

US Athlete of the Year

JANE FREDERICK

Interviewed
by Garry Hill

It's unlikely that any woman in America could claim to match the all-around talent that Jane Frederick has. Certainly nobody on the track scene can make that claim. Indeed, there are those who think that she might be the world's finest, even though she doesn't hold the World Record. That's a problem she's working on rectifying.

The numbers speak for themselves. As a 13.25 hurdler, she is arguably the country's finest. As a 6-0 high jumper and 21-6¼ long jumper she rates behind only a handful of Americans. And as a 53-1 shot putter, she need only bow to Maren Seidler as a clear superior.

Athletic, articulate (in Italian and German as well as English) and attractive, Jane is either in, or borders on, world-class in everything she tries.

A pentathlon age-group record-setter since she was 13 (in 1965), Frederick has pursued her career in California, at Colorado, in Italy and back in California.

Ironically, true fame didn't come her way until the notoriety of the Superstars debacle, a case still in litigation. But as we caught up with her on Thanksgiving morning she was optimistic of being absolved.

Genuinely surprised to be chosen as the outstanding U.S. Athlete Of The Year (see p. 17), she spoke of her almost symbiotic relationship with the sport which has been a part of her life for so long.

Our chat took place in the garden of her father's rustic home in Orinda, nestled in the foothills behind Berkeley. With a gloriously bright sun taking the edge off a crisp day, we began:

T&FN: Where do you want to rank in the pentathlon this year?

Frederick: I don't know—I didn't get to have a season. I had barely gotten started. It was just killing me by the end of July not to be able to compete in the meets that I had planned because I was in the greatest shape of my life. I couldn't believe the workouts. They were just hints of what I was about to do.

It was so easy I could just walk out on the track at any moment. . . I just felt so ready. All I had to do was be able to compete and get a little adrenaline up and do it when it mattered to me. But I didn't get to; they took that away.

But I don't think about things like Rankings. That's somebody else's job, and that's a different perspective on the sport. It's just as valid and important, but if I think in those terms then maybe it will change my perspective and sometimes that works against you. I think I'd rather just

think about my own personal improvement.

What'll probably happen is that I'll go out into that wild-beyond area of 5000 points and won't think about my placings anymore. If I do what I feel I can do it'll just be way out there.



T&FN: Well, you're 2nd. After all, you beat Diane [Konihowski] at Gotzis and Tkachenko dnfed at Nymburk.

Frederick: Boy, did she dnf! That's pretty interesting. They didn't expect me to be there; I had to show up on the sly. I was so hard up to compete. So I sneaked over to Czechoslovakia on 4 days notice and they didn't expect me to be there. The two Russians were there and they didn't expect me.

T&FN: They must have been surprised.

Frederick: Tkachenko was one of them and they were very upset about it, I'm sure. She wanted to finish, there was no reason she shouldn't have. She wasn't hurt, she didn't have anything wrong. I was out ahead, I guess about 180 points at the end of the HJ. She just didn't finish so as not to lose.

So I was disappointed about that. And I'm really disappointed about this steroids stuff. I feel, let them take it. Let people take that stuff. I don't care, because if I want to win I want to win against someone at their best, or when they've done what they think they need to do to be competitive. What I want is someone who is competitive.

If she had to bulk up on 'roids to be competitive then it serves my purposes as well. Otherwise, perhaps she'd be that pentathlete back in '72, scoring 4300 points.

T&FN: You remember that?

Frederick: I don't forget any of those people. The people I saw in 1972 made such an impression on me I'll never forget a single one. Their faces, their mannerisms, anything.

T&FN: Why is it so vivid?

Frederick: I was really young, I felt. I was 20, which a lot of people feel is really in their prime but I felt like I was just a babe. I knew I wasn't going to do anything great so I tried to absorb as much of the people and the attitudes, and what they did to warm up, and how they were trying to psych each other out, and how they were acting towards each other, so it would give me an idea of what it was really all about.

That was my first international competition. So I took a good look around.

T&FN: And Tkachenko weighed 30 pounds less, right?

Frederick: She was never a small woman, she's the bulky type. But when I think of it in Czechoslovakia, she was very big.

You know, catching someone by surprise is a lot of things. She was growing out gray everywhere. When you catch someone by surprise like that it means she didn't dye her hair before coming to the meet. She was just her au naturel self.

Things like that make an impression. It was interesting to see her and her coach under those conditions. They never present themselves to their major competitors under those conditions.

T&FN: It must have felt strange.

Frederick: It was. And the way that her husband bothered me about, how much money did I win. . . well, you're a professional now. . . millions eh, millions. . . you're a rich girl now. He's also her coach, one of the national coaches.

T&FN: If he was in charge of the drug regimen that Tkachenko and Gordiyenko were practicing he may not have much of a position anymore.

Frederick: I wrote her a letter recently, basically just to say that I was sorry to hear that she had troubles and that I could relate to it and I told her...

T&FN: You asked her if she wanted to set up an outlaw pentathlon circuit.

Frederick: That's it. "Wanna go in with me?"

I really wanted to say to her, "I know you're not ashamed for having taken them, but I know you must be ashamed of being caught."

I don't ever try to judge anyone. If she did what she needed to be happy in their society—you know, they get extras, they get their apartments, their permits, all of those things—if that's what she needed to make her life easier... That was her choice.

I told her I felt sorry that they were trying to keep her from competing in Moscow and that I didn't want that to happen. I want to be able to compete against the very best. I want to next year.

T&FN: Well, she's out, how about you?

Frederick: It will be easy. We're going to do what Francie did. We'll walk into the hearing with a check and say, "Listen, I've wanted to do this since May and you've told me I can't do it. And now you're

telling me it's November so I can do it."

What is this? In May I said, "Here, you want all the money back, you get it."

They said, "No, no. This and that and so forth and so on and you have to come home for a hearing."

I don't like that stuff of you're guilty until proven innocent.

T&FN: The Napoleonic Code.

Frederick: I was reading some of the rule changes that they've proposed for the Convention. Pretty upsetting. They're giving the Executive Director and the Executive Committee just about final power to decide if any athlete or coach should be suspended "to save the reputation or respect of the organization."

My father's a delegate to the convention, I saw it in his papers. Stuff like that scares me. It's like giving you a Stalin pass.

T&FN: Will the new pentathlon help you?

Frederick: It won't hurt me. I think it'll be all the same. There'll hardly be any other training involved for the 200.

The javelin will take some work though. But I've always liked the javelin and I think it'll be a lot of fun. As long as I take it slowly, I won't hurt myself. I have 2 years to train for it.

T&FN: You've curtailed your graduate studies?

Frederick: I was in UCLA's comparative literature program, but it took

up too much time; I couldn't balance it with track.

Comparative literature and the academic world are not where I want to be.

If anything, where I want to be is to coach. Ideally, what I'd like to do is amass all the experience that I can because I'd like to compete all the way through '84. I'd be 32, and I'm a late maturer. LA's going to be a mess though, a terrible place to have the Games.

T&FN: I have a nightmare of having to leave at 3:00 in the morning to make the preliminary sessions of track, or being stuck forever on the freeways.

Frederick: Or you could live in the Coliseum, one of the two. I think I'll drop out the field in a helicopter, check in.

T&FN: Where were we?

Frederick: I'd like to finish in '84. I'd like to amass as much experience as I could and be the "resident clinic lecturer" sort of thing. I feel, why don't they send someone like me, someone who loves to collect information, little details on technique, etc.?

What I'd like to do is go and give these coaching experiences. I don't just want to be one person's coach or one area's. Just in general. A floating coach.

I'd love to write articles and publish things. That's one thing that literature taught me. I feel like I should begin to use my resources to serve my own sport.

T&FN: You really are a child of the

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sport, starting at a young age and having your father so active. It's "always" been a part of your life.

Frederick: I've learned life through track. It's one of those things that happened, my sport taught me about life. I started doing it at 11 and it was one of those most stabilizing factors for me.

T&FN: Now that you are out of school, how do you pass your time, other than training?

Frederick: I earn my money in little pieces here and there. Helping various people out at the studios a lot.

T&FN: How about your spare time?

Frederick: I'm crazy about having projects. Like building things. I built what I think is a very nice kitchen table. I like to putz with my hands.

But track takes a lot of time. The only time I really have off from track is now. Mid-September through Thanksgiving. I'm just resting, doing high volume but low effort type stuff.

When I think that I train 6 days a week and besides my regular workouts I also lift 3 days a week. On those 3 days you're talking about 6 hours devoted to workouts. All that's left then is creative things.

I like to be creative. I love to read.

T&FN: Such as?

Frederick: Novels, historical novels. From Graves's *I, Claudius* to Homer. Mary Renault books. . . *The King Must Die*. I like to learn history through novels.

I'm trying to learn Russian, but it's hard. If you don't work with it a lot you lose it because you don't have the idioms, you start translating straight across. That's one language that doesn't come straight across.

T&FN: How does your taste run in food?

Frederick: Eat? I like to cook. If I'm having friends over, or they want to get together, I'm the one who cooks. That's always fine with me. As long as I don't have to wash the dishes. I like to eat Oriental. Chinese is my favorite. Cantonese.

T&FN: Are you still training at UCLA?

Frederick: In the morning, which is another problem because they chain up their hurdles, which makes it tough. And the high jump pits likewise, and the standards likewise. I'm not sure how I'm going to work it out, but it's going to be your basic amateur scramble. □

U.S. ATHLETE OF THE YEAR BALLOTING

	1	2	3	4	5	tot.
1. Jane Frederick (LAN)	14	2	-	3	1	85
2. Jodi Anderson (North)	2	8	4	3	2	62
3. Jan Merrill (Ct C)	1	3	8	1	3	46
4. Maren Seidler (Stars)	2	4	1	2	4	37
5. Brenda Morehead (TrSt)	-	1	5	3	3	28
6. Deby LaPlante 18; 7. Louise Ritter 8; 8. Sherry Calvert 7; 9. Evelyn Ashford 5; 10. tie, Julie Brown & Rosalyn Bryant 2.						

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