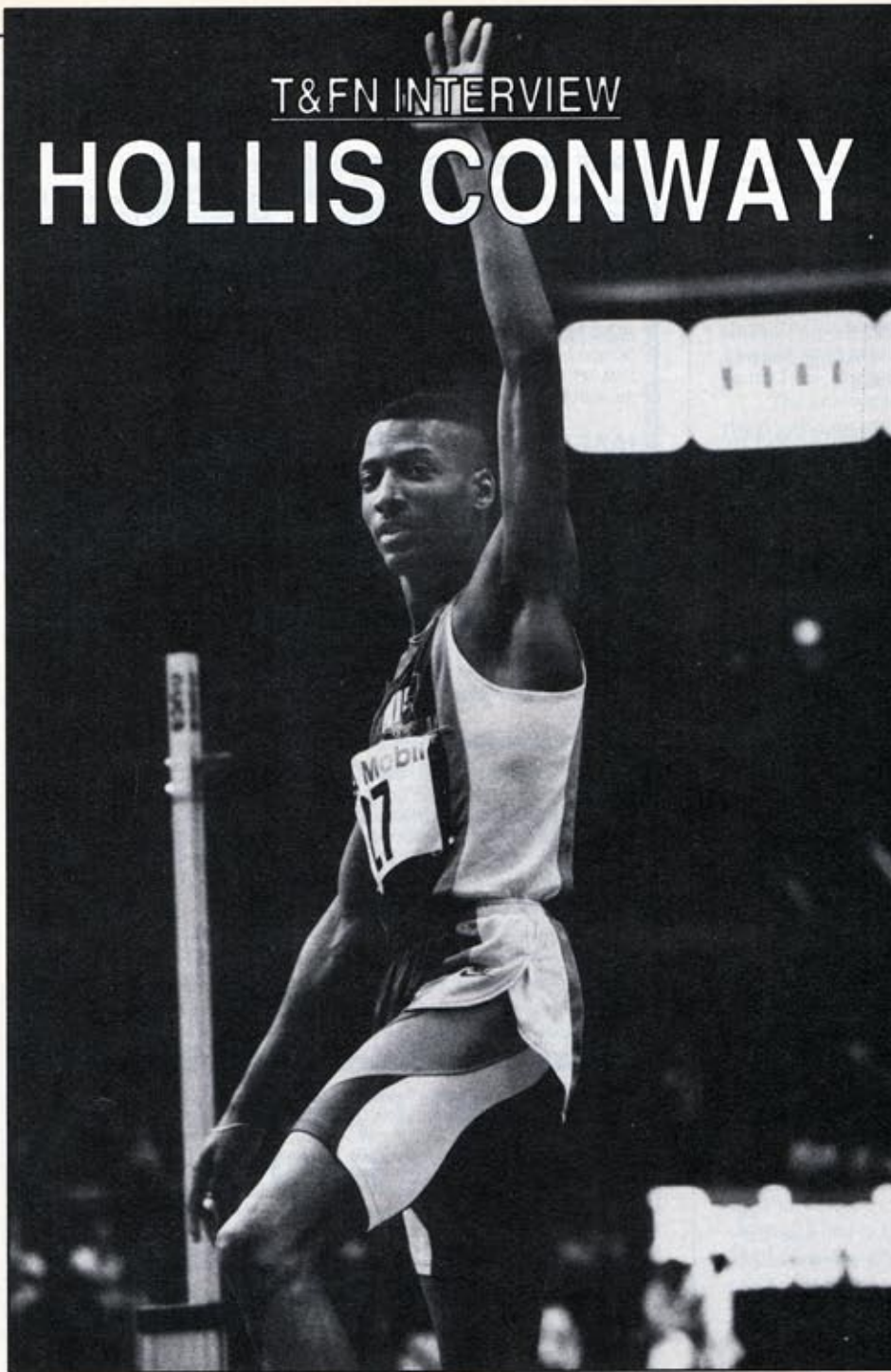


T&FN INTERVIEW

HOLLIS CONWAY



ALLSPORT/Temp Dufy

by Jeff Hollobaugh

Sure, Hollis Conway is America's best high jumper. And yeah, it's pretty amazing that he's done what he's done despite being under-tall for the event. The 21³/₄-inch differential between his 6-¹/₄ height and his American Record of 7-10 ranks him No. 3 on the all-time height-over-head list, behind only Franklin Jacobs (23¹/₄ inches) and Rick Noji (22¹/₄ inches).

The distinction that's really telling about the Olympic silver medalist is the way that the people who know him talk about him. Not only is he one of those rare humans about whom nobody has anything

bad to say, he's also the rarer type that people go out of their way to say nice things about.

The litany of variations on the "Hollis is the sweetest guy" theme could easily fill up a couple of pages. "He comes up here a lot to train with his coach, Dick Booth," says our man at the University of Arkansas. "I tell you, Hollis is just the nicest guy you'll ever meet. Everyone likes him." And so on.

Forgoing his final year of collegiate eligibility at Southwestern Louisiana and adjusting to life as a former Ragin' Cajun, Conway recently shared his thoughts with us:

Conway: Are you going to put me on the cover?

T&FN: I won't promise that. Not unless you jump 2.40 this weekend.

Conway [laughing]: Alright. . . things have been going pretty good. I've been working hard. This year I sacrificed a little technique work to get down to some basics. So I used my whole indoor season as my technique work. The first two or three meets, I was terrible. I was extremely strong, but my technique was so bad I couldn't clear anything.

T&FN: What do you need help in?

Conway: I really need to work toward peaking at a certain time. The thing that's hard is there are so many different meets that you want to jump well at. It's hard to taper off and then go back into training. I feel like I'm strong enough to jump 7-8 when I'm training, if I lighten up the week before. That would win a lot of meets.

Lately, training's just tearing my body up. I'm never giving it a rest. I can't recover from it. On Monday, I go real hard on my legs; Tuesday I run and do upper body weights. Wednesday is an active rest day. Then I reverse it and do running and upper body on Thursday, and lower body on Friday. And then I just don't do anything over the weekend.

It's been working fairly well. It just feels like I'm not doing enough. I'm still trying to fight off a little injury because I trained so hard through the off-season and right through the indoor. It catches up with me. So, I'm fighting off little aches and pains here and there.

T&FN: You're sounding like an old man.

Conway: Yeah, I'm feeling like an old man. In the mornings I get up, my knee's popping, my neck's popping, my elbow's popping. I crawl out of bed, my back hurts. You know, it's the price I've got to pay. Once I get going, though, I feel pretty good.

I'm excited about this season coming up. My first outdoor meet I jumped 7-8—I've never jumped that high that early and I definitely wasn't ready for it. I just made it off of pure strength. So I feel that when I lighten up, I should jump really high. I couldn't believe that I was jumping so high so early.

I'm kind of scared and excited about what I think is going to happen.

T&FN: Are you making a smooth transition to post-collegiate competition?

Conway: I don't know. I'm still trying to adjust to the different training schedule. I'm not doing a good job of it. I keep on overdoing it. And I'm not jumping in as many meets, so I really have to force myself to do something in practice.

T&FN: Are you trying to peak later?

Conway: I just have different goals. I want to win TAC for sure. That's always been a big deal for me. And I know if I win TAC, I'll be at the Goodwill Games. If I can win those and maybe Zürich and the GP Final, then I'll be happy with whatever comes along. I'm still trying to figure out what to do with all of this.

T&FN: How do you deal with being in an event where the best all meet so frequently and no one can win all of the time?

Conway: I'm trying not to focus on winning all the time. You've got to figure you're training through a lot of meets and you're not going to jump as high as you want.

And it's a different situation from when I was in college. I used to go to meets wanting to beat Jimmy Howard. And now I find out a lot of people come to meets wanting to beat me. It adds a lot of pressure.

I know I'm not going to win all the time. Most meets, I have an idea what I think I'm going to jump. I have to take what comes along with that.

I think now with my strength level, if someone makes 7-5, I can gut out 7-5, on most days. But when I'm going up against Sotomayor, the Germans and Sjöberg, I'm going to have to jump 7-7 or better. Those are the meets I want to be in shape for.

T&FN: Does losing get you down?

Conway: Only for a second. In the high jump, it's weird, because it's you against the bar. What gets me down is when I jump and the bar falls, even if it's a bad jump, because I have so much adrenaline.

I run and jump and the bar falls as I land in the pit and it's like "Awww!" because I planned on making it.

After that, you have to go on. After all, I've been jumping in 30 or 33 meets a year. I can't leave it all in one.

T&FN: How do you avoid that?

Conway: Coach Booth taught me that you don't want to ever get too high on anything, because it's a long, long fall down. If I win a meet, it's only a

meet, the Olympics or whatever. If I believe that I'm No. 1 and no one can beat me, and I lose, it's a long fall down. And you never want to be way down, because then it's a long way up. I try to stay in the middle.

I'm happy when I jump a big one, while I'm on the mat and celebrating. But right after that I still have three

School Still Important

Even though he chose to skip his senior year of collegiate eligibility, Conway has shown the foresight not to have given up on his academic career, as he explains:

"I have a pretty heavy load right now—about 16 credit hours, including 3 upper-level business classes. It's helped that I'm not competing as much because I'm not missing as many classes.

"I'm not that far from graduating with my business degree. But I think I'm going to draw that out to four semesters, because I couldn't think of what I'd do when I graduate:

"Either end up going to grad school or just lie around the house trying to find a job. I figure the best thing for me to do is take my time, stay in class, train and try to do well.

"I have to make sure that I do the right thing, because if I get injured, or anything happens to my career, then I'm really in trouble. That's why I want to finish school.

"I'm just trying to be careful about everything, because I know nothing's for sure right now."

more jumps that I might miss anyway.

I think I'm more happy with the heights that I jump than I am with the places I finish. I would rather jump 7-7 and 7-8 most of the time, and take whatever place that is, than jump 7-3 and 7-5 and win a lot. I like jumping high.

T&FN: Would you steer any children to the high jump?

Conway: Oh, definitely. They're going straight to the high jump. And then we'll work around that after I see how they look.

I love the event. All the jumpers

get along with each other. We're always out there, trying to help one another, having fun.

T&FN: What would you have your children do differently from you?

Conway: I wouldn't let them train the way I train. My big problem is that I pound away all the time, because I have a problem with feeling fresh. If I'm not tired and feeling beat up, I feel like I haven't done enough. So I'll do a little more, and I end up doing too much.

It ends up hurting me in the end because I keep pounding, and eventually these little injuries get worse.

T&FN: Do you feel like you're at a disadvantage at your height?

Conway: Realistically, I have to jump higher than those guys. If we're jumping the same height, I'm jumping higher.

They're at their plant, and their knee's driving up with their foot still on the ground: I have to jump just to get to that point. That's one reason I overtrain a lot; I figure I have to work harder. I have to do a little more. It's a problem.

T&FN: Any other problems?

Conway [laughing]: Well, you've failed to put me on the cover of *Track & Field News*. But I can't feel bad, because every time I jump a big one, somebody does something better.

When I jumped my 7-9 1/4 indoors for the AR, Sotomayor jumped 7-11 1/2 for the WR. When I jumped my 7-9 3/4 at Provo, Dawn Sowell ran a great time in the 100.

Then, when I jumped my 7-10, Sotomayor jumped 8-0. Either I have to jump high at a different time or really do something crazy. □

Hollis Conway was born January 8, 1967, in Chicago and is 6-1/4/142. Graduated from Fair Park High School (Shreveport, Louisiana) in '85, and competed for Southwestern Louisiana through 1989. Used the roll in his first two years of high school before switching to the flop as a sophomore.

Other PRs: LJ—25-1 ('88); TJ—53-1/2 ('87).

Progression (World and U.S. Rankings in parentheses):

Yr	Age	Affil	HJ	Major Meets
'81	14	LaJH	5-8	—
'82	15	LaHS	6-2	—
'83	16	*	6-8	—
'84	17	*	6-10	—
'85	18	*	7-2	7Jr
'86	19	SWnLa	7-6	6(NC, 6(TAC, 2)WJ
'87	20	unat	7-8 (x, 7)	nq(TAC
'88	21	SWnLa	7-8 1/4 (4, 1)	2(NC, 2)OT, 2)OG
'89	22	*	7-10 (3, 1)	1(NC, 2)TAC, 1)OF
'90	23	Nike Int	7-8 1/2	—