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Sharing the ice

Hockey players must take turns at Tautphaus

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Football players spend five days a week on the field, basketball players can find a court all over the city and for baseball players, any patch of grass works for a game of catch.

But hockey players in Idaho Falls rarely see the ice.

Between public skating, figure skating and youth and adult hockey leagues, high school hockey players get an hour and a half practice and one game a week at Tautphaus Park Ice Rink.

The three high school teams in Idaho Falls suffer from the same circumstances and play each other until the state tournament.

Those who play on the Midget travel team, selected from players from all four high schools, earn an extra hour and a half practice.

But the competition they face in weekly tournaments have the facilities to practice daily.

"The Tri-Cities (Wash.) travel team had more hours of ice time before our tryouts than we'll have all year," said Robert Johnson, the assistant coach from the Midget AA travel team and Idaho Falls High School. "It amazes me how competitive these kids are with those caliber of teams."

Senior goalie Brett Seely is a perfect example of the lack of ice time. Despite playing for Skyline High School and the Midget AA travel team, he's had three practices in the last month due to the holidays and the busy schedule at Tautphaus Park Ice Rink.

"We'll always be at a disadvantage because of a lack of ice time," Seely said. "Even teams from smaller areas get more ice time. Like Sun Valley. They have one rink, but they also have one school."

And when the players do get ice time, it isn't prime time on the schedule.

Senior Jake Johnson attends the high school practice for Idaho Falls on Wednesday nights at 9:15 p.m. He doesn't get home until midnight, then has practice at 5:30 the next morning for the travel team.

"I'm not a morning person, but you get used to it," Johnson said. "I'm not very excited when I wake up."

The Midget team makes up for its lack of ice time by working out together off



Aaron Rosenblatt / Post Register - Brett Seely, goalie for the Idaho Falls Midget AA hockey team, does the Russian Twist during a midweek workout Wednesday at Performance Therapy in Idaho Falls.

the ice Wednesday nights. Every little bit of time together helps, Johnson said.

"Between high school practice, travel practice and working out on your own, you make up for it," Johnson said. "You've got to take what you can get."

Despite the lack of time on the ice, the Idaho Falls Midget AA team has been more than competitive. It finished second in tournaments in Casper, Wyo.; Butte, Mont.; and Missoula, Mont.; and is the favorite in its own Tin Can Classic tournament this weekend.

"I've told a lot of friends and family who've wanted to come see me play, this is a great chance," Seely said. "Our high school games are so late (Tuesdays at 9:15 p.m), it's hard for people to see us. But if you want to see a high level of hockey, this is it."

Tin Can Classic

The schedule of games for this weekend's Midget AA hockey tournament at Tautphaus Park in Idaho Falls:

Saturday

8:15 a.m. Idaho Falls vs. Timpanogos

10:05 a.m. Sun Valley vs. Ogden

7:00 p.m. Ogden vs. Idaho Falls

8:55 p.m. Timpanogos vs. Sun Valley

Sunday

7:00 a.m. Idaho Falls vs. Sun Valley

8:55 a.m. Ogden vs. Timpanogos

12:30 p.m. Third-place game

2:25 p.m. Championship game