

John Boccacino:

Hello, and welcome back to the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast. I'm John Boccacino, Senior Internal Communications Specialist at Syracuse University. As one of the most decorated student athletes in the history of the Syracuse University women's lacrosse program, Katie Rowan Thomson helped grow the Orange into a perennial power during her four years on campus. An electrifying playmaker, Thomson finished her Syracuse career as the program's all time leader in points with 396 and assists with 164. A three-time all-American, Thomson's teams won the program's first-ever NCAA tournament game in 2007 and later reached its first Final Four in 2008.

Katie Rowan Thomson:

I just love competition. And my team was so important to me and is so important to me that I just wanted to be able to do my job, which at the time was helping create plays on the

Katie Rowan Thomson:



Katie Rowan Thomson:

Oh, there's so many reasons. The first thing is absolutely the people. When I came and I met the coaching staff, when I met the team and got to stay overnight, Jill DePetris bachelor was my host and she's the head coach at Villanova. And we're still such great friends. She's just the warmest and kindest and welcoming person. And her and her roommates and teammates just made it feel like home for me. And then, like you said, the education piece was really important for me. Since I can remember, I wanted to be an elementary and special education teacher. So Syracuse has such a great program for inclusive education. And that was so important to me. So getting a great education and having a certification for teaching post-graduation was on my radar all along.

So that program really set up nicely for me. And even though it's not what I'm doing now and I didn't go into teaching, all of the lessons that I learned throughout the education program helped me every single day as a coach, because as a coach, I'm here to teach the game and reach my players in different ways and learn to connect with them. And everyone responds differently to different coaching methods. So it's my opportunity to learn my players and see how they can best be taught and guided. So it ended up being an easy choice because of the team, the program and the proximity to home because my family is so important to me and I wanted the opportunity to get to see them and have my parents and family come to as many games as possible and they did.

John Boccacino:

I would actually argue, Katie, that your career is solely educational-based when it comes to teaching because you're teaching these 18 to 21 year olds who already have a proficiency for the game to enhance their careers and become a better student athlete. And I love the word student athlete because we know that you guys have to maintain good grades in the classroom, otherwise you can't play. So you are an educator. And how would you say your time at Syracuse, and specifically under coach Gait? What did you learn from him about being a coach that's helped you with your career?

Katie Rowan Thomson:

Oh, I just love coach Gait's approach to connecting with people. He's so calm and professional and wants to get to know his players and connect with them on the field and off the field. So building those relationships and that trust is something that I learned through both coach Miller, coach Gait, and the incredible assistant coaches that I've had. So those are some big takeaways. And just creating a really positive environment for the players, building helping create that environment where they can build their confidence and play with confidence and really go out there and take some risks and not be afraid to make mistakes, but learn from any mistakes that happened, but to take risks, be creative and just continue to grow as a player and as a person.

John Boccacino:

You were an attacker who was quite proficient at both finding the back of the net and setting up your teammates. Again, we mentioned all the great assists. You seem to have a clutch gene because the crack research I did told me you had a school record 45 points in post-season NCAA tournament play. What was it about playing in the post-season that helped you elevate your game?

Katie Rowan Thomson:

I just love competition. And my team was so important to me and is so important to me that I just wanted to be able to do my job, which at the time was helping create plays on the offensive end, setting

up players, being a really reliable teammate. And those pressure situations, I just wanted so badly to help us reach our goals that I went in really confidently, really prepared.

John Boccacino:

Yeah. So let's talk about that, making an impact when it comes to the lives of student athletes. We all know that 18 to 21

John Boccacino:

Now I want to bring you again full circle to you're becoming the second women, second female student athlete to have her jersey retired by Syracuse athletics following Felisha Legette-Jack. It's a long overdue honor. How do you hope the university builds upon this moment because there's so many other worthy female student athletes that deserve the recognition?

Katie Rowan Thomson:

Absolutely. I mean, so many people are deserving, both male and female, and I am just really excited because I do think that this is just the start to SU recognizing females in this way. And just so appreciative of the honor and recognition. And I think what they're doing is really setting a standard for institutions across the nation to really honor females who may get overlooked or at times, this deserved recognition.

John Boccacino:

Well, it's certainly been an honor getting to tell your story here to our Orange community here on the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast. With the exception of when Albany takes on Syracuse, we wish you nothing but the best of luck in your coaching career, Katie.

Katie Rowan Thomson:

Thank you so much. This was a lot of fun.

John Boccacino:

Thanks for checking out the latest installment of the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast. My name is John Boccacino, signing off for the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast.