

ATHLETE OF THE DECADE

CARL LEWIS

Carl Lewis is a busy man. He was on the run—literally and figuratively—throughout the '80s.

On the literal side, his competitive achievements stamped an indelible mark of excellence. A half-dozen Olympic golds, and five World titles, insure him a high place on the list of the very greatest athletes ever to honor the sport.

Off the track, Lewis always has spoken his mind, regardless of the subject. Money, drugs, how the sport is run (or isn't). He says what he thinks.

Lewis's life away from track—his latest record, or video, or even hairstyle—is constantly intermixed with Lewis the athlete. The public often seems determined to judge the non-track Lewis by athletic standards, and vice versa. It hasn't been easy for the New Jersey native to balance on that tight-rope.

Even when we caught him in Washington, D. C. in late October, the 28-year-old Lewis was into several things at once: work on his autobiography; meeting legislators on fighting drug use; planning a third overseas trip in a month; even arranging for music at a Halloween party he was hosting.

But Lewis had clear thoughts of the most notable aspects of the 1980s, the decade he dominated:

T&FN: Was there one single performance during the decade that was most memorable?

Lewis: I would say there were three. I can't pin it down to just one because each situation gave me great joy but also enabled me to learn and understand a lot about the sport.

The first was the '83 TAC 200 [missing the WR by 0.03 despite easing off]. In spite of the success I had enjoyed up to then, after that race was the first time I realized the magnitude of the talent I had.

I thought, "My God, what is in this body?!" It was a very positive feeling, but it also created a great sense of responsibility to do the best with that ability I possibly could.



Silver Ltd

T&FN: And the next?

Lewis: The second time—in terms of pure joy—was the '84 Olympic 100. That was a very joyful competition because I had been shooting for it for a long time.

The long jump and 200 were also happy, but the 100 was special because it was my first Olympic win. It was the most pressuresome because it got everything rolling to try for the four golds. I know that was the one time in my career when I was completely overwhelmed emotionally; totally overjoyed.

T&FN: And the final time?

Lewis: It was in Seoul after the 100, which may sound strange. I had set my goal, to run my best race and win. And I felt I did run my best race ever. But afterward, I had to search within myself and accept my performance, the outcome and all that went on.

T&FN: On the other side of the coin, was one effort most disappointing?

Lewis: It would have to be the

Seoul 100 again. I went through a full range of emotions. After extreme disappointment, I refocused my attention on my performance and felt that tremendous joy.

But that race still was my biggest disappointment because I felt I could have won. When it was over, my immediate reaction was, "He did it again!"

T&FN: Back to the positive, is there one overall aspect of the sport—as it grew in the '80s and as you developed in it—that was most pleasing?

Lewis: One positive side has been the financial aspect; the fact that many athletes can make a very good living in track. I feel that's one main reason U. S. track was strong in '88 and gets stronger every year: many older, more experienced athletes can keep competing.

T&FN: A most disappointing aspect to you must be drugs?

Lewis: Yes, and not just the aspect of usage by athletes. I'm also very disappointed by what appears to be the lack of a total commitment by everyone—athletes, coaches, administrators, or

ganizations, the media—to fight drugs. We need everybody working together 101% to stop drug use in track.

The vast majority of athletes in our sport are clean, but all the negative publicity about drugs has made people feel otherwise. The public listens to the unfounded charges of people like Charlie Francis and Darrell Robinson. So, that often puts innocent people on the defensive and the public develops a "guilty until proven innocent" attitude which only damages everyone.

T&FN: *What role in the sport would you like to play as the '90s begin?*

Lewis: In terms of the drug problem, I have long advocated setting up an independent agency to oversee testing. We also need followup rehab procedures for athletes. They need help to get off and stay off whatever they use.

And the sport also needs to go after the coach, or whoever provides and encourages use of drugs. Anyone who provides drugs should be eliminated from the sport.

T&FN: *It would be a very positive step for the sport.*

Lewis: I agree totally. See, I'm one who doesn't buy the malarkey that track always needs records to attract attention, sponsors and fans. It's *competition* that's most important. I feel track has to get away from the time-and-records thing.

If there's a record at a meet, great; the sport moves forward. But the main thing fans come to see is great competition. That's what generates excitement.

T&FN: *Changing stride, so to speak, has there been one athlete in your career you consider your toughest rival?*

Lewis: In the sprints, Ben Johnson certainly was—but we all know where he was coming from. Early in the '80s, Calvin Smith and Larry Myricks were tough opponents. We often traded wins.

But then something happened I feel really affected that: I've been with the same club for 10 years; but a lot of athletes have bounced around from club to club. Instability in that sense ended up hurting their consistency of performance.

Not to insult anybody, but what I tried to do more than focus on a particular athlete was concentrate on just running fast or jumping far; focus on my

Koch Top Woman Of '80s

Marita Koch had already set 8 World Records in the 200 and 400 as the '80s began. As the decade unfolded, she got only better:

1980—Won Olympic 400 (OR 48.88), anchored 2nd-place 4 x 400; ran on 4 x

Koch celebrates her 47.60 WR.



Panorama DDR

200 WR (still-standing 1:28.15). Ranked No. 1 in 400 for third year in a row.

1981—Injured much of the year but won Euro Cup 400. Lost World Cup (and No. 1) to rival Jarmila Kratochvilova.

1982—Capped a stellar year with two WRs at the Euros, crushing Kratochvilova in 48.16 and anchoring a 3:19.04 relay. Voted AOY for third time (with '78 & '79).

1983—Leg injuries held back 400 training so she sprinted a PR 100 (10.83), and sped to 3 WC titles (200, both relays).

1984—Boycotted out of Olympics, she anchored 3:15.92 WR, matched her 21.71 WR from '79 and regained No. 1 at 400 with undefeated year.

1985—Climaxed another undefeated season with a sensational World Cup: 1st 200 and 4 x 4, then a stunning 47.60 WR. She kept No. 1 at 200/400, again won AOY honors.

1986—Capped a brilliant career with third consecutive Euro 400/4 x 4 double. Compiled third straight undefeated 400 season as well as fifth No. 1 rating of the decade.

Indoors—Koch set 8 WRs from 50m through 220y, equalled another and won 3 European titles.

After her retirement, she was paid tribute by Kratochvilova's coach, Miroslav Kvac: "Marita Koch is the most remarkable woman sprinter of our time." //H/

own performances.

T&FN: *Is it fair to say you were establishing your physical abilities up through '83 and '84? After that, the physical part was honed almost to perfection so achieving success became a matter of staying sharp mentally?*

Lewis: That's a large part of it. I know that when I'm not focused—for whatever reason—is when mistakes happen. Also, many great athletes have taken extended time off. I've taken time off, but I've usually had many other things to do when I'm away from the sport.

And I put pressure on myself to perform. When I was younger, I could rely on my physical ability even if I focused mentally only at the last minute. But now, at age 28, I have to make a greater effort to tune in mentally. I have to be

more mentally focused to do the same things. And I must admit it's tougher now to get up mentally for most meets.

T&FN: *You have always been very individualistic in an area which demands conformity. Sport is conformist-oriented. But is there a facet of Carl Lewis you wish the public understood better?*

Lewis: One is that I will always fight for what I feel is right. Things I have done sometimes have been twisted and misinterpreted. But I will always say exactly what I think and fight for what I believe. People have said I'm selfish and always want my own way, but I just believe in standing up for my beliefs.

The '88 Olympic relay situation is a perfect example. The coaches said the

CARL LEWIS — *continued:*

top 6 at the Trials were the nucleus, and the best 4 from the European tour would make up the team. I just wanted them to *stick to their word*. I didn't want to get Joe DeLoach on the team or anybody else off it. My whole fight was just to have the coaches keep their word.

T&FN: *Has that stick-to-your-guns attitude almost overshadowed your pure physical achievements? Are you really underappreciated as an athlete?*

Lewis: That's probably true to a degree, but basically I would say no. One thing I've realized is that the public is pretty basic. I'd say 90% of the people I meet say something like, "Oh, you're the fastest man in the world," not, "I read that you're self-centered."

I'm sure there were times I could have backed off, conformed a bit more and still remained strong to myself. And I certainly made my share of mistakes in my life; I don't mind admitting that at all. But mainly I've always tried to stay true to myself first. There is a tremendous balancing act you always try to do.

T&FN: *Care to take any guesses*



Twice the Athlete Of The Year in the '80s, versatile Jackie Joyner-Kersey rated No. 2 overall and is the leading American woman of the decade.

about what the decade of the '90s might hold for you?

Lewis: A lot of watching! Really, I

hope the '90s sees a great competitor in the twilight—but also the best part—of his career. Someone, too, who knows when it's time to retire and not linger on. Also keeping the respect I have for all the athletes I compete against.

And hopefully, staying active in the sport by working to advance it to a more professional level. Finally, continuing the fight against drugs.

T&FN: *As your fame grew through the decade, did that create almost a no-win situation for you? The "damned-if-you-do / damned-if-you-don't" dilemma?*

Lewis: Yes, there's no question. But in looking back over the '80s, there were some great triumphs; a lot of fun; tremendous growth and exposure; an unbelievable learning experience; some pain, in and out of the sport. I sometimes feel I lived a whole lifetime just in one decade.

But, realistically, you have to look at what you have in life, not what you don't have. How can I ever complain when there are people who are ill, or poor, or homeless? People might say something bad about me but there are millions of people who love me, and that's what keeps me going now. □



TAC/USA COACHING EDUCATION LEVEL I SCHOOLS 1989 - 1990



LEVEL I SCHOOLS	LOCATION	CONTACT SCHOOL DIRECTOR
December 1-3, 1989	Houston, TX	Dan Green, 3395 Northline Oaks, Conroe, TX 77384
December 15, 16, 17, 1989	Cocoa Beach, FL	Fred Finke, 460 East Tullis, Longwood, FL 32750
December 8-10, 1989	Millbrae, CA	Ed Parker, 400 Murchison Drive, Millbrae, CA 94030
December 29-30, 1989	Swarthmore, PA (nr. Philadelphia)	Russ Ebbets, P.O. Box 221, Greenvale, NY 11548
January, 1990	New Orleans, LA	Tommy Badon, Track Office, Univ. of SW Louisiana, 201 Reinhardt Dr., Lafayette, LA 70506
January 5-7, 1990	Canby, OR (nr. Portland)	Tom Millbrook, P.O. Box 658, Canby, OR 97013
January 26-28, 1990	Colorado Spgs., CO (Doherty HS)	Dr. Joe Vigil, Adams State College, Alamosa, CO 81101
March 16-18, 1990	Syracuse, NY	David Oja, 213 Scott Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13224
June, 1990	Suffield, CT	Patrick Mooney, 251 Main Street, Northfield, MA 01360
June 23-25, 1990	Nashville, TN*	John Hemmer, 901 Sweetbriar Road, Orlando, FL 32806
June 29-30 & July 1, 1990	Grandville, OH (nr. Columbus)	Bob Shannon, 447 North Pearl Street, Granville, OH 43023
July 1-3, 1990	Spokane, WA	Duane Hartman, N 11309 Lancelot Dr., Spokane, WA 99218
July 22-24, 1990	Lincoln, NB	Pat Pretty, 1836 Highway 143, Cedarburg, WI 53012
July 24-28, 1990	Brevard, NC (nr. Asheville)	Bill Sheskey, 506 Creekridge Ct., Woodstock, GA 30188

*In conjunction with NHSCA Convention

CONTACT: School director for more information or Kathy Presnal at the TAC National Office, (317) 261-0500.

TUITION: \$100.00 advanced registration. \$110.00 at the door.