

# Making great saves, just like Mom

## Only girl on her atom team follows her goalie-playing mom in net

BY CHRIS ZDEB, EDMONTONJOURNAL.COM DECEMBER 13, 2011



Millwoods Raiders goalie Meghan Cornwell at practice with mom Keeley Procki, also suited up as a goalie. (Greg Southam / Edmonton Journal)

**Photograph by:** Greg Southam

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Like mother like daughter?

Meghan Cornwell can't say she was inspired to be a hockey goalie because her mom, Keeley Procki, is one, but the 10-year-old knows of no other mother-daughter netminders.

Procki can't say she was her daughter's inspiration, either.

"(Meghan) has always done what she wanted. But I can tell you she has a playing style almost mirroring mine. She has grown up watching me play and has definitely picked up on my style."

This is Meghan's fifth year playing minor hockey and fourth year playing between the pipes. She's currently backstopping the Millwoods Atom Raiders, the only girl on the team.

“I played on a girls’ hockey team for one year,” Meghan says, sitting with her mom in an empty dressing room at the Donnan Arena, before a game.

“It was Initiation (beginner hockey for 4-6 year olds),” says Prockiw, picking up the story. “Then we moved and the girls’ team (in the area they moved to) was playing two divisions lower than her old team, so to excel and be better, and to get to where she wants to be later on in life, she joined a boys’ teams.

“She needs to play boys’ hockey, needs to stay with guys for now,” Prockiw says, though Meghan might join a girls’ team down the road.

Just under 800 girls play minor hockey in Edmonton — half under the Edmonton Girls Hockey Association, ([egha.ab.ca](http://egha.ab.ca)), and almost as many in the predominantly male program, according to Dean Hengel, general manager of the Edmonton Minor Hockey Association ([hockeyedmonton.ca](http://hockeyedmonton.ca)).

Girls make up nine to 10 per cent of all minor hockey players here, less than the national average of 15 per cent, but Hengel explains a robust number of females playing in Ontario, a very large province, skews the national figure.

The number of female hockey players in Edmonton is fairly static and has been for the last two or three years, Hengel says.

“There is capacity to grow the female program. There’s a tremendous number of initiatives and opportunities for female hockey players that are coming out as result of progressive programming and corporate partnerships. We’d love to see more girls playing in the sport.”

Successful elite female athletes come up through both programs. They play all positions — forward, defence and goal.

“I don’t think there’s a predisposition that if you’re a female playing in the male program that they’re being forced into playing defence, or forced into playing goal,” Hengel says. “(The position they play) depends on their interest and their skill level.”

Meghan Cornwell says she plays goal because “I can’t really shoot. I just really like being a goalie.”

Her mom says Meghan decided when she was five years old that she wouldn’t play hockey anymore unless she could play in goal, “so we just kind of went with it. Meghan barely knows how to move a player’s stick now.”

Prockiw, 30, has played some form of hockey most of her life — stopping only to have Meghan and son, Griffen, 7. She was five years old too when she started.

“My dad and my brother, both, were players, defencemen, and I wanted to play with them. My brother made me go in net so he had something to shoot on,” she explains.

“Growing up, my best friend and I used to fight over who would play in net when we played street hockey.”

Prockiwi played Atom with a girls’ team “but we played boys’ teams and they made us play in a lower division because we were girls.

“I’ve played guys’ hockey mostly. Most of the girls I played with, and play with now, played guys’ hockey too, because of our age and stuff.”

At first Prockiwi switched between playing in and out of net, “but then I kind of just wanted to play in net.”

The welder currently plays for two women’s teams: the Division II Storm and the Division I Fort Saskatchewan Fury. Occasionally, Prockiwi puts on her goalie gear and works with Meghan when her daughter’s team has a practice.

Being the last line of defence can be stressful, mother and daughter agree.

“If I let in more than four or five goals, I just shut down. I get mad and I shut down,” Meghan says.

She is in her second year at Mount Carmel Hockey Academy where she is learning to handle the stress and mental part of the game, her mom says.

“For me, if I know I should have had that goal, it’s more frustrating than somebody getting a good goal on me,” Prockiwi says. “Those are also a little easier to shake off than the goal I should have had.”

Meghan says most of her team are supportive whether she stops or misses a shot — “they’re like ‘that’s OK you’ll get the next one.’” Win or lose, the other players come out on the ice at the end of each game to give her a pat on the helmet or her blocker before lining up behind her to shake hands with the other team.

Prockiwi says she always takes the blame when a shot gets past her.

“If I yell at my defence and I blame it on them, they’re going to turn around and eventually treat me the same way and say ‘you should have had it.’ Even if my team makes a mistake I always tell them that it was my fault, that I should have had it.

“They know, and I know, what they did wrong and what I did wrong so you just encourage each other and otherwise keep quiet.”

Meghan says at first that she kind of dreams about playing in the NHL some day “and my mom is kind of helping me work for that.”

But Prockiwi says she just wants her daughter to go to university, hopefully on a hockey scholarship.

“Yeah,” says Meghan. “I want to go to university because besides hockey, I want to be an

oceanographer.”

Prockiwi smiles. She’s glad not everyone in the family is a goalie: son, Griffen, plays defence. Her car isn’t big enough to carry a third goalie’s gear, she says.

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