

# Tyson Gay

by Jon Hendershott

**T**yson Gay is quiet in speech and manner—except when he is on the track. Then the 24-year-old Kentucky native lets his running roar. His USATF double of 9.84/19.62 only underscored Gay's position as the fastest combo 100/200 sprinter ever.

But the Arkansas alum knows he still has things to prove in the sport, starting with winning some Worlds medals in Osaka, preferably golden ones.

Gay speaks quietly but with strong feelings, whether he discusses

his rising place in the world sprinting scene, succeeding despite having coach Lance Brauman in federal prison (see p. 16), coping with the specter of doping in the sport, or the pride he felt winning in Indy before family members and especially his 6-year-old daughter, Trinity:

**T&FN:** Now with some time for reflection, what are your thoughts about each sprint win in Indy as well as the overall achievement of winning a sprint double at nationals?

**Gay:** I feel very good about the victories, especially in the 100 because that's what I've been focusing on

this year. I've really been working on my start and I think that has carried over to my 200 as well.

The 200 was the last race of the meet and I was a little fatigued. So for me to pull out the victory there was very pleasing after all I had run before. And also there were 15 members of my family there, including my daughter. So it felt very good to win in front of them.

**T&FN:** Was one of those races more personally satisfying to you and if so, why?

**Gay:** The 200 was most satisfying to me. I think I was a little in the shadows this year in the 200 with Wallace Spearmon and Walter Dix. Walter had the fastest time in the world. Some people didn't pay much attention to me. I just felt that I deserved a little bit of respect, especially after what I ran in the final.

**T&FN:** Will you have to reassess your goals for this season in light of your achievements in Indy?

**Gay:** Well, I had planned to run both races at Nationals, even though I had some doubts in my mind about the 200 because I was a little fatigued. Now I'm looking to win the sprints at Worlds, as well as the 4x1. That's the only way I'm looking at it.

**T&FN:** What are your reactions to being second-fastest all-time in the 200 only behind Michael Johnson's 19.32?

**Gay:** It feels pretty good, considering that I edged out Xavier Carter for the second spot by a hundredth of a second. I believe I was fifth all-time with my 19.68 from last year and now to be second all-time feels great.

**T&FN:** Were there any signs you sensed in Indy that you were running as fast as you did?

**Gay:** I think it was the semi of the 100 when I ran fast [9.97] even if it was into a negative wind [-1.1mps]. That let me know that I was really strong this year and able to run well into a headwind as well as with an aiding wind. That race told me that I could run fast regardless of the conditions.

**T&FN:** Of the USATF races, which time was the bigger shock to you? And you said in Indy that if conditions were right, you felt you could break the World Record. Do you still feel that way?

**Gay:** Yes, I still believe that. Mainly for the fact that last year I ran 9.84 with a 1.0 wind, but this year I did it with a negative wind. So I know I've gotten faster and stronger and I still have confidence I can break the record.

Of the times at USAs, I would say the 200 was the bigger shock. I have been in the shadows a little, but I have been training hard. I think I could train harder for the 200, but I've been focusing on the 100. So I just need my 100 speed to carry me through the race and I can be a lot stronger than I am.

**T&FN:** How did you get started in running in the first place?

**Gay:** I didn't start running until about age 14 or 15 when I got to high school. My sister ran track before I did and I just followed in her footsteps and started to run as well.

My mother also used to run

## Gay In A Nutshell

•**Personal:** born Lexington, Kentucky, August 9, 1982; 6-0/161 (1.83/73)

•**Schools:** Lafayette HS (Lexington) '01; Barton County '03; Arkansas '05; now represents adidas

•**Coach:** Lance Brauman (Barton County, Arkansas, pro)

•**Major Meets:** 100—(1) JC, 6)USATF '02; 3) JC '03; 1)NC, 5sf)OT '04; 1)US, 3)WAF, 1) WCup '06; 1)US '07. 200—(2)JC '03; 4)NC, dnf)OT '04; 3)NC, 2) US, 4)WC '05; 1)WAF '06; 1)US '07

•**World/U.S. Ranks:** 100—x, 9 '04; 2, 1 '06. 200—x, 8 '04; 3, 3 '05; 1, 1 '06



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**“I heard a comment once that I was quiet but deadly”**

track as a young girl and she loves the sport in general. She watches meets on television, even ones I'm not running in.

**T&FN:** *Did you ever intend to make a career out of the sport?*

**Gay:** No, that wasn't my intention whatsoever; I just really enjoy running. When I started producing good times in high school—like breaking the state record [10.46 in '01 as a senior]—that's when I wanted to go on to college and further my career.

**T&FN:** *Did you have an ambition, a direction in life before running?*

**Gay:** No, not really. I started running around age 14 and I liked to play football as well. I tried to play basketball, but I wasn't any good. I just didn't have that type of coordination. If the ball doesn't go in, you'll never get picked for the team.

**T&FN:** *When did you first get serious about running? When did you decide, “I can take this as far as I want?”*

**Gay:** I would say my freshman year at Barton County CC in Kansas. That's where I met Lance Brauman, who is still my coach.

He told me one day at practice, “Son, I think you can make a profession out of this sport. You're running fast times in practice just naturally; you don't even lift weights. I really think you can have a career one day.”

I didn't think too much about it, but I just wanted to continue to run from then on.

**T&FN:** *So what remains your primary driving force in the sport? Now it's your job, your profession, and you're very good at it. But is it to run a specific time, or just win every race or what?*

**Gay:** I think both. I definitely want to win. I think that means more to me than times. Winning USAs this year meant more to me than when I PRed in races last year but got beat by the X-Man or by Asafa Powell.

So I think it's more about winning now and not so much about fast times. I feel that fast times will come if you continue to win.

**T&FN:** *Even though you were World Ranked No. 1 in the 200 last year and No. 2 at 100, do you think you've been running a little in the shadows of Asafa Powell and Justin Gatlin?*

**Gay:** I would think so. With all due respect, Asafa is a great athlete and he does deserve all the attention because he is the World Record holder. In the 200, Xavier and Wallace both

## **Gay In The Post-Gatlin World**

**T&FN:** *Do you feel you have some kind of responsibility to be a standard-bearer for the sport after all the bad publicity due to Justin Gatlin?*

**Gay:** I think so. I just try to be myself and hope that people will believe that the sport will get better. I hope we will have meets without people bringing up steroids. I'll just focus on myself, stay clean and try my best.

**T&FN:** *People are suspicious because some athletes aren't clean. Do you worry that suspicion will fall on you, even though you are clean?*

**Gay:** I think it already has. I try to ignore it, although it does make me more nervous now. I've been running all my life and no one has ever accused me of being on drugs. Not when I was in college and running fast.

Now that I'm a professional and running faster, it's worse because people have been caught for cheating. I am more nervous because people say things like that.

**T&FN:** *Is maybe one way to refocus the public's attention through the competition itself? With guys like Powell, Dix, Carter, Spearman and Bolt, can the very nature of the sprints refocus people's attention to a more positive aspect?*

**Gay:** I think it can. Right now, I'm running fast in the 100 along with Asafa and Derrick Atkins from the Bahamas. So there are three guys from three different countries who are running fast.

Then you have four Americans who are capable of running 19.6 or maybe faster in the 200. So I think both the 100 and 200 could help put some of the drug suspicions behind because there isn't one guy totally dominating those events. On any given day, anyone can win or lose.

have been considered mainly 200 runners. I was pretty good in the 100 and pretty good in the 200, but kind of getting overshadowed.

**T&FN:** *About your coach Lance Brauman, did he see your Nationals races on TV? What did he say after each of your races?*

**Gay:** He called me after the 200 and told me he watched it and was very happy. He said that after I ran 20.15 in the semis, he knew then that I could 19.6 or faster. He said I looked way too easy and looked very fit. So he was very excited about my performances.

**T&FN:** *Have you lost anything not having him there each day to watch your running? Obviously not, with the way you're running.*

**Gay:** [laughs] Maybe a little bit, but I think it's actually made me a little stronger. He was

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able to watch Carson, New York and USAs and we gave each other feedback.

**T&FN:** *Do you and Wallace Spearmon actually train together?*

**Gay:** Yes, sometimes when I'm in Fayetteville. Other times I go to Dallas for some technical work.

**T&FN:** *What is the relationship like between you two? You were college teammates, but now you're professional rivals. So is it kind of two different worlds, in that you might see each other socially or even in training but then you have to put that aside when it comes to racing?*

**Gay:** It's been like that for about the last year or so. When we're in Europe and away from our families and friends, we spend time with each other. We train more together and eat and go places together because all we have is each other.

### Coaching By Remote Control

Lance Brauman, Tyson Gay's coach for the past five years, is in federal prison in Texarkana, Texas, after being convicted of mail fraud and embezzlement stemming from a case at Barton County CC. Brauman still directs an elite training group of Gay, Wallace Spearmon and Jamaican Veronica Campbell.

Sprint veteran Jon Drummond has also helped Gay with technical work on his start:

**T&FN:** *How difficult has that coaching situation been for you with him incarcerated?*

**Gay:** It's been a little difficult because he can't see what we do in practice or know how I feel. But at the same time, it's helped me mature a lot and that's been very beneficial.

Jon said he would help out as a friend. It's like I have the best of both worlds: Lance is great devising workouts and gets me in the best shape possible. Jon was a great starter. So I figured if I had Lance's training and Jon's technical assistance—especially with my start—then I could become a great sprinter.

**T&FN:** *Do you speak with Lance often?*

**Gay:** We try to call each other about once a week. I've visited him two or three times in Texarkana. He calls and writes, I write and we stay in touch. He went in last November 14 and August 28 is when he's supposed to get out.

I doubt there is any chance he could come to Osaka. I don't think he can leave the country that soon. There would be only a few days left of the Worlds anyway.

**T&FN:** *Have you lost any respect for him after what's happened?*

**Gay:** No, none whatsoever. I really hope our relationship is just the same after he gets out. He's probably done a lot of maturing while he's been locked up. I really hope so.

In the U.S., we'll train here and there together, but anywhere, once we get on the track it's all business.

**T&FN:** *You say you'll definitely double in Osaka,*

*so who do you see as your biggest rivals?*

**Gay:** In the 100, the primary opponent has to be Asafa Powell. He has just as much to prove as I do. I don't have any medals and he's the recordholder but without any big medals. So he has that over his head. And I definitely want some medals.

I have looked at Asafa as being a dangerous sprinter. So I've always had a lot of respect for him. But going into a race, I can't lose respect for him but I also have to have more confidence in myself that I can beat him.

In the 200, I have to look at my teammates and Usain Bolt of Jamaica. And I've heard that Derrick Atkins of the Bahamas may run the 200 as well as the 100.

Right now, I think Bolt has to be one of the favorites; he's a young guy and has improved so much this year. I have been told by his coach and some teammates that he has trained really hard this year. He improved last year after training more seriously so he has to be among the favorites.

**T&FN:** *You said in Indy that placing 4th in the '05 Worlds 200 has motivated you. How did it do that since you were a different sprinter then?*

**Gay:** That race is on my computer and I watch it from time to time. It's been motivation because going into that race, I felt I was the favorite. I had the crowd behind me and my family was there.

When I lost that race, I really felt I let my family down. They have helped me continue to work hard. I knew I was just as talented as those guys who got medals. I ended up beating those guys at the Grand Prix Final that year, but that wasn't the World Champs.

So ever since that race, I've told myself that I'm going to work harder than ever before. I'm going to learn about the sport; learn how to run the rounds. Do that to get better.

**T&FN:** *In fact, now that you are running faster than ever, improvement may come in smaller and smaller increments. What do you feel you have to improve in your races to keep getting faster?*

**Gay:** I think it's consistency and staying healthy. I've been told that when you run the 100, it's going to be harder and harder to improve. But I have so much to improve on in my 100. I'm still running off a lot of talent.

**T&FN:** *What is your life like outside the sport?*

**Gay:** I don't have a girlfriend. I do have my daughter Trinity back home in Lexington. She is 6. I don't really have time for a girlfriend right now. Trinity came to Nationals and



**Gay's 15-member family support-group in Indy included 6-year-old daughter Trinity.**

stayed with me.

My mother doesn't work; she just takes care of my brothers and sisters. My dad and step-mother live in Alabama; he works for Hyundai as a manager. I have two sisters and one little brother. One sister is a year older than me, plus a little sister and little brother.

**T&FN:** *Sprinters can have the image and behave as being cocky and talkative and loud. But in Indy, you said that you're a quiet guy in your manner and speech. Yet does sprinting somehow still reflect some elements of who Tyson Gay really is?*

**Gay:** I really do think so. Some people like to compare me to my 200; that I run a smooth curve and I'm a smooth guy. I even heard a comment once that I was quiet but deadly. □