

Breaux Greer

by Toby Cook

The phrase "star-quality" rarely gets bandied about in track & field. At least, that is, when one assumes the meaning that's associated with the arena of entertainment.

However, if you've been to the Nationals or the Olympic Trials in the past few years, your eyes have more than likely found their way to one end of the infield, where a recently-quiet American event has begun to glisten with the not-so-muted performances of a 28-year-old Louisiana javelin thrower named Breaux Greer.

Greer In A Nutshell

•Personal: Edward Breaux Ray Greer was born 10/19/76, in Houston, Texas; 6-2/225 (1.88/102). Trains in Athens, Georgia with Don Babbitt

•PR: 287-8/87.68 AR

•Schools: Ouachita Parish High (Monroe, Louisiana) '94; Northeast Louisiana '99

•Club: adidas

•Major Honors: 3)OT '96; 2)NC, 3)USA '97; 5)NC, 8)USA '98; 4)NC '99; 1)OT, 12)OG '00; 1)USA, 4)WC '01; 1)USA '02; 1)USA, 3)PAG, nq)WC '03; 1)OT, 12)OG, 1)GPF '04

•World/U.S. Rankings: '96 (x, 4), '97 (x, 3), '98 (x, 5), '00 (x, 1); '01 (7, 1); '02 (x, 1); '03 (x, 1)

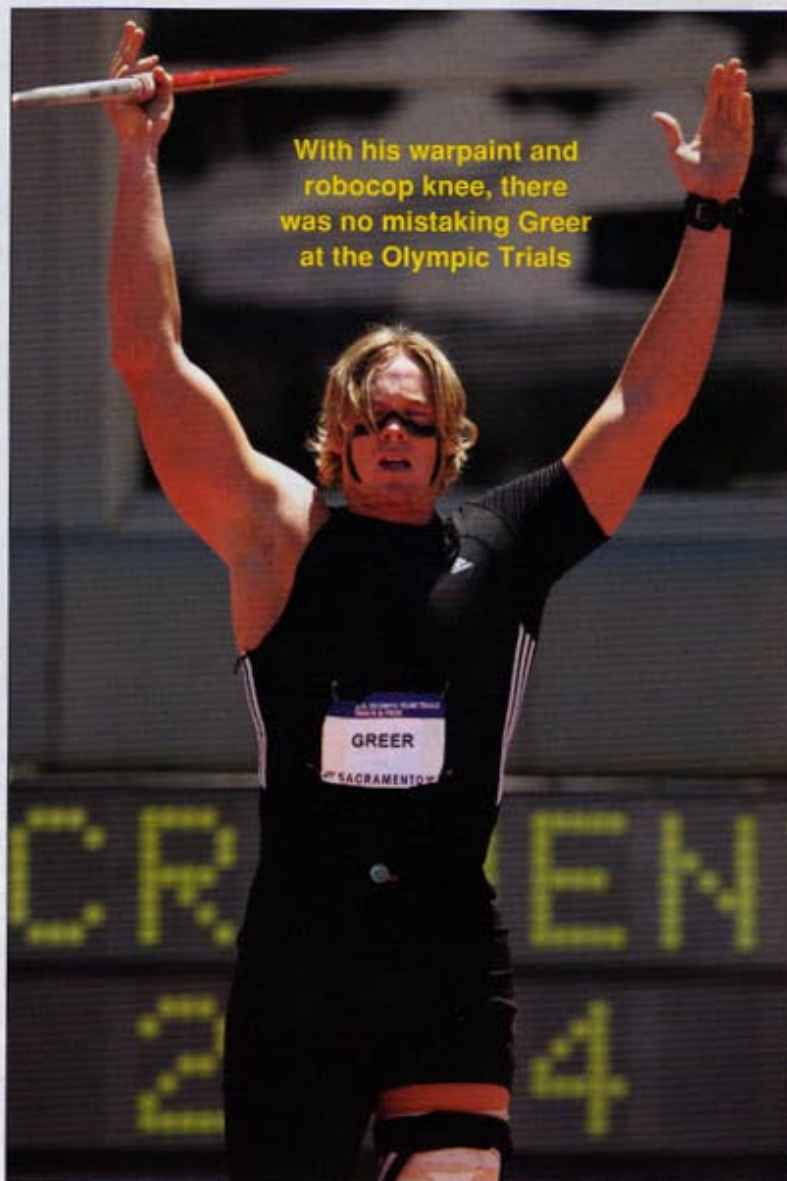
European campaign with a bookend American Record in Monaco, a crusade-like return from an abysmal Games.

An athlete with a sense of flair, Greer has a penchant for quips, salty language, showmanship and the outlandish, but that doesn't always belie the sense of pain and disappointment experienced on myriad levels during the last year's campaign.

One can't help but think that given another event Greer would already be a household name. But, despite the odds, he rumbles on in his unique, aggressively upbeat manner, determined to have it all on his terms and with his little slice of cake, too.

Greer is part of the elite throwing group coached by Georgia assistant Don Babbitt in Athens, Georgia (T&FN, March '03). He and his 14-year-old Lab, Ginger, share a house with Olympic shot silver medalist Adam Nelson and his wife Laci and their Great Dane, Cassius.

We met up with Breaux, dressed in a homemade t-shirt stating "I Rock Catholic Girls" on a quiet autumn Sunday over a cup of coffee and a large order of Tater Tots:



With his warpaint and robocop knee, there was no mistaking Greer at the Olympic Trials

In 2004, he was poised to take center stage in the sport's biggest venue, only to have the effort of an American Record 2 months prior to the Olympics result in a torn ligament (ACL) in his left knee.

What ensued was a season as broad in results and emotions as his taste in music ("everything from Brian McKnight to Dave Matthews to Slipknot").

Greer culminated his Euro-

T&FN: First of all, you've just had surgery. What did they do, exactly?

Greer: I had an ACL put in from a cadaver from a 25-year-old guy. The funny thing is when I was in surgery—this is what they told me after—they had a couple of cadavers the doctor was going to look at and then see which one was

the best for me. But they had a guy that was 400lb and 50-something years old and they actually brought that guy's ligament in there.

The nurse took one look and said, "You got to be out of your damn mind!" So, she chewed somebody's ass out and went and got some 25-year-old's ACL. So, anyway, now I got an ACL. This Tuesday [November 9] will be four weeks.

I also had my shoulder cleaned out while they were in there, because eight days before the Olympics, I subluxed my shoulder and I honestly thought I re-tore it.

T&FN: This is the second time in two years that you've faced rehab.

Greer: Yeah, and the thing is, it's sort of a bittersweet deal because every time I get hurt, then I learn how to throw with that body part—I'm running out of body parts, so I'm getting technically pretty sound now. Not by choice but because I'm getting sick of having surgeries.

T&FN: And how's your motivation?

Greer: Oh, it's fine. I've never been as excited as I have been. I was flying back home with Adam and I said, "Dude, our season is over. I get to go get an ACL put in. I get to get fixed, finally so I don't have to every day sit there and whine."

T&FN: How did the doctors telling you that you couldn't do any more damage affect the way you approached throwing?

Greer: Actually, the doctors did tell me I could do more damage. [Dr. James Andrews] was like, "I don't really recommend it. But given it's you and it's a special situa-

tion. If it was my daughter, I'd tell her to stop now."

T&FN: Why did you continue to throw in Europe after the Trials?

Greer: I pretty much had to get comfortable with being uncomfortable. I could have stayed home and gone out every once in a while and thrown 65-70m [c215-230ft] in prac-

"Every time I get hurt I learn how to throw with that body part—I'm running out of body parts, so I'm getting technically pretty sound now"

tice and say, "OK, I feel pretty good." But that's not what I felt I needed. It was about what my body was going to let me do.

T&FN: *The Olympics. Longest throw in qualifying. What was your thinking?*

Greer: I knew I was going to win. I was ready for the final because I knew I was going to win, without a doubt. I felt good afterwards, too.

T&FN: *And the final?*

Greer: I remember being out there thinking,

"I didn't want to talk to anyone and I had my hair hanging down low just to disguise my face and I was just like, 'Please, please no one recognize me.' Then I stayed in my room the entire night, didn't go to sleep at all, and all the next day"

"I'm ready for this." On the first throw I ran down as hard as I could and went to plant as hard as I could and my knee just buckled, but my arm was sooo ready. I was ready for it. On my second throw, my knee just buckled.

The third throw, the javelin came out of the back of my hand. I've never hit a javelin that hard before. I think it would have gone—I really believe this—that it would have gone close to 95m [311-8].

I've never felt a jolt go through my body like that when I went to go plant. And I actually planted the javelin. For the first time ever. Picture perfect, straight-leg planted it. I did. For the first time in my life and the %@#! javelin came out the back of my hand when I went to go pull.

I couldn't believe it. I remember sitting there

on the runway saying to myself, "No. No-no-no." It's just like everything was just taken away from me. It was the worst feeling I've ever had. It's the most embarrassed I've ever been in my life, and I don't get embarrassed.

And the only thing I could think was "What did you just do? Why couldn't you hang on to that thing?" And the last thing I wanted to do was have somebody watch me limp off.

So, as soon as I was through throwing I was like, "Do not limp off. Whatever, you do, don't limp. Because I don't want anybody to think that I've got an excuse."

That is the last thing I wanted, for someone to give me pity. So, I tried my best not to limp off.

And then it set in. It was awful. I did not want to see anybody. I was so ashamed of myself. I felt like I let down everybody. Something that was so easy, that was there for me to take. I let myself down, my family, my friends, everybody else that was watching.

And I don't want any kind of excuse either like, "Oh, he's got a torn ACL." Well, bullshit,



"I'm big in Europe," says his shirt as Greer works on his snarl with Adam Nelson's dog Cassius.

because I'd just got done throwin' 87m [285ft] two days before that. I didn't want to talk to anyone and I had my hair hanging down low just to disguise my face and I was just like, "Please, please no one recognize me." Then I stayed in my room the entire night, didn't go to sleep at all, and all the next day.

T&FN: *Have you watched video of it?*

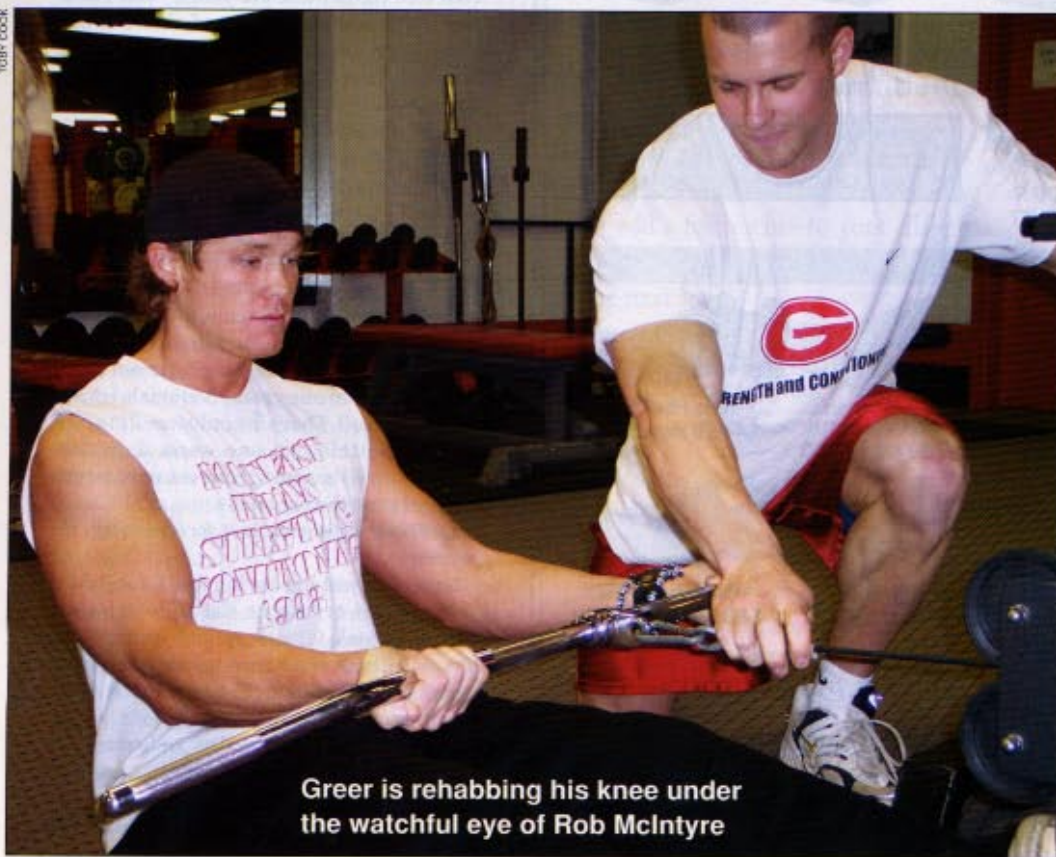
Greer: No, but I've seen a picture of me on that third throw and it was picture-%@#!-perfect. And if I can learn to throw that, that's what I'm saying, that I'll throw over 100m [328-1]. If I can do that same thing and hold the %@#! javelin.

But I've got no excuses. People can rattle off excuses all they want but I don't do that. I don't make excuses. You go there and compete. If you've got excuses, don't show up. Good thing I got my redemption in Monaco, to let them know I can still throw.

T&FN: *Which brings up what Don Babbitt had mentioned was a "cathartic" workout between the Olympics and Monaco. Is that how you see it?*

Greer: I wanted to see how it felt to throw again. I wasn't 100% sure. It was probably 5-6 days out from Monaco. I hadn't picked up a javelin.

But, yeah, there wasn't much talk going on that day at the track. I was still very down but I knew I was better than that. Then I kind of had a goal. I



Greer is rehabbing his knee under the watchful eye of Rob McIntyre

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didn't want to just beat everybody in Monaco, I wanted to kill 'em. I wanted to win by 10m. And, again, I knew I was still capable of it.

I know I keep saying that, but when I get that breakthrough, I don't think it's ever gonna stop. I really think that I'm gonna throw that far one day. Far enough to where people will say, "You got to be kidding me. I didn't know a javelin could go that far." And I don't just talk shit. I really feel capable of it.

So, anyway, that day, I was really frustrated inside, and I kind of took it out on the javelin. Usually I go for technique, but this was my "I don't-give-a-#@#! practice. I'm gonna stay quiet and figure this thing out and start throwing." I was thinkin' more of what I had to do. I was thinkin' more like... to see what I was capable of that day.

So, I was in a lot of thought that practice. Then I got frustrated, not with Don or me; I just got frustrated with the situation. The whole time I was thinking, "Why me, why?" So, I let

**"No one wants a freakin' thrower.
But if I'm outrageous enough,
maybe they'll pay me
the big bucks"**

all that build up and next thing I knew, I hit the other side of the track and I was really happy about that. I'd never done that before. That's what I was trying to do that day.

In fact, I'd just told Don, "Dude, I'm sorry, I might break one of your javelins." He said, "That's all right, those are yours," and I said, "Nope, this one's yours," and threw it and dinged it up. The end folded up, it's got a big divot in it. That helped me out a lot.

T&FN: How far do you think that is?

Greer: Oh, I don't know. I've thrown upper 87s before I hurt my knee at practice, and some 88s before in practice. And that one was farther. And I threw it off grass.

Monaco helped me out a lot. I wanted to end on a good note and that would be the only thing that would help me.

T&FN: How about the all-black uniform, the face paint, the writings on your arm?

Greer: Oh, I do something different every year, I mean, that one year at Nationals I threw with my shirt off. That's the only way I'm going to be marketable. No one wants a freakin' thrower. But if I'm outrageous enough, maybe they'll pay me the big bucks.

T&FN: Is it for you; is it for the crowd, the competition?

Greer: It's just me having fun. I don't do it for the crowd or anyone else. I do it for me because I think it's funny and fun for me. Otherwise, how you gonna tell me apart from anybody else? I'm not craving publicity; I'm not, although that would be nice.

T&FN: What about the skull and crossbones wristband [see T&FN cover, November] you've

taken to wearing?

Greer: You know, a fan in Zürich this year gave that to me. And I had just lost my other wristband; it was a black one. Some guy gave it to me out of the crowd and that's just the coolest damn thing that anyone has ever given me. And it was really sweet because I didn't have to go buy a new one. Watch, everyone will be wearing them now. Fashion trend.

T&FN: What did you throw in high school?

Greer: I think about 196 [60m]. I got my two weeks in.

T&FN: Two weeks?

Greer: I just had a few meets. One of my best friends at the time was a pole vaulter so I went out one day because I told him I'd pole vault with him. That first day I made 10ft on one of those stiff poles; it didn't even bend. I don't know much about the pole vault but I said, "This sucks."

Then, I saw someone throwing the javelin on the side, went and grabbed it. A few practices later, I remember stickin' it through the back of somebody's shirt and I thought, "Yes! This is awesome."

T&FN: Have you had any trouble traveling with your javelins since 9/11?

Greer: Yes. Air France. Two times this year they wanted me to pay an extra \$940 to take them over and back. I said, "%@#! that." In fact, both American Records weren't with my javelins. I had to borrow javelins.

T&FN: Maybe you should borrow javelins more often.

Greer: Maaaybe that's what I'll do. Every meet. Even the ones here in Georgia.

T&FN: You mentioned Jan Zelezny before. How was it to watch arguably the greatest thrower ever compete as a mere shell of himself in Athens?

Greer: I didn't think he's at the end. I still think he's capable of throwing very far. He's a really awesome guy. He really is. It was really awesome to hear—we were in Ostrava earlier this year, and I told him kind of what he was

"I saw someone throwing the javelin... A few practices later, I remember stickin' it through the back of somebody's shirt and I thought, 'Yes! This is awesome.'"

doing wrong, that he needed to keep his arm back just a little bit longer and he said, "You know that if you planted your leg, it would be over? That it would be over forever?" And that was really awesome to hear, to have the World Record holder tell me that, that from what he sees, I'm capable of breaking the WR now.

T&FN: Do you feel like you can take the javelin and make it yours?

Greer: I wanna own it for the next four years. I think I'm going to. If I'm ever going to do it, now is the time. But I also think these next four years are going to be better than the past four. And, when I get this new contract done, I know there'll be a lot of people outside of stores waitin' to buy javelin boots. "Give me those new Breaux Greers, please." □

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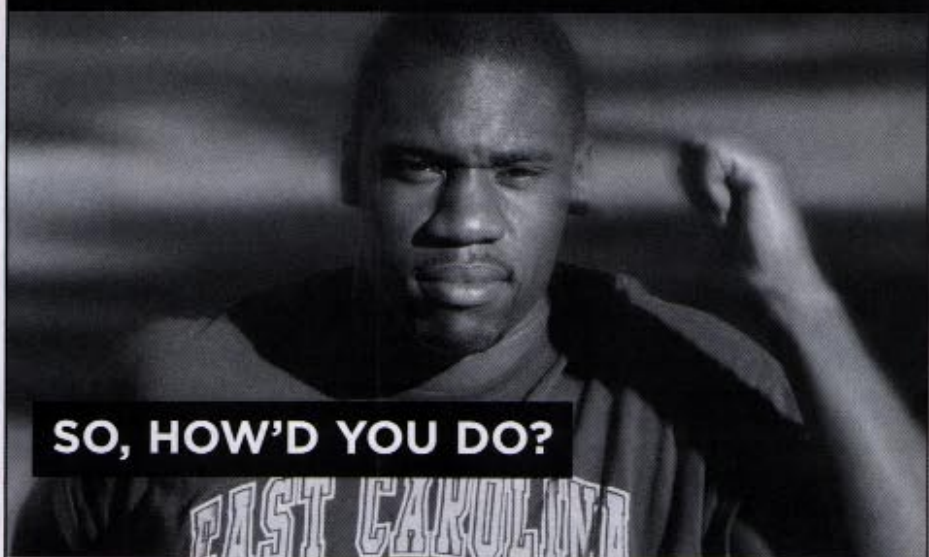
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