



Bill Kuhlman

For Andre Phillips, the 1985 season was one of redemption. He wanted to show everyone that there is life after not making the Olympic Team, which he missed in 1984.

So Andre not only ran his fastest ever over the 400 hurdles—and put together his best season yet—the 26-year-old Californian also became the finest combined hurdler in history. He cut his best over the 110 barriers from 13.95 all the way down to 13.25.

Besides that, over the flat 400 Phillips sped 45.17 and relayed 44.0. This versatility grew out of his desire to take a serious shot at the decathlon in the near future.

That desire typifies the challenges Phillips likes to undertake. As aching a disappointment as it was to miss the Olympic Team by one place in 1984 in the 400 hurdles, that letdown also proved to be the spark that relit his competitive fires and spurred him to his fine '85 season.

A quiet, restrained man for the most part, Phillips even speaks quietly of his renewed determination. Nonetheless, it is easy to hear and sense the vigor and will which drove him this season.

At home in San Jose the week before

Thanksgiving for the wedding of a sister, he first spoke about his dramatic improvement over the 110 barriers:

T&FN: You became history's best combined hurdler in 1985 thanks to your tremendous improvement in the highs. What was behind that improvement, your training for the decathlon?

Phillips: Yes, it was due to the decathlon training, but this past season also was the first when I really trained for the high hurdles. In the past, I worked just on the intermediates.

In '85, I didn't start training on the intermediates until just a couple of weeks before my first race. Before that, I had concentrated on the highs and really worked to get the timing down.

Training for the highs helped with the pure speed, but also with things like balance in the intermediates and handling the turns. This season, I felt like I came off the intermediates faster than ever before.

T&FN: How fast are you over a flat 100? You went from hurdling 14 seconds all the way to 13.25, so you have raw speed.

Phillips (laughs): I'm not sure. In high school, junior college and at UCLA, I ran on the 4 x 100 team, but I have never run a serious open 100.

The basic speed is there—I've always had quick feet. I don't know how fast they are, but they've always been quick. I'm probably like Tonie Campbell, who probably is the slowest world-class high hurdler. He isn't that fast on the flat, but when he gets over the hurdles, he flies. But he's fast specifically for his event.

T&FN: Did moving successfully into those new events provide a renewed motivation, a rekindling of the fires, for you? You did prove to yourself that you could make an impact in them.

Phillips: It really did. When I first started training in the highs, it was just for decathlon training. I figured I would just run a few high hurdle races to balance out the throwing training. But my times started coming down and Bobby [Kersee] said, "Hey, this is a Grand Prix event this year. Maybe you can challenge some of the guys."

I really wasn't looking for that when I

first started out, but as my times started coming down, I decided, "This is a fun race!" I really had a lot of fun in it—it wasn't a personal thing for me. The 400 hurdles gets me nervous because that's my race. That's *me*. But when I'm in the highs or the 400, I can laugh and smile just before I get in the blocks.

T&FN: *What has been the effect of Bob Kersee on you as a coach, as well as the effect of the environment of the World Class AC with all of its topflight athletes?*

Phillips: One thing that was especially bad about the Trials was that everybody else on my club ended up making the Olympic Team. I told myself that I wasn't going to watch the Olympics, I didn't want anything to do with them and I was going to crawl under a rock and stay there.

Just before they moved into the Olympic Village, I realized I couldn't do that. I knew that if I had made the team and one of them hadn't, I still would want them to come up to me and wish me luck.

So I bought roses for all the women and a card for Greg [Foster] and I told them all, "Good luck. Go get 'em." So they all won at least a silver medal.

But they helped me out, too. It was a motivational thing because after they won their medals and got their media exposure, I decided I was just as good as them. It was going to be my year in '85. I was going to shut people's mouths and open their eyes. I was going to show the shoe companies, "Hey, I'm still here and I'm still very real."

And a long time ago, I decided if I didn't make the '84 Olympic Team in the 400 hurdles, I would seriously try the decathlon. I'm back training already, working with the throws and I feel I can successfully incorporate the success I had this year in the highs and 400 into the decathlon. Plus, I just want to *try* one, just to have some fun.

T&FN: *Was there one specific race in '85, in any event, that was most satisfying to you?*

Phillips: I would say the TAC 400 hurdles was the most satisfying. I won in my PR, but I felt like most people weren't expecting me to do well at TAC. I felt like the attitude was, "You didn't make the Olympic Team; we don't expect you to be in it now."

So when I ran well and won, I shut a lot of people's mouths—or left their mouths wide open. It was like I was telling them, "Okay, you can take your foot out of your mouth now." I let my running speak for me. I think a lot of people felt that not making the Olympic Team had totally killed my spirit, but I wanted to show them that wasn't true.

T&FN: *How do you feel the 400 hurdles were affected in '85 by the absence from competition of Edwin Moses?*

Phillips: Well, I remember when

Edwin didn't compete in 1982, it seemed that the event was affected. I don't know if people had Edwin Moses Mania or what, but Edwin was the 400 hurdles. People

"You Can Stumble In Life, Just Like In A Hurdles Race."

wanted to see him run and all the other hurdlers just filled the field.

I'm sure there are some guys who are intimidated when Edwin is in a race. I've heard some say, "Oh, man, Edwin's here." But I love it when he is in the race, or Danny is in the race, or anybody is in the race because you never know what can happen.

T&FN: *In fact, which 400 hurdlers do you most respect?*

Phillips: Besides Edwin, I respect Danny Harris. He is very talented, in both the 400 and the 400 hurdles. Great potential in the hurdles. His mechanics aren't that great, yet he is still running fast. So when he improves his mechanics, he will run a lot faster. And he's so young.

I respect Schmid, because he has been hanging in there for a long time. He has been chasing Moses longer than I have. Of course, he did beat Moses once.

Actually, I have respect for all the 400 hurdlers. More for the top four of myself, Edwin, Danny and Schmid, but I don't feel I can ever discount anyone.

I do respect Edwin the most, because of what he puts up with. It's hard enough to go into races when you have won some and lost some. But Edwin has that big reputation and he hasn't lost in so long, so the pressure is on him and not anybody else.

T&FN: *Do the hurdles as an event somehow reflect Andre Phillips, the man?*

Phillips: I think so, in that the hurdles as a race can be like obstacles in life. No one goes through life without a crisis now and then; you can be going strong one minute and the next minute there can be some problem that you have to deal with. You can stumble in life, just like in a hurdles race. But in both, the main thing is just to get back up and keep going. It's going to be that way until you die. Just because you clear one obstacle smoothly doesn't mean there won't be more up ahead.

T&FN: *Is there anything that you do off the track that brings out as strong an effort and commitment from you as the hurdles do?*

Phillips: Taking care of my family. I have five sisters and three brothers in my family, plus my parents, and if anything ever goes wrong with any of them, they know they can always count on me to be there with them to help. I have as strong a commitment to my family as I do to my running. Probably stronger.

If something happened to one of them the day before the Olympics and they needed me, I would leave the Games and go to them. No question. There have been times in the past when there has been a problem, but my mother *didn't* call me because she knew I would be gone right away. I would just drop whatever I was doing, regardless of what it was, and leave.

Even though I'm the fourth child, I still feel like the oldest sometimes. My older brother and sisters look up to me sometimes. And I feel like I want to set a good example for my younger brothers and sisters, plus share with all of them the things I have learned—whether academically, or from sports, or from places I have traveled. So in many ways, I do feel like a rock in my family.

T&FN: *You were a high jumper in high school when your coach suggested you run the 330 lows. What did you think of the race that first time?*

Phillips: It hurt. But there just was something about it that kept me going back. Then when I saw Edwin win in Montreal in '76, I really loved them. He became my idol.

I have always had this great feeling when I run the hurdles, whether it's the highs or intermediates. Running on the flat is boring to me, but going over the hurdles is thrilling.

And I know I haven't begun to tap my resources yet. I consider myself a late bloomer; I'm still working on mastering 13 strides between hurdles all the way. So I know I haven't come even close yet to running my fastest. □

Andre Lamar Phillips was born September 5, 1959, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and is 6-2/175. Ran for Silver Creek High School of San Jose, San Jose City College, UCLA, Wilt's AC and now represents the World Class AC, where he is coached by Bob Kersee. Returned to the 110 hurdles this year for the first time since running 13.95 while a UCLA senior in 1981.

His PRs (with places on World and U.S. all-time lists in parentheses): 400—45.17 '85; 110H—13.25 '85 (8, 7); 400H—47.67 '85 (4, 3). His progression (with World and U.S. Rankings in parentheses):

Year	Age	Affil	Class	400H	Major Meets
1976	16	Ca	HS Jr	36.4y	330y lows
1977	17	"	Sr	53.41y	
1978	18	SJCC	Fr	50.67	2)TAC Jr
1979	19	"	So	49.47 (x, 9)	8)TAC
1980	20	UCLA	Jr	49.30 (9, 6)	7)NCAA 8)OT
1981	21	"	Sr	48.10 (2, 2)	1)NCAA 2)TAC
1982	22	Wilt's	"	48.45 (2, 1)	2)TAC
1983	23	"	"	47.78 (2, 2)	3)TAC 5)WCh
1984	24	WC	"	48.42 (4, 3)	4)OT
1985	25	"	"	47.67 (1, 1?)	1)TAC 1)WCup