

Tori Bowie

by Sieg Lindstrom

Tori Bowie may have been underselling herself in London last summer as she soaked in the reality of her World Championships gold-medal run—bumped and bruised but all smiles after her victorious dive at the line.

“I bet I’m the only person in the world who believed that I would come out here and win the 100 meters,” said the Mississippian who turned 27 two weeks after the Worlds wrapped up.

Almost, anyway. Surely there were others who believed in the Rio triple sprint medalist who had anchored the U.S. 4x1 to Olympic gold—even with rival Elaine Thompson riding a 14-meet win streak into the Worlds

Sprint surprises had been nothing new since ‘14. That year, Bowie sprang to a new LJ PR, 22-9¾ (6.95) indoors, but then after placing last in the World Indoor qualifying round made a propitious coaching switch to the tutelage of Lance Brauman, best known for his mentorship of sprinters.

At the Eugene DL that year, Bowie long jumped, placing 5th, and though she was an unproven sprint quantity, her agent, Kimberly Holland, begged on her behalf for a 200 lane—and got lucky.

Corridor 1 opened up and Bowie filled it, dispatching a field that included Olympic champion Allyson Felix with a world-leading 22.18. A world-class sprint career was born.

Long before that, Bowie has said, track saved her life, from the chaos of unfocused adolescent life.

She got an especially harrowing prod toward a wider world and the order and achievement offered by the sport when, as a teen being raised by her loving grandmother in the tiny town of Sandhill, a street hoodlum waved a gun in her face and robbed her.

Post-Rio there’s a street named after the local star in Sandhill, Tori Bowie Lane, the street on which her alma mater, Pisgah High, stands.

Nationally, last fall Bowie stepped out into fashion, modeling collections by Valentino and the Pharrell Williams/adidas Originals Hu line for ad campaigns.

T&FN caught up with Bowie for this chat after her first indoor

Bowie In A Nutshell

- Personal:** Frentorish “Tori” Bowie (rhymes with Louie) was born August 27, 1990, in Jackson, Mississippi; 5-8¾/134 (175/61)
- PRs:** 60—7.11i; 100—10.78; 200—21.77; LJ—22-9¾/6.95i; TJ—42-11½/13.09i
- Schools:** Pisgah HS (Sandhill, Mississippi) ‘09; Southern Mississippi ‘12; now represents adidas
- Coaches:** Angela Reynolds HS; Adrian Ghioroae Southern Mississippi; Craig Poole (2013–14), Lance Brauman pro (‘14–present).
- Agent:** Kimberly Holland
- Major Meets:** 100—sf)NC ‘12; sf)US ‘13; sf)US ‘14; 1)US, 3)WC ‘15; 3)OT, 2)OG ‘16; 1)US, 1)WC ‘17
200—1)OT, 3) OG ‘16; 3)US ‘17
LJ—nq)NC ‘09; 6)NC, 8)US ‘10; 1)NCi, 1) NC, 15)US ‘11; 13)NCi, 2)NC ‘12; 4)US ‘13; 2)USi, nq)WIC ‘14
60—2)USi, 6)WIC ‘16
- World/U.S. Rankings:** 100—‘14—2/1; ‘15—3/1; ‘16—2/1; ‘17—2/1; 200—‘14—5/2; ‘15—8/4; ‘16—3/1; ‘17—5/1
LJ—‘11—x/9; ‘12—x/9; ‘13—x/5; ‘14—x/5

century final.

What Bowie rode in on was three seasons of spectacularly rapid strides in the dashes after shifting her focus from the long jump, the event in which she won NCAA titles indoors and out in ‘11 as a Southern Mississippi junior.



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KIRBY LEE/IMAGE OF SPORT

race in two years (7.14 for 2nd in the Millrose 60) and a stop in at New York Fashion Week 2018.

Three days after that turn in the haute couture world, we asked after introduction pleasantries if she was still in the Big Apple, or back at her Clermont, Florida, training base.

Bowie: No, I came back already. The show that I did over the weekend with [designer] Taoray Wang was Saturday, but now I'm currently back in Florida.

T&FN: *So you're making the rounds among the fashion crowd? Not just with Valentino?*

Bowie: Taoray Wang is kinda new but her designs are so amazing. She invited me out to be a guest and I attended the show. It was an amazing experience for me.

T&FN: *Don't worry, we'll get to track & field questions. But sounds like you've got an intriguing sideline going, and I know nothing about fashion, you can ask my wife.*

So for this you appeared in Wang's clothes among the audience at the show. Do you get to keep the clothes?

Bowie: Unfortunately, no. That outfit, she asked for it back so maybe the next opportunity.

T&FN: *How did you get involved with fashion?*

Bowie: It's just something that has happened quite naturally. I realized that I loved getting my nails done and changing up my hairstyles.

Recently, I kind of want to walk the runway. So I feel like I just wanted to give it a shot and see what happens [see sidebar].

T&FN: *It looks from your Instagram account [@1toribowie] like a lot's happening. But I also see*

you've posted our January cover. How is the young season going for the current "Queen of U.S. Sprinters"?

Bowie: Millrose was one of the fastest

Life On The Catwalk

In last fall's off-season after her double-gold World Championships, Bowie—who has said her penchant for adorning herself with headbands and scarves at meets stems from a belief shared with her sister Tamarra that "scarves symbolize a crown"—got a determined start on her dream of one day walking a modeling runway.

Her move into the fashion world began with an ad campaign shoot for haute couture designer Valentino.

Bowie: The entire experience was new for me because I kind of thought modeling was just showing up, maybe take a picture here and there, but I realized through that experience that it takes a ton of time and hard work.

At the same time, it's still fun. On the shoot I got to meet [NBA star] Carmelo Anthony and a lot of models. Overall, the experience was good.

It was in New York City and we started around 2:00pm and finished a little after midnight. We did the shoot at a park and we took pictures with a basketball [bearing a Valentino logo, of course], we played one-on-one. It was fun.

The photos are all over the Valentino Instagram page and I have a few on my page, as well.

openers that I've ever had in my career. I remember a couple years I opened up with a 7.28 and then a 7.24. As of right now, 7.14 has been the fastest opener that I've ever had in my career so I'm in a great place and I just need to continue to be consistent in what I'm doing.

T&FN: *Outdoor is the season in which you really seem to bring your best. What do you have in mind for this year's?*

Bowie: As far as the outdoor season, my goal is to focus more on the 200 this year. It would be lovely to have a [200] bye for the 2019 World Championships year.

But I know that right now I just have to continue to stay consistent in what I'm doing and see what happens.

T&FN: *Last year at the Pre Classic you made a real statement in the 200: world-leading 21.77 win over Shauna Miller-Uibo, Elaine Thompson, Dafne Schippers and Al-*

lyson Felix.

Those are some heavy names, reigning Olympic gold medalists at 100, 200 & 400, plus Schippers is now a 2-time world 200 titlist and Felix, of course, won 200 gold in '12 and at three World Championships.

Did you opt out of the 200 in London because you were scratched up and sore from your tumble at the end of the 100?

Bowie: Yeah, I had a sore heel that was kind of swollen and everything and I felt that my best decision would be to sit out for two or three days to allow my body to fully recover before I got ready for the relay.

I don't feel like that was my last opportunity to do the double so there's really no feelings there toward the situation. 2019 is around the corner and I feel like I should be looking forward.

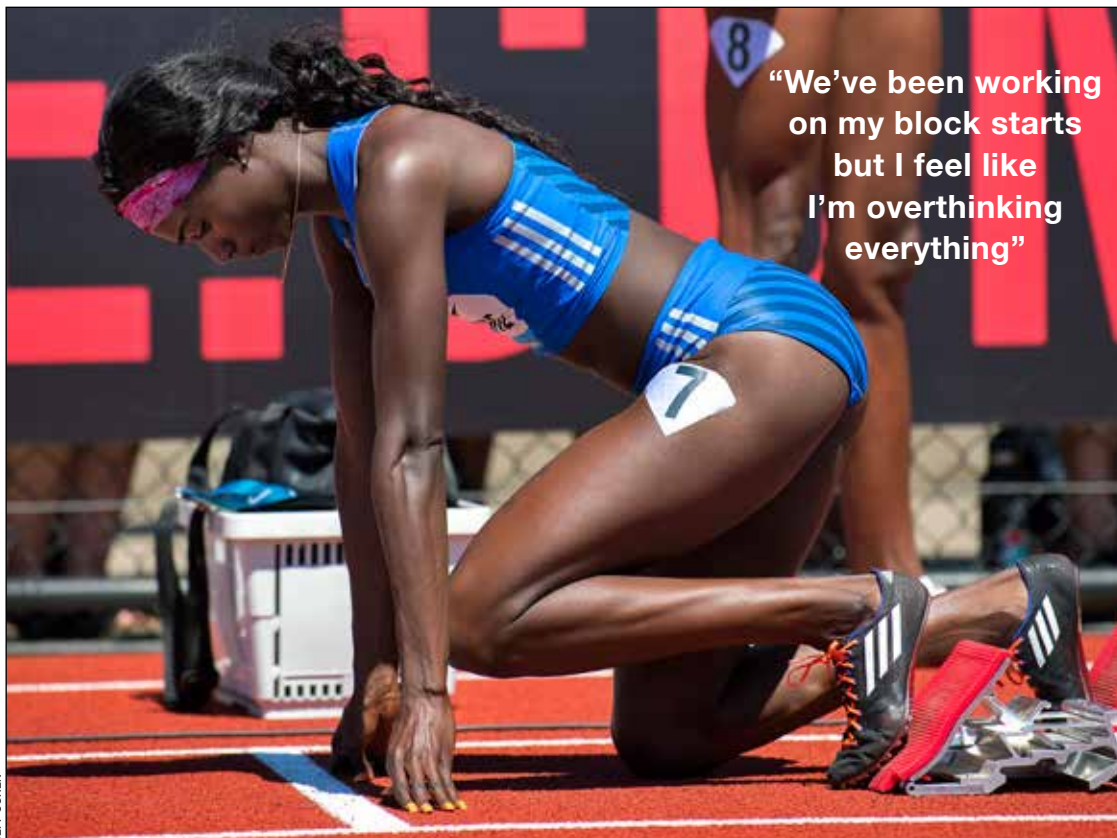
T&FN: Do you feel that the 100 or 200 is your best event? Or do you not look at it that way?

Bowie: I feel like the 100 is maybe my best event but you know the long jump is still one of the events that I completely enjoy. [Oh, really? See sidebar]

T&FN: About that 200, though... Among Americans, in the last 20 seasons only Allyson Felix, at the '12 Olympic Trials, has run faster than what you ran at Pre last year. Surely that was a highlight of last season for you.

Championships. So I still feel like there's still lots of potential there and this year I plan to race a little bit more to see what I can actually get out of it.

T&FN: How would you compare the feeling



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Bowie: I consider that one of my most special moments. We had the top 5 or 6 fastest women in the world on the line at that time.

And I consider that one of my best moments just simply because of what I could have actually run because I didn't do any more 200s after the National

of winning the 100 world title in London—and then the relay—with bringing home a full set of Olympic medals [100 silver, 200 bronze, relay gold] from Rio in '16?

Bowie: I don't feel like you can actually compare the two. I feel like the Olympics were so special, especially because I had to wait so long to make the team.

And I consider the world championship just a special moment because of just the willingness to fight and not give up in that race, no matter what happened. I'm just filled with so much gratitude with both achievements.

T&FN: In retrospect, do you still feel nobody but you believed you could win that 100?

Bowie: Umm, you know, I think that I was wrong in making a state-

Back To The Long Jump?

Did you catch Tori Bowie's comments earlier in this interview? About the long jump?

If you thought the 2-time NCAA long jump champ might have left the field event for good after winning 100 bronze at the '15 World Championships, think again. Bowie is.

Bowie: Yes, the long jump is an event that I just completely enjoy overall, but the 100 and 200 I've come to consider as my best events.

T&FN: You have not contested a long jump since that breakout 200 day at the '14 Pre Classic. Might you long jump this year?

Bowie: Omigod, I am so hoping for the opportunity to do long jump 1A [laughs]. My plan was to try to get through indoor and then try to get some more long jump training underneath my belt. I have not had many long jump sessions [this winter], I have to be honest. I haven't had many but I did have a few. Not as many as I need to have in order to be able to compete at a high level and be confident about it.

As of right now I'd need to continue to put some more work in for that event.

T&FN: Is Coach Brauman on the same page?

Bowie: I think so. We've talked about it several times but I think the main focus as of right now is to continue to keep an eye on what's ahead.

ment like that, and selfish. But I can say that I know most weren't expecting that [laughs] but I do need to be extremely considerate to the ones who actually thought it could happen.

T&FN: *Before the race was Lance Brauman telling you that you were going to win it?*

Bowie: It wasn't just me that was racing in the final. I had a training partner there, as well, and her name is Kelly-Ann Baptiste.

So he sat there and told us both that no matter what happens he would always be proud of us. And we just took that comment and ran with it.

T&FN: *Shaunae Miller-Uibo is also in your group. Like you, she won a major title, the Olympic 400, with a lean that planted her on the track at the end. Have you compared scars from those experiences?*

Bowie: No, we actually haven't, and you know, most of the time I don't even feel quite comfortable talking about other athletes. So I think we should just move forward with the next question.

T&FN: *You've previously said that your whole attitude and your determination changed in 2014 when you hit the high of that big long jump PR indoors but then the low of not making it out of the World Indoor qualifying round.*

Bowie: I felt like a lot of things changed overall. I came to a completely different situation, training with a completely different group, so everything changed at that point.

T&FN: *What did you tell yourself as you made that transition [from the Olympic training center in Chula Vista]?*

Bowie: I think when I moved here it was just all about effort, just giving that

100% effort no matter what happens.

That's something that I continue to just install inside my brain today: just do the best you can. The best you can is all we can do. I continue to live by that.

T&FN: *You've said many times that your*

thankful for what she's done.

T&FN: *Did she introduce you to sports?*

Bowie: I kind of think that it was just something that we grew up doing and it was quite natural. But I grew up with like 13 cousins around me and we were all around the same age. Most of them were guys and they loved to hoop and we always raced and, see who could jump the farthest.

There was just always some type of competition. With my cousins or just whoever my dad would try to contend with that day.

T&FN: *You played basketball, too?*

Bowie: Yes, basketball was actually my first love, the first sport that I fell in love with overall. But I had to kind of get a grip on life when I was preparing to go to college.

I realized that—I was a forward so I realized my size wasn't going to get me anywhere playing basketball.

T&FN: *Besides fashion, what are your interests outside the track?*

Bowie: Just trying to relax and simply enjoy life. Like they say, all work and no play, I do not live by that [laughs].

T&FN: *On the track is there any technical aspect of your races you want to work on this year?*

Bowie: No, I don't think there's anything to work on. We've been working on my block starts but I feel like I'm overthinking everything

and I just need to get out there and just make it happen.

That's the point I'm at right now. I feel like Millrose showed me where I'm at right now and I feel like my reaction and everything is not the problem. I'm just going to stop overthinking everything. □



It's easy to forget that Bowie was an NCAA long jump champ indoors and out

grandmother is your role model. When you were very young she fought to get you and your younger sister out of foster care and you went to live with her.

Bowie: We sure did. We went to live with her at the age of 2. She rescued us from foster care and we're extremely