

## Amy Cooper a star at Starpoint

---

By Ryan Nagelhout  
Niagara Gazette

SANBORN — For Brian Lasher it was easy to see the potential Amy Cooper had.

The Starpoint track and cross country coach saw Cooper running as a freshman and knew right away that Cooper could be great.

“She came out she started track in ninth grade, and in tenth grade she came out on cross country,” Lasher said. “It took me a while to get her to run distance in track but I saw her abilities right away in the testing we did.”

As a freshman Cooper was swimming for the high school in the fall, but she knew her talents would be put to better use outside of the pool. Since her sophomore year the runner has become one of the best distance runners in Western New York and attracted plenty of attention from colleges.

“I knew I would be so much better at (cross country),” Cooper said.

With both parents accomplished runners, she knew running was in her blood. But while she had been running track since first grade, her experience running longer distances was very limited prior to high school.

“It was just 100-meter dash kind of thing,” Cooper said of her elementary and middle school days. “I was part of the 400-meter relay and there was long jump and that was all that was offered, so I really completely changed events.”

Now a senior, Cooper has left her 100-meter dash days and found a new home in the trees and mud of the cross country course.

“She’s really shown tremendous improvement each year, and this year is probably as drastic as any,” Lasher said. “You don’t often see that improvement in young ladies from 11th to 12th grade. She was very good last year but it’s been pretty significant.”

Lasher credits Cooper’s work ethic for the improvement, insisting that his star runner is the best in the area.

“Arguably she might be the third best runner in the area,” Lasher said, “but obviously the best runner in Niagara County.”

Lasher said that Cooper is also in the top 20 in the state right now, and could be in the top 10 by season’s end.

Cooper’s stride and speed are impressive, but what Lasher says makes the senior great is her mental approach to running. Being an “efficient” runner is one thing, but being mentally dominant gives her an extra edge.

“She has a really focused demeanor when it comes to doing the work,” Lasher said. “We train at really high levels at Starpoint and she does it without complaint at the highest level.”

Cooper said that running cross country is more mind over matter than anything.

“Running is such a mental sport,” Cooper said. “It takes more mental discipline than physical discipline and I already had that. I definitely didn’t struggle with that like some people do.”

With a strong senior season, Cooper is seeing a lot of interest from colleges, including a few Division I schools. Her coach said he isn’t sure where the runner is headed, but a Division III school may be her best option to really see success.

“There’s going to be interest at the Division I level,” Lasher said. “But when it comes to cross country, some of the



best Division III teams are much better than some of the Division I or II teams.”

One of those strong Division III teams, Geneseo, has shown a strong interest in the Starpoint senior.

“I get letters all the time,” Cooper said. “I visited Geneseo last spring as well as the University of Rochester and Syracuse.”

Cooper said she’s also considering the University at Buffalo, and while more schools have continued to express interest, she said she’s all but decided on her short list.

“I’m someone who needs to be in control and know where I’m going,” Cooper said. “I figured out pretty early where I’m going and what I want to do.”