

Katherine "Katie" Almeter, '00



Katherine Jean Almeter, "Katie," was fast from the time she learned to walk. Her parents, Betsy and Bob, said she was moving so fast because she was always trying to catch up to her big brother Jeff. She was in constant motion as a young child, and possessed relentless energy and dogged determination. "It was a workout for us as parents to keep up with her," Bob and Betsy Almeter said.

Katie's first taste of competition came in the fourth grade. She ran a lap around the soccer field in physical education class so fast against the girls, that the Physical Education teacher asked her to run against the fastest boy—and she beat him, too.

Before embarking on what would become a legendary track and field career, Katie tried her hand at softball in the seventh grade. "She never hit the ball very far, but she always got on base because she could outrun the throw to first," Bob and Betsy said. "But softball didn't have enough action for her, there was still too much sitting."

In the eighth grade, Almeter moved to track and field and soon after she began breaking records. In ninth grade, she set her first varsity record in the 400 meters and she made the first of four straight trips to the New York State meet. She moved up the ranks in the state meet year after year, while simply dominating on the Section IV level. She was a Class B sectional champion in each of her four high school seasons in either the 100-, 200- and 400-meter dashes, and added a first in the 400-meter hurdles as well. She was also a four-time STAC champion doubling up in the 100 and 200 meters as a junior, then winning the 100 and 400 meters as a senior in 2000. During that time, she established new Norwich school records in the 100 meters, 200 meters, 400-meter hurdles, and teamed on the record-breaking 400- and 1,600-meter relay teams. She also lowered her 400-meter record several times.

As a junior, Katie placed second in the state in the 200 meters, while added a third in the 100 meters. Not surprisingly, Katie finally broke through with a state title her senior season, and it came in the 400 meters—an event she had passed up as a junior.

After cruising to the STAC title and Section IV title in the 400 meters with just about the same times she ran as a freshman, Katie summoned a career-defining performance at the New York State meet, hosted by Section III in the Syracuse area. Rarely tested on the sectional level, Almeter pushed past the best competition she had seen all season and lowered her own school record by nearly 1 1/2 seconds. She crossed the finish line first in 58.21 seconds to bring home a state title. It was the first individual state title for a Norwich girl in school history. "She was the best ever," summed up former Norwich coach Jim Lanfair, who coached Almeter throughout her high school career.

Another shining moment that captures Almeter's competitive spirit was when she, Stefanie Alger, Erica Eddy and Karen Snyder set the school record in the 1,600-meter relay. Almeter took the baton on the final leg and it was estimated she was 10 to 12 seconds behind the front-runner. She ran the leader down finishing in a dead heat for first place with a record time of 4:08. Although Almeter's final split time was not kept, it was probably the fastest 400 meters run in school history.

Following her standout high school career, Katie was Colgate University's top incoming sprinter. "Katie was the dream recruit from a coach's perspective—lots of talent and little experience," said Colgate track and field coach Laura Nardelli. "Her high school times in the 100 and 400 meters would have been records at Colgate, even if she had never improved in college. Her high school times would have placed in the top three in the Patriot League Conference and would have scored in four events. What I will remember most about Katie was her ever-present smile and sunny disposition."

Katie passed much too early dying in a tragic accident that also claimed the lives of her best friends, Emily Collins and Rachel Nargiso. Katie was used to placing first on the track, and in addition to being the first Norwich girl to win an individual state championship, it is fitting that she is the first female inducted into the Norwich Sports Hall of Fame.