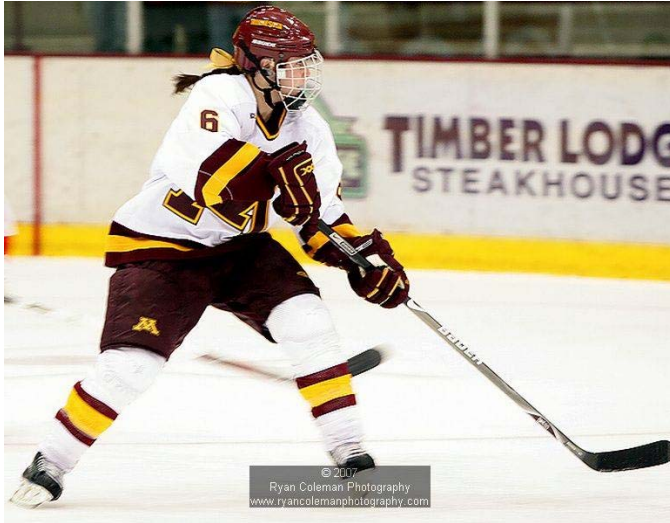


A Ribbon For Hope

Rachael Drazan Makes Unusual Addition to Her Uniform



Anybody who has watched the Gophers is accustomed to seeing ponytails extending beneath the players' helmets. Junior defenseman Rachael Drazan has taken the look a step further this season, wearing a bow from a gold ribbon for each game.

"The referees ask me, 'Are you serious – are you trying to be more of a girl?'" Drazan said.

"My teammates, the first day were all like, 'What are you doing?'"

Her teammates warmed up to the idea when Rachael explained the reason.

"We have family friends who have a little girl who's three years old who has eye cancer," she said. "I met her this summer, but our families have been best friends forever. My grandparents are friends with her grandparents."

"So I started wearing a ribbon for her, to make more people aware of children's cancer."

To date, the ribbon has succeeded in doing just that according to Drazan.

"The first team that we played said, 'You have a ribbon in your hair,' and they were making fun of it, and we started talking about it."

"Every game, someone's asked me about it. It's good for awareness that people are questioning it, but at the same time, it's really awkward."

Ribbons may not be a natural part of hockey, but then it doesn't seem right that cancer should be part of the life of a young child either.

"She's only three, so a lot of the time, she just stares," Drazan said. "When she does talk about it, she grabs my hair and says, 'Where's my bow?' She understands that it is for her. It is more meaningful to her parents and to our family than it is to her, because she doesn't quite understand it."

"She understands that she has cancer. She has no vision in one eye, and they are trying to save her vision in the other eye. She's in remission right now."

Through the University of Minnesota, Drazan has become involved with Hope Kids, an organization that provides ongoing events and activities and a support community for children with cancer and other life-threatening medical conditions.

“Make-A-Wish is a one-time thing – it’s a wish,” Drazan said. “Hope Kids is more like keeping the dream alive and helping you go through those times. Hope Kids does a lot more with the family. They involve the parents, and they do things for the parents. They take the kids for a little bit to make it easier on the parents and provide support wherever they can. A lot of the kids make friends with other kids, and parents make friends with other parents. It’s a really great atmosphere. When they do things in the community, people know about them, and they love to help them out.”

Her young friend has served as an ongoing source of inspiration for the Gopher.

“When she comes to our games, she sits down by the boards by our bench,” Drazan said. “She puts her hand on the boards, and that’s really cute.”

“Remembering that she goes through struggles -- sometimes when I have aches and pains, I think about her, and I don’t really think about (my pain) anymore.”

Click the following link if you would like more information about the Hope Kids organization.

[Hope Kids Organization](http://powerplayclub.org/pb/wp_be2c4022/wp_be2c4022.html?0.6215375589306652)

http://powerplayclub.org/pb/wp_be2c4022/wp_be2c4022.html?0.6215375589306652