Anna Eames ’13: Swimming Against the Tide

By Matt Thomas ’00
I f you take a quick look at Anna Eames ’13, you will likely see a typical Division III athlete who is majoring in biology with hopes of someday starting a career in genetic counseling. But if you dig a little deeper, you will uncover a part of Eames that makes her unique.

Born with Fibular Hemimelia, Eames’ right fibula is slightly shorter than her left fibula. On top of that, she has only three toes on her right foot, an abnormal ankle joint, and suffers from hip dysplasia.

Despite undergoing 28 different operations during her lifetime, Eames has not allowed her medical conditions to interfere with her passion for swimming.

“I started swimming originally because it was something I could do that wasn’t painful, because running was pretty painful for me,” Eames said. “I just ended up loving it and stuck with it. I think it’s fun to compete, but swimming is also a good sport for learning life lessons.”

After a successful high school swimming career at Hopkins High School, Eames has been a valuable member of the Gustavus women’s swimming and diving team, particularly in the grueling 1,650-yard freestyle event.

Last February at the MIAC Championships, Eames took fourth place in the one mile race with a time of 18 minutes and 1.84 seconds.

She added a 10th place finish in the 500-yard freestyle event and a 13th place showing in the 200-yard butterfly.

Her efforts helped the Gustavus team earn its third straight MIAC Championship.

“Being a part of the Gustavus swimming team has been wonderful,” Eames said. “We’re a really big team and we’re a really close team. Everybody cares about you and our coach Jon Carlson makes sure everyone feels important.”

While swimming at Gustavus has been a big part of her life the past three years, Eames has also been competing on the international level since 2005 as a paralympic athlete.

Eames swims in the S10 class for paralympic swimmers, which is designated for those with the mildest forms of disabilities, and she has excelled.

At the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing, China, Eames competed in five events and won the gold medal in the 100-meter butterfly S10 and took the bronze medal in the 100-meter freestyle S10 event.

Her time of 1 minute and 9.26 seconds in the 100-meter butterfly S10 set an American record in the S10 class.

“Going to Beijing was everything I could have hoped for. I had never been to that big of a meet with that many spectators,” Eames said. “I went in with no expectations and didn’t really ever think about winning a gold, but it ended up working out for me.”

At the 2010 International Paralympic Committee World Championships in The Netherlands, Eames earned a bronze medal in the 100-meter butterfly event and was later named captain for the U.S. team that swam in the 2011 Pan Pacific Games.

“Gillette is where I have had all of my surgeries so it’s nice to be back there,” Eames said.

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