

T&FN INTERVIEW

Carl Lewis

by Mike Hurst, Sydney Daily Telegraph

Carl Lewis has done it all: Olympic golds, world titles, World Records, top athlete honors, No. 1 rankings. You name it; Lewis has achieved it in an international career now in its 15th season.

But the 32-year-old American is far from complacent—at least partly because of the past two years. In 1992, a virus-weakened Lewis didn't make the Olympic team at 100 or 200. Last season, a back injury suffered in a car accident hampered him all year.

Now Lewis is healthy, training well and looking ahead to good things in 1994.

Lewis reflected on his accomplishments in late January, just before a brief trip to Australia to visit 17-year-old Craig Sheppard, a big Lewis fan critically ill with heart disease.

Lewis made it clear his storied career is far from over:

T&FN: *Sergey Bubka has said he values World Records more than Olympic gold medals. He rates his setting of 34 WRs on a par with your eight golds. How do you rate records vs. medals?*

Lewis: I can't compare the situations between Sergey and myself. But I will say that, between being a World Record holder and an Olympic gold medalist, the thing that you're remembered for most is being Olympic champion. That's obvious.

But the difference to me is that to set a record, all you need are conditions and conditioning. To win Olympic gold medals, you need conditions, conditioning—and divine intervention [laughs].

I feel achieving Olympic gold is a higher standard because the chances are less. You have one chance every four years, as opposed to a World Record maybe every year. And in the vault, you can take it up a quarter-inch at a time. If I could take just 0.01 off the 100 mark, I might have 10 records.

I have achieved World Records, but nothing has given me the joy I felt in winning those Olympic gold medals.

T&FN: *Was one of your records the single most satisfying one to you?*

Lewis: My best record obviously was the Tokyo 100. That was an incredible experience for me. At the same time, when Mike Powell took his last jump in Barcelona, the feeling was much higher [to win his third consecutive Olympic long jump]. And when I crossed the line in that relay and did both [win the gold and set the WR], it was much higher again.

T&FN: *So what are your remaining goals? What is left for you to achieve?*

Lewis: I want the record in the long jump. And I want to run faster in the 100. I think I can take that record lower, down to 9.80. And when those two are clicking—even though I said I wouldn't run the 200 anymore [laughs]—I'll take a stab at the 200 record again.

But right now there's no question I'm in better shape than I was in 1993, than I was before the accident. I think this is going to be a big year for me. I'm very confident and I feel great about my training and the way things are going.

T&FN: *You hear athletes say that mental preparation is 95% of performance. How do you prepare mentally?*

Lewis: My coach, Tom Tellez, is a very back-to-basics type of coach. People think we have secret workouts, or that we have 50lb of film going on us.

We may have all those things, but what it really comes down to is that coach Tellez says there is only one way to do things: "This is the right way. That's what we focus on."

When I get to a meet, what gives me confidence is that I march into it knowing that coach Tellez says I'm ready. I have the best coach in the world, so if he says you're ready, you're ready. And you know basically from training when you are ready.

I go into a meet saying, "Let's eliminate all the variables. You know



you're ready. You've trained for it, prepared for it, set yourself up for it. Let's go do it."

T&FN: *When you run as fast as you do, what does it feel like? Is there a physical or a metaphorical sensation—a music or rhythm to mind and body?*

Lewis: It does feel rhythmic. Sprinting is all about establishing a rhythm and running in that rhythm. You're pushing and accelerating and it is a rhythm.

At the same time it's a total contradiction because, while sprinting is pure acceleration, it's also total relaxation. You should always feel like you're on the edge of control. That's how I am. Others may feel different; may feel stronger or run differently.

But I feel like I'm on the edge, running as fast as I possibly can yet also in complete control at all times. Right on the edge of running so fast that I lose control.

T&FN: *What do you need to do to generate that peak velocity, the speed that took you over 12mps from 70–80m during your WR 100?*

Lewis: The unique thing we do in training is sprint at very high quality. Low quantity, but very high quality. We sprint fast a lot during the week.

Yet we also balance it with 400s, 300s and 200s in order to get the strength work in. We acquire a tremendous amount of muscular endurance.

For example, we do a workout on Mondays, which Michael Marsh and I are doing at the moment because we're not racing indoors. In '92, we ran six 200s, with a minute's rest, in the 23-flat range.

Everybody says, "Oh, you all don't train hard." When I tell them that workout, most people say that's no big deal. But I say, "Okay, you try to do just four."

I think that's how we can achieve that velocity and then maintain it—we do a tremendous amount of muscular endurance stuff. Besides the muscular strength from lifting weights, we also have the strength that comes from letting the muscle get tired and then continuing to work it.

T&FN: *So it's really quarter-mile work.*

Lewis: Exactly. The past two years, besides that Monday session, we also do a 400/300/200 workout. We worked hard and now that we have that base, we'll back off, except for the repeat 200s.

I think that's what gives us the base. All of us have a strong finish because we do that hard endurance stuff. We're used to running fast while tired.

T&FN: *Are the 2000 Olympics too far away to even speculate on? Could you still be around?*

Lewis: Ooh, I would be 39 years old.

T&FN: *Hmm. Long jump?*

Lewis: You know, it's funny you say that because coach Tellez is convinced in his own mind—and he's never been wrong yet—that in the year 2000 I could still jump 28-feet.

T&FN: *After Bjorn Borg won five straight Wimbledon titles, even he became bored on the baseline and tried to revitalize his career by temporarily changing to a net-rushing game. Do you, too, ever get the feeling that you've done it all? Do you ever get*

bored with track?

Lewis: Oh yeah. It doesn't happen as much now as it did when I was younger. That's why I did all the events—and also why I did so many different things and experimented with other careers.

At the same time, it also reinforced the fact that I am very proud and happy that I have had the opportunity to be the athlete that I am. Like now, I get challenges.

Last year was a tough year for me because I had the back injury when at the same time I wasn't as focused as in '92. Then at the end of the year, I read things like, "Oh, he's too old. It's probably the beginning of the end."

But '93 was my best post-Olympic year ever—plus I had an injury. So I say no. Now I'm very excited. I'm back on top of things. I want to have a great year in 1994. So, yes, I get complacent like everybody. And I need a shock to get back at it because I'm human.

T&FN: *Stuttgart was the first of the four World Championships you've competed in without winning a gold medal. But if you hadn't relinquished your relay spot, you certainly would have won at least a relay gold.*

Lewis: Right. You know, at the beginning of the year coach Tellez had a long talk with us. He said 1993 would be a low-key year. We want to be ready for Atlanta because the Olympics are the most important thing. So we would cruise on through the season.

Well, a lot of the Europeans obviously were very focused on the Worlds because that's where they were. And they ran great. They caught us in a buzzsaw. They had a great season.

But you can't go year in and year out at the top. You have to have years where you back off. If anyone knows that, I do because I've been around so long.

I haven't really shown myself in the 100 since '91. At the same time, there's no doubt in my mind that I still have a lot left there.

T&FN: *What is the basis of your longevity?*

Lewis: I think it's two things. First is having a sound technical foundation—probably as sound as anybody because I feel I have the best coach in the world.

Then, on top of that, I

have averaged about 15 to an absolute maximum of 20 meets a year. That includes relay meets, indoor and outdoor meets. I've averaged under 20. But last year, Mike managed 25 long jumps. I just think you have to stretch it out.

But I'm not afraid to lose. A lot of people try to set races up. They don't want to race because they're not 100% or whatever. You're going to lose some races. All that matters is that you win the big ones.

T&FN: *Was that part of the story going into the Gateshead 100 last July? It was a very big promotion, with you and Linford Christie each standing to collect around \$150,000—or more than \$1500 per stride or \$15,000 per second.*

Lewis [laughs]: There was no way I was going to be ready to run that race. I mean let's be realistic. There I was, flying across the country, then across the world; arriving the night before. Then when I got there, it was raining and windy. It was a great day.

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LEWIS IN A NUTSHELL

Frederick Carlton Lewis was born July 1, 1961, in Birmingham, Alabama, and is 6-2/175. Graduated from Willingboro (NJ) High School in '79 and competed for Houston 1980-'81. Since then he has represented the Santa Monica TC. He has been coached since late 1979 by Tom Tellez.

PRs (all-time notations in parentheses): 100—9.86 WR '91; 200—19.75 (=3, =3 W; =2, =2 A) '83; 300—32.18 '84; 400—47.01 '93; LJ—29-1 1/4/8.87 (3, 3 W, A) '91.

Indoor PRs: 50—5.72 (=10, x A) '84; 55—6.02y (=2, =2 W, A); 60—6.60 '89; 200—20.75 '92; LJ—28-10 1/4/8.79 WR '84.

Major Meets: 100—4)OT, 1)US Jr, 1)PA Jr '80; 1)NC, 1)USA, 9)WCp (inj) '81; 1)USA '82; 1)USA, 1)WC '83; 1)OT, 1)OG '84; 4h)USA '85; 1)USA '86; 2)USA, 2)WC '87; 1)OT, 1)OG '88; 1)USA '90; 2)USA, 1)WC '91; 6)OT '92; 3)USA, 4)WC '93.

200—2)US Jr '79; 1)US Jr, 1)PA Jr '80; 1)USA '83; 1)OT, 1)OG '84; 4)USA '86; 1)USA '87; 2)OT, 2)OG '88; 4)OT '92; 2)USA, 3)WC '93.

LJ—4)US Jr '78; 2)USA, 2)PAG '79; 1)NC, 2)OT '80; 1)NC, 1)USA, 1)WCp '81; 1)USA, 1)OF '82; 1)USA, 1)WC '83; 1)OT, 1)OG '84; 1)USA '86; 1)USA, 1)PAG, 1)WC '87; 1)OT, 1)OG '88; 1)TAC, 2)WC '91; 2)OT, 1)OG '92.

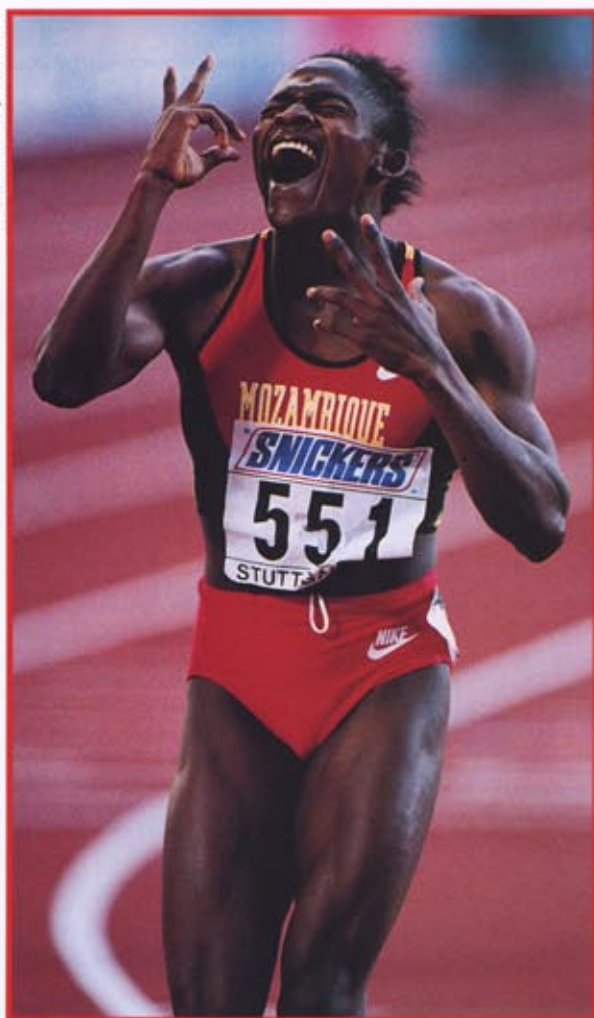
4 x 100—1)PAJ '80; 1)WC '83; 1)OG '84; 1)PAG, 1)WC '87; 1)WC '91; 1)OG '92.

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

| Yr | Age | Affiliation | 100 | 200 | Long Jump |
|-----|-------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| '74 | 12/13 | NJ JHS | — | — | 18-1/5.51 |
| '75 | 13/14 | " | — | — | 19-11/6.07 |
| '76 | 14/15 | NJ HS | 11.1y | — | 22-9/6.93 |
| '77 | 15/16 | " | 10.6y | — | 23-10/7.26 |
| '78 | 16/17 | " | 10.5 | — | 25-9/7.84 |
| '79 | 17/18 | " | 10.67 | 20.9 | 26-8 1/4/8.13 (5, 2) |
| '80 | 18/19 | Houston | 10.21 (7, 5) | 20.66 | 26-7 1/4/8.11 (6, 2) |
| '81 | 19/20 | " | 10.00 (1, 1) | 20.73 | 28-3 1/4/8.62 (1, 1) |
| '82 | 20/21 | SMTC | 10.00 (1, 1) | 20.27 (6, 5) | 28-8/8.76 (1, 1) |
| '83 | 21/22 | " | 9.97 (1, 1) | 19.75 (2, 2) | 28-10 1/4/8.79 (1, 1) |
| '84 | 22/23 | " | 9.99 (1, 1) | 19.80 (1, 1) | 28-10 1/4/8.79 (1, 1) |
| '85 | 23/24 | " | 9.98 (1, 1) | 20.69 | 28-3 1/4/8.62 (1, 1) |
| '86 | 24/25 | " | 10.06 (3, 1) | 20.41 (6, 5) | 27-5 1/4/8.37 (2, 1) |
| '87 | 25/26 | " | 9.93 (2, 1) | 19.92 (1, 1) | 28-8 1/4/8.75 (1, 1) |
| '88 | 26/27 | " | 9.92 (1, 1) | 19.79 (2, 2) | 28-9/8.76 (1, 1) |
| '89 | 27/28 | " | 10.05 (2, 1) | 20.47 | 28- 1/4/8.54 (1, 1) |
| '90 | 29/30 | " | 10.05 (2, 2) | — | 27-11/8.51 (2, 2) |
| '91 | 30/31 | " | 9.86 (2, 2) | 20.46 | 29-1 1/4/8.87 (2, 2) |
| '92 | 31/32 | " | 10.07 (3, 2) | 20.15 (7, 4) | 28-5 1/4/8.66 (1, 1) |
| '93 | 32/33 | " | 10.02 (6, 5) | 19.99 (3, 1) | — |

Next Month In T&FN

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LEWIS —cont. from p. 57:

I said I was probably the happiest guy there and I didn't win. Sometimes you have to establish your priorities.

T&FN: *Are athletes worth \$1500 a stride? How do you establish market value?*

Lewis: Of course we are. Absolutely. Market value is what people are willing to pay, period. That's why, when people approached me all year about racing Linford, I said no: "If you want it, you'll pay for it."

I've been around a long time and I've had similar situations with Leroy Burrell, Ben Johnson, Mike Powell and Larry Myricks years ago. I've had these duels with so many different people, I have more experience than anyone on how it works. You establish what you feel is your price and if someone wants it to happen, fine.

T&FN: *You're a celebrity, so well known now. How does it feel to be looked at every moment you're in public? Do you ever feel like you're living in a goldfish bowl?*

Lewis: Well yeah. It takes a long time to get used to it. And for me, a lot of people forget that at the 1984 Olympics I was 22. I mean, I'd already been No. 1 in the world three years in a row. I was Olympic champion and a World Record holder at the age of 22. I was still a baby. It was difficult for me then.

Of course as I've gotten older, I've matured and dealt with it more. It's a lot easier and I understand it more.

But at the same time, my life is different from my friends'. It's always been that way. Of course, I'd never trade it. I'll take this life. It's OK—but sometimes I am curious what it's like to be able to be yourself.

People started to know who I was when I was 19. So essentially my entire adult life had been snatched. I'm being watched, where I go, what I do; people recognizing me.

I don't think I've really been a solid adult or had an experience where I could just go somewhere knowing that no matter who saw me, it didn't matter. They didn't know me from Adam. As a result, you're a certain way all the time. You always look out for things.

I don't really know what I would have been like had I not been in this situation. I might have been a wild buck. I don't know and I think about that sometimes.

T&FN: *But you're happy being who you are?*

Lewis: Oh yes, very happy. I balance it. The trade-off is being able to obviously set myself up financially for the rest of my life. Plus have the opportunity to share that wealth with my family and friends.

Then, more than that, being able to achieve things. Also making my parents proud. That's something you can't trade in. I look at films of old meets, maybe the Olympics and stuff. To see the look on my parents' faces, or in my mother's eyes, you know. I don't mind that part of it. I think it's great I've been able to make my parents happy. □