

"Guys respect a girl who has the nerve to do a masculine sport."

# LOOK WHO'S TALKING

> MELISSA DUNHAM '17, *Thrower*



## How do people react when you tell them you're a thrower?

Some people will try to mimic the shot put and discus, which is funny. Normally people don't know what a hammer is—we're not throwing construction tools around. It looks like a shot put with a wire and a handle.

## How has your experience as a high school cheerleader helped you with throwing?

You use similar muscles, and being able to jump and throw people in cheerleading has the same element of explosion that throwing events have.

## Can you explain "explosion?"

When you throw something you can evenly distribute your energy throughout your windup or try to hold onto a lot of energy and release it all at once—like a cannon or firework. This is what we aim for when throwing.

## What makes you a good fit for your sport?

Even before kindergarten I embraced chores that required strength—shoveling snow off the driveway with my dad or moving things around in my own wheelbarrow.

## How did you do this season?

In shot put I threw over 43 feet, one foot above my high school record. In discus I threw 150 feet, 2 inches at the Penn Relays, which was a personal best and a big milestone. I'm very excited to see how much I can improve here. I hope to beat the Dartmouth discus record of 157 feet.

## At 5-foot-6, 160 pounds aren't you small for a thrower?

Yes. Most coaches think the taller you are, the wider your wingspan and the likelier you are to get a better push on the throwing implement, but I can compete with girls who are 6 feet tall. Our throwing coach, Michelle Clayton, is 5-foot-4 but was an All-American hammer thrower. She gives me hope for pursuing a post-collegiate career.

## Isn't throwing dangerous?

Hammer and javelin are illegal in my home state, Illinois, because of fatalities due to those events. That's why we take extra precautions. You should always stand behind the net. If you're in the field retrieving an implement, never turn your back to the ring!

—*Minae Seog '14*

photograph by JOHN SHERMAN