



Soccer, Hay Caramba!

Limping through the season

By Kelli Wheeler

Thank goodness we're more than halfway done and on the downhill slide! What was I thinking allowing both kids to sign up for soccer and one for cheerleading, knowing this was the year homework would become the dirty word in our house?

As my great-grandmother used to say, "Hay caramba, paciencia! Chihuahaus! Hay dios mio! Que lastima! Ay, ay, ay!" OK, she didn't actually say that all at once, but I always thought it was funny to combine all of her various Spanish exclamations of dismay into one. Loosely translated, it means, "Holy cow, have patience, good Lord, what a pity, bummer!"

It's a good universal phrase—better than cussing. People don't necessarily know what you're saying, but they know what you're feeling and they're right there with you. Feel free to start practicing it, especially if you're one of the many families limping through the last leg of your own soccer season. This pretty much means everybody in our wonderfully extracurricular suburb. (*Nosotros idiotas.*)

Can I please tell you how hard it is to stick to the "we eat dinner as a family" rule? I've combined this with the "I won't eat out more than

twice a week" rule because I'm following the "I don't want to get fat" commandment while still trying to stick to the 8 p.m. bedtime curfew and getting in homework, bath and nightly reading. (*Que imposible!*)

Something had to give. I was unwilling to barter my sanity, so I sacrificed my weight. We ate together as a family at Willie's Burgers too many times to not let those chili-cheese fries find a permanent home on my left butt cheek in the form of a dimple. Don't look so smug: What is one woman's order of chili-cheese fries is another woman's double-foam latte with vanilla syrup and five packets of sugar. (*Que horrible!*)

The next to go was the bedtime rule. It slid to 8:30 p.m. I got booted off the bathing line because I was too lenient. Letting kids bathe

themselves was too slow. My husband can get a kid in and out, clean and dry and into pajamas quicker than the express wash at Suds'n'Go. I made up for my deficiencies in the nightly reading, though. Read me one story and I'll credit you for two. Hey, they're not the ones signing the reading log, so they don't have to worry about committing perjury. Plus, they can read the back of the cereal box in the morning and make it up. (*Muy inteligente!*)

We've adapted—as all higher beings of the food chain learn to do—but I can't say our family has been a shining example of "making the best of it." We've brought homework to sibling practices and it's gotten done—sometimes under duress and threats. We've sweated through the hot beginning in August with little complaint (*grande lie*) and are prepared to suffer in silence through to the bone-chilling end of the season. (*Mucho grande lie*).

In order to get my son and daughter to their respective practices and games, we've split into two teams: his and hers. My husband, as assistant coach to our son's team, is obligated to the "his" events.

Since I'm the one who insisted it was feasible to do both soccer and cheerleading (*idiotas*), I'm in charge of getting our daughter to "hers" events, which on a Saturday gets

pretty interesting. When the stars align, the whole family is together enjoying all three events. But success can also mean I see part of my son's game, two quarters and a halftime routine of cheering, and the second half of my daughter's soccer game. (*Que loco!*)

As crazy and challenging as this new school year's academic and extracurricular schedules have been, it is my children's choice to pursue these sports despite the demands on their time. I'm happy to support their ambition as the rewards have been worth it. I love seeing them excel on the field and shine in the classroom. (*Tan brillante!*)

I'm also impressed with their early growth and lessons in balancing work and play, time management and rising to a challenge. Shoot, I'm impressed with my own growth in those areas. (*Bien trabajo, Mama!*)

But *hay dios mio*, we'll be ready for the upcoming break to catch our breath. It'll be short lived, though, with basketball season just around the corner. Where's my Spanish dictionary? I need to look up "Sweet Baby Jesus, give me strength—and coordinating schedules!"

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