

US Athlete of the Year BRIAN OLDFIELD

Interviewed by Tom Jordan

For a man who answers his phone, "Spartacus speaking," Brian Oldfield can act far from gladiatorial. To be sure, the popular image of Oldfield the Wildman, partial to carousing and craziness, does have large elements of truth in it. It is no coincidence that the only name roommate and world discus recordholder John Powell seems to have for Brian is "Hey, flake."

But there is another side to Oldfield. As the T&FN US Athlete of the Year sat relaxed and somewhat subdued in his comfortable Cupertino, Calif. apartment, he only occasionally proffered the outrageous statements which are a part of the self-perpetuated legend. Not to say that the new claimant to the longest indoor and 3 longest outdoor shot throws of all time doesn't always speak with gusto and at length about his event and himself:

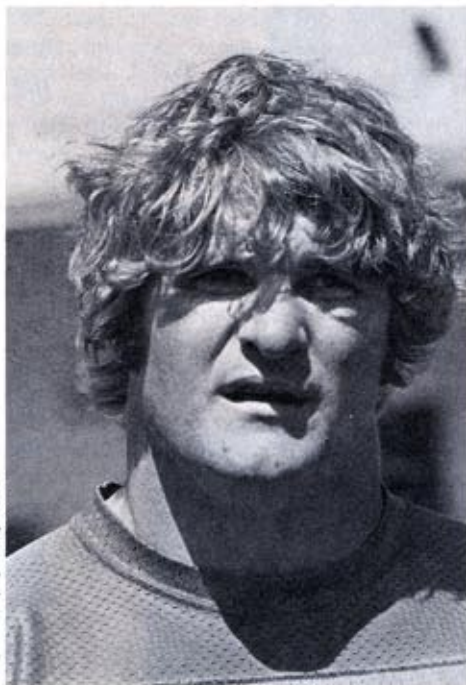
T&FN: Can we assume that the 75-footer was the highlight of your season?

Oldfield: The 75-footer was a high point because of everything that happened: It brought attention and credibility to me. But it was something which should have happened a long time ago. I started out in December with a fractured wrist. Then I did a couple of clinics which made me very tired, and I went down to Long Beach and popped my oblique [muscle] from the insertion of the 12th rib. Then two days before the LA meet, they told me Feuerbach was going to be there.

I really created a monster in that meet. I warmed up for a half-hour before the meet, taking throw after throw out over 75-0, and I couldn't keep it together. I just kept getting weaker and weaker. So then about two weeks later was the San Francisco meet and that monster I had created in LA was let loose on my 5th throw [72-6½, longest indoors or out at that time].

Outdoors at El Paso, I knew I had it together. I knew I was going to break the record because I threw 69-5 at Durham screwing up badly. So on my first throw, I threw 71-9 and I decided to see if I could break my indoor record. So the 73-1 came and that was nice, and my last throw came up and I was satisfied. I actually intended just to take an 80-foot foul or whatever, just go crazy on one. And when the throw was done, I looked down and the toeboard was in front of me and I was still in the circle, and I said, "Wow, maybe I broke the 73-foot record." Then they measured it and I went berserk, and said, "Get a steel tape." They had old nylon ones which kind of stretch a taste. I wasn't going to let them round that back—I needed it bad. It's so much easier to say 75-0 than 74-11 and three-qwatters!

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Chip Gane/Sportsphotos

T&FN: How did you view 75-feet before the season?

Oldfield: My goal was 23 meters (75-5½). I had a bet with Ricky Bruch for \$10,000 that I would get that. Actually, he was just going to give me \$10,000 if I did it. He told John [Powell] after I threw 75-0, "You sure it was dollars; I thought it was crowwwns."

T&FN: Does anyone else throwing today have the potential to reach 75-0?

Oldfield: The potential is always there. Like I got 70-feet just on dumb luck—hobnob around, just a big kid and stuff. I knew I could do more and I think other people are going to realize that it's not like 71-feet is an ultimate thing anymore.

T&FN: You don't think the steroid detection test is going to cause a decline in performances?

Oldfield: I'm throwing over 70 right now without steroids. The 'roids seem to give you that psychological crutch, and I experience cramps and stuff with them. I don't think they're that great. People who are using the 'roids—it's to come up to a high level, but once you're up there, you don't need them anymore.

T&FN: What do you think explains the poor performances among the amateurs this season?

Oldfield: I think it's the lull before the storm. People are looking at the Olympics and playing little psych games

with each other, not going for records.

T&FN: Do you regret not being a part of the Olympic scene anymore?

Oldfield: Well I have regretted it. And as an amateur, I could probably be making more money right now, and I wouldn't have people running around saying "It doesn't count!" It would be nice to go to the Olympics and throw the shot and discus. To win the shot, it would sort of be like being a bully, as far as I'm concerned. But the discus is starting to excite me now. I'd like to break that record, too. After Powell came back from Europe, we threw and I beat him 5 different times. I was throwing about 220 without a wind.

T&FN: Rumor has it that you and Al [Feuerbach] have some workouts together.

Oldfield: On Saturday, I'll go down and throw. Everybody goes down and throws, not just Al and I. Al's a natural resource in the area. Pete [Shmock] told me not to talk too much about Al today, not get him excited, just let him get mellow. Al and I were throwing there for awhile with a light shot, just to stay in shape, and I guess we were about 3 and 3 for competition. Then he didn't want to compete anymore: The last 3 were mine; the first 3 were his.

T&FN: Who are your picks to make the US team?

Oldfield: Al, and George [Woods], and then it's a toss-up. Believe it or not, it's going to be uglier than last time. I tend to lean toward Jesse Stuart, but there's Albritton, and Pete's taking time off to get in shape for it—he could throw 65-feet right now if he had to.

T&FN: Did you have any trouble getting up for the pro meets after a while?

Oldfield: I think I've got all the competition I want. In 1973, the average 2nd place shot put was 67-5½; it was about the same in '74, and it came down a little bit this year. I'm getting ample competition.

Redundancy crept in once in awhile, but again, it was the PR stuff. I would like not to have to do that. I would really like to just come back between meets and train. My goal is to do everything perfect for one season. I know that my base throw could be 75-0.

T&FN: Is ITA going to make it?

Oldfield: Some way or another, they don't want it to look too rosy. Mike [O'Hara] obviously knows the business better than I do, but they make it out so gloomy a lot of the time.

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T&FN: What will you do if ITA folds?

Oldfield: I could make a lot of money in wrestling. I could probably just go into the "Oldfield Clinic" business and teach what I know, sell my film loops. . .

T&FN: Is the discus-style the style of the future?

Oldfield: I don't know. I was at a clinic recently and saw a film of O'Brien doing the O'Brien, and he had the worst O'Brien technique I'd ever seen. He was soooo bad. My theory is that O'Brien started lifting more and getting strong and at the same time started using this new style and his success stopped the experiments the Russians and [Tom] Tellez and people like that were doing with the discus-style. I'm just glad that O'Brien got big and strong and threw like he did, because it left the discus-style all those years for me to come along and get all the fame and glory [laughs].

T&FN: What about the Superstars? Are you in that again this year?

Oldfield: The finals are coming up. These are my workout sheets right here. I'm doing a lot of cardiovascular work. I figure that if I can take an event that I haven't scored in, like swimming, and win it, I can win the Superstars. Because they are al-

lowing me to weightlift this year. I want to get down to about 245, then gain about 5 pounds before the competition, and then jump in the water and just wait for the alligators. You know how alligators lie in the water and just wait for you to make a mistake? Well, I'm going to just lie there and wait for them to make the mistakes. I'm going down there for blood. I want to go away from there with \$50,000. I need it.

T&FN: What was it like being on *The Johnny Carson Show* with Don Rickles as host?

Oldfield (whistles): You know, you really expect a lot out of a thing like that. And you don't want to seem too much of a lummoX, and you don't consider yourself a stereotype, but with Rickles, you have to be a stereotype. I never did like the man; I *Bible of the Sport*.

never thought he was funny. Sort of obvious humor, you know what I mean.

I enjoyed doing the David Frost Show more. It was a little more spontaneous, although he asked all the same questions: "How do you get along with the girls?" and so on. I said, "You're asking me? You've been my idol. I've seen you in all these magazines. You should be telling me about the chicks." I had taken three straight



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double-gin martinis before that one—I was loose. I almost got loose for this interview today, but decided, "Why ruin a workout?"

T&FN: Have you made any New Year's resolutions for 1976?

Oldfield: I gave up sweets. No more sugar. See, this is sugar weight [pinching almost non-existent rolls of fat], it's marshmallow weight. It gets you down. When I was a kid, my mother always used to give me candy because I was always high, jumping all around. "Here, take this," and bring me right down. Now I want to get high. Watch out world! I have a new ultimate goal: I want to throw so far that they're going to replace the discus statue with a shot putter.

T&FN: Do you know anyone else who can match your personality?

Oldfield: I'm probably the most eccentric person I know. I always piss people off. But I may be getting more mature. Like Carlos Castaneda says, "If you're 30 and act 20, you've wasted 10 years." So I think I'll act 25 from now on.

T&FN: There's a story about you that says you once tried to throw Steve Smith out a 5th-story window at Munich.

Oldfield: I still try to throw him out of places. He just aggravates me to no end. He just purposefully tries to aggravate me. Pole vaulters are exhibitionists. They like to live close to death, and he figures the closer to death that he lives the better. He likes to hang-glide, skateboard, and all the crazy things he can do to perpetuate his Peter Pan complex. Because he's got old-man injuries in his knees and stuff, and he doesn't know if he can hang around until his 30s or not. But he's a good athlete, a good head, and a good friend.

T&FN: So you weren't serious about throwing him out of the window?

Oldfield: Yeah, I was serious. [Powell enters the room].

T&FN: What's it like to live with another world recordholder?

Powell: Hey, I'm the only recognized recordholder in this room.

T&FN: Well, how does it feel to live with another world's best performer?

Oldfield [laughs]: It's... great.

T&FN: Other than great, how is it?

Oldfield: You want me to get more "verbal"? I would say that some athletes are very athletic and have good strong personalities. John's got a good strong personality... [laughs].

T&FN: Does it bother you that, as he says, your record won't be "recognized"?

Oldfield: I recognize him and he recognizes me.

Actually, I think we're being recognized—maybe not patronized—but I think we get more controversy this way. As long as you're on top, I don't think it makes much difference. If it was any more exciting being an amateur than it is being a pro, I don't think I could handle it. □