

Summer months take on different meaning for Colby family

By Joey Falkoff

Free Press Reporter
jfalcoff@nwks.com

They're called the lazy days of summer for a reason.

With school out, most kids struggle to stay busy while parents take a breather from the grind of their everyday lives and look forward to a relaxing summer vacation.

Then there's the Krzycki family.

Rather than looking for ways to avoid the summer doldrums, the Krzycki's barely have time to catch their breath.

Vacations? Please. The only thing they get to see in the summer that resembles a sandy beach is the infield dirt at the Colby city fields.

Actually, that's where the Krzycki's spend a lot of their time these days. Parents Jeff and Shelli have the fortune (or dilemma depending how you look at it) of having kids that play both summer league baseball and softball.

Their 16-year old son Preston is the starting second baseman on the Colby American Legion baseball team and 11-year old daughter Tessa is a member of the Sweet Thunder softball team. They also have a 17-year old daughter, Jordan, who is kept busy with her summer volleyball schedule.

On top of all of that, Jeff serves as the American Legion head baseball coach.

It's a rarity not to see at least one Krzycki out at the fields and it's equally as surprising to find one at home.

"We could just cancel our cable and our telephone, because we're just not there," joked Jeff. "We kinda just sleep there. That's all we do. We just go from one thing to the next."

Trying to keep up with three kids who are involved in summer sports is certainly no picnic. With several conflicting dates throughout the summer and Jeff committed to the Legion team sometimes four or five nights a week, the Krzycki's are forced to make tough choices as to who they will watch. Usually, it's Jeff going with Preston, while Shelli goes with Tessa and Jordan. It's a system Jeff says they've made the best of.

"They've each done a good job with it," said Jeff. "Our kids are competitive. It doesn't bother them as much when one parent is missing because they're so wrapped up in the game. The kids understand mom and dad might not be at every game. Anytime there's an open weekend, I make sure and watch the girls play."

That was the case June 21 when Jeff got to stay home and watch Tessa's softball tournament, which Shelli says he did for nine hours that day.

For Shelli, it's a bit easier to watch Preston play since the Legion team plays during the week and Sweet Thunder only played on the weekends.

Still, it's made for some interesting times for her trying to appease both Preston and Tessa. On the weekend of June 2-3, the Legion team played at the Dodge City Tournament and Sweet Thunder was in Beloit.

As soon as Tessa got done Saturday night, the Krzycki's and Sager's made the three-hour trip home together then got up early Sunday morning and drove another two hours to Dodge City.

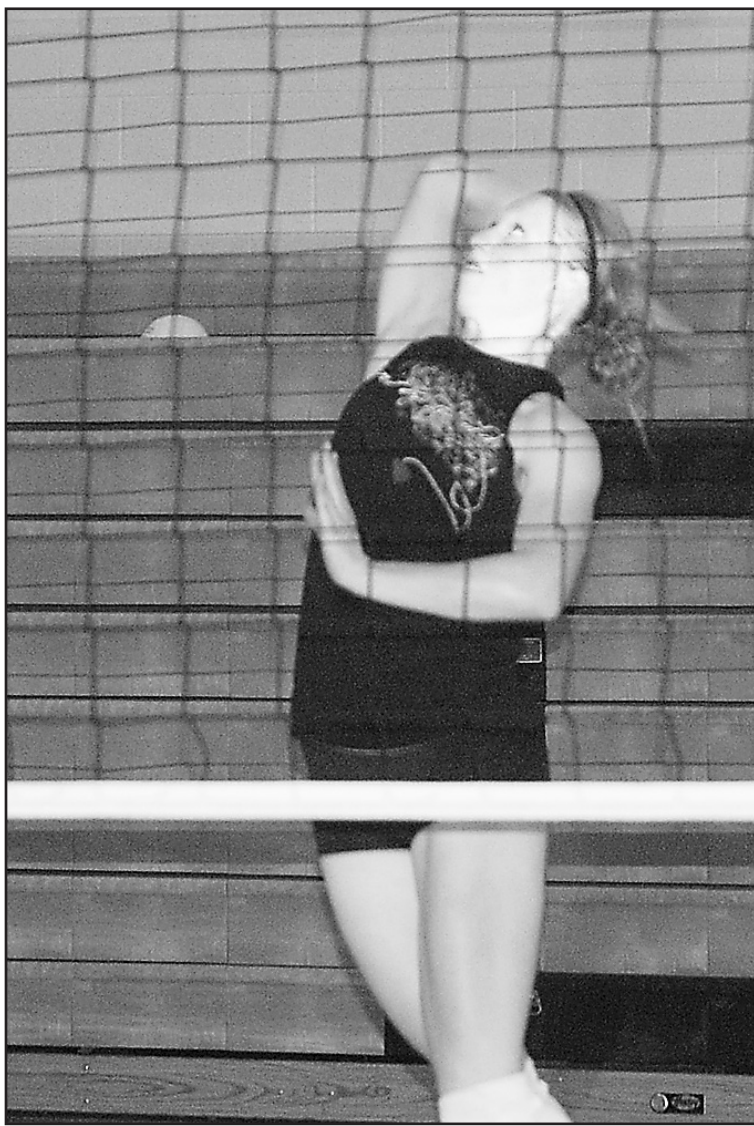
"Then we all went back home with our families in our own vehicles," Jeff remembered.

This weekend, Jeff went with Preston to Goodland and Shelli traveled with Tessa to the state softball tournament in Wichita.



JOEY FALKOFF/Colby Free Press

ABOVE: Preston Krzycki, 16, is spending his summer playing American Legion baseball. **RIGHT:** Jordan Krzycki, 17, is a volleyball player at Colby High. She is participating in the team camp activities this week. Both Preston and Jordan also work for their father, Jeff, at Taco John's.



The next day, Shelli was back in her familiar lawnchair seat at the city fields to catch Preston's doubleheader with Dodge City.

"We go where the kids go," she said. "I get cranky every now and then. I told Jeff one Saturday I wasn't going to another game again. Where was I Wednesday? At another game."

Even though Jordan no longer travels with Sweet Thunder, her summer sports schedule isn't exactly empty either. Two weeks ago, Jordan attended a summer volleyball team camp at Doane College in Nebraska and this week is participating in the Colby High volleyball camp. Her mom says she also keeps the rust off for softball by playing in a co-ed league on Sunday nights.

Being the oldest of the bunch with two younger siblings who also play sports, Jordan has accepted the fact she now has to share the spotlight.

"Early on we went to all of her games, so she understands mom and dad can't be at every event," said Jeff. "In the spring when she's in softball and Preston's in baseball it will be same thing. You don't want to miss any of your

daughter's games her senior year. We'll just take every opportunity we can."

The decreased travel schedule has also allowed Jordan to work more this summer at Taco John's, which her father has owned since the family moved to town in 1990. Preston and Shelli also work there and even Tessa can be seen milling around behind the counter.

"That's where the kids have been raised: the baseball fields and Taco John's," said Shelli. "When Jordan was 11 and Preston was 10, they just wanted to stay home. Tessa don't want to stay home alone. Tessa's a very strong person. She gets a lot from her brother and sister."

Tessa and her mom arrive at the restaurant around 11 a.m. each day, but Jeff, Preston and Jordan get there bright and early at 6 a.m. to help open the store.

They work into the afternoon before heading home for a brief rest period, which also includes changing into their uniforms for the evening. On this night, Jeff and Preston had a baseball doubleheader against Norton, and Tessa had softball practice.

"The only clothes I wash are

Taco John's uniforms and baseball uniforms," said Shelli.

Although Jeff said they 'absolutely' don't mind any rainouts, getting some fresh air is always nice.

"Being in this business, any event we can go to outside of the store is relaxing to us," said Jeff. "After being cooped inside so long, it doesn't matter if it's cold and snowing or 100 degrees. We'd rather be outside."

Once the games are over, the Krzycki's say they usually grab a bite to eat and discuss the evening's events.

"It's just nice to recap everything and hear the excitement in the kid's voices," said Jeff. "You know when they've done good and you know when they've done not so good. As soon as we're done, we crash, call it a night and do it over the next day."

It's a very repetitive process that can be a bit hectic at times, but Jeff knows there are much worse things his family could be involved with than sports and fast food.

"It's nice to know where they are and what they're doing," admitted Jeff. "Kids are entertained

in so many ways these days."

While Tessa just concluded her softball season, Preston has at least a couple of weeks remaining in his baseball season.

The red-hot Legion team, winners of 12 straight games, begins Zone Tournament action next week and a trip to the state tournament awaits them in early August. Should they win state, they would advance to the region tournament in Minnesota.

"The opportunity is there with these boys," said Jeff.

Jordan also has a showcase volleyball camp in Hutchinson she plans to attend at the end of the month, hoping to draw the eye of several colleges that will be watching.

"Everyone is having a successful summer and everybody is having a lot of fun," said Jeff. "I still think the best is yet to come. Whatever they're doing, we're going to follow."

Despite all the miles and concession stand hot dog dinners, the Krzycki's are actually taking a backseat to the Sager family this summer.

With daughter Darby in Sweet Thunder, Braden playing K-18 and Cory in American Legion, Alan and Tonya Sager can claim to be the only parents this year to complete the summer trifecta.

Last weekend, the Sager's were spread so thin no one was home to watch Cory play a pair of doubleheaders. Tonya was at state softball to watch Darby and Alan, who coaches for the K-18 team, was at a tournament in Ft. Morgan, Colo.

"They're where we were last year," said Jeff.

Last year, even with Jordan doing Sweet Thunder, the Krzycki's still managed to salvage a mini summer vacation. The family went to Colorado Springs, Colo., to go school shopping and after getting done in half-a-day Jeff suggested they go up to Pike's Peak.

"We rode the cog rail," said Jeff. "It made it feel like a real vacation. One thing we do enjoy is going fishing, going camping...taking a real vacation. Our vacation time is at the ball parks. That's something the kids look forward to when they get older is a real vacation."

When that summer will come is anyone's guess. Even with Jordan heading off to college in the fall of 2009, Jeff doesn't foresee any changes to their busy schedules for several more years.

"I don't think it will slow down until they're all out of the house," he said.

Maybe then a trip to Florida or Mexico will be possible.

For now, it's off to the ballpark.



JOEY FALKOFF/Colby Free Press

Tessa Krzycki, 11, played for the Colby Sweet Thunder softball team this summer.

4th Annual Rawlins County
MUD BOG
TRUCKS & 4-WHEELERS
Saturday, July 19th • 2 p.m.
Rawlins County Fairgrounds, Atwood, KS
GATES OPEN 11 A.M. ~ \$4,000 CASH & TROPHIES!!
For more information: 785-626-3684 or 785-322-5253.

REACH HIGHER

New Holland introduces the NEW T8000 Series tractors, offering higher power, higher speeds and higher productivity. With five models up to 270 PTO hp and offering up to 75-gallons-per-minute hydraulic flow, the new T8000 tractors handle the most advanced seeders and specialty equipment on the market. Push your efficiency higher!

BIODIESEL APPROVED - FOR USE WITH UP TO B100!
INCREASED PULLING POWER - POWER GROWTH UP TO 44 HP
NEW 19X4 POWERSHIFT - 31-MPH TRANSPORT SPEED
INTELLISTEER™ AUTO STEERING SYSTEM - ACCURACY AS PRECISE AS +/- 1 INCH

NEW HOLLAND
AGRICULTURE

New Holland introduces the NEW T8000 Series tractors, offering higher power, higher speeds and higher productivity. With five models up to 270 PTO hp and offering up to 75-gallons-per-minute hydraulic flow, the new T8000 tractors handle the most advanced seeders and specialty equipment on the market. Push your efficiency higher!

BIODIESEL APPROVED - FOR USE WITH UP TO B100!
INCREASED PULLING POWER - POWER GROWTH UP TO 44 HP
NEW 19X4 POWERSHIFT - 31-MPH TRANSPORT SPEED
INTELLISTEER™ AUTO STEERING SYSTEM - ACCURACY AS PRECISE AS +/- 1 INCH

NEW HOLLAND
AGRICULTURE

Farm Implement & Supply Co. Inc.
of Colby
1025 East 1st. Street Annex
785-462-2411

NOW SHOWING
July 11th - July 17th

THE INCREDIBLE HULK
PG-13 1 Hour, 45 Minutes
Friday & Saturday 7:00 & 9:10
Sunday 2:00 & 7:00
Monday - Thursday 7:00

HANCOCK
PG-13 1 Hour, 35 Minutes
Friday & Saturday 7:00 & 9:00
Sunday 2:00 & 7:00
Monday - Thursday 7:00

Colby Cinema
1935 S. Range • 785-460-9600
www.colbycinema.com

Winner of 2 FREE Movie passes
Richard Riemann

HOUSE FOR SALE

965 E. 9th
Colby, KS

Call
785-460-7038

For sale by owner: Four-plus bedrooms (additional room can be a guest room, den, library or office) 2.5 bathrooms, all on one level, Central Air and roof about three years old, on two lots including corner, approximately 2,500 square feet, dishwasher, 10x12 storage shed, plenty of off-street parking, great for young kids as house is adjacent to small park, recently remodeled and ready to move into. Want to stop by and take a look? Call 785-460-7038 for an appointment. \$87,500.