

## Fencing Article in the Fayetteville Observer by one of our Fencing Moms!

Thursday, 13 August 2009

Don't sweat small stuff  
By Brenna Berger

Recently, my father took my 10-year-old son to watch the Baltimore Orioles play the Kansas City Royals at Baltimore's Camden Yard. It was a last-minute thing; my sister couldn't use the tickets because of a surprise business trip. My dad was thrilled to be able to take his grandson to a Major League game.

In the middle of the game, the phone rang at my parents' house. It was my son, and he was so excited I could barely understand him. It turns out that the seats were behind the Royals dugout and as the catcher headed in after an inning, he tossed the ball up into the stands and my son caught it. I was thrilled for him! I also was secretly relieved that he had actually caught the ball, as one of my big fears about raising a boy mostly on my own is that I make a lousy stand-in for his father.

I worry that I haven't spent enough time with my son playing catch or tossing a football in the backyard. Honestly, it's because I stink at both. I've never been that great at sports. I always figured that my husband would be the one to teach him how to do these things, but because of multiple deployments and long work hours, it hasn't worked out that way. I know my husband feels bad about it, too.

I know there are a lot of moms out there who throw a mean fastball and who can put a killer spiral on a football. Unfortunately, I'm not one of them. If we're being honest here, it's really not my husband, either. As a military brat, my husband spent a lot of time growing up overseas. He attended international schools that didn't always offer traditional American sports. He played a lot of soccer and tennis. His varsity letter was in water polo. As the nonathletic one in my family, my varsity letter was in yearbook.

I felt guilty that I didn't sign my son up for Little League even when he said he wasn't interested. Maybe if I hadn't been so burnt out after soccer season, I would have signed him up for basketball. I'd use moving as an excuse for not signing up for spring sports. Perhaps I was simply trying to make life easier for myself by not having to chauffeur the kids to multiple practices every week.

I'd become not a soccer mom, but a slacker mom. I felt like I was making a huge parenting mistake. I wanted to discuss it with my husband, but having a soul-searching conversation with someone who sounds like he's standing in an echo chamber with a soup can and a string for a phone is not easy.

While I was earning a new varsity letter in maternal guilt, my son, oblivious to my worries, found his sport. A sport he absolutely loves. Last December, he came to me and told me that he wanted to take up fencing. I highly suspect that this had something to do with his interest in light sabers, but I told him I'd look into it. I wasn't sure that I could find fencing lessons in Fayetteville. Fortunately, I found All-American Fencing Academy, and both my kids have been fencing there since January.

Fencing turned out to be the perfect fit for my son. It's an individual sport, and he loves the strategy involved in a bout. Fencing has brought out a side of my son I wasn't sure existed. On the strip, he becomes a fierce competitor. Although I still don't understand all the rules, it's a fascinating sport to watch. Fencing also happens to be an Olympic and collegiate sport, so perhaps there is a possibility for a college scholarship after all! A mom can dream, right?

I've once again learned not to worry so much about the little things. Things always have a way of working themselves out. I'm going to bet that the same hand-eye coordination skills required in fencing helped my son catch that baseball at Camden Yard.

Brenna Berger can receive messages at [brenna.m.berger@gmail.com](mailto:brenna.m.berger@gmail.com), [military@fayobserver.com](mailto:military@fayobserver.com) or 486-3585.