

NCAA tournaments toss Printys a puzzle

Written by Tom Fruehling

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Kelly and Jeff Printy's home computer and both cell phones were buzzing Monday night as the Marion couple figured out where they're going to be this weekend and how they'll get there.

Earlier in the evening, they learned that daughter Jaime will be playing with her Iowa Hawkeyes basketball teammates in the NCAA tournament late Saturday afternoon in Spokane, Wash.

They'd found out a day earlier that son Jordan has a late Friday night tip-off in Cleveland with his Indiana State Sycamores ball club in the men's NCAA tournament.

For the past two seasons, Jeff and Kelly have been at all of Jaime's games in Iowa City and many of the road games, too. They've also traveled to all of Jordan's weekend home tilts in Terre Haute, Ind., and to a lot of them elsewhere around the Midwest.

They haven't counted them up but figure they've been on the road at least 35 times this year and last.

When one of their former Linn-Mar star athletes is playing in one place and the other someplace else, they sometimes split up.

"Besides working, that's pretty much what we do in the winter, is go to basketball games," says Jeff, 49, an engineering project specialist at Rockwell Collins. "It's our social life."

But then they also have a 13-year-old daughter, Jenna, who has taken up dance instead of hoops. So she has dance competitions all over the place, as well.

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“I don’t know what Jeff and I will do when the kids are all graduated,” says Kelly, 48, a nurse for the past 25 years at St. Luke’s. “Just sit and look at each other, I guess.”

This upcoming weekend is special, of course, with brother and sister each playing in first round games of the NCAA basketball tournaments.

Jordan, 22, is a 6-foot-4 junior who’s been the top reserve for his Cinderella squad this year. Jaime, 20, is a 5-foot-11 sophomore and the team’s leading scorer.

Problem is, they’ll both be in action about 2,000 miles and three time zones apart.

When the men’s pairings pitted Missouri Valley Conference champ Indiana State against powerhouse Syracuse, Jeff decided he’d make the 10-hour drive to Cleveland along with his parents, Dave and Shirley Printy, in the folks’ well-used Chrysler minivan.

The folks are such fans that, although they sold in their condo in Marion and now live in a home on Spirit Lake in northwest Iowa, for the past several winters they’ve set up quarters in Jeff and Kelly’s basement, so they can tag along on basketball trips.

“We used to spend a month in Arizona,” says Dave, 78. “Now we spend from November to the end of the basketball season in Marion. But we love our grandkids.”

As of late Monday night, Kelly was burning up the internet checking out flight schedules and hotel reservations for Spokane, where the Hawk women will face home town Gonzaga.

Her husband calls her a “PriceLine.com guru” for the rates she’s able to negotiate for their far-flung travels.

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If for some reason her arrangements fall through, then she'll be going to Cleveland with the rest of them.

As long as the Hawks and Sycamores keep winning, Kelly and Jeff plan to keep following them all along the trail.

"This might not happen again," Jeff says. "And you only live once."