

Olympics bring back memories of our first born

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As TV sets around the globe tuned into the Sochi Olympics, the occasion was nostalgic in our household.

Our first-born, Lexie, marked her sweet 16th birthday.

During her first week of life, Kim and I recall clearly watching the 1998 Nagano Olympic Games. So it seems only fitting that Lexie's 16th falls during another winter Olympic Games.

We've had a soft spot for the Winter Games ever since.

The '98 Games were historic in many regards. They marked the introduction of women's ice hockey, curling and snowboarding. National Hockey League players were allowed to participate in the men's ice hockey.

The United States beat Canada 3-1 for the gold medal in women's hockey, after going undefeated in the tournament. The Czech Republic defeated Russia by a score of 1-0 for the men's gold medal, while Finland won both the men's and women's bronze medals for ice hockey.

Of course, this year, the results will be different!

Canadian snowboarder Ross Rebagliati won the gold medal, after initially being disqualified for testing positive for marijuana.

Canada finished fourth, with 15 medals in all - 6 gold, 5 silver and 4 bronze, just behind Russia and just ahead of the U.S.

It's looking much brighter for Canadian athletes this year, as we were on top of the medal standings earlier this week.

My other two kids and I have been glued to the set, watching the action and admiring the sheer determination and strength displayed by these world-class athletes. Amazing.

In other sporting events that year, Denver defeated Green Bay in the Super Bowl. The New York Yankees blanked San Diego four straight and Chicago downed Utah in the NBA. Detroit blanked Washington four straight to capture the Stanley Cup.

Other highlights of 1998 included Titanic winning best picture at the Academy Awards; Microsoft released Windows 98; Swissair Flight 111 crashed near Peggys Cove, Nova Scotia; Google Inc. was founded in Menlo Park, California, by Stanford University PhD candidates Larry Page and Sergey Brin; the world lost entertainers Sonny Bono and Frank Sinatra; Elton John was knighted; the Lewinsky scandal led to the impeachment of President Bill Clinton; Mercedes-Benz bought Chrysler forming DaimlerChrysler in the largest industrial merger in history; vice-president of the United States Al Gore symbolically signed the Kyoto Protocol.

Some 76 million viewers watched the last episode of Seinfeld. Count my and my spouse among them! It was a good run. I'm not convinced the new Seinfeld show will compare.

For space enthusiasts, 1998 marked the year 77-year-old Senator John Glenn, the first American to orbit the earth, returned to orbit in the space shuttle Discovery.

Interesting stuff to be sure. But the reality of saying happy birthday to one's own 16-year-old carries much weight.

It means that our eldest is getting ready to meet the world head-on, carve her own niche and make a difference.

It means I'm 16 years older, in what seems like the blink of an eye.

It means good or bad, my job as a parent has helped create a young adult.

Sometimes there are defining moments in the parenting journey that give you a smile, or bring tears to your eyes. Sometimes is just a ton of small steps, micro-events that culminate in the whole package.

Lexie marked the occasion with 50 of her closest friends in our basement Saturday night.

Surprisingly, the gaggle of teens was well behaved, polite and they all enjoyed themselves with sugar as their only vice. My wife did interrupt a minor food fight, which caused one of those classic, stop-dead-in-your-tracks moments.

Again, given this age group's manners and genuine compassion for one another, it bodes well for the future.

It's easy to knock our young as careless, spoiled and entitled. If they end up this way, it's our own fault.

The human being hasn't changed much in the past 100 years, so child-rearing has remained basically the same, bar a few advances.

Be a good example; espouse virtue; encourage compassion; love unconditionally; guide and set rules.

Of course, while the formula has remained unchanged, the results are unique.

As far as Lexie is concerned, I have no worries, only praise and reassurance.

I love everything about her and her compassion for others is second to none. This was reflected in the sentiments she received in her birthday cards from her friends.

Many called her a true friend and someone they can count on.

Parents love to hear this kind of stuff. I can't really take credit for any of it, though. I may have had something to do with developing her mind and spirit, but her inner beauty is all her own, a gift really.

I'm not sure if Lexie will ever become an Olympic athlete.

But I wouldn't put it past her.

She has a passion for competition that's almost as strong as her commitment to academics, arts and helping others.

Soon she'll be learning to drive and I'll be handing over the keys.

Maybe I can delay that time for just a little while longer.

Yes, 1998 was an interesting year for yours truly.

Maybe I'll be watching the Olympics with my grandchildren in another 16 years!