



# STRIKING DISTANCE

Sports

See that chiseled pitching arm? That—and a knack for strikeouts—makes Cat Osterman the most feared woman in Olympic softball.

As a youngster growing up in Houston, Cat Osterman didn't picture herself competing in the Olympics; she imagined herself running the torch. "It was career day in first grade," she recalls. "I wore running shorts and made a torch out of a paper towel roll with construction paper flames on a flashlight."

Osterman wasn't even playing softball then, but now she can hurl a ball as well as any woman in the world. The long, lanky lefty—whom friends used to call Olive Oyl and who now stands six feet two inches—is the NCAA's all-time leader in strikeouts per seven innings (15.4). And she's headed to the 2008 Olympics in Beijing with USA Softball—this after helping to bring home the gold in 2004, when she was the youngest person on the team.

Now 25, Osterman moved to Chicago last summer to pitch professionally for the Rockford Thunder. She works, too, as the pitching coach at DePaul, a job she's so passionate about that she sends text messages to her players when she's on the road. She's been on the road a lot recently, drumming up Olympic support with USA Softball. The team rolls through Normal, Illinois—with Olive Oyl on the mound—for a sold-out double-header on June 14th. —DAWN REISS

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The Blip **P. 16** Jeff Koons **P. 18** Gut Rehabs **P. 30** Beach Beauty **P. 34**