

# 'A NATURAL' Alton's Katie Mans makes her way to top in high jump

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April 7 2015 4:25 PM



In the movie, “The Natural,” Robert Redford’s character has an extraordinary amount of talent with a baseball bat and eventually it leads his team to a fictional World Series title.

During Katie Mans’ sixth grade year, she randomly positioned herself and made a stab at the high jump bar. Tammy Talbert, well known in area coaching circles, just happened to be standing there when Katie made her stab at the high jump. Katie

prepared and soared over the bar on her first attempt. Talbert automatically proclaimed her “a natural” at the high jump.

“This is your event,” Talbert said that day.

From that day forward, it has been her event. Katie has continued to improve and recently the freshman broke an Alton High School record that has stood since 1999 by Jessica Stockard.

Katie described her clearing 5-6 in a recent Alton High School girls’ track meet as “awesome.”

“I almost made 5-7,” she said. “I made three attempts on 5-7 that night and I was pretty close. I think I can get it before the season is over.”

Alton High School girls track coach Terry Mitchell said “the sky is the limit for Katie.”

He said if she continues to improve she could earn a top place at the state track meet later in the spring.

Mitchell said not only is Katie an excellent track athlete, but she is a good, polite kid, who listens to what the coaches have to say.

Katie said her parents were a little on edge when she began her journey with the high jump, but now her mom, Lola, and father, Brian, position themselves just outside the fence to be as close to her as they can when she makes her attempts. Lola and Brian are Katie’s most devoted supporters.

In seventh grade at the Illinois Elementary School Association state competition, Katie was ranked No. 1 in the state and finished third. But last year, she went in determined to come back with a first place trophy and she cleared 5-3 to do just that.

Katie’s name is proudly displayed on a sign welcoming people into Alton, proclaiming her IESA state high jump title. Katie’s goal is to erect another display announcing a high school state championship.

The Alton High School youngster said she has been inspired by Loretta Goebel, sister of her mother, Lola. Goebel, of Godfrey, is a quadruple amputee. Goebel’s book was endorsed by Beatle Paul McCartney with a foreword by Heather Mills. Her aunt has inspired thousands of people throughout the country with her book, “A Life In Parts.”

“My Aunt Loretta inspires me every day,” Katie said.

The Alton High School girls track coaching staff also inspires her each day, Katie said, and she loves working with them.

Katie has become good friends with Alton junior LaJarvia Brown, currently rated as the state's top triple jumper and also one of the top long jumpers.

"I love working with her," she said. "We are very good friends and work hard together at every practice."

Katie is also a triple jumper and is learning from Brown, she said.

The Alton High School high jumper follows a long line of solid track athletes at her school and a goal for her and Brown is to capture a state championship as a team.

Individually, Katie has her eyes on topping the 6-foot mark and hopes to earn a college scholarship.

Katie's sister, Kellie, also does the high jump and is in eighth grade, so both will be at Alton High School next year. Kellie is also an all-around athlete who is not only a high jumper, but runner like her sister.

The Alton High School freshman high jumper still marvels at how she took to her event.

“It just happened,” she said. “I do love it. I think we can go far this year at state. We have such good track and field athletes.”



