

ABBY, KYLEA AND OLIVIA LIVING THE LADY BLUE KNIGHTS LIFE

>> BY DONNA PARIS

THIS IS A STORY ABOUT THREE GIRLS — Abby, Kylea and Olivia — who love to play lacrosse. They all play for the Oshawa Lady Blue Knights Lacrosse Club (OLBK) U13 team and they have not lost a game in Ontario in almost five years. True story.

“It is true, but there were lots of games where it could have gone either way,” says Carolyn Toll, the coach. “That’s not really what it’s about for me — as long as everyone is doing their best.” Her philosophy is simple, “I try to understand each player as an individual and get the best out of them, understand what they can give and what I can expect, and move forward from there.”

Toll has a lot of street credibility. She started playing in high school and went on to play for Team Canada, then started coaching when she was pregnant with her daughter. For her, the most satisfying part is getting to watch the athletes develop. Most difficult? “Getting an athlete to reach their potential when I’ve used all my resources and it’s still not working,” she says. “I hope something I do along the way will make a difference, but I can only do so much — then it’s up to the athlete.” And she’s no pushover, either. “If you do your best and you lose, then it’s OK. But if we aren’t playing well, then it’s a different story,” she says. “We have to try our hardest to execute what we do best.”

As a parent, Toll, who coaches her daughter Olivia on the team, admits she is probably toughest on her. “Playing the game is fun and it’s challenging, and I want her to stay fit, reach her goals and I want to provide the tools to do that,” she says. “But Olivia is one of the most talented players on the team — I’m probably a little harder on her than the other 80 percent of the girls.”



Meet Olivia Toll, who recently picked lacrosse over another national sport. “I quit hockey this year,” she says, “I like lacrosse better. Asked what it’s like to be on such a winning team, she says, “You have a lot of pressure to win, but our team can do it if we all try our best.” She likes playing defense, and one of her goals is to play for the Florida Gators.



As for Lisa and Joe Hiltz, the Ontario Lacrosse Association (OLA) Vice-President of Field Lacrosse, who live in Peterborough, Ont., it’s worth all the driving that happens every week for their daughter. Abby first started playing at eight years old but there was not enough interest in a team in Peterborough and that’s how she started playing for OLBK.

“Abby fell in love with lacrosse,” says Joe. “It’s an amazing story for these three girls.” To what does he credit the team’s success? “We have one of the best coaches in Ontario — in Canada,” he says. Carolyn knows how to inspire the girls on different levels, he says. “She’s someone the girls look up to.”

Joe, who started playing lacrosse when he was four years old then went on to referee and coach, is a big fan of the game. “Lacrosse is fun, it’s fast-paced, it’s about getting to meet a lot of different people,” he says. “I want my kids to do the best they can in whatever they participate in, and Abby has met lots of nice people and made friends — that’s the best part.”

Lisa points out another plus. “We were lucky that Oshawa hosted the women’s international lacrosse games last year — the girls attended a camp and were able to watch a lot of the games.”



Now meet Abby Hiltz, who plays lacrosse, basketball and competes in track and field. Why does she like lacrosse so much? “The coaching is great, I get to play with all my friends and we respect each other,” she says. “And I like getting to meet new people that I can play with later on, as an adult.”

Unlike some of the other parents, the Dobsons never played lacrosse. “My husband played basketball and soccer, and I played volleyball,” says Heather Dobson. “But we’re both phys ed teachers, we’ve played sports all our lives and we want our kids to be active.” In fact, she thinks it is vital that kids are active. “There are so many studies showing how important it is — from gaining self-confidence to making good decisions as they get older.”

As for her daughter, Kylea, Dobson says that perhaps she will play at a higher level. “Who knows?” she asks. “Right now, I know that Kylea loves the sport and the coach — Carolyn is outstanding, she really knows how to teach.

Kylea is an athlete who likes playing volleyball, basketball, badminton and lacrosse. “I like playing lacrosse, I’ve been playing since I was little and I have friends on the team that I’ve been playing with for years.” What she likes best? Shooting on net and scoring.

She should get lots of opportunity to do just that, says Dobson. “Girls’ field lacrosse is building, and more and more teams are added to the league each year — it’s definitely bigger in the United States, but we’re lucky to be here, in an area where it’s growing.” That’s one thing everyone agrees on. “The opportunities in

lacrosse are phenomenal — lacrosse is there for girls and women to play the game recreationally or move up through the ranks, to take the game to the next level,” says Barb Boyes, Executive Director of the OLBK program.

“What I like about girls’ field lacrosse is that a lot of female coaches come back to give back to the game as role models. If you think about girls’ hockey or soccer, there are a lot of men coaching,” says Boyes. “It’s really cool to see so many women out there.”

Take Carolyn, who embodies the philosophy of the club, says Boyes. “She played for Team Canada, she’s a real student of the game and she’s a phenomenal instructor — from teaching skills to character development.” For Boyes, the biggest reward is the growth of the program. “It’s the biggest club program for girls in Canada. One amazing thing: our kids have been very successful — 35 girls from our program have gone on scholarships to continue their academic goals” she says.



At the end of the day, Boyes says it’s about character development, making kids better people and giving them skills they can apply later on in life — leadership, discipline, commitment and time management. “Don’t worry,” she laughs. “The kids are having fun, too — one of our tournaments is in Disneyland.”

All three girls on this team have their eye on the target. Asked if they will go on and keep playing lacrosse, they all have the same answer. “I want to play for Team Canada,” says Abby.

“I want to get on Team Canada,” says Olivia. “Oh yeah. To Team Canada,” says Kylea.

If they do go all the way, these three will certainly have the backing and support of family, friends and coaches — and lots of cheering from across the country. **OLM**