

# PATTISUE PLUMER

by Sieg Lindstrom

*PattiSue Plumer has kept herself more than a little busy the past year or so. In June of 1989 she graduated from Stanford Law School and won her first TAC title in a tight 3000 battle with Sabrina Dornhoefer. She then spent her summer earning a No. 4 World Ranking and finishing 3rd at the World Cup.*

*Through the fall she worked full time while studying for the bar, and she finished the year by marrying fellow lawyer Steve Levere.*

*Hectic 1990 has not seen her slow down, still training under her Stanford coach, Brooks Johnson. She doubled at both TAC meets, taking two 2nds at the Indoor and winning the Outdoor 5000 after a close 1500 loss about an hour earlier to Suzy Favor.*

*Now a full-fledged attorney in labor law, she has used a summer leave to put up a first-half European season with only one loss at 3000. Her Goodwill win at 3K followed by less than a week the death of her grandfather and her moment on the medal stand saw tears well in her eyes.*

*Plumer, 28, found time to answer a few questions as she packed to move from her Mountain View, California, townhouse—located literally just down the street from T&FN's offices.*

*As she packed, she and Steve hoped to hear that their offer on a house would be accepted. If it wasn't, she was prepared for a stint of apartment living. But first, she knew that in less than 48 hours she would fly back to Europe for another stint of moving from city to city, from hotel to hotel.*

**T&FN:** You mentioned when we spoke to you a year ago that you were having to adjust as you went "from being a darkhorse to being the one everyone else based their strategy on." Have you changed your approach to racing at all this season?

**Plumer:** I went out in almost every race I ran last year. Very rarely did I not go to the lead, especially early in the season. I was very frustrated when people would not come with me or people would run off my shoulder continuously, knowing that I would go to the front.

But I made a decision last summer that I wanted to run some solid times and I wanted to race from the front, that I was in shape to try to get some PRs and that's what I would do. This summer, though, I really did not want to have a lot of pressure on me. I looked at this as being my off year between now and '92.

**T&FN:** You've run some solid times, though; you ran a 2:00.3 PR at an all-comers meet the week before Goodwill.

**Plumer:** Yeah, but that's not really fitness either; it's not like running 5000m. I'm not saying I'm out of shape. I'm not out of shape, but I haven't done the extra things that I have done in the past: my mileage is down from last year; I'm not doing morning runs; I haven't had time to do as much weight-training.

Because of the problems that I've had with asthma this year I haven't been able to do the distance on the track either.

**T&FN:** How are you mixing the demands of practicing law and running?

**Plumer:** Fortunately I have a leave of absence from work for the summer. Before that I was working basically full-time; certainly full-time from a 40-hour-week perspective, not necessarily full-time from a lawyer's perspective

**T&FN:** Has it been harder to leave the office for your track workouts since you passed the bar?

**Plumer:** Now it approaches 3:00 and I start to feel guilty almost. It's like, "Omi-god, I'm not going to get all the stuff done that I need done," and the pressure's much higher than it used to be.

**T&FN:** How is that going to affect your athletic future?

**Plumer:** Hopefully it's like anything else. When I first started working, it was very, very difficult for me to do both. Then I got used to the job and it became a matter of balancing time and not



Bob Thomas/Rediff

balancing stress, and now it's just going through yet another stage in my development as an attorney.

**T&FN:** *Has your busy life outside of track affected you in other ways?*

**Plumer:** One thing is that when I go to Europe in the summer, for me it's just this great release. In a sense it's very intense, and it's certainly not a vacation, but it's a joy, it's a pleasure. And with a lot of people it's the most intense period of their careers; that European circuit is so intense.

And it is, but compared to training, and working, and competing at home and trying to balance all the other things that go on when I'm at home—I can read *People* magazine, I can read the paper everyday, I can do all these things that I normally don't have the chance to do.

**T&FN:** *One gets the sense looking at your schedule that you like competing.*

**Plumer:** I hate it three or four minutes before the race, but I really enjoy racing.

**T&FN:** *When you do have a chance, what do you do for fun?*

**Plumer:** I'll tell you the honest-to-god truth. This is so boring. My favorite way to spend time, because it's so rare—in April I had two weekends home in a row for the first time since October of '88—I'm into having takeout sushi on Friday night and renting a couple of good videos. Just have no interruptions, and just me and Steve, and it's just great.

**T&FN:** *You've said there's a "more even playing field" now than in the past, in women's middle distance running. Would you care to comment further on that?*

**Plumer:** I don't know. I would never say publicly or privately that there are people who were using drugs and aren't anymore. I don't know. No one knows and it's bad to spread rumors.

All I know is that the times that it took to win races are slower. But I think that has a lot to do with the way people are racing now. There's more money to be made, and people aren't just going to go out and run from start to finish in the front and take a chance.

You know what I'm saying? There's more on the line now. And also you run more races now. It used to be there were one or two 3000s a year, and now there are 3000s, if not in most meets, in a good percentage of the meets.

But whether or not you believe or disbelieve that there's a lot of drug use in the sport, I made a personal decision not to use drugs. That's not negotiable in my

book, and I live with that. There's nothing I can do about what other people do.

**T&FN:** *In years past was Mary Slaney's dominance of U.S. women's middle distance running a psychological obstacle for you?*

**Plumer:** Actually not. Certainly it was a block earlier in my career. The thing about Brooks that makes him such

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## "Your mental progression is as important—more important—than your physical progression."

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a great coach is he just forces you to break down mental barriers. I think that's the biggest challenge that all athletes face, those self-imposed barriers. Whether it's a person (i.e. Mary Slaney), or whether it's time—2:00 for the 800, or 8:25 or whatever.

**T&FN:** *Brooks has a reputation as a demanding coach. Has your relationship with him always been what it is now?*

**Plumer:** No. He's a very demanding coach, but he's demanding mentally more than physically. We don't train that hard. I think that's why I don't get injured that often and I still have a pretty fresh attitude.

In a sense our relationship really has changed over the years. It was a team concept when I was in college. And Brooks's attitude toward collegiate athletes, which really offends a lot of people, is that all we do is just running in circles, and it doesn't matter what you learn; it matters how you apply the things you learn on the track to your off-the-track life. He looks at it as part of the educational process.

**T&FN:** *It has been 6 years since you graduated from Stanford, though.*

**Plumer:** When I graduated, the next transition was if I wanted to stay working with him and working with the team. I had to be a varsity athlete without the benefit of being a varsity athlete. In other words, even though I wasn't on the team anymore, I basically had to play by the team rules. If I couldn't handle that then that was fine. I could go my own merry way.

His attitude now is different. His attitude is, "The education is over; now we want to produce a medal."

**T&FN:** *Did you always think you could*

*compete with the best in the world?*

**Plumer:** No, not always. Like I said, with Brooks your mental progression is as important—more important—than your physical progression. He's been telling it to me forever; I just haven't always believed him.

**T&FN:** *Yet you had no trouble believing you had broken the 5000 AR last year?*

**Plumer:** I knew by my training and by my racing that I was perfectly capable of running that fast, if not faster. I wasn't surprised at all. In fact I thought it was a pretty bad race I ran. I knew I'd run at least that well. I put it on paper, I knew it.

That's usually the way it is. Usually by the time you do something, it's not even that big of a deal in your own head.

**T&FN:** *It has been nice for U.S. fans to see you and Lynn Jennings both running so well in Europe.*

**Plumer:** Yeah, I feel the way about Lynn that I feel about a teammate, in a sense. I want to win, but if I don't win, I want Lynn to win. I think it's better that two Americans are on top regardless of who the names are.

**T&FN:** *The standard sportswriter question would be, "Is there a rivalry developing between you two?"*

**Plumer:** Gosh! If the press wants to make a rivalry out of it, fine. If it sells tickets, fine. If it gets us on television, terrific. We need more of that. Get Vicki [Huber] back in. Suzy [Favor] will be coming up relatively quickly, so it will be a great thing.

I think by '92 we'll have a lot of great rivalries, but I hope it's in a positive way and not a negative way. □

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PattiSue Plumer was born April 27, 1962 in Covina, California, and is 5-4/107. Graduated from Montrose (Co) High School in 1980 and Stanford in 1984. Competes for Nike International.

PRs: 800—2:00.3, '90; 1500—4:06.87, '89; Mile—4:29.21, '89; 2000—5:42.82 '89; 3000—8:41.45i, '90; 5000—15:00.00 '89.

Major Meets: 1500—2)TAC '90; 3000—11h)AIWA '81; 2) NCAA, 5)TAC '82; 2)NCAA, 8)TAC, 1)OF '83; 2)NCAA, 6)OT '84; 3)TAC, 2)OF '86; 3)OT, 13)OG '88; 1)TAC, 3) WCp '89. 5000—dnc)NCAA '83; 1)NCAA '84; 3)TAC '86; 1)TAC '90.

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

Year	Age	1500	3000	5000
'81	19	—	9:42.02	—
'82	20	—	8:55.98 (x, 6)	—
'83	21	4:18.7i	8:53.54i (x, 8)	15:49.7 (x, 7)
'84	22	4:11.36	8:54.91 (x, 6)	15:29.0 (10, 3)
'85	23	4:40.7yi	9:01.85i	—
'86	24	4:19.75	8:46.24 (x, 3)	15:20.88 (x, 5)
'87	25	injured—did not compete	—	—
'88	26	4:13.64	8:45.21 (x, 3)	15:32.6 (x, 10)
'89	27	4:06.87 (x, 3)	8:42.12 (4, 1)	15:00.00 (2, 1)
'90	28	4:10.72	8:41.45i	15:07.97