

AVERILL SISTERS SAVOR 'FULL-CIRCLE' EXPERIENCE



By Patrick Donnelly

WILL AND ALI AVERILL were living a hockey parent's dream.

On any given winter night, after the kids had gone to bed, they'd resurface the family's 44-foot-by-80-foot backyard rink, perfected over years of building, leveling the yard, frantically shoveling late at night and even removing a tree.

They would leave the ice pristine.

"We would sit there and just admire it," Will said.

The next day, daughters Anne, Caroline, Maggie and Liz (Wayland, Mass.) would carve up the ice again.

It might have been a pickup game, sledding, target practice or even a game of tag. Many nights were spent with ferocious 3-on-3 or even 4-on-2 contests between the girls and their parents, both Division 1 players in their day.

"We used to dominate them, and then over the years it got worse and worse for us," Ali said.

Eventually, those games gave way to nights when she and Will were happy to kick back inside and leave the games to the kids.

"Our favorite thing as they got older was the nights we were

Passion for the game fuels family tradition, from Phillips Andover to the Ivies, USA Hockey and beyond

inside the house, looking out the window and just watching them goof around, laugh, play music and have so much fun in the backyard," Will said.

"It was definitely a time where we all kind of started to love hockey even more but also each other, too," Caroline said.

The Averills love watching their girls play hockey. They coached them in their younger days with the East Coast Wizards and have been there to support them as they've gotten older, whether in college, prep hockey, or club hockey with the Wizards and Assabet.

This winter, it might never be easier for Ali and Will to watch their girls play.

Anne is in the midst of her junior season as a defender at Dartmouth, while Caroline, a senior, and Maggie, a junior, are set to run it back at Phillips Andover. The two Princeton commits will skate alongside Liz, now a freshman at Andover.

It'll be a rare opportunity for three of the Averills to play on the same team.

From left, the Averill sisters — Liz (Assabet), Caroline (Phillips Andover), Anne (Dartmouth) and Maggie (Phillips Andover) — have blossomed at every level of hockey. The natives of Wayland, Mass., have represented Team USA and been standouts at the collegiate, prep and club levels.

The four sisters inherited their love of ice hockey from their parents — Will (Belmont Hill, Northeastern, pro hockey) and Ali (Phillips Andover, Princeton).



EARLY ON, Ali Averill thought they had screwed up.

After starting hockey a year earlier, a then-6-year-old Anne was at the Wizards' U-8 tryouts, struggling to keep up with some of the other kids.

"I called Will from tryouts, like, 'We've blown it. She can't play. We got her involved too late. She should have been skating,'" she said.

Anne quickly caught up, and Caroline, Maggie and Liz eventually began to take up the game themselves.

It's no surprise that hockey almost instantly was part of the girls' DNA.

After starring at Belmont Hill, Will continued a family legacy at Northeastern, shining with the Huskies before some professional stops in the ECHL and AHL.

Ali (née Coughlin), meanwhile, was a star at Andover before moving on to Princeton. A skilled defender and a two-time Patty Kazmaier top 10 finalist, she was a member of Team USA's Under-18 Select team in 1995 and had one of the Tigers' most productive careers in program history.

"It was almost impossible not to understand the game," Anne said. "Our dad always had hockey on. Sometimes you couldn't even talk to him. You'd ask, 'Hey Dad, can you pass the remote?' And he'd just be on the Bruins game."

Having parents who played at high levels and understand the game so well themselves created an invaluable resource for the girls.

"They've been able to find a balance between being able to push us to be our best and holding us accountable ... but also not being overly crazy toward us to the point where we start to not love hockey the way that we do," Caroline said. "The roles they've played in helping us become better players and people have been so important."

Anne said, "They're both competitive people. They want us to be good so badly that they're willing to do anything to put us in any position to succeed."

That competitive spirit was on full display on the backyard rink, where neither Ali nor Will would take it easy on the girls.

"Neither of them took any mercy on us, ever," Anne said. "If we had the puck, Dad would be slashing our wrists and chasing us down. I feel like he'd even trip us if we were on a breakaway sometimes. He was fully into it. Mom wore full equipment one time."

The same tenacity was fostered in the girls.

"We really just wanted them to have fun," Will said. "We love the sport. I couldn't imagine people watching more hockey than us."

Anne continued to improve each year, playing boys Squirt hockey with Belmont in addi-

tion to the Wizards. Caroline fell in love with the game. Maggie got a taste of winning the U-10 Massachusetts state title with the Wizards. They both played boys hockey with the Islanders, too.

Will recalled Caroline's 6th birthday celebration, a skating party at Edge Sports Center. While most of her classmates spent the hour twirling around the other end of the rink, Caroline was more interested in playing cross-ice 1-on-1 with Richard Gallant (Concord, Mass.), who's now a freshman forward at Harvard.

Liz, meanwhile, had no choice but to stand up to her three older sisters, who would sometimes have to give her a free breakaway in the backyard to keep the peace. She also played boys hockey with the MaxPro Jets.

As they got older, the bar got higher.

There was prep hockey and then college hockey for Anne. Caroline and Maggie played together for Team USA in back-to-back IIHF U-18 Women's World Championships, winning gold in 2024 and silver in 2025. They won a 19-U state title with Assabet in 2024.

That drive rubbed off on Liz, too, who skated at USA Hockey's National 15 Camp in July.



Caroline Averill and sister Maggie at the 2024 IIHF U-18 worlds

"Trying to chase their success a little bit pushed me to be better," Liz said. "I've always felt like, with training or anything like that, I was kind of just brought along with them. ... Being in the gym and on the ice with them has made me feel good about what I was doing because I was trying to push myself to get to their level."

MAGGIE AVERILL just wanted to be with her sisters.

While Anne and Caroline enjoyed the deep end and the diving board, Maggie was confined to the shallow end of the Olympic-sized pool at Essex County Club, per the lifeguards' rules, as she had yet to prove she could swim the length of the pool.

The rules didn't seem to matter, as she took off, paddling toward the other end of the pool.

At one point, she pulled up for air. Will was ready to dive in and save her.

"She kind of looked like she was going to drown for a second there," Ali said.

But Maggie powered through.

"At the age of 2½, she swam the length of the pool, and it was purely because she wanted to be with her older sisters," Will said.

That's how tight their bond is — even at that age.

"We were brought up to know that you're always going to have your sisters, and it's so important to be close," Liz said.

Rarely is it a shock to see Caroline, Maggie and Liz showing up to a Dartmouth game, donning Big Green gear in support of Anne. Nor is it out of the ordinary for Anne to turn up for an early

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Caroline Averill helped Phillips Andover reach the Elite 8 finals last season.

That feeling will only be magnified this season with the chance to see three of them on the ice at the same time in any given game, which has happened just once before when Anne, Caroline and Maggie played together during the Beantown Classic earlier this year.

“I’m definitely jealous they’re all getting to play together this year,” Anne said. “I feel like it goes by so fast. I almost forget Caroline and I even had that year together.”

Andover has been right there over the past six seasons, reaching the Elite 8 championship three times and making the semifinals the other three. Caroline has had the chance to play in a championship with both Anne (2023) and Maggie (2025). Anne played in another in 2021. Each was a heartbreaking result.

Between Caroline, Maggie and Liz, as well as a talented returning group, the Big Blue are well-positioned for another strong run.

“I think we’ll have a good team this season,” Caroline said. “I’m excited to see what that will look like and to get the season started.”

Needless to say, the three have a common goal this season.

“I’m looking forward to getting some revenge from last year,” Maggie said. ■

morning game for one of the others at New England Sports Center. It’s a built-in support system.

“They make an effort to really find time to support each other,” Ali said. “It’s amazing how it’s connected them.”

That connection was the driving force behind the younger three following Ali

and Anne’s footsteps, continuing a family tradition at Andover.

Anne and Caroline have each donned the same No. 16 that Ali wore, too.

“I will never forget when I first saw Anne in an Andover jersey,” Ali said.

“That was just a full-circle moment, like, ‘Whoa, I can’t believe I have a child here.’”

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