

T&FN Interview

BOB ROGGY

by David Gleason

It's quite a sight, when Bob Roggy lets go a big javelin toss. And not simply because he is 6-3 and 240 lbs. of power and coordination (and versatile enough to high jump 6-8 and run 100y in 10.2).

America's top javelinist is awesome because he shows the world, by his manner, expression and apparent ease of effort, that he knows that he is a world-class athlete who has yet to touch the limits of his ability.

With only 4 years of serious throwing under his belt, the New Jersey native who originally traveled to Carbondale, Illinois, to become a football player is just beginning to learn his craft. And before he's through, he intends to be the master.

Despite a back injury that kept him down for much of the season and out of the European hotbed of competition, last year Roggy dominated the U.S. javelin scene, bettered 280 on 6 throws, and ranked 6th internationally.

In his senior year at Southern Illinois Roggy won the NCAA title at Eugene, where he unloaded the longest throw in the U.S. for '78 (293-0) and gave notice that he was a serious newcomer with a lot of room for improvement.

Now competing for Athletics West, Roggy opened this season with a near-PR 289-10 at the Jenner Classic, indicating there will be much more to come from the easygoing 23-year-old:

T&FN: *Is it true that you hadn't touched a javelin at all before the Jenner meet?*

Roggy: Yeah, I know that Ed Tucker is going to be mad with me, because I went to an Olympic Camp last year, and we talked about drills I was supposed to be going through, but with the lack of facilities here, and the rain, I really hadn't the chance to get out and throw. So Jenner was the first time that I picked up a javelin.

T&FN: *You are still living in Carbondale?*

Roggy: I'm taking some graduate courses at Southern Illinois in kinesiology—the study of human motion.

There's a trainer here that I've been friends with, who's been helping me for about 2 years. I spend about an hour a day in the training room; I do an exercise called Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation—PNF [a flexibility exercise whereby the athlete's range of motion is

increased with the aid of another person]—and he's been helping me with that.

Last year it prevented a lot of injuries, and I know the arm got real strong and it became a little quicker, and my flexibility improved 100%. So I've stuck with it.

T&FN: *You had some injuries last year, especially a back injury.*

Roggy: Yes, that's still kind of nagging me right now, but I've been able to lift and compensate in my throwing by wearing a belt. I'm afraid that if I get on a hard surface and try to let loose, it might happen all over again, so I've been taking it kind of conservatively.

T&FN: *What kind of injury is it?*

Roggy: It's probably a strained ligament, and of course, constant abuse just kept it inflamed.

T&FN: *But you came back at the end of the season to throw 288-1 at Colorado*

Springs.

Roggy: That was kind of funny. I was rooming with Frank Perbeck, I was totally out of shape; we both figured our best throws would be about 240-0.

We didn't stretch, we didn't even prepare ourselves for that meet—just decided in the last 20 minutes or so to start to think about winning it.

T&FN: *It was just the altitude, right?*

Roggy: It could have been! [laughs] We didn't drink the night before, either. . .

T&FN: *What do you like about throwing the javelin?*

Roggy: I just enjoy the competition. I love to compete, and I love the initial going out on the field and everybody trying to psych each other out. It might sound weird.

I also love to throw. I love a nice, clean throw, when I reach out at a meet like at the Nationals last year. And I like the overall recognition, of course. Everyone likes to be heard of.

T&FN: *Are you going over to Europe this year?*

Roggy: Yes, we will probably be there about 2 months. We'll have a home base and just branch out from there. I think the javelin is a little more appreciated there, so the javelin throwers will stick mainly to Finland.

It should be quite an experience. I've never been over there; I was going to go last year, but the injury held me back.

T&FN: *You weren't with Athletics West then.*

Roggy: No, I was kinda jumping from club to club.

T&FN: *Are you happy with Athletics West?*

Roggy: Oh, yes, I'm very happy with Athletics West. I think it's the best deal of all the clubs.

T&FN: *Ever thought of doing something like going into broadcasting or movies? You're a pretty clean-cut looking guy.*

Roggy: [laughs] Actually, it's funny, 'cause when I was in the airport coming back from Mt. SAC, some guy came up to



Dave Stock

me, and he goes, "Hey, you've really got superb eyes. I'd like to photograph you for Rawlings," or something like that, and I thought, "There goes my amateur status! Goodbye to track and field."

T&FN: Aw, you could still do that and stay an amateur.

Roggy: Yeah, I guess I could. I've never really thought about it. I've heard of, like, Mike Tully trying to get into commercials and stuff, but I've never really considered it for myself.

T&FN: What else does Bob Roggy do besides throw the javelin?

Roggy: You mean like other hobbies? Well, I just recently bought a dog. He's kind of a trip. I've been going to school, I play racquetball with my girl friend, stuff like that, just stuff to keep myself from going crazy.

T&FN: Why would you go crazy?

Roggy: Well, you know, working on track all the time. I used to do high jump and other things just to keep my mind off javelin.

Now that I'm not doing that as much, since I don't have to—the coach isn't pressuring me—I do other things like swimming, horseback riding, that kind of stuff. Swimming takes the pressure off the back—you're just floating—so I do that maybe an hour a day.

I don't actually like to practice javelin between the meets. That sounds weird to a lot of throwers, and even some coaches would say, "Wow, if you expect to get anywhere, you should at least work with your technique."

But I just like to lift and work on my flexibility. My technique I like to work on at the smaller meets. I like to take them as practice sessions and I work at it there.

I did it in the past, and I don't think I should change now. I did it in the past because of injuries—the elbow—and I didn't want to aggravate it.

I don't know if it's a bad habit. I don't think so, but I feel I'm strong enough to compensate for my technique flaws right now.

T&FN: What are your goals for this year?

Roggy: I'd like to go for the World, well, for the American Record first, and then the World Record. That will probably come after, of course. I definitely have the World Record in mind by next year.

It could possibly come this year. I felt terrible throwing that 289-10; I didn't feel I put anything into it, and my technique was very much off as compared with last year.

I think that if my strength remains the same and I get my technique—which I think will come in Europe—it could come this year. But I definitely want to shoot for 300-0 this year.

T&FN: Are you pretty serious about the Olympics?

Roggy: Yes, I'm very serious. I think I can make the team, especially if the injuries just, well, if they hang loose. It's going to

Bible of the Sport

be fun.

This year I'm psyched for the World Cup; you know, I like to cross each bridge as I get to it.

T&FN: Some javelinists, such as World Record holder Miklos Nemeth, reach a plateau in their early 20s and don't improve until several years later, if at all.

Roggy: I don't know; I've never spoken to Nemeth or the other East European throwers. Nemeth, I don't know if it's the end for him; he's kind of erratic in the way he throws.

He's kind of a hit-or-miss technician; by that I mean that he is small and very, very quick, and he is either on or off.

Whereas somebody like Lusic or myself, who has a lot of power and strength, could go out there and throw 270-0 pretty consistently, and usually get up in the 280s or 290s, possibly 300 feet.

But I think with Nemeth, there could be a lot of mental blockage that could come out of nowhere. You have problems lifting or just a little technique flaw, and it could really work in his mind, and it could screw him up for a while.

T&FN: You don't feel you have that kind of problem?

Roggy: No, my technique was terrible last week and it still went out 279-280. And if I had thrown into a wind instead of with it, it would have gone a lot farther.

T&FN: Ever considered trying the decathlon?

Roggy: I've thought about it, maybe after '80. Everything's there, it's just a matter of programming myself to do it.

It takes an awful lot out of you; I just watched Craig Brigham and Roger George train when I was in Eugene, and it's an awful lot of conditioning. I'm not ready for that right now. I'd just like to go with the javelin 100%.

T&FN: Do you have plans for what you'll do when you finish track?

Roggy: Well, as soon as I get my master's, I could probably coach, if I wanted. But I don't know if I want to. I've coached a little at the high school level, just to get my degree, but I didn't enjoy it as much as I thought I would. There were a lot of little problems I didn't enjoy, like students against students.

I'd rather just train on my own for a long time, and not have to worry about that kind of stuff.

T&FN: So what are you going to do after you win the Olympics?

Roggy: [laughs] Go for the next one! Yeah, I'll just keep going until I get mentally drained, or whatever.

I've thought of football. It would be silly with the injuries involved, but I've always wanted to do it; football was my favorite sport in high school. I think I could make a team, or at least get a tryout with a pro team, but right now, I'm pretty gung-ho on track. I'd like to stick with that. I think I'll be in this for a long time. □



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