

# Maurice Greene

by Jon Hendershott

Maurice Greene has come a long way from the 21-year-old novice who placed only 7th in his second-round 100m race at the '96 Olympic Trials. And Greene, now 25, never covered that sprint stretch faster than he did in '99—a World Record 9.79.

The Kansas City native, who now lives and trains in Los Angeles, sped to a trio of gold medals in Seville as he became the first man to score a World Champs dash double. He capped a week of glory in the searing Spanish sun by anchoring the U.S. to the 4 x 100 title.

An unbeaten season in the century plus 8 wins in his 10 half-lap races helped Greene run off with not only USATF's Jesse Owens Award (see p. 30) but also our U.S. Athlete Of The Year honor as well.

But all that was then, in 1999. Now, Greene's focus, naturally, has zeroed in on the Olympic campaign ahead. Can he emulate the sprint doubles scored by Americans Carl Lewis, Bobby Morrow, Jesse Owens, Eddie Tolan, Ralph Craig and Archie Hahn? Literally, time will tell.

There are many races to run between now and Sacramento and Sydney, many hours of exhaustive training to log with renowned sprint coach John Smith and the star-studded HSI sprint stable. Greene knows the hard work ahead and doesn't fear it.

All that work, after all, is pointed toward Greene's next big goal.

**T&FN:** An obvious aim for 2000 must be qualifying for the Olympic team in both sprints.

**Greene:** Oh yes. I've started back training already. The coming year is a big one, so I couldn't take too much time off.

**T&FN:** For '99, when did trying both sprints at the Worlds become a real goal?

**Greene:** At the beginning of the year, my manager Emanuel Hudson and coach John Smith gave the real challenge to me. They said, "You can go to the Worlds in both sprints, so why not go to win?"

They put the challenge out there and I just set my mind to it. That's what I set as my goals for last year.

**T&FN:** What did you think when they first threw down that challenge to you?

**Greene:** Nothing special, really. I did think, "Man, it's going to be hard. But it is something I can do." Then they said that no man had ever done it in the Worlds before, so that really gave me the incentive to try.

**T&FN:** You ran sprint doubles at invitational meets four times in both '97 and '99—including Athens in '99 and we know what happened in the 100 there. But did those doubles give you any kind of preparation to try it in Seville?

**Greene:** Not really. Running two events in the Worlds compared to an invitational meet are two different things entirely. In the Worlds, you've got four rounds of each race which is more of a challenge because it's more taxing to your body. In invitationals, it's easy. That's what you train to do. We train hard, so there's no reason why I can't run two events in one meet.

**T&FN:** Up to '99 really, did you consider yourself more a 100 guy than a 200 sprinter, or were they fairly equal to you?

**Greene:** I've always considered myself a better 100 runner than a 200 runner. But as time goes on and the more 200s I run, I get better and better in it each time.

**T&FN:** And Seville gave you important experience at competing in the 200 in a title meet, which will be a big benefit in 2000.

**Greene:** Yes, absolutely.

**T&FN:** Can you estimate what was the tougher aspect of the Seville double? Was it the mental part more than the physical?

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**Greene:** I'd have to say it was a combination of both. You're mentally tired and physically drained at the same time. But you still have to go out there and compete and perform. So it's a little bit of both. One aspect is no greater than the other.

**T&FN:** After the 200 especially, you were quite emotional, kneeling on the track to shed tears. You said they were tears of joy, but was it also a release of tension built up with the expectations of trying for the double?

**Greene:** No, they really were tears of joy. Regardless of what people may expect of me, I expect 10 times more of myself. There really wasn't any buildup of tension because I felt I could [double] all the time I was going through it. After the 200, I was just very happy with the accomplishment.

**T&FN:** Between your WR in Athens and defending your world 100 title, was one more significant to you in '99? Or what was your most significant performance last season?

**Greene:** My most significant performance had to be the 9.79. I cherish both the record and the title, but I probably cherish the World Record a little more than defending at the World Championships.

The World Record is a goal I set for myself to achieve, but it just happened to come a little before the Worlds. The record was something I worked very hard toward—and I felt I should have broken it in '98.

I didn't do that, but it came to me in 1999. That made me feel even greater because it finally did happen. Then after I broke the World Record, I could concentrate on defending my world championship.

**T&FN:** You said you always knew you could physically achieve the sprint double, but did it prove anything extra to you about yourself in the mental sense?

**Greene:** [laughs] It just proved that I'm mentally stronger than I ever have been before. I mean, I always felt I could hold up under expectations. That's something I've never been worried about.

**T&FN:** In looking ahead to 2000, what will you have to do differently—mentally or physically—to be able to shoot for the same double in the Olympics? It will start actually at the Trials, because you won't get a free pass as the 100 defender like you did for Seville. You'll have to earn team slots in both events.

**Greene:** Physically, I'm just going to have to be in better shape than I was at nationals last year. I have to go to the Olympic Trials prepared to compete in two events. But as an athlete, I feel I can run an easy 100 and still qualify for the next round.

I'm going to try to run as easily as possible through the rounds—I'm not going to go out there and blaze a time in the early races. I'll run as easily as possible to advance, let the finals come to me and then give it everything in the finals. If I do that, I believe I'll be alright.

**T&FN:** You have been quoted that your next time goal in the 100 is 9.76. Any particular reason you picked that time?

**Greene:** In setting goals for yourself, you have to take realistic steps. You can't put something way out there and shoot for that, because you have to make realistic

**Greene got to raise the flag three times at the World Championships and ended up as U.S. Athlete Of The Year**

## U.S. Voting: Mo Outpoints MJ

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	%
1. Maurice Greene .....	22	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	274	97.9%
2. Michael Johnson .....	6	22	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	258	92.1%
3. Anthony Washington .....	—	—	15	13	—	—	—	—	—	—	211	75.4%
4. C.J. Hunter .....	—	—	8	11	8	1	—	—	—	—	194	69.3%
5. Jeff Hartwig .....	—	—	3	3	4	6	5	4	—	2	133	47.5%
6. Mark Crear .....	—	—	2	—	11	5	3	3	2	—	132	47.1%
7. Chris Huffins .....	—	—	—	—	3	5	6	6	5	1	96	34.3%
8. Jerome Young .....	—	—	—	1	—	9	6	2	2	2	88	31.4%
9. Curt Clausen .....	—	—	—	—	2	2	5	2	3	5	59	21.1%
10. Angelo Taylor .....	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	8	5	2	44	15.7%

11. Andy Bloom 26; 12. Charles Austin 10; 13. LaMark Carter 5; 14. Erick Walder 4; 15. Larry Wade 2; 15. John Godina 2; 17. David Morris 1; 17. Bob Kennedy 1.

progress toward an ultimate goal. My coach believes I can run nine-sixty-six.

But the 9.79 race felt very easy to me. I believe that if I do the right things, and correct some of the things I did wrong in that race, then I can run 9.76.

**T&FN:** And the 9.79 did come early in the season, didn't it?

**Greene:** Yes and I also believe that in the Seville final, if I hadn't stumbled just out of the blocks, I would have run around 9.77 or 9.78. Maybe even 9.76. But negative things can happen and you have to live with that.

**T&FN:** But really, wasn't the primary goal first to win the final?

**Greene:** Definitely. That's the ultimate goal, to win the race. If a record comes to me, it comes. Something negative happened, I adjusted so that I could win and I won the race. That was the most important thing.

**T&FN:** In looking at the 200 for next season, do you have a particular time you're shooting for?

**Greene:** I'd like to run in the 19.70s.

**T&FN:** Would winning only the Olympic 100 be satisfying to you—since the 100 first defines Maurice Greene? Or does satisfaction at the Games only mean winning win both sprints?

**Greene:** Winning just the 100 would be partially satisfying. [laughs] I have a goal of going there and winning both and I don't want to settle for anything else.

**T&FN:** Something else you have talked about lately is meeting Michael Johnson in a match race. Is that really important to you?

**Greene:** I wouldn't say it's as important as the Trials or Olympics, but it is important because I've heard him say a lot of things. But I'm the type of person that if you're going to talk about me, let's get on the track right now.

Everybody wants to see us race anyway, so let's quit talking and show everybody what they want to see. What happens, happens.

**T&FN:** But in an Olympic year especially, there are more important races to prepare for.

**Greene:** If we had a match race, it wouldn't interfere a bit with my main goals for next year. I'm not worried about that. I'm going to run meets next season, he's going to run some and if he wants to run a 200, I'll be glad to go wherever he's going to run a 200 and we'll race there.

**T&FN:** You ran in the '96 Trials so you have that extent of Olympic-year experience. But 2000 will be totally different for you—and the Olympic year basically is here.

**Greene:** Yes, it is. It's something I've been waiting for since '96. So I'm just trying to be patient. I can't rush it along; I just have to take it as it comes. When you try to rush anything, that's when things go wrong. Most of all, I don't want to get hurt.

**T&FN:** And the timeframes and schedules for both the Trials and the Games are controlled by others.

**Greene:** Yes, which is another reason I can't rush anything. But I definitely will be ready when each of those times come and then I'll just take it one race at a time. □

