

T&FN INTERVIEW

Christian Cantwell

by Jon
Hendershott



Christian Cantwell may have won “only” an Olympic silver in Beijing, but since then, the towering Missouri native has pretty much owned the shot.

With his World Indoor victory in Doha, the 29-year-old giant became the first putter to win three such titles, as well as being the reigning world champion both indoors and out.

But the frank Missouri alum isn't resting on any laurels. He continues to train in Columbia, Missouri, where he is a volunteer assistant at his alma mater and where he lives with wife Teri—an '00 shot Olympian as Teri Steer—and their 22-month-old son Jackson:

T&FN: Where are you now in your training? Chilling out after winning the World Indoor?"

Cantwell: I never really just chill out. I don't take off much time. I stay in touch. I used to do that, take time off. But I think it screwed me up.

I would take off a month or so and then when I came back, it was like starting over. I would throw like 58, 59, 60 feet. It was like learning the event all over again. It took me a couple of months to learn things again and that was stupid. So I decided just to not do

that anymore.

T&FN: Is it the old “learning by experience” thing? You find out what works for you and then stick with it.

Cantwell: Sometimes it's hard. You come

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home in like October after a long season: it's a little weird to go right back out and start throwing again. But I found that after even just a day or two, I fall back into the same routine. It's just getting through that first day.

It's like the first day back in the gym after

some time off. You've got to get the first day over and then everything else just kind of falls into place.

Something else I found is that when you come back after some time off, you have these weird aches and pains. All of a sudden, your shoulder hurts a little, or your hand aches and takes a few days before they don't hurt.

But whenever you don't take the time off, you don't have those aches and pains. I don't know what the word would be, but you stay kind of tight almost. You don't need that break-in period.

T&FN: This year, the Indoor was the only major championship for Americans. So was it important for you in that regard and to defend your title?

Cantwell: I definitely was focused on it. I wanted to do well there and obviously you had to make the team first at USAs. So it played out pretty well: I had a great indoor season, so I can't complain at all.

I didn't think I was going to have an indoor season at all. I had an appendectomy at the beginning of December, so I had five weeks where I didn't do anything. Two weeks was just recovering in bed. It was a really depressing time for me because I really thought I wasn't

going to be able to do anything, given the amount I *wasn't* able to do in those five weeks.

T&FN: *So when did you get back to full training?*

Cantwell: About the beginning of January I'd say I was back to normal. There was a week where there still was some residual pain. I trained but it still hurt. Then all of a sudden, it went away and things were fine.

T&FN: *And you went undefeated, a nice way to kick off this year to follow up '09.*

Cantwell: Well, there's really only one goal I've had recently. I'm getting close to beating John Godina's mark of 21-meter [68-10 $\frac{3}{4}$] throws. He did it at 85 meets and I think I'm at either 82 or 83.

I remember when I first saw that stat of how many times John did 21, it was a few years ago. I was around 40 or so. I thought that was just a crazy mark, just outrageous. Then I got into the 50s and 60s.

It was something me and Reese Hoffa had talked about a lot because he had been where I was. We talked about who would be the first to beat Godina and I never thought I could actually be the one.

But now it looks like it's going to happen fairly soon. So that's one goal of mine, because I think that says a lot.

T&FN: *It points to longevity and quality, which both are important to any serious athlete. We crunched some numbers [see p. 20] and found that in the new millennium, you have 18 throws over 72 feet, or 21.95.*

To get the Godina mark, or keep increasing your leading stats, do you think you have to scale back on the number of meets you have every year, or number of throws you take, or how hard you throw? Or do you just go out every time and throw it as hard as you can?

Cantwell: For a long time I did that, but now I keep a perspective on things. Before, I would kill myself if I didn't throw very far in practice. But now I look at it that I like to throw far in practice, but it isn't a necessity anymore. If I have a bad day now, I don't dwell on it as much as I used to. And I do have bad days.

I've just always been competitive, but I don't know how I do it anymore. It's kind of strange. I mean, I like throwing but I think it's I'm just so competitive. Like there were years where Hoffa threw 21 meters in every meet. And there was Adam and when I first came in there was Godina. Now there's Dan Taylor.

So there always are people who are

throwing far and if you don't come to the table with something good, you're going to get your ass handed to you. I've had years where that's happened and I guess I just don't like the feeling too much.

T&FN: *The U.S. shot has always been ultra-tough and then you add in the best world guys. So that must be a great atmosphere, both for training and competition?*

Cantwell: It definitely is, but I think most of the atmosphere is set way before the competition starts. In the back of all our minds when we're out training is... you kind of think, "I wonder what he's going to do this weekend?"

So you're always thinking about it. In the end, you do compete against yourself but there has to be a winner and there has to be a loser. So you do think about those things and, yeah, it definitely motivates me.

Cantwell In A Nutshell

•**Personal:** Christian Daniel Cantwell was born September 30, 1980, in Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri; 6-4/340 (1.93/154)

•**Schools:** Eldon (Missouri) HS '99; Missouri '03; now represents Nike

•**PRs:** SP—73-11 $\frac{1}{2}$ (22.54) '04 (7, x W; 3, x A). DT—194-7 (59.32) '01. HT—187-7 (57.18) '01. Wt—72-3 $\frac{3}{4}$ i (22.04) '02

•**Coaches:** Rick McGuire, Brett Halter (college, professional)

•**Major Meets:** SP—7(NCI, 18) NC, nm-q)OT '00; 5)NC, nm)US '01; 2)USI, 3)NCI, 5)NC '02; 3)NCI, 2)NC, 5)US '03; 1)USI, 1)WIC, 4)OT '04; 4)USI, 1)US, 5)WC '05; 2)USI, nq)WIC, 3)US '06; 1)USI, 5)US '07; 1)USI, 1)WIC, 2)OT, 2)OG '08; 1)US, 1)WC '09; 1)USI, 1)WIC '10

•**World/U.S. Rankings:** x/4 '02; 7/3 '03; 1/1 '04; 6/4 '05; 2/2 '06; 3/3 '07; 2/1 '08; 1/1 '09

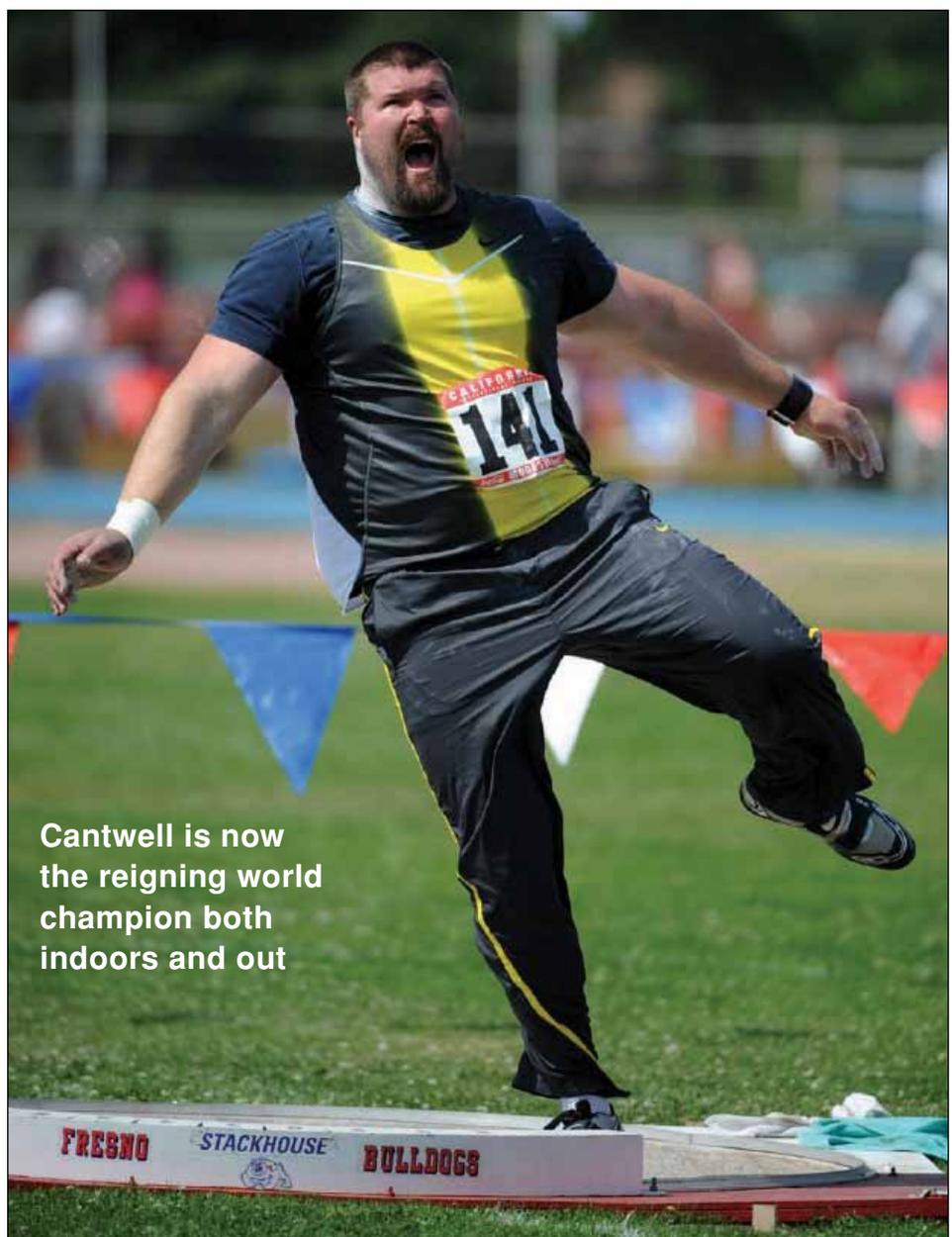
Even looking at the young guys, like Ryan Whiting and all those guys, you definitely have to set goals and you can use those guys as motivation. At least I do.

T&FN: *What are you looking forward to most outdoors this year? The Diamond League?*

Cantwell: Well, it's kind of a weird time because we don't have one big meet for outdoors. It's been four years since that's happened, that there isn't the stress of having to make a team. So to me it is a little strange right now.

I feel a sense of urgency to throw far, but it's good [not having to make any team]. And for me it will go another year since I'm already on the team for '11. So it feels good to not *have* to make a team. That's a big stress. That takes years off our lives.

T&FN: *Have you thought about the fact there will be four*



Cantwell is now the reigning world champion both indoors and out

KIRBY LEIMANE OF SPORT

U.S. putters in Daegu next year?

Cantwell: I think that's great. I prefer it that way. As a group we always say before we compete—and we did this in Berlin—that we hope we do well but let's make sure one of us wins. That's kind of our motto. We always want that extra person just in case one of the other guys has an off day.

T&FN: For the future, the big title meets remain a big motivator for you?

Cantwell: For sure. I feel that the next two years at least are really important to me because I can see the light at the end of the tunnel that I'm not going to be able to do this forever. I can legitimately say I *could* make it to the 2016 Games and be competitive.

Yet the reality is, I just don't know. The sport can be uncertain. Four or five years ago, when I was having knee surgeries and back problems, I wouldn't have thought I would make it to this point.

Now, I've got it a little bit figured out how to do things. I can definitely see myself going through the next two years and then take it from there.

But these next two years are really important. I'd love to do well next year and then obviously in the Olympics. I'd love to make it back to that setting; no matter what would happen, just to make the team would be pretty cool.

I'm pretty happy with how my career has gone so far, so I wouldn't complain if I didn't make that team. But I sure would like to and it's something I'm really going to try for.

T&FN: Do you think much about the World Record eventually? Or if it happens, it happens?

Cantwell: There have been times when I've been really close. The record always has been something I think about, but it doesn't consume me like it used to. Now I just think that I would like to throw a record.

To be honest, I'd like to throw a PR again. I'd like to start there because my PR goes all the way back to 2004.

I've been close: in '06, I had a minor foul that was measured at 22.96 [75-4] afterwards. So I'm getting really close—and that's kind of frustrating. But I would just like to start there with a PR.

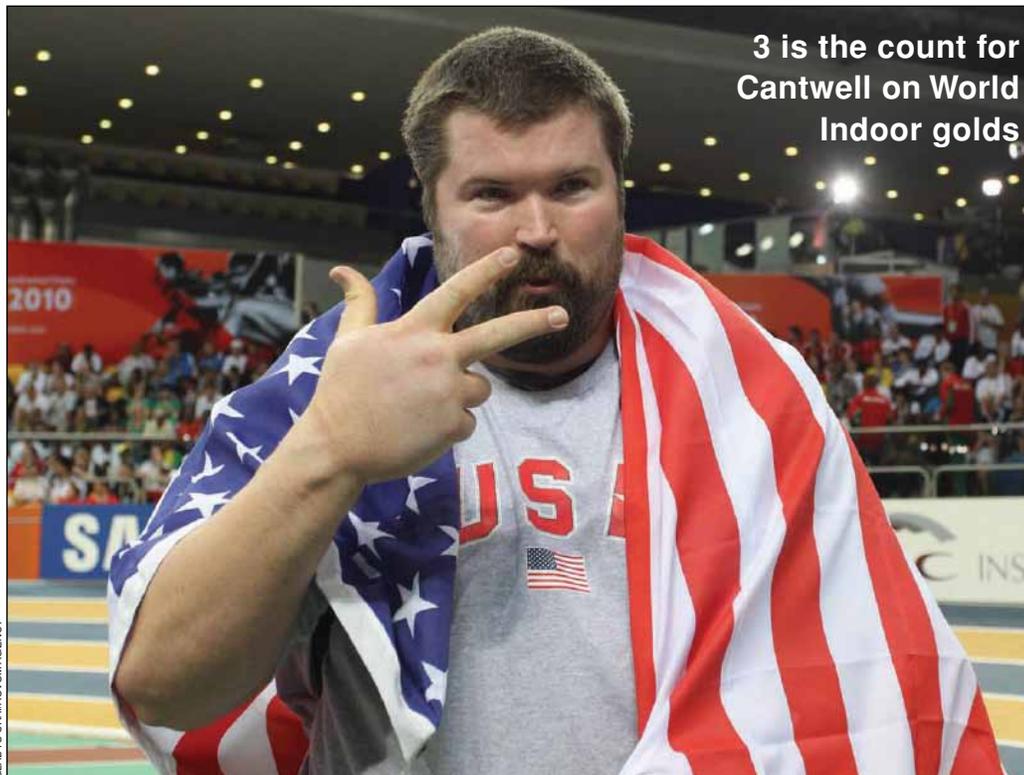
T&FN: On the technical side, all the top Americans are spinners. The Europeans who have scored upsets—Harju, Majewski,

Mikhnevich—they're all gliders. Is there a significant risk-to-reward ratio with the spin in that you might get long throws but run a greater risk of fouling?

Cantwell: I don't think for me, because I'm a guy who doesn't foul in practice. If you

for you since she knows the event, the sport, the ins and outs? Or does she stay away from that part of your life?

Cantwell: For the most part, when I come home we don't talk about that stuff. I try to keep that [laughs] in the middle part of town



3 is the count for Cantwell on World Indoor golds

GLADYS CHAVASTION AGENCY

Cantwell Tops The "Modern" List

Looking at shot putting since we changed centuries, Christian Cantwell is the man in charge. From the start of the '00 season through the end of March '10, the 72-foot (21.95) barrier has been breached 41 times by 8 different men; 73 (22.25) 9 times by 3 men (Cantwell, Adam Nelson & Reese Hoffa).

Cantwell tops the list at 73-11½, and owns 5 of the 73-footers and 18 of the 72-footers Nelson is next in each category, at 3 and 13. († = secondary mark in series)

The 9 "modern" 73-foot throws:

1. 73-11½..... 22.54..... Cantwell 6/05/04
2. 73-10¼..... 22.51..... Nelson 5/18/02
3. 73-9½..... 22.49..... Nelson!..... 5/18/02
4. 73-8..... 22.45..... Cantwell 6/11/06
5. 73-7¼..... 22.43..... Hoffa..... 8/03/07
6. 73-6..... 22.40i..... Nelson 2/15/08
7. 73-4..... 22.35..... Cantwell 5/22/04
8. 73-3¾..... 22.33..... Cantwell! 6/05/04
9. 73-0..... 22.25..... Cantwell 6/18/04

foul in practice, then that might be the case. But I don't know that I fouled 10 throws last year in training That's why it was weird for me to foul my second throw in Doha because I almost never foul.

For the most part, no, I don't worry about it. Now timing-wise, there's a little more risk,

I'd say, but not fouling. The timing can get a little off because I've gotten to where I can minimize that. Even when I'm off, it's still pretty good for the most part.

But it didn't happen overnight either; it took me a long time to get to this point. I guess I'm starting to believe the idea that throwers mature later. It's taken me to this point and now [laughs] I'm definitely not where I was when I was young.

I'm definitely much more confident than when I was younger. As time goes on, I guess you just figure things out.

T&FN Your wife Teri was a putter and an Olympian. Has it been positive

but when I come back home I leave it. But she's also there when I do want to talk. Or when I don't want to talk, she understands that too. She's been around and when there are times that things aren't going well, if I want to talk, she's fine with that.

I think one reason she's good about that is because she's a good coach. She will be a much better coach than she was an athlete. And she was a great athlete; she quit well before her time was up. She was right at getting very good, then she got her last back injury and that was it. But she's going to be a great coach.

T&FN: On the bad topic of drugs: Often when someone throws well, some people automatically assume, "Oh, he's got to be on drugs." How do you answer that?

Cantwell: It's not necessarily a bad topic; it's a topic that needs to be talked about. There are some people who compete who really have a hard time with it. But I have never once thought after I lost—and I couldn't be more telling you the truth—"Damn it, I lost because that guy was on drugs."

I guess I've never allowed it to enter my head. I don't want to give myself an excuse. To myself, I want to say that if someone else wins, they were better than me that day.

I never even think about it until someone else brings it up. I just don't care. I work hard, I do a lot of things right and even if someone uses drugs, he's going to have to throw a long ways to beat me. □