



## Jennifer Hughes

SCHOOL: Farmington Harrison  
CLASS: 1986  
GRADE POINT: 3.83  
SPORTS: Basketball, volleyball, soccer  
COLLEGE: University Michigan



## Ken George

SCHOOL: Farmington Harrison  
CLASS: 1986  
GRADE POINT: 3.68  
SPORTS: basketball, baseball  
COLLEGE: Albion

# Athletes of the Year

## Different roads lead to similar end

By Chris McCosky  
staff writer

**T**HE MEMORIES come back in floods at the mention of their names.

Ken George. The blind lookaway passes, right on the money. The one-man stall. The rainbow jumpers from the corner. The polse. The charisma. The clutch hits in baseball — how many were there? A ton. The two-out, three-run double in the bottom of the seventh inning to beat his father's Livonia Stevenson team in the state Class A regional in 1985. Legendary stuff.

Jennifer Hughes. The courage. The strength and composure in the face of constant defeat. The talent, unnoticed by so many. Her coast-to-coast power drives to the hoop. Her determination in volleyball: "No ball shall touch the floor on this side of the net." The well-placed sets, the spikes. The tears that flowed non-stop after her final home basketball game.

The two 1986 Farmington Harrison graduates have many things in common: talent, leadership qualities in both the classroom and on the playing field, good looks, wit and charm, to name but a few.

The two have arrived at a similar point — they will share honors as the 1986 Farmington Observer's Athletes of the Year — after traveling far different paths through high school.

KEN GEORGE'S path was bumpy at first, but smoothed considerably. He began his high school career at Hedford Catholic Central. A tough place for a slightly built, athletically inclined youngster to begin.

"I was never exactly told that I wasn't good enough (to play at CC), but I just felt like I was too short and too weak to make it there," said George.

He would think differently after his senior year.

George transferred to Farmington Harrison and was welcomed with open arms. Mike Teachman, the basketball coach, saw the leadership

qualities in George right away.

"He had skills people can't coach," Teachman said. "He's such a mature young man and his basketball skills were phenomenal. He comes from a basketball family (Jim George coached both baseball and basketball at Stevenson) and that helped."

"But two things happened that helped Kenny gain acceptance. I made it public early on that he was to be my point guard. And second, the man accepted him. John Miller (former Hawks All-American) paved the way for Kenny. John saw his ability, I think, and was able to communicate it to the rest of the team. When John spoke, a lot of people listened."

GEORGE DISAPPOINTED no one. He led Harrison to the Western Lakes conference championship in 1985 and to the Western Division title last season. The Hawks were 32-10 with George running the point. He was the team's leading scorer and assist-maker in both seasons.

George had similar success on the

baseball field and in class. He hit over .300 in both his junior and senior seasons and played near-flawless second base. He carried a 3.68 grade point average and was a class officer.

"Everything worked out for the best," George said, summing up his high school days. "I hope to keep it up."

FOR JENNIFER HUGHES, the path was always a bit rocky. With the exception of volleyball, she played on truly rotten teams. The girls basketball team has lost a state-record 61 consecutive games. The soccer team finished dead last every season.

Somehow, through the mental strain losing puts on an athlete, Hughes managed to distinguish herself as both rich in talent and sportsmanship.

"Anyone can show class when they win," said Teachman. "But Jenny showed tremendous class in the face of defeat. That's very, very difficult."

Hughes, unlike George, doesn't get much joy out of looking back at her prep career.

"I feel kind of burned out by it," she said. "A lot of people have told me I should be proud of what I've done. I guess I am, in a way. But I don't think I would do it over again."

Hughes poured her feelings into a three-page essay, written for a class assignment following her final home basketball game. Some of the passages tell a great deal about Hughes' character:

"I WAS determined to make this one of the best games of my life. I wanted to go down with pride. I wanted to execute perfectly every time I had the ball."

"Throughout the game, memories of the past three years kept swelling up in my throat. The question 'Why?' kept running through my head. All of the emotions showed in my effort. But, damnit, it hurt. When my fifth foul came in the fourth quarter, the tears came pouring . . ."

She talked about the support she received from coaches and parents:

"They made me feel proud of what I'd done. I felt wanted and needed. One of my few regrets is that I never said thank you, not straight out anyway. . ."

"Now that it's all over, I can say that it was worth it. I learned a lot about myself and other people. I'm a better person than I was three years ago. And when I think back to all the pain and the tears come back, I just remind myself that I won."

Indeed, NOW THAT George and Hughes have arrived at the same plateau, they will diverge once again.

George will continue his basketball career at Albion College, a Division III school in the Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association. He will study communications.

Hughes' athletic days are over. She will put her exceptional 3.83 grade point average to work at the University of Michigan. She will study engineering.

Their names, assuredly, will remain part of the community's sports lore.



*'I feel kind of burned out by it. A lot of people have told me I should be proud of what I've done. I guess I am, in a way. But I don't think I would do it over again.'*

— Jennifer Hughes on her painful basketball experience.

### The selection process

Each year, the Farmington Observer will select a "High School Athlete of the Year." Those selected will be seniors from Farmington Harrison, North Farmington, Farmington or Farmington Hills Mercy high schools. The Athlete of the Year will excel in more than one sport,

as well as in the classroom. The selection will be made by Chris McCosky, sports editor of the Farmington Observer. Past winners were: ● Amy Austin, North Farmington, 1984. ● Annette Ruggiero, Mercy, and John Miller, Harrison, 1985.

*'I was never exactly told that I wasn't good enough (to play at CC), but I just felt like I was too short and too weak to make it there. . . . Everything worked out for the best.'*

— Ken George on the transfer.

