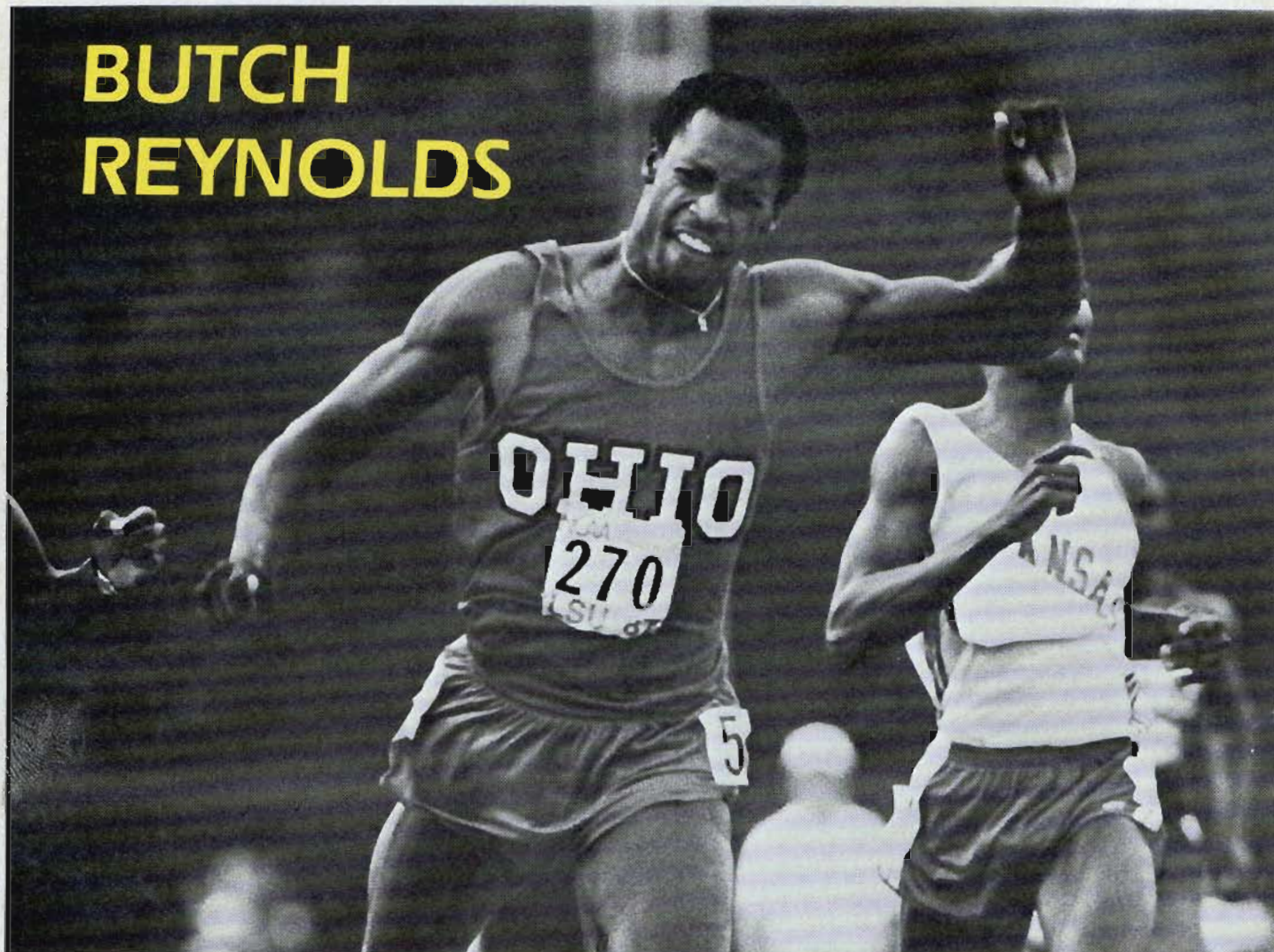


# BUTCH REYNOLDS



**T**o run the 400 in 43 seconds. That's been the goal, conscious or subconscious, of every world-class quartermiler since Lee Evans won the 1968 Olympics in 43.86, the altitude-aided World Record which has endured to this day.

Butch Reynolds was only 4 when Evans circled that famous lap; he was 12 when Alberto Juantorena won the 1976 Olympics in 44.26, the closest anyone had come to beating Evans' WR. That 44.26 was also the fastest anyone had run at low altitude.

Now someone has come closer. And it's the unlikely Reynolds, who before this year never even ran in a TAC or NCAA championship. His PR when the year began was 45.36. Now he's little more than a stride away from the World Record.

Butch has put together a sparkling year which actually started four days before 1987 with an indoor 500m WR. At the Drake Relays he slashed 0.74 off his 400 PR with a 44.60. Still, the track world was startled on May 3, when the 6-3/175 powerhouse exploded a 44.10 at the Jesse Owens

Classic for the low-altitude WR.

Two days before turning 23, the Ohio State junior won the NCAA in 44.13, the second-fastest low-altitude mark ever. In mid-July he added the third-fastest ever, a 44.15 in London (p.12), then lost his first race of the year (p. 43).

His season has already been so good it could be called a career as his 10-mark average for the year is 44.519, history's best career average by almost a tenth.

Relaxing in his townhouse in Columbus, Ohio, in late July, Butch reflected on his whirlwind trip to the top:

**T&FN:** What was your reaction to seeing Antonio McKay on the cover of T&FN a couple of months ago?

Reynolds: Other people seemed to be more disappointed than I was. My coach noticed it first, and he couldn't see why. I told him that maybe it was an old issue because we saw it at TAC and they were

selling a lot of back issues there. But he said, "No, I looked at it closely."

So I said, "Coach, I don't know." I really didn't let that get to me very much. I said, "Well, I guess I just have to prove more to *Track & Field News*. I guess they still don't believe in me yet."

But I didn't let it bother me, really. I know Antonio is a good quartermiler. And I like him.

**T&FN:** You've now run history's three fastest low-altitude times. Is running in the low-44s "easy" for you?

Reynolds: Well, no, it's not. I feel I can go faster, but running low 44s consistently takes something out of you. I'd rather go 44.7-44.8—that would be easy for me. I wouldn't say *easy*, really, because the quarter is hard to run—don't get me wrong. But running a 44.7-44.8 is a more controlled race.

When I line up now, people are



shooting for me. And if they run their best time, say 44.6 or 44.4 for a PR like Danny Everett or Innocent Egbunike, they're making me go that 44.1. I like to give all I've got in that last 50 to make that move.

**T&FN:** *Most runners hate running the 400. How do you rate it?*

Reynolds: I don't like it either! I love to run, but running the quarter is something different. You really have to tell yourself, "I'm gonna run it and that's all there is to it," because your mind is naturally telling you that you *don't* want to run this event. But I'm getting to the point now where I can handle the quarter a lot easier.

**T&FN:** *How would you describe the 400?*

Reynolds: I look at it as war. You have to get through it, tough it out, and when you get through it, you're free; you've finished a battle. You have to be real conscious of what's going on when you start.

And then you have to *run*. I mean, some people say you have to float or key off somebody, but you have to *run*. Myself, I haven't really *run* the quarter yet. True, I've gone out and made my moves and run some fast times, but I haven't *run* that first 200 yet, and then come home with the same kind of kick. I can run a fast 200—in fact, I think I could PR in the 19s somewhere.

I have a tendency to float through the first 300, then just put in what I need to win.

**T&FN:** *You and Edwin Moses have become friends. What effect has he had on you?*

Reynolds: He has had a big effect on me. When I first ran the 44.10 at Jesse Owens, I called him up at the Holiday Inn just before he was ready to leave. I had that fast time, but I had to make sure I made the right moves and right decisions. I felt I could be a world-class sprinter, but you have to have the right guidelines and advice to follow.

So I called Edwin up. I told my girlfriend, "I'm gonna call him." I was a little nervous, but I was also determined—I thought he could help me. He congratulated me and said, "That's a fast race for so early. You have a long season ahead of you—three rounds of TAC, two rounds of NCAA, four rounds of World Championships."

And he said, "If I were you I'd take it off a little bit and take it easy. Running that hot, it's easy to keep running until you've run too much."

**T&FN:** *Is that why you've run so selectively this summer?*

Reynolds: Yes, I took his advice. And I think it was the best move of my life. Edwin knows the ropes and he's been there before.

**T&FN:** *Your emergence this year has been truly amazing. How have you handled all of the attention, publicity and traveling?*

Reynolds: It's something that I know has to come when you're trying to break Lee Evans' World Record. You know it's gonna come—and thinking and dreaming of

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## "It'll Hit Me When I Run A 43.85"

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that since the 1984 Olympic Trials, I've been preparing myself. But you never can prepare yourself for the actual main event.

I've held up pretty good; I've surprised myself. But at first it was kind of rough because you're making so many decisions and you don't want to make the wrong decision.

**T&FN:** *What happened in Paris, where Egbunike beat you?*

Reynolds: Yeah, he beat me, but he's a good runner. I can't take anything from him. But I know that once I'm at my best again, it'll be a good race. I was trying to relax and run a really good race, but in the back of my mind I couldn't get into the race. I was really tired, even though it was only my second race over there.

Usually I make a move coming off the last curve, but when I tried to make my move there I had no move to make. But I think it may have been a blessing for me. It was the first race I lost all year and it woke me up—made me hungry. Not hungry bad, but emotionally want it.

I hate to lose. I can motivate myself without the loss, but now... it's like getting beat up. But you don't like getting beat up—you want some more. I want some more now.

**T&FN:** *Everything has happened so fast for you; do you ever feel like you're living out a dream?*

Reynolds: I do. You know when it's going to hit me? When I run that 43.85. I'm serious; it'll hit me when I run a 43.85.

**T&FN:** *You seem pretty confident.*

Reynolds: I am. I'm excited. Not necessarily because of my accomplishments, but because I'm healthy and I see no problems. I'm looking forward to the World Championships, looking forward to running with the letters USA across my chest—that's going to be a good feeling, like a tickle.

**T&FN:** *You once said that your life story is all about having the worst luck at the worst times. How did you deal with all the bad luck?*

Reynolds: That goes back to high school. They were expecting me to win

four events at state, but at regionals I jammed my knee and they had to carry me off. They picked me up and my coach told me in the training room, "Suck it up. There's something better for you in the world. Nothing like this is going to happen without there being something better out there for you."

And ever since then when something would happen to me—something that would keep me from going over the hump—I would always tell myself, "There's something better for me out there in the world. Just keep pushing, keep trying."

That's why I don't let the little injuries get me down and bother me.

**T&FN:** *When you came out of high school you had offers to play college football and basketball, but none for track. Why did you stay in track?*

Reynolds: It was an individual vs. team thing. In my senior year I had a good year individually. In my high school, I could play football well—I could catch, I had good speed and played good defense—and I could play good basketball—I was always a forward but I could play guard too—but my teams couldn't win. So I just told myself, "I'm going to go into track," and I did that because of the individual aspect.

It's not that I don't like team sports, because I think track is a team sport in a way, but it's more an individual sport. You decide your own limitations, not some other guy who might not be working as hard as you.

**T&FN:** *You mentioned the Olympic Trials next year, but most people probably don't remember that you surprised a lot of us by making the semifinals in 1984.*

Reynolds: Any time I get nervous, I think of the Olympic Trials in 1984. That's when I wanted to run, I was in lane 8, but I stopped at the start of the backstretch. It was like I skipped, because my hamstring pulled a little bit. I kept running—I ran about 47. When I get in the blocks and I'm nervous, I just remember that day. That gives me more enthusiasm than anything.

**T&FN:** *In terms of performances and upcoming opportunities, what are your goals? Records, medals?*

Reynolds: I want to run 43, but I think it can come any time. I would like it to come this year, and I feel confident that it can come this year. But I still have to run the races and we'll both find out together. It's not my all-out goal to get that time this year, though.

I want to be ranked No. 1 in the world, to be recognized as the best in the world. That's why I want to win the World Championships. What I dream of is being introduced like, "Ranked No. 1 in the world; holder of the World Record; in lane 5, Butch Reynolds." That's all of the accomplishments in one. □

by Howard Willman