B ringing her best when it mattered most, Mich-elle Carter took the 2016 Olympic season and made it the year of “Carter Comes Through” in the women’s shot.

Her AR-raising win at the Games wasn’t just historic—the first for a U.S. woman, also making her just the second American after Earlene Brown in ’58 to World Rank No. 1—it was edge-of-your-seat stuff.

Carter, 2nd to 2-time defender Valerie Adams from round 2 to climactic round 6—where Hungary’s Anita Márton briefly bumped her to bronze—stepped into the circle as the penultimate thrower and launched the longest heave of her life (67-8¾/20.63) to take the lead. Adams couldn’t produce a topper and the gold was Carter’s.

She had won the World Indoor crown in March and the Olympic Trials in July with the same brand of final flourish, but said in Rio, “That is definitely not my goal.

“You always try to come out in the beginning and throw far but in practice you always want to end it with a good throw and I think that’s been working for me in the competitions, just knowing I can pull it together on my last throw and give it my all.”

For Carter—the daughter of ’84 shot silver medalist Michael Carter, who also played nose tackle on 3 San Francisco 49ers Super Bowl winners… and coaches Michelle—her “Sweet ’16” followed a string of health woes she rarely talked about: Hypothyroidism in 2010–13 induced deep fatigue, uncontrolled weight gain and other symptoms. “My hair would fall out, my skin was

Carter In A Nutshell

-Personal: Michelle Denee Carter was born October 12, 1985, in San José, California; 5-8¾/236 (1.75/107)

-Prs: SP—67-8¾/20.63 AR, 66-3¾/20.21i AR; DT—177-4/54.06 ’07

-Schools: Red Oak, Texas, HS ’03; Texas ’07; now represents Nike

-Coaches: Michael Carter high school & pro, Rose Brimmer college

-Major Meets: 2)WY ’01; 3)USJ ’02; 1)USJ ’03; 12)NCi; no)NC, 1)USJ, 1)WJ ’04; 2)NCi, 2)NC, 2)US ’05; 1)NC, 3)NC, 5)US ’06; 2)NC, 6)NC, 5)US ’07; 1)OT, 15)OG ’08; 1)US, 9)WC ’09; 2)US, no)WIC, 2)US ’10; 1)US, 9)WC ’11; 2)US, 3)WIC, 2)US, 6)OG ’12; 1)US, 1)US, 4)WC ’13; 1)US, 1)US ’14; 1)US, 3)WC ’15; 1)US, 1)WIC, 1)OT, 1)OG ’16

-World/U.S. Rankings: ‘05—x/2 ’05; ’06—x/5; ’07—x/6; ’08—x/1; ’09—7/1; ’10—x/2; ’11—9/2; ’12—5/2; ’13—4/1; ’14—4/1; ’15—3/1; ’16—1/1
Struggles At Early Age

Michelle Carter asserts the tenacity that earned her Olympic gold owes something to her struggles since childhood with ADHD and dyslexia.

Carter: Actually, you always have those issues. It never goes away, you just learn how to cope with them. So I partner with an organization called understood.org. It’s a website that has free information, tools and tips, for parents and even adults and kids with learning issues.

Sometimes it’s frustrating. For me, sitting down for a long time and trying to read a book is still a challenge but as an adult I know that I do have to get this done so I’m able to focus a little bit more. Or I know that I can break it up. I don’t have to sit there and read for a whole hour, I can spend 15 minutes, take a break, come back and read another 15 minutes.

T&FN: Has shot putting helped you at all with that? Or vice versa?

Carter: Yes, it has. If I’m reading and the words are just not looking the same on the page, I know that I can make adjustments to finish my project. I do think about those hard practices when I’m tired and I really don’t want to do this. I know it’s best for me and I can make the decision to do it.

In elementary school I would go to tutoring 4 days a week for an hour with a specialist for reading, writing and math. That helped a lot because she was able to give me tips and tools. Also I had my mom and my dad being patient with me when I didn’t want to do it and was sitting at the table till midnight being stubborn. They were able to be there with me and stay on it; they wouldn’t let me slide.

They’d say, “OK, Michelle, you’re different, it may take a bit longer. You can do it but you have to make the decision to focus on it and get it done.”

They kind of put the responsibility on me by letting me know I had what it takes to get it done.

I never took medications for my ADHD and dyslexia. I just really had to push myself and put myself in great situations to help me be the best that I could be.

As an athlete at Texas, your freshman year you have to be in study hall. I stayed in study hall all the way until I graduated because I knew that I needed that time to sit down in a quiet room with my tutor or whomever I needed to help me, or just have that quiet time working by myself. Because once you get to your room, your friends come by, the TV’s there, you can get distracted.

I knew that about myself so I always set myself up with situations to help me and not hurt me.
For years I was very consistent in my numbers, and I just feel that once you reach a consistent point it’s a matter of time before you can make a jump. Then you have to dig down just a little bit deeper and figure out what else can you do to take it to the next level. That’s what’s the biggest thing for me that was a really hard transition was just learning how to reverse in the shot put. That took some time and some effort and some years of trying to put it together.

T&FN: If I remember incorrectly, when you first took up throwing you had no idea your dad was an Olympic silver medalist?

Carter: No, I had no idea because I grew up with my dad playing football. That’s what I knew; I was born the year after his track career. So when I came to him with it, he knew that I didn’t know and said that he never wanted to force anything that he’s done or accomplished in his life on us.

But if we chose to do it, then he wanted to be sure that it was our choice and our choice alone.

He questioned me up and down to make sure that no one was trying to tell me what to do because they knew what he did.

T&FN: With a gold medal yours, have your circumstances changed outside of training?

Carter: I actually just bought a house. I was living with my parents all through until last year. Then I finally was able to get my own house. But my dad is my coach so I still see him pretty much every day.

I’m pretty much throwing 5–6 days a week so he’s always there; I can’t get rid of him.

T&FN: What’s the athletic plan for this year?

Carter: Of course I want to be better than I was last year.

I’m just working on my technique, trying to get stronger, faster. I’m trying to lose a little bit of weight this year, see how my body reacts, and just get in better condition.

Those last three years I’ve had injuries that kept me from being in shape like I would like to be.

T&FN: You’re not injured now.

Does that mean you can do more in training?

Carter: Now I’m just easing back into the dynamic workouts, jumping over hurdles, medicine balls, box jumps and things of that nature that I couldn’t do the last 3 years. Sprinting; I’m actually pretty fast and I miss it, so I’m glad that I’m able to get back into that.

T&FN: Maybe you’ll run on the U.S. 4x4.

Carter: The sprinters always joke that if nobody else can run the 4x1 they’ll put me on.