

Seton swimmer Cat Rogers shines in the pool

Credit: John Boal/News & Messenger

Seton's Cat Rogers, at the Jeff Rouse Aquatic Center in Manassas.

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Competition is not only a way of life for Seton senior swimmer Cat Rogers, it is a major part of who she is.

Of course, being the youngest of five children, three of whom are brothers, Rogers found she had to compete or she might have been overshadowed.

“My parents and siblings have encouraged me in a lot of ways,” Rogers said. “At least one of my siblings comes to every one of my meets and I just challenged my brother’s breaststroke time about a year ago. [Their support] makes me excited. It makes me a very competitive person. I have to keep up with them, especially academically. And since my oldest brother [Edward] was a valedictorian, I am always thinking about my capabilities.”

Rogers, who carries a 3.8 grade point average, is apparently holding up her end of the bargain. She was recently named to the 2010-11 Women’s Scholastic All-America team, where she was one of only 39 in Virginia to qualify, according to the website for USA swimming.

Based on her academic and athletic excellence, Rogers also recently signed a letter of intent to swim for St. Francis University, located in Loretto, PA. This is the same school where a Seton alumnus, Jessica Dunn, has been swimming for the past four years. Rogers said she wants to major in nursing so she can emulate her mother, Mary Beth, who works as a nurse at the Prince William Surgery Center.

But it is the zest for competition and the willingness to try new things that has taken Rogers to this point. When she started playing organized sports, getting a college scholarship in swimming was probably the furthest thing from her mind. After all, she began as a basketball and volleyball player. She estimates she played volleyball for two years and basketball for four before leaving the court for the water for good when she came to Seton.

“I like to try new things, so after I had foot surgery [while playing basketball], I decided to try it [swimming]. Then I started swimming for QDD [Aquatics] and Coach [Rick] Benner. Rick’s been really great,” Rogers said. “He makes us do distance races, the 200s and 400s, in practice, and if we can do it really well, then we have the drive to drop time [in the sprints]. I never give myself an excuse not to drop time.”

Since coming to Seton, dropping time is exactly what Rogers has consistently done, regardless of the event. A look at her progression chart shows that from 2008-2011, Rogers dropped an average of 41 seconds per event, with her biggest drop in time coming in the 500 freestyle (from 7:20.56 in 2008 to 5:37.58 in 2010).

Yet Rogers said she does not like the distance events as much as the sprints. Her best event is probably the breaststroke, where she notched a 1:07.94 in the 100, while finishing third at last year’s VSIS state championships, nearly a full 34 seconds better than her time just two years before.

“The sprint [races] are what I live for because they get your adrenaline going,” Rogers said. “In a long race, I really don’t understand the concept of pacing yourself a little [so you can be strong at the end]. My motto is ‘Push yourself, give it your all, and go.’ I don’t like to leave the pool and not have left it [all out there].”

Aside from her competitive juices and the encouragement from Benner and her high school coach Jim Koehr, Rogers said she also gets a lot of encouragement from her friendship with Alex Doonis, a fellow senior at Seton, but who was an eighth grader who took Seton by storm when Rogers first became involved with the program.

“When I was first starting swimming, I would watch her and think, ‘I really wish I could be her.’ That was definitely a wall for me to cross, but it was great to get in on relays with her. Soon I wanted to be as fast as her and the other girls on the Seton team,” Rogers said.

Rogers, who Koehr said had the meet of her life at last year’s state championships, said she is even competitive with Doonis.

“Alex and I push each other. We definitely push ourselves to be the best,” Rogers said. “I think we can use that when talking to the other girls, the 8th and 9th grade girls, when describing the pressure to do well at states. It is so much fun to be on a team [where the expectations are high]. There’s a lot of adrenaline going on when you swim at states.”