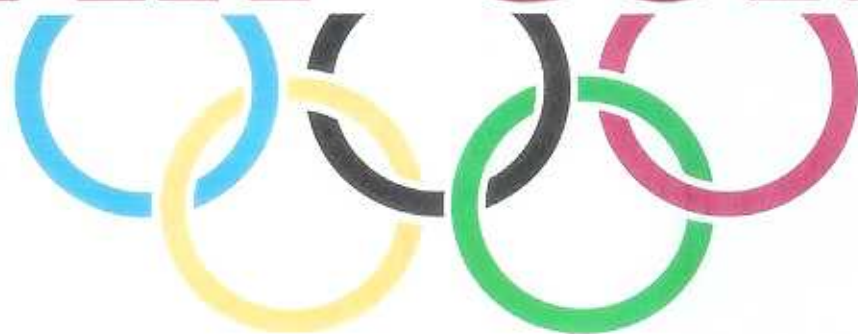


Ali Cox



Confidence, Hard Work and Team Spirit Wins the Silver at 2004 Olympics

by Kimberly Horg



Ali Cox was born and raised in Turlock, this month's Town & Country Spotlight City. It was there that she learned the basic fundamentals of life that would one day help her to become one of the nine members of the United States Women's Rowing Team which recently won the silver medal in the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Greece.

"I never doubted myself or the team," she said. "I had confidence in my crew that we'd do our best," stated the 1997 Turlock High School (THS) graduate.

It was there at THS that Ali got her start as the school's star softball player and received the team's most valuable player award. Coaches Jill Ogden, Mary Krupka and former tennis coach (now principal), Dana Trevethan, all helped instill the value of teamwork and achievement in the upcoming athlete.

Trevethan was her tennis coach from 1993 to 1997. She said that Ali was a "born leader" and "one of the most talented athletes on the team." Coach and former student still stay in contact with each other. Trevethan recently received an autographed poster of the Olympic team in Athens courtesy of the now-famous former student.

In high school, Cox lettered 11 times in sports. She was on the softball and tennis team for four years, played soccer for two years and basketball for a year.

"She always has preferred team sports, worked hard, been competitive and never quit. We are very proud of her," stated her proud parents, Sylvia and Chuck Cox. According to Ali's mother, Sylvia, "All of Ali's coaches were interested in the athletes progressing as individuals not just to play to win."

While mom, Sylvia, enjoyed watching from the sidelines, dad, Chuck played

various sports when he was young so "if Ali inherited that gene it probably came from me," he said.

Cox didn't start rowing until 1998 as a sophomore at the University of San Diego where she received her degree in Communications.

Cox attributes part of her success to positive reinforcement that she received from everyone around her. Her college coach told her that she had the potential to be as good as the other women on the Olympic Team so she took his advice and went with it.

"I knew it was feasible but the work I had to put in was daunting. I had a good idea of what it would take. I set the immediate goal for 2001. I graduated from college that summer and next on my list was to make the national team and I made it! I had confidence in myself that I could do it," Cox said.

Cox earned All-West Region honors in 2001 and was All-West Coast Conference for three seasons (1999-2001). She has been living in Princeton, N.J. for the past couple of years because she was training for the Olympics at the Princeton Training Center with her teammates Samantha Magee, Mary Whipple, Lianne Nelson, Anna Mickelson, Laurel Korholz, Caryn Davies and Megan Dirkmaat.

"I miss being around my teammates every day," she said. "We all lived in Princeton and trained seven days a week together. We had more than a friendship."

"Rowing is more intense than other sports, she said. "You can't even compare the amount of training that goes into it compared to other sports."

The team trained for seven hours a day on the majority of the days. "At times it was annoying but, in retrospect, it was worth it. The last couple months of training, it was hard to walk up stairs or hold a bag of groceries because my arms were so tired," Cox said. "I definitely won't miss that!"

She has been on the national team for four years and in that time the team

has won two gold medals in the World Cup. It has been developing over the last couple of years into an Olympic Team, she said.

"Over the last four years every person on the team has earned my trust. I have absolute trust and confidence in all of them," Cox said.

It takes years to build up to it, but the event is over in six minutes so one can only imagine the amount of pressure an athlete must feel before a competition.

"Butterflies are an understatement for how I felt. My biggest fear was underperforming. I am not afraid of competition. I was so nervous my foot was tapping against the wall when I was sleeping," she said.

"She always has preferred team sports, worked hard, been competitive and never quit. We are very proud of her..."

- Chuck & Sylvia Cox

When it was all done and over with, it was time to relax. Cox has never been to Athens before, so she had a chance to take in the culture. She watched the track and field competitions and was inspired to race in the New York Marathon that will be held in November as a result.

She was back in her hometown for a couple of weeks to visit friends and family immediately following the Olympics. Cox recently moved to New York to pursue a career in sports marketing. As far as competing in another Olympics, Cox said, "I don't know, I'll see what happens. I am going to hang out with friends and family," she said. "I have missed out on a lot of things. The biggest thing I have sacrificed is a career outside of rowing, social events and vacations with my family."