

Puck-friendly clan scores again

Brad Krueger of the Des Moines Capitals is the last winger in a six-man line that began with his father.

By MIKE MALLOY
REGISTER CORRESPONDENT

The Krueger family business is gasoline, but hockey is its fuel.

The puck-friendly clan added another moment to its bulging scrapbook recently, as Brad — the youngest of Cathy and Don Krueger's five children — held the Iowa High School Hockey League State Tournament

championship trophy after the Des Moines Capitals defeated Mason City, 6-3.

"The guys on the team, we've been talking about it for a long time. We really wanted that win," Brad said.

Brad, a senior at Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines, is the last winger in a six-man line that began when his father, Don, was a

stick boy in the early days of the Metro Ice Sports Arena. "I've lived in this arena most of my life," Don said.

Don moved from Minnesota when he was 9 and played on a traveling squad while in high school.

"They didn't have teams back then like they do now," Don said.

Don married Cathy 35 years ago, and their rink-side journey began in earnest with the birth

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ALEX DORGAN-ROSS/THE REGISTER

Des Moines Capitals defender Austin Olson, left, is congratulated by teammate Brad Krueger after scoring during the second period of the first round of a state hockey tournament at Metro Ice Sports Arena in Urbandale last month.

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Brad Krueger, a member of the Des Moines Capitals

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of their first son, Scott. The oldest Krueger boy played for the combined Valley-Dowling team and went on to skate at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, where he played on three Division III national championship teams.

Scott also played for the Des Moines Buccaneers — as Brian, Mark and Nick eventually did. Brian put his own name on a Buccaneers sweater this season, playing in three preseason games and one regular-season game.

The Kruegers own six Amoco stations around the metro area, and Don, a Capitals board member, has found that business savvy can be as important in hockey as a hard slap shot. Hockey is unsanctioned by the Iowa High School Athletic Association, and no longer sponsored by individual high schools,

meaning the game must be in not only a player's blood, but also his wallet.

"It's about \$2,000 a kid to play on the team," Don said. "We sell a lot of ads in the programs, firewood, Christmas greenery, all kinds of things."

Traveling is expensive, too, but provides a nonmonetary return. "We do so much traveling that the parents and kids get real close. We've traveled to Minnesota, Canada, all over," Don said.

Scott, 34, coaches the Capitals, including a brother nearly half his age. "I was dating my wife when he was born," Scott said.

Brad said his respect for Scott began long before Brad ever taped a stick.

"I look up to him, everyone on the team looks up to him, and if we didn't, we wouldn't be where we're at right now," Brad Krueger said.



ALEX DORGAN-ROSS/THE REGISTER

Des Moines Capitals forward Ross Kirby skates with the puck between Ames Little Cyclones' forwards A.J. Kuuttila, left, and Andrew Hinzinger in the first period of a state hockey tournament at the Metro Ice Sports Arena in Urbandale last month.

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