, Diving**

I have been a diving coach for the past 15 years. Prior to that I was a diver for 10 years and on the age group and senior national teams. When I was an athlete, I had a coach who did things differently from how I think you should coach. I wanted to try to do it better, in my own way.

Coaching is not only teaching the sport, but also how to do well in life. Some coaches believe an athlete must concentrate only on the sport or they won't become a high performance athlete. In my point of view, that's not the way to go. You need a very complete, balanced athlete to be up there and I teach that to my athletes.

After I stopped diving, a club asked if I would coach. I was angry at diving at that time. I was told that I had to lose weight in order to continue. I lost 10 pounds in four months, and my coach said, \_If you have lost 10 pounds, it doesn't show. Go home. I left the dream of my life to be an Olympian.

When the club approached me, I said okay because I love sharing my knowledge, but I don't want to go to competitions because I was hurt and I didn't want to see anyone. They agreed, but I decided to try going and it went fine and I have been coaching ever since. As of August 31st, I became a free agent because I need a better job and a better salary. Money in Quebec for a diving coach is very hard to come by. You have to have two jobs if you want to make a living. I was a phys ed teacher for six years and I stopped that to take my Level 4. I told my club that if they wanted to keep me, they'd have to give me more money and they offered me \$24,000, which was much better than the \$10,000 I had been making. But A COACH swim coach who was beside me every day at the pool has a salary of \$35,000 and he doesn't have Level 3 or high quality athletes as I did, and we had many more Learn To Dive participants, which meant fees for the club. If I don't get another job, I'll probably stop coaching.

I was in the first group to go to the NCI-Montreal. I loved it. As soon as I finish two essays, I'll have my Level 4. I was the national age group team coach and had two divers at the recent age group championships, but the senior level is harder to get [appointed to].

Why I need a better coaching job is my six-year-old son, who is in the first grade. I'm a single mom. His dad left me when MY SON was a year- and-a-half. I had a \$8000 contract to coach diving, I had my phys ed job which was only six hours a week because of the coaching, and I had a mortgage to pay. That was a tough year, but I got accepted into the NCI, which I thought would make things better after I finished.

One of my problems was coaching in a smaller club that only ran its program in the evenings. I had to be at the office in the afternoons and returned home around 8:30 pm., every day. My son would leave for kindergarten in the morning and when I got home, he was in bed. When my mom was alive, it was okay because she took care of him, but since she died, it's been hell. To find a person you're comfortable with and who is willing to have a child for dinner every night was the hardest part. In daycare, you have to be back by 5:30 or 6:00, and that's understandable, but for me, that's when I coach. I did find someone nearby and he went there after school. She gave him dinner and his bath so when I came home, he was ready to go to bed.

His father kept telling me that it wasn't reasonable that I wasn't there for my son when he came home from school. I had to fight all year long because the dad wanted him to have a more of a family life. I understand; I miss the love of my life, but I don't get to see him often enough. Also, we just found out that he has petit mal epilepsy, so he had a tough year. He's quite bright and knows how to \_play\_ with adults. He knows our weaknesses and he takes advantage and plays with my heart all the time. He knows I feel guilty because I'm not there a lot.

This is all so hard. He needs someone when he comes home from school, spending time with him, reading with him. I love coaching because I love seeing someone come from zero and

become a 10. For me to do that with an athlete, someone who wants to dive but doesn't know a thing, to start from scratch, that's a great job and I love to do that. And for me not to be able to do that with my own son! Its a question of what exactly do I want in life? Do I want to sacrifice my own blood or do I want to be a high performance coach? Is my goal to be an Olympian the most important thing in life? What about my son?

The last month of school, when I was getting my athletes ready for the age group championships, the lady who took care of him decided that she didn't want to be responsible for him any more because he was really hyperactive. I took him with me to the pool every day and it calmed him down but the first couple of weeks, I didn't think I was going to live through it. Finally he understood that I was working and needed to pay attention to my athletes. He might have been a bit jealous of the attention they were getting from me. My club was really good about letting him come with me. They understood when I couldn't find someone for him.

With a child, coaching is very hard. I am away almost every weekend and I'm dedicated, passionate about my sport. I've always been. So what do I do? Do I change? Do I forget coaching and become, what, a marketing agent?

I think I'm a very creative coach. I try to find ways different ways from anyone else to get to a point. Its like I want to go to Rome, but I am not going to take the same highway as everyone else. I take the same approach with my son.

Other clubs have different ways of doing things. One Montreal club, for example, practices during the day. It is the best club in the world, but they have a way of coaching that is different from the way I want to coach. Its a philosophical difference. Its hard for me; its going to be hard for the rest of my life. That's okay. Ill try to manage.

It would be very hard for me to leave Quebec, but I would do it for the right job. And probably leave my son with his father for a year or so while I get settled. It would be best for him, but not for me.

I might be at a turning point in my life. Nothing is coincidence for me, and I think we can apply coaching to any aspect of our lives. I love diving and I am passionate about coaching, but I could manage to bring coaching into any job.

NOTE: Pascale has joined the Canadian Amateur Diving Association as sport development manager.

## **TRACY ELLSWORTH, Basketball**

While I was at university, first studying psychology and finishing up with arts and languages, I coached the provincial midget team and really enjoyed that. When I was finished playing, I went to Germany as a player and also coached three teams at various levels, both men's and women's. I really got into it. Before I came back to Canada, I was offered the assistant coach position at the University of Prince Edward Island and did that for two years. When our head coach stepped down in '92, I wasn't necessarily ready to take on a head coach position, but I was passionate about the university program and didn't want to see it slip, so I took it on.

I had not planned to become a coach. I was just doing it on a piecemeal basis and took a liking to it. Unfortunately, you're only allowed to play five years. If you're not good enough to go on to some higher level, the next step is coaching and that's exactly how it was for me.

I'm a full-time teacher in the local school system and a part-time university coach. It is a tremendous load. I also have two children. My son, Alex, is five, and my daughter, Jenna Mae, is two. I coached throughout both pregnancies.

During the intense part of the season, to be truthful, we just survived. It is amazing the number of things in your life that can be left undone or not done quite as well. I have a wonderful husband, who is very supportive. We use day care at the university and that is convenient, particularly in the afternoon when I am coming from my day job and going to my coaching job. For day care, I pay the same as anybody on the street. I had to wait for a spot, the same as the average Joe. I chose the university because I am kind of devoted to it and for sure, it's convenient.

My coaching is never ending. As a part-timer, I can only do so much. I don't do all that needs to or should be done, but I do what has to be done and ask a lot of people to help me do the things that I can't do, but need to be done.

What I need help with is fund-raising. To operate a quality program, we don't have enough dollars in our base budget to cover exhibitions, employment for my athletes, attire for my athletes, and that sort of stuff. So, yes, there is quite a bit of administration as well as the coaching. We are also responsible for our exhibition schedule, organizing and arranging that as well as the finances.

When I'm coaching, my husband is the primary care giver. Particularly when they were little, he would come with us all the time. Nursing was always a challenge, so he stayed pretty close. Wherever I was, they came with me. Last year was the first time they didn't come on every away trip and that's because they are a little more independent, but it's still hard.

No objections to my children travelling with me were ever made public, but there were occasional situations and I just addressed them with my athletic director and said, "Look, if I'm going to do this job, this has to be." She understood. The men's coach, whom we travel with, wasn't overly excited about it, but my husband would always take our car and we would cover the cost of travel in our own vehicle so my children could be there with me. It couldn't be done without my husband's support.

Why do I do it? The love of the game is the primary reason. Basketball is one of those sports that you can do a million times and never perfect. It's almost like an addiction; you keep coming back for more. There was also a spell where a big part of me wanted to give back to the program what I received as an athlete.

As a part-time employee, I don't get any benefits. That's a pressing issue. They get the best for their buck, so to speak, and the buck doesn't even come close to covering the intense hours,



commitment, and sacrifice that we put in. I find it frustrating. I wasn't particularly looking for monetary payback as much as for an appreciation of all the additional sacrifices. I found that one of the greatest challenges. You're not looking for them to hand you gold medals, but you are looking for some kind of appreciation. Even offering a benefit of some sort would do that. I'm attending a master's program in leadership and learning at the university this coming year – I'm on sabbatical from my teaching position – and I am looking to have a portion of my tuition covered by the university and, as it stands at the moment, I don't fall under employment status to give me those benefits. I am requesting it, but it hasn't been finalized.

The thing that worked well for us was simplification. We don't get too worked up about not meeting an exact timeline in terms of the structured schedule for my son, in particular. My daughter's had much more structure, but he was pretty much a travelling road show. He was two weeks old when I started training camp and wherever I was, he was. If it was dryland training, he was there; if we were doing workouts in the gym, he was there, and so was my husband. My athletes helped out a lot. If I had additional athletes, it was their responsibility to make sure my children were well cared for. But, in a nutshell, simplification was what worked best for us, not getting too worked up about everything. There's a lot you can do about caring for your young children on the road. It's a matter of figuring out the priorities. My house is not exactly the best-maintained house during the season, for sure. There's a lot of catch-up in the off-season as far as those things go.

The school board does figure into the picture as far as my coaching is concerned. I can be out for as few as three days and as many as 10 days with road trips and if we win the championship and move on to the CIAUs [Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union finals], that's almost a week off work. The university pays for a substitute teacher and that allows me to receive my pay without penalty. I have to use up my leave that is normally there for emergency situations, but isn't used very often by the average teacher. The school board is supportive of my coaching. I've been extremely impressed with the support they've offered to me.

What worked quite well was being part time; you're not physically on campus all day and working in your office. As a matter of fact, our office is more a depot than a workstation. We're not there a lot and I managed my schedule well enough that my family life was separated from what I did as a coach.

Most of my athletes enjoyed having the kids around, although occasionally there was someone who didn't agree with it and I had to address it so there would be a better understanding of one another. It wasn't that they felt shortchanged; it was just a personal opinion that kids shouldn't be around as much, or they weren't kids kind of people. It was more a personality thing. It was something I always addressed with my players because it was a concern for me, having them physically there. They want their mother, they don't understand that she's busy, but I didn't want it to be a distraction so we addressed that on a number of occasions and it never evolved into an issue of any sort. If they had a major problem with it, then I'd look at alternative plans.

Each day you wake up, and wonder if you should continue to do this or focus on the family. Traditionally, women have focused on their families, and we're going off the beaten path. It comes into my thinking at least once during every day.

Children are wonderful; they are extremely adjustable and they teach us not to be quite so rigid in our endeavours. I have always said that my children have made it very easy for me to continue to coach because they've adjusted to whatever expectations I've had of them. I hope to eventually teach at the university and continue my coaching as well.

## **LESLEY-ANNE (L.A.) SCHMIDT, Canoeing**

In '89, one of the Rideau Canoe Club coaches was going to the junior worlds and they needed someone to fill in at the club, so I offered to do it. I was totally uncertified; all I had was experience in the sport as a provincial level athlete. In 1990 I became head coach and coached there for four years. I coached a number of Canada Games athletes and had two athletes qualify for the junior worlds. Once I had my first child, Hannah, in August '94, I stopped for two years and worked for the CCA [Canadian Canoe Association], with responsibility for domestic programs. When I came back after my maternity leave, I job shared. I left the CCA when I got into teachers college when Hannah was two. It had been one of my dreams to teach and now I teach full time at an alternate high school in Kanata, Ont., and I love it.

In '97, I came back as the women's canoe coach at Rideau. That was really neat because women's canoe, especially in the singles area, had just come on the scene. Women in canoe doesn't exist anywhere in the world but Canada. I'm also coaching the Ottawa Dragon Boat Festival and the Madawaska Dragon Boat Team, which has won for the seventh year in a row. We're trying to qualify for the 2001 world championships. This is manageable, which is why I do it. If I coached for the club, I'd have to be there two workouts a day, early mornings, late afternoons, and with the kids – I had Jared in '97 – I couldn't do it.

In dragon boat we were scheduling three or four practices a week before the festival so I drove straight from work to the club. My husband, Bevan, works in Kanata at Alcatel. The kids are in a full-time Montessori program in Kanata, and we have extended day care. He picked them up at 5:30 and, depending on the night, he'd go home and have dinner with the kids – he paddles as well. I think he figured he had to do it or be a paddling widower. If he has a practice, he brings the kids to the club. Many of the children of the masters paddlers babysat our kids at the club. I'd have their supper in a picnic basket and off they'd go.

In the wintertime, with the dragon boat, it's weight training and that type of thing, and testing days once a month, so it's not as intense. It really starts in April and goes until the end of August. If I wanted to, we could be at the club every second night doing weights and skiing and running, but I live outside the city so it's a commute.

In the early spring, the Festival pays. After, as the summer wears on, we choose to do this on our own. When I was coaching canoe with the women's team, the pay wasn't even covering my day care costs so I was in the hole.

When I first joined the club as head coach, it was a paid position although I shudder when I remember how much it was. I asked the current head coach what her salary is so I could know if I could do it with two kids. From April to August, she makes about \$8,500. I worked it out and after taxes, we'd probably break even in terms of day care, but it would be tight.

What keeps me in it? I'm still racing. We're trying to win the national junior class women's C-4 (in our sport, there are no age restrictions at the junior level) and between the women in the boat, we have nine children. It's an addiction to the sport. We're passionate; we love it. There's no better feeling.

As a club coach, most of my travelling was to local regattas. One year I took Hannah to the national championships. I had to drive some boats with another coach so I went ahead and my husband followed later with her. Obviously you need to have support to do this. My husband gets frustrated sometimes, but he understands that I am very passionate about the sport and I need his support to do it.

Kids get used to it. They are so excited about going to the canoe club now. I often bring them in the motorboat and they come to our dragon boat practices and sit in the back. I generally try to include them as much as I can, but when I can't, they are quite happy to stay with one of the older kids at the club. If I am travelling, my husband usually takes the kids.

My mom was a single mom, and I often wonder how she did it with three kids. She couldn't do a lot of the things I get to do.

I raced at the nationals 17 days after Hannah was born and I was breastfeeding with no comments. There is a very strong family component to our sport, especially because our masters championships are the day after our regular sprint nationals, so all the kids are there to cheer on the parents.

I haven't yet had to ask my school board for days off to coach, but I will have to take personal leave if we go to the world championships. It comes down to the school you work for. The board may oversee, but the principal has a fair say in what goes on. Our principal is fantastic and very supportive of any canoeing endeavours. As the chair of the CCA coaching committee for canoe and kayak, I've had to leave for meetings and she's so supportive.

I found I was treated with more respect once I had children. I can't explain it, except that I think there is a real difference between a parent who has paddled sitting on a board and one who is involved because Johnny is there every day but knows nothing about the sport. At Rideau, a lot of the parents are paddlers. I think the respect was based on them seeing me having a kid and still being involved in coaching and still having a life and still racing. They saw that I really love it. There will be career aspirations in the future in coaching, especially as the salaries improve. When I was head coach, they were 14-hour days, and 24-hour days when I was at a regatta, and I couldn't do that once I had kids. I wasn't prepared to compromise my family.

One of my dreams is to start a canoe club in Kanata. I've been working on that because I want my kids to paddle and I don't want to drive them all the way into Ottawa. In terms of getting certified at 3M NCCP Level 4 and the Olympic Games, it could be there, but it's a long way off.

I am heavily involved in the 3M NCCP and with the practical assessments of all the Level 1 coaches in the Eastern Ontario division. Our Levels 1 to 3 hadn't been revisited since 1979. There aren't a lot changes in terms of the stroke, but presentation was brutal. A coaching advisory group was formed that includes all our national team coaches and some key provincial and club coaches from across Canada. I am the only female. Over the past two years, we've redesigned the course. It's been a great group and a good experience for me. I've also piloted the new Level 1 course and that's a great opportunity to interact and stay connected. We are on the leading edge of making our courses for our coaches really practical, useful, hands-on. We are professionalizing the coaching end of things, saying if you are really serious about being a coach, we want you to take your Level 1, 2, and 3.

I can see getting this club developed in Kanata and getting my own children into it. Both of them love to paddle. I don't have family here to help so there are times when I turn to a neighbour or a friend, and then there are the club people who, on the drop of a hat, take my kids. They rescue me all the time, and they love to do it. We, of course, do the same, especially in my neighbourhood. Life gets chaotic, but I'm a high-energy person. To be a female coach, you've got to have that energy.

When I left coaching, I was really sad because I felt I had a lot I wanted to do, but I had to. My husband said, "L.A., you can only work for free for so long." When you have two kids and you're working for free, it doesn't make sense. His perspective was good because he was on the outside looking in and I was on the inside, not being able to see it. Now I'm putting my energy into

professionalizing coaching and I think that will help the coaches who follow to stay longer than I did and push to have a standardized salary grid.

## **ELAINE DAGG-JACKSON, Curling**

I got into coaching over 10 years ago. I had always taught my sport. My husband and I have run a summer curling camp for kids for 20 years, but I had never thought about coaching until 1989 when Julie Sutton asked me to coach her very talented team. It was such an opportunity that I couldn't refuse. Two of them had been world junior champions and they really wanted to take a run at making an impact. In that first year of serious coaching, the team won the Canadian championships and gained the berth to go to the 1994 Albertville Olympics.

I loved it right from the start. It was great and so easy for me. I found something I feel really comfortable with, but I said to myself that I was never again going to be in the position of feeling the lack of confidence that I had that first time. I decided that the next time I came into this arena, I was going to make sure I was so much better prepared. I decided to take it very seriously and improve my coaching skills and upgrade my education in case I wanted to make a career of it.

I was working full time in advertising and public relations in Victoria. A couple of years later, I decided to leave my job and concentrate full time on improving my coach education, hoping to get work in coaching. It was hard for me to make the career change because I was quite successful. It was a great job, so it took courage to try this other thing. I wasn't making much money at all for a couple of years. My husband supported me and said, "Give it a try and see what you can do." A lot of people wouldn't have been able to do that because they couldn't afford to give up the income.

I spent a couple of years upgrading. I took summer courses at the National Coaching Institute in Victoria, and ran our summer camps. Then we were asked to do some curling schools in Japan. In January '95, my husband and I got the national coaching contract for Japan's Olympic team and I went to the Nagano Olympics as their coach. As the host team, Japan wanted a reasonable showing and they put a lot of money into their curling teams and did a lot of training, most of it in Victoria. Both teams ended up in fifth place, which was great.

My husband and I have always looked at curling as something we do together. I do a lot more of it than he does, because it's my full-time job, but wherever possible, we like to get contracts we can do together, especially if it's a travelling one, and that happens frequently.

When I started coaching, my kids were two and four. For Albertville, I was away from home for a month and it was tough. Glen's parents would fly out from Calgary to take care of our kids a couple of times a year. When they couldn't do that, we had to hire somebody. Our first choice is always family, but you can only ask family so many times. A lot of people couldn't deal with it the way we do. We live trip by trip, not quite knowing what's going to be in store the next time we go away. Now my daughter is 14 and my son is 12. Last winter I was away a lot because my team, the Kelly Law rink, was winning a lot, and they ended up as the world champions. Every time I went away, we had to find somebody. We often have young people, perhaps someone who worked at our curling camps, stay at our house and we pay them.

When I'm not travelling, I work at home and it's no trouble at all; in fact it's a bonus. When it's not curling season, I'm home all the time so I can go on field trips, take the kids places after school. I can do a lot more than I did when I was working at my full-time job downtown. I miss some important occasions with the kids, but we have been able to take our kids, on points, to Europe, Australia, Hawaii, New York. Our involvement in sport has been quite a worldly experience for our children. Not only have they travelled a lot, but we've had Japanese students living in our home. They've been part of the Olympic training program and could take Olympians for show and tell. This has enriched their lives. There are lot of tears when I go away for a couple of weeks, but there are lots of other exciting parts that really involve them with what we do.

Partnership is the way it works for us. It's not an option if it doesn't work that way. I love coaching and I can't really imagine not coaching, but it has to work for our family. To do that, we have to make it blend in with everybody in the family. We might not have been able to do this if my husband didn't have a full-time, year-round, guaranteed job as a sales manager for a large vending company. At certain times, the coaching has been very lucrative, and other times, not at all. Some of the highest profile jobs are the lowest paid.

I have a combination of responsibilities because I have worked for Curl BC part-time for six years as provincial development coach, and I'll be coaching Kelly's team through until December 2001.

The kids are now old enough to take care of themselves, but you still worry. What if something important happens in their lives and you're not home? It's important to set up an extended support system. We always have somebody staying in the home, but we also have a special aunt and a special neighbour for each of them – a person they can call at any time of the day or night. We spend a lot of time making sure those support people are in place and we do this even when my husband is home, so he's not parenting alone.

A lot of thought and care has gone into this. It took 10 years to get to the point where we're reasonably comfortable with the way things are, but certainly not totally confident. The main thing is knowing that your kids are well taken care of.

There have been critical career choices because of having a family. For example, several national coaching jobs in major curling countries came up in the last year, terrific jobs, but totally unreasonable for a family person. You either had to spend a lot of time in that country or move, so we can't even look at those jobs. When we negotiated the contract with Japan, it was negotiated to suit the way I could do it. They did want somebody to move there, but they wanted the job filled more than they wanted it filled their way.

Household help is one of the things that makes it possible to be a relaxed and supportive person when I'm home. We have a rule in our house that when you come home, you'd better be in good shape and cheerful. It doesn't matter if you've just travelled around the world and are exhausted when you come home to your family. You put on your happy face and be a family person.

Making the commitment to Kelly has been a really tough choice because when you commit to a team, it does put some limitations on other possibilities. Coaching Kelly is a volunteer job. Being coach of a curling team is a non-paying position. It just doesn't fit anywhere in the Canadian system. I'm responsible for assisting all high performance curlers in British Columbia through my Curl BC job, so when Kelly asked me to coach them, it was a personal decision to say yes. It was quite an important career decision to make because at that time I was still the national coach for Japan's women's team.

The night before Kelly won the 2000 Canadian championship, my Japanese women's team was playing in their final. They had won it for five years in a row. Everyone was wondering what I was going to do if both rinks won and went to the worlds. As it turned out, the Japanese team lost. It was a huge upset. That was when we decided to end the contract with Japan. I turned my back on a paying contract because it was time for a change. If I were offered a national coaching position similar to the one with Japan, I would have to take a very hard look at it. The Canadian Curling Association is very supportive, they assist me in my coaching needs as much as they can, but Canada has no paid position for this kind of thing.

I block it out of my mind, because when you coach, you just coach and forget about which are the paying jobs and which are not. It was quite an issue for me in the past year, deciding that I could coach Kelly's team and that I wanted to and understanding what I had to give up. The main

reason I could make the decision was that I'd do just about anything for Julie Sutton, who plays third on the Law rink.

I had no idea that success would come so quickly and to that extent. It was a similar choice to the one 10 years ago. There was nothing there that said either rink was going to do anything; it was just the potential that I saw and the challenge. I had known all four curlers on Kelly's rink for many years and knew they are all very talented. It was just such a challenging opportunity to have that kind of potential on the team. It was irresistible.