

At the ages of 25 and 23, Al and Jackie Joyner have accomplished enough in track & field to fully satisfy most careers. Each earned a medal at the LA Olympics (Al the triple jump gold, Jackie the heptathlon silver) to become the first brother-sister duo to win track medals in the same Olympics.

But nothing is on hold with these two, and their future appears extremely bright. Al is back in Jonesboro finishing up school at Arkansas State. He no longer sleeps on Jackie's couch, as he did for nearly 6 months last year in preparing for the Olympics.

"I'm still a piece of coal in a diamond in the rough," says Al, referring to his knowledge of the triple jump. "I'm kind of self-taught—I did a lot of reading in the library. Bob Kersee of UCLA and Guy Kochel of Arkansas State have helped me. I have not understood the triple jump yet. But these next couple of years, I will take it seriously."

Jackie, finishing up school at UCLA, surely hasn't slowed down. After again starting on the Bruin basketball team, in late March she took up two events for the first time: the 400H and the triple jump, climbing all the way to Nos. 3 and 2 among all-time Americans in just two months.

Al and Jackie are looked well upon by nearly everybody, not just for their talent and success, but also for their easygoing attitudes.

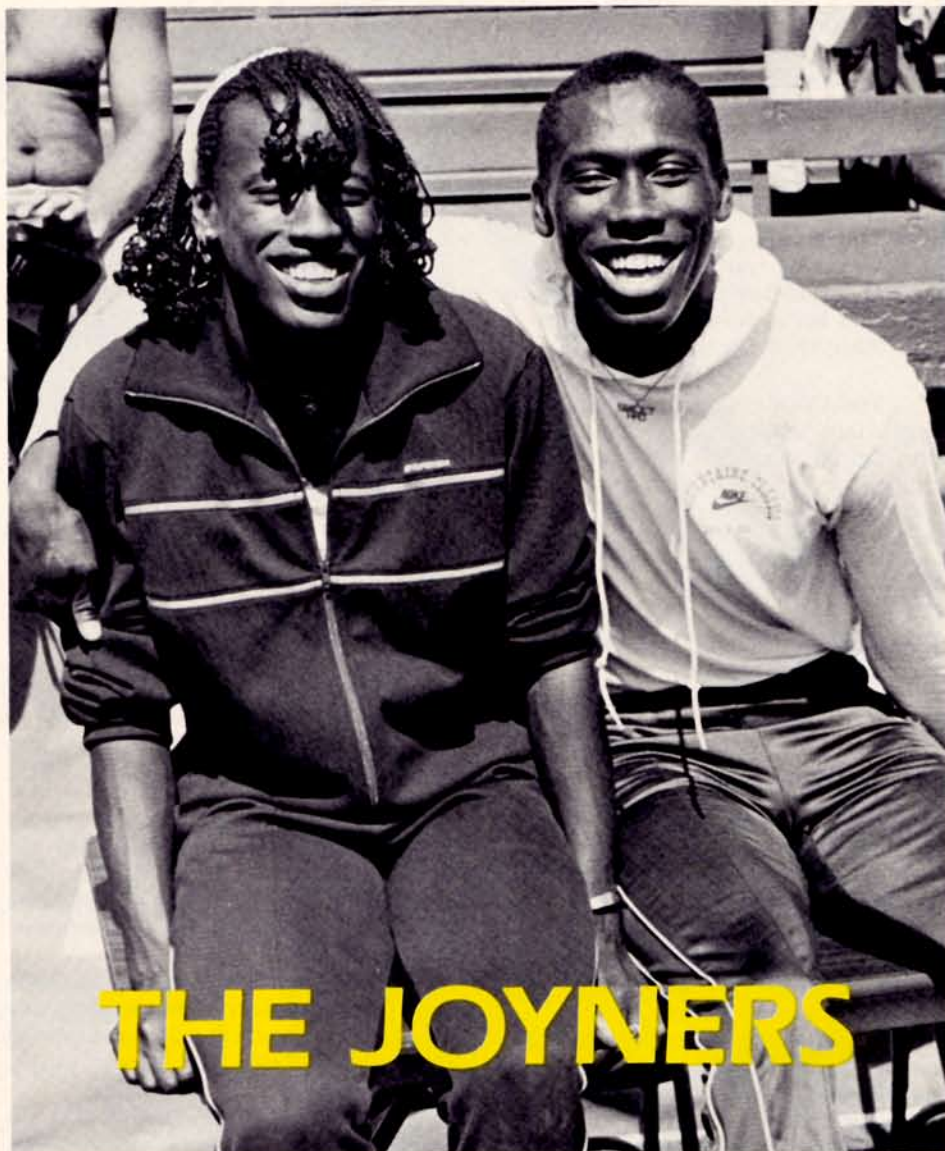
Their goals for the future are simple: finish school. And then they aren't so simple: Al would like to become the first triple jumper to travel 18m (59- $\frac{3}{4}$) along with adding the 110 hurdles to his portfolio, and Jackie—whose goals must seemingly change almost every day—hopes to be the first heptathlete to tally 7000 points.

We talked with Al and Jackie after the ARCO Coliseum Classic, in which neither competed (Al's arrival was delayed because of personal matters in Jonesboro, and Jackie is nursing a sore hamstring). Kersee, Jackie's coach since 1981 and Al's coach last spring and summer, proffered his Culver City apartment for the interview:

T&FN: Al, what's the significance of the gold "Sweet H₂O" chain [see photo] you have around your neck?

Al: That's my nickname. I was a lifeguard in my hometown at the public swimming pool when I was 16 or 17, and I saved this little girl from drowning once. She was only about 7, but she and her friend had a little crush on me, I think—they used to always sit underneath my chair.

So they used to get outside the fence and yell, "Sweet man by the water!" And during that time, the lifeguards were making up nicknames and I didn't have one, but my friends heard those girls yell "sweet man by the water," so they started calling me "Sweetwater," and the name stuck with me.



THE JOYNERS

Bill Leung, Jr.

T&FN: Is it true that you wanted to be a swimmer?

Al: Yes, a diver. I always wanted to go to the Olympic Games as a diver.

T&FN: Since last summer you two have become more famous. Give me some examples of some of the good things that have happened to you.

Al: I like to do a lot of functions for kids. Like there was this "Make A Wish" foundation for terminally ill kids back in Illinois and these kids could make a wish to see anyone in the world. One kid made a wish to meet me and Jackie. But at the time, Jackie couldn't make it because she was in school at UCLA so I made it there for both of us. And that was enjoyable.

To me, I don't feel too much has

changed. It's been kind of busy, but nothing has really changed. I feel like people know my sister. They like to tease me by saying, "You're Jackie Joyner's brother." I guess they do it to upset me, but I'm not; I'm proud that she's my sister, and I'm her brother.

T&FN: Now this is interesting, because Jackie told me earlier that a lot of people come up to her and say, "Oh, you're Al Joyner's sister." It's not like people don't know who you are.

Al: But Jackie's very talented. She's been good ever since I can remember. Everybody said back home that Jackie was going to go to the Olympics. And they were shocked to see I made the team.

T&FN: Jackie, what was good for you?

Jackie: Probably the best thing that happened to me after the Olympics was being able to go back to college and be able to compete well on the collegiate level. I was very happy to do as well as I did and still win a silver medal. I think what I've done this year, as far as collegiate competition is concerned, has helped shine my silver medal, more than anything.

T&FN: *When did you think the possibility of both of you competing in the Olympics seemed real? When did you say to yourselves, "Hey, we can do it"?*

Al: I thought about it at the '80 Olympic Trials, because I qualified for the hurdles and Jackie qualified for the long jump—and she almost made the team. I said, "Wow!" and that come 1984 Jackie's going to be more mature and better. I always felt it was going to be easy for Jackie to make the team and it would be harder for me, and I just wanted to be there with her. That was my goal—not to be left behind!

T&FN: *Is there a special significance to you two about winning medals in the same Olympics?*

Al: When I first came out here in '84, that was the first time I was with Jackie since high school, since I left home. It really felt good that we were together again, you know.

I used to sit in the back seat of the car when Bobby drove, and they had a theme song that I didn't know anything about. And they *always* used to play it. It was called "We're Going All The Way" and it talked about "the two of us," and I thought Bobby and Jackie were talking about them. Then one time I thought it could be the two of us—me and Jackie. "If we just don't blow it, we can go all the way." And that's the way I started looking at things. Every time I hear that song I get goose bumps—it's my theme song again.

T&FN: *Do you feel the same way about the song, Jackie?*

Jackie: It just brings memories back. I don't get goose bumps.

Al: It was meant for me, because I listened to it every morning. And then everything started materializing in my head that we could pull this off. The big hype then was the Lewises. And I remember something I wrote a long time ago to *Track & Field News*—I wrote a letter and told them to watch out for the Joyners.

T&FN: *I remember it. What made you write it?*

Al: Because people didn't think I was Jackie's brother. They thought I was Al J-o-i-n-e-r, and they didn't think we were related because she was in California and I was in Arkansas. I wanted to let you know that we were just as good as the Lewises were.

I gave them their respect because I knew they were going to be there, but I felt we were too.

T&FN: *You keep mentioning, almost as if it was a given, that Jackie was going to be at the Olympics. But you were no long-shot, Al.*

Al: Jackie is, to me, a phenomenon. I watched her compete all through high school in all sports, and she was amazing. I saw her get 27 points in a basketball game when she had a toothache. And I know at night how much she used to cry about a toothache, and she was out there playing hard. She always played well under pres-

"I Wanted You To Know We Were As Good As The Lewises"

sure. Pressure didn't seem to bother her. She took things easygoing. She never walked around with a big head. Because she was a star, and she was a star to me.

Jackie (laughing): I'm not a star.

Al: That's how I perceived it. I never underestimate her. She can do anything, and she's my inspiration.

Like, she kept bugging me to run summer AAU track. In '77, I went there and took dead last in everything.

Jackie: The only problem he had was he didn't want to go to practice. He thought he could just go out there and compete, and I told him it's not that easy—you've got to go to practice and work hard. I told him you're not going to win all the time because when I first started running—I was running the 400m—I got dead last. But at the time it didn't bother me because I enjoyed running and I never gave up just because everybody on the team that I was running with was faster than I was.

It was easier for me to leave track alone because I was involved with dancing and then I was playing basketball in the back yard, but not organized basketball. But as far as track was concerned, I thought it was easier to leave that sport alone because I wasn't doing good at all.

T&FN: *How old were you then?*

Jackie: This is when I was 9, that's when I ran the 400m. When I got into the 10-11 age-group, I started long jumping, and that was an accident. George Ward, my coach at the time, had a long jump pit in his back yard. He was waiting to take me home one day while this other girl was long jumping, so I said, "Why don't you just let me jump too?" You know, I didn't want to sit around. So I jumped once and he measured it and said, "You should be long jumping!"

Al: Back then, I guess Jackie was long

jumping good—like 15-16 feet, and that was kind of like far. And this is why I didn't try the long jump, because I did it once and it wasn't that far and I said, "I'm not doing this event." I mean, my sister could beat me at basketball, running—I wasn't going to add the long jump to that list!

T&FN: *It's always been impressive how happy and outgoing you two are, but even more so to me is how competitive you are. How is it you can be so enjoyable yet can really dig deep so often?*

Jackie: I feel, well, I guess it comes natural. But there's some things about me... like with the long jump in the conference meet. I won at 21-11 on the second jump, but the first jump was 18-10 [laughs]. And it was like I told myself, "Girl, that's embarrassing—you shouldn't be jumping like that."

I just feel that when I'm going in an event, regardless of who I'm going against, I like to win—I mean, I'm going to do the best that I can to win. Even like running the 400m hurdles. I know the event a little bit, but I felt that if I'm out here, I'm going to compete to the best I can. Regardless if it's not my best event.

I think I get that attitude from being a heptathlete. Because at one time I was satisfied with just getting out there and throwing the shot and being considered a heptathlete. But I felt I wasn't getting the best out of myself because I'd say to myself, "Oh well, I'm not going to worry about this event because I'm not a shot putter." But that attitude was carrying over into my performances to the point where I was throwing mediocre.

So in the conference meet, I got in the shot ring and one girl looked at me like, "What are you doing here?" And that really ticked me off! I used to think, "Oh, I know you girls are shot putters so I'm just going to toss the shot—just go through the motions." But now I think, "I'm going to compete against you just like a shot putter."

Al: I know that if I get down and line up with you, I can beat you. In my first indoor meet this year, I remember Milan Stewart and Tonie Campbell were jealous. They said, "You better get over in the triple jump and learn your event." So I took 2nd in the hurdles and almost beat Greg Foster. If I line up, I'm out to win—I don't care who you are or what your record is.

If I go out and say I'm going to win, then I know I'm going to do my best because I'm out to win. Then, no matter what happens, I know I've done my best. If you eat nails, then you're supposed to beat me. But if you eat, sleep, drink, walk, go to the bathroom like I do, I've got just as good a chance as you.

—continued—

T&FN: Jackie, what are your impressions of Al as an athlete?

Jackie: Well, I know he's come a long way. As far as an athlete, I think he's very talented. But... the only problem is... [joint laughter]. I just see so much in my brother that I don't believe he realizes it... I just don't think he's very disciplined. I don't see how a person can coach himself.

Kersee: He's not disciplined. If he ever settled down, if he was out here training with whoever he wanted to train with—it wouldn't have to be with Bob Kersee—Willie Banks's 57-11¼ would be broken by Al Joyner.

Al likes competing but he doesn't like training. He's enthusiastic and positive—he's got the mental ability to concentrate and do what it takes to get something done. But if he were a disciplined athlete—if he didn't always just strive for one high moment and had a consistency of training—he'd be one of the best triple jumpers this world has ever seen.

After the Olympic Games people came up and asked me, "Well what did you do to Al Joyner?" And I said, "I cannot take the credit for Al, except that I just slowed him down to where he trained. He had a set schedule."

Al: I agree with that except that I think I'm disciplined. I'm hardheaded and I may not be disciplined sometimes...

Jackie: Hardheaded? Stubborn is the word.

Al: But I want to listen. I think if I did come out and trained consistently, I think I would be the best. But I do agree with Bobby—I don't think you've seen the best out of me yet.

But there's a time when you have to think for yourself, and you have to make your decisions. And I'm the type who says, "Well, if I make a mistake, I want it to be my mistake—not someone else's."

Jackie: I think a lot of this has to do with nobody really getting a hold of Al. You see, when I got involved in track I really wanted to do it. And once I got involved, I wanted to be the best. Because when I was a dancer I wanted to be the best dancer.

Al: She was an outstanding cheerleader too. She did the fastest flip I've ever seen in my life. She could do cartwheels and then when she'd split, it would be straight—and that was unique. Some girls would do cartwheels real fast and then when they'd split they wouldn't go all the way down and it didn't look so good. But Jackie was perfect—like a gymnast.

T&FN: Were the people back home proud of you after the Olympics?

Al: They were really proud of us. They named a park after us in East St. Louis—it's called Al and Jackie Joyner Park, and it's in the neighborhood that we grew up in on the south side.

T&FN: Did they rename this park because you used to play there?

Jackie: They built it from scratch. There's a park right across the street from where we used to live, and that's where we used to do all of our training.

Al: It's funny, because this is how I knew people watched me in the Olympics. Everybody back home used to call me Alfredrick, but when I got back they were all calling me Al.

We gave the town a big plus, they said. See, there's a lot of violence there, but during the time of the Games there was no violence or crime.

T&FN: Were things really bad in East St. Louis?

Jackie: It's not that bad, but the article *Life* magazine did back in 1983 made it sound real bad.

Al: In a class once at Arkansas State they asked me where I was from, and I told them East St. Louis. And then he asked me how old I was, and I said 18. He said "Living to be 18 in East St. Louis is like living to be 85 in Jonesboro!"

T&FN: Was the town proud because someone from East St. Louis had achieved something?

Al: A lot of people from there have achieved something after leaving. Like Eric Wright of the San Francisco 49ers.

Jackie: And Kellen Winslow for the Chargers. A lot of good players.

Every city has violence, but I guess people focus on East St. Louis because it is a small community. But we grew up right in the violence. One time a man got shot right in front of my face.

Al: Yeah, I saw it—I was shining shoes. I almost had a heart attack.

Jackie: I was about 12 or 13, and we used to run up and down the block. This liquor store was right across the street and a bunch of weird things used to happen there. And this man was coming out of the store and he pulled this gun out and pow-pow.

Al: He was shot 7 times. Just like in the cowboy movies.

T&FN: Do people recognize you two a lot?

Al: The only time where a lot of people recognize us is back in East St. Louis. Sometimes—like right after the Games—we were, because we were still fresh in people's heads, but now not much. Once they hear our names, then something will click—"Ah, you have a sister."

One time—at Mt. SAC this year—the guy who let us in saw I was Al Joyner and says, "Oh, how are your brother and sister doing?" And I said, "They're doing fine!" It's funny but it doesn't make me upset—it just makes me strive harder.

And I was getting interviewed on live TV once and I was telling the guy that this year I want to earn a little respect. And the guy says, "What do you mean earn respect—doesn't anybody know who the bronze medalist is?" I told him, "That's what I mean—I won the gold!"

T&FN: Since you've become more famous, has anything outrageous happened to you—something you never expected?

Al: Yeah, this one charity auctioned me off. The charity raised \$3000, and I was supposed to be at one kid's birthday party because they won the auction. And I was like, "Wow, me?"

T&FN: That's certainly different. Anything like that happen to you, Jackie?

Jackie: No, just weird letters.
Al: I get weird letters too. I've actually gotten letters from people asking me to marry them!

Jackie: Yeah, real strange. One guy wanted a picture of me in my running outfit.

Al: One girl from Holland wanted to kiss my medal. And signing that one lady's bra last year at the Hard Rock Cafe—that was really strange. □

Jacqueline Joyner was born March 3, 1962, in East St. Louis, Illinois, and is 5-10/152. Graduated from Lincoln High School of East St. Louis in 1980 and plans to graduate this December from UCLA. Coached by Bob Kersee. Former AR holder in the heptathlon (6579 '84), she has set 4 CRs in the 7-eventer (current 6390 '83) and holds the CR in the long jump (22-11¼). PRs (with all-time world and U.S. list positions in parentheses): 100, 12.24 '83; 200, 23.70 '83; 400, 54.0 '83 (51.0r '85); 800, 2:09.32 ('82); 100H, 13.19 '85 (13.00w '85); 400H, 55.19 '85 (x, 3); HJ, 6-1½ '83; LJ, 22-11¼ '85 (x, 2); TJ, 43-4 '85 (3, 2); SP, 48-2 '85; JT, 157-5 '85; Hept, 6579 (7, 2). Her PRs in heptathlon events add up to 7005w.

Major meet finishes: 100H—'83 8)NCAA; '85 3)NCAA; 400H—'85 2)NCAA; HJ—'84 12)TAC; LJ—'79 2)TAC Jr; '80 8)OT, 1)TAC Jr; '81 12)TAC, dnq)AIAW; '82 dnq)TAC, 2)NCAA; '83 4)TAC, 3)NCAA; '84 5)OG, 2)OT, 3)TAC; '85 dnq)NCAA; TJ—'85 2)NCAA; Hept—'81 2)TAC, 3)AIAW; '82 1)TAC, 1)NCAA; '83 dnf)WC (injured), 2)TAC, 1)NCAA; '84 2)OG, 1)OT. Her progression (with World and U.S. Rankings in parentheses):

Year	Age	100H	LJ	Multi
1974	12		16-9	
1975	13		17-1½	
1976	14		17-5	
1977	15	14.7w 30"	18-8	3471tp 30"
1978	16	14.6 30"	18-2½	3680tp 30"
1979	17	14.8 30"	20-7½ (x, 8)	3830tp 30"
1980	18	14.88w	20-9½ (x, 6)	4048tp 30"
1981	19	14.54	20-11¼ (x, 10)	5754w (x, 2)
1982	20	13.81	21-1½ (x, 6)	6066 (x, 2)
1983	21	13.58	22-1½ (x, 2)	6390 (x, 2)
1984	22	13.53	22-4¼ (x, 3)	6579 (9, 2)
1985	23	13.19	22-11¼	6275

Alfredrick Alphonzo Joyner was born January 19, 1960, in East St. Louis, Illinois, and is 6-1/168. Graduated from Lincoln High School of East St. Louis ('78) and Arkansas State ('83). Now competes for Athletics West. His triple jump PR of 56-4¾ puts him equal No. 6 on the all-time U.S. list. His PRs: 110H, 13.55 '85; 400H, 52.43 '83; LJ, 24-11 '83; TJ, 56-4¾ '84. His progression (with World and U.S. Rankings in parentheses):

Year	Age	Affiliation	TJ	Major Meets
1978	18	Illinois HS	50-2½	
1979	19	Ark St TC	51-8½	3)TAC Jr
1980	20	Ark St	51-10	
1981	21	"	53-4½	7)NCAA
1982	22	Ark St TC	55-¾i	
1983	23	Ark St	56-2 (10, 3)	8)WC 3)TAC 2)NC
1984	24	Bud Light	56-4¼ (5, 2)	1)OG 2)OT 1)TAC
1985	25	Ath West	56-2	