

Moraga's Basketball Superheroes—Katie Batlin and Jack Trotter

By **Andrea A. Firth**

It seems quite remarkable that Katie Batlin and Jack Trotter—two of the best basketball players graduating from Lamorinda high schools this past year—grew up less than a block apart, in the same neighborhood, on a bedrock bluff in Moraga. One might speculate that there was something strange in the water that fed the bluff about 18 ½ years ago to yield two basketball prodigies in such close proximity. But the Batlin family did not arrive in Moraga until Katie was three years old, so that theory is dashed.

Yet similarities between Batlin and Trotter exist and can not be discounted. First the obvious—they are tall. Batlin stands 5'11" and Trotter towers at 6'9". Second, they have good genes. Batlin's uncle was an all-American basketball player, and Trotter's father played college ball.

But what they share that is most important to their athletic success is the quiet confidence, fierce competitive nature, and passion for the game that is evident when both of these young talents take to the court. These traits, coupled with the limitless family support they each receive, helped Batlin and Trotter to lead their high school teams to North Coast Section Championship wins and to position themselves for careers in Division I College Basketball.

Katie Batlin

As a youngster, Batlin and her father would slip in the side door of the McKeeon Pavilion at Saint Mary's College (SMC) and shoot around on the stadium-style court when the gymnasium was empty. "Back then I would tell my dad how great it would be to get to play for a college team on a court like that," says Batlin with a smile. And that is exactly what Batlin will be doing in a few weeks having accepted a full-ride scholarship to play basketball at Saint Mary's.

Batlin played on the Varsity Girls Basketball Team at Miramonte High School for the past four years under Coach Darrell Hirashima, and her accomplishments at Miramonte are endless. She was named Rookie of the Year as a freshman, Most Valuable Player in her sophomore and junior years, and selected to the Hall of Fame in her senior year. "She is one of the strongest players to have ever played for Miramonte High School," states Hirashima without hesitation. "She was the fiercest competitor that I have ever coached. For girls playing against her, it was nearly impossible to beat her," he adds.

Bolstered by parents who have attended every school and club basketball game that she has played in since ninth grade (which numbered roughly in the thousands according to mom Judy), Batlin is looking forward to having her family close by when she heads off to college. "My friends tease me about the fact that I can walk to the College from my house," says Batlin who plans to live on the SMC campus. "I think it will be great to stop back at home to do laundry or have a home-cooked meal. Plus, I don't think I'll have any problem with getting homesick," she adds. Batlin's mom describes her daughter's choice to attend Saint Mary's as a dream come true. "Katie felt connected to the coaching staff and her teammates from day one, and she is ecstatic to continue being a part of the local community," says Judy Batlin.

It will also be helpful for Batlin to have mom and dad nearby so that she can continue her pregame ritual. "Our whole family is superstitious," explains Batlin who before each and every game gets a piece of gum from mom, a kiss and words of encouragement from mom and dad, and their final bit of advice—to have fun. "My goal each game is to have fun. I like to have a good time, and that is what I want for everyone else."

"It's going to be a challenge to balance school, basketball, and a social life," states Batlin who plans to study elementary education and hopes to eventually work with special needs students. But with her easy-going, mature, and responsible nature, Batlin seems more than ready for this new experience and the next level of competition.

"I think the last chapter of Katie Batlin's basketball career has yet to written," says her former coach Hirashima. "The best may be yet to come, and we will have the advantage to be able to watch her do it."

Jack Trotter

If you google Jack Trotter, you will find his ESPN high school boys basketball ranking and a flattering description of the power forward which includes phrases such



Jack Trotter and Katie Batlin at home in the Bluffs in Moraga Photo Andrea A. Firth

as 'smooth shooting touch,' 'solid pivot work' and 'excellent hands.' This is quite impressive for a lefty from Moraga who never made the A1 CYO team while in middle school.

As the center of Campolindo's championship-winning Boys Varsity Basketball Team, Trotter was the go-to guy. "He was a leader," states Chris Whirlow who coached Trotter for the past two years at Campolindo. "Other teams game-planned against him. Our players looked to him for leadership. He led the way to the title."

Averaging 24 points and 14 rebounds per game, Trotter was named co-MVP of the DFAL League and Campolindo's team last season. The only thing that seems to have paralleled Trotter's success on the court has been his exponential growth off the court. Trotter started freshman year standing six feet short and grew in annual increments of three inches to reach his current height of 6'9", and he may not be done yet.

Trotter, who carried a heavy schedule of AP classes and maintained a 4.2 GPA while at Campolindo, will be attending Stanford University in September where he is a preferred walk-on for the Men's Basketball Team. "I wanted to go to Stanford before I knew basketball could open doors for me," states Trotter. Although he received offers to play basketball elsewhere, Trotter is confident with his choice to join a three-generation family tradition, following mom, dad, and siblings Andy, and Emma, to the hallowed halls of Stanford U.

Modest in nature, Trotter credits Coach Whirlow with his success last season. "He re-engineered the offense and defense which opened the way for me to score," states Trotter "It's really thanks to him that I'm going anywhere."

"Over the past few years Jack has shown a knack for working hard to take advantage of opportunities on the basketball court. Those opportunities have included really superb coaching Jack has received at Campolindo," adds Trotter's father Dave.

Trotter's dad, who coached him in the early days, has missed only a handful of his son's games over the past four years. "I really enjoyed coaching Jack and his LMYA and CYO teammates. From the start, I found Jack to be extremely coachable. He absorbs constructive criticism and has continued to work hard, both during and out of season, on improving his physical strength and basketball skills."

Trotter's passion for the game is clear. "Basketball made high school better. It was almost essential," he states in his characteristically judicious style.

"I think Stanford is a great choice for Jack," says Coach Whirlow. "Given some recent changes in their line up, I think he'll have the opportunity to play," he adds. "Jack hasn't come close to realizing his full potential on the basketball court. Stanford got a sleeper, and they will benefit from Jack being a part of the team."