

Hockey is family affair at Ames High School

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The theme song for the Ames High Hockey Club might as well be Sister Sledge's "We are Family."

While sibling participation in the same sport and even on the same team is not uncommon, the Little Cyclone club boasts a disproportionate number of relatives on its roster this year. Of the team's 30 members, four pairs of brothers help comprise the squad.

Cocher Russ Moore, who has been involved in the Ames Hockey program for 17 years, said that while the sport often attracts participants from the same family, the number of relatives contributing to the 2002-2003 Little Cyclone team is larger than in years past.

Moore said that sibling rivalry as well as brotherly support and guidance have played a factor in many practices and games this season.

"Even though they've got that brother thing going, usually the older guys help the younger guys," Moore said.

The sibling members of the team said that participating alongside their family members on the ice can be both rewarding and taxing on their relationships.

"It's nice to see him when he makes a play," All-Star junior forward A.J. Kuuttila said about watching his sophomore brother Alex participate in games. "It's tough seeing him out there, with 200-pound seniors, get pushed around."

The younger member of one of the team's other brotherly duos, sophomore Adam Weber, had a different perspective about practicing with his elder sibling, senior Chris.

"It's not bad since we get along," Adam Weber said. "...and when we (do not get along) we can get in a fight at practice."

For one set of brothers on the team, the circumstances of dual participation are more familiar. Unlike the three other sets of brothers on the team, twins Greg and Brad Stafford are accustomed to partaking in the same activities.

"You see them joking around



The Ames High School Hockey Club features a number of players who are related, making the team a real family affair. SUBMITTED PHOTO

and giving each other a hard time," Brad Stafford said about his teammates who also compete with their siblings. "It makes it a lot of fun."

One member of the Little Cyclone Hockey Club, sophomore Trent Heithoff, returned to the team this season without his older brother, Trevor, beside him in the rink. Trevor transferred to White Bear Lake High School in Minnesota for his senior season so that he could compete with the St. Paul Lakers Junior B team in the Minnesota Junior Hockey League.

"It's different because I'm the only Heithoff on the team," Trent said. "If (Trevor) had been here we probably would have won a few more games."

Trevor said that although he is enjoying the experience of competing at a higher level in Minnesota this season, he misses playing on the same team as his brother and the teammates with whom he grew up.

"I miss my friends a lot," Trevor said. "In Ames, we have been playing together since we were really little. We all get along, we are all friends."

Although most of the Ames High squad is not related biologically, members of the team said that their familiarity with each other and longtime involvement in the hockey program has helped to forge bonds greater than typical teammate acquaintances. Four of this season's seven seniors have been playing together for 12 years.

"We have a close knit team," Moore said.

Along with the sibling involvement and friendships forged by the sport, the Ames High Hockey Club has excelled in the competitive arena this season. Although the Little Cyclones were officially eliminated from playoff contention this past weekend, the team prides itself on doubling its number of wins from last season

and becoming a formidable force in the Iowa High School Hockey League this year.

"We have done a lot better (this season) than we have in the last few years," Moore said.

With the final two games of the season set for this weekend in Kansas City, Ames has 11 wins and 20 defeats. Last year, the team finished with a record of 5-27-1.

Also gaining accolades this season, A.J. Kuuttila and defenseman Matt Duffy gained IHSHL All-Star recognition. After the first 27 games of the season, A.J. Kuuttila ranked ninth in the league in total points with 23 goals and 17 assists.

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