



## **Still at the top of her game: Former NHS star athlete now a business force in Utah**

By Kevin Doyle  
Staff Writer

The softball in Sue Rice's Salt Lake City office serves as a constant reminder of her training as an elite athlete, which she applies each day in the business world.

Quite effectively, as a matter of fact.

Rice | a 1978 graduate of and three-sport standout at Newburyport High School who was elected to the school's Wall of Fame in 1999 | is the founder and president of Cavanaugh Services Group LLC. She was named the Utah Small Business Person of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration in April and, while in Washington, D.C., to receive her award, Rice attended a luncheon with President George Bush, was introduced to Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch and made sure to let Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry know that she was a Bay State product.

Rice left an environmental cleanup company in 2002 to start Cavanaugh Services, which uses her mother's maiden name and also maintains an office in Knoxville, Tenn. The company provides packaging and transportation of contaminated material from cleanup projects to secure sites. Less than a year after going into business, Rice was honored by Utah Business Magazine with a Risk Taker Award as one of the top 30 female business owners in Utah.

"A risk taker is just who I am, so that meant a lot to me since we'd only been in business six months at that point," said Rice, 45, who grew up on Allen Street in the South End and is the younger sister of Newburyport police officer Teddy Rice. "This year, I was surprised when I got the letter from the Small Business Administration saying I had been picked as the winner from Utah.

"As a business owner, you question yourself every day, whether you're doing the right things. So that was a big confirmation for me and, since we do 80 percent of our business with the federal government, has really helped with the company's credibility in the industry. When I found out, I honestly hadn't felt that feeling since being named (Eastern Mass.) Player of the Year (in softball)

when I was a senior," Rice said.

Rice said the decision to start her own company grew from the need to challenge herself.

"I got tired of working hard for someone else. I wanted a shot to see if I could do it. Life is about taking risks, and I wanted to try it," she said. "I learned a long time ago that you can always survive. Getting on a plane when I was 18 years old to come to Utah to play softball is the biggest risk I've ever taken. I had no idea what to expect."

She maintains her training as an athlete has helped her immensely in the business world.

"Everything I learned and use every day came from being an athlete. Sports prepares you for life. You compete every day and you learn your limitations," Rice said. "Back in the day, we were lucky. It was instilled in us that we would win and became part of our belief. Think about how successful we were from 1974 to '78 | I've never been on a losing team in my life," Rice said.

Rice, as well as her younger sisters Meg and Beth (a 2002 NHS Wall of Fame inductee), began a love affair with sports while attending the city's long-defunct summer parks program at March's Hill. One of their coaches was another future NHS Wall of Famer, Maura Doyle.

"Those summer teams were so much fun. I remember we used to really beat up on the Belleville Bombers," Rice said, laughing at the memory.

She went on to win four letters each in softball and basketball and two in field hockey while in high school. Rice still ranks fifth on the girls' all-time scoring list in basketball with 894 points, was a three-sport all-Cape Ann League selection as a senior and was featured in Sports Illustrated's "Faces In The Crowd" section for softball in July of 1978. At the time of her graduation, she ranked among the top five nationally in career pitching wins and top 10 in career strikeouts.

She headed to Utah for two years at Snow Junior College and, as a senior at the University of Utah, led her team to a seventh-place finish in the College World Series. Her most memorable college moment? A 1-0 loss to Dr. Dot Richardson, then a pitcher at UCLA who went on to play a starring role on the first two U.S. Olympic softball teams.

These days Rice limits her athletic endeavors to hiking, mountain biking and some golf. But the competitive spirit still burns.

"Every single day in my business life, the athlete in me comes through," she said.