



## CARLOS LOPES

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**E**ven though it was only the end of September, winter had come to Colorado. It was a cold and snowy day in the Rockies.

Carlos Lopes was glad to be in Boulder, although the Olympic marathon champion couldn't resist slipping in a gibe. Looking out the car window, he sighed, "I went home to Portugal after Los Angeles and relaxed and got some sun. Then I traveled to Canada, where it was much cooler. Now I come here to train and it's snowing."

Lopes wanted to be right where he was, though, ready to escape—via his first experience ever at training at altitude—from the whirlwind schedule he had maintained since winning the gold in August.

He returned home to Lisbon and a seemingly endless round of civic and government receptions to honor Portugal's lone gold medalist. After visiting numerous cities in his home nation, the 37-year-old Lopes packed up his family and traveled to Canada, where he was scheduled to visit Portuguese communities in several major cities. Then it was to be on to the U.S. for more of the same in New York, Boston and cities in California.

But after stops in Montreal and Toronto,

with attendant travel, lugging his family along and the general hustle and bustle, Lopes had had enough. He canceled the rest of his junket and also withdrew from the post-Olympic meet scheduled for the end of September in Seoul.

"I'm tired," he said. "I need to train. I want to train, and I think Boulder would be a good place to do it." So a weary-looking runner arrived, needing and wanting to get back to running. Training had been the stabilizing constant in his life for more than a decade and he missed it.

With Lopes came Theresa, his wife of 10 years, and their two sons, nine-year-old Nuno and three-year-old Pedro.

When he arrived in Colorado, Lopes found Portugal's other LA medalist already in residence. Marathon bronze winner Rosa Mota had been training at altitude and was accompanied by coach Jose Pedroza, a longtime friend of Lopes'.

In a matter of hours, Carlos went from the whirling world of a celebrity to the quiet life of a man surrounded by family and friends and doing what he likes best—training.

His results reflected his contentment: just

nine days after arriving in Boulder, he clocked 29:10 over a certified route in Denver's Governor's Cup 10K. Six days later, he blistered the El Paso Run Against Crime 15K in 43:20. Lopes had found his groove. Then he clocked his second-fastest marathon ever, 2:09:06, to finish 2nd to Steve Jones' WR in Chicago.

The evening after the Denver contest Lopes sat down to talk about winning the Olympics. Mota and Pedroza shared the table as Lopes began, speaking quietly and in a reserved manner at first.

But as he warmed to the conversation, his voice grew stronger and his wry sense of humor surfaced:

**T&FN:** What was the aftermath for you of winning the Olympic marathon?

**Lopes:** Our entire Olympic team went back to Portugal together after the Games. There was a huge crowd to meet us at the airport and also at big receptions later. In many ways, the size of the crowds was overwhelming.

There was a great deal of emotion at

all these events, but it is very difficult for me to describe my feelings. We have phrases in Portuguese describing such emotions, but it is very difficult for me to describe the emotions I felt.

**T&FN:** *How were you treated differently at home after the Games?*

**Lopes:** There really has been no difference in how I have been treated after LA compared to before. Honestly, I have always been treated very well in Portugal and there was no great change after the Games.

**T&FN:** *Being one of Portugal's premier Olympic athletes, did you feel strong expectations from your people to do well in Los Angeles? What was your own attitude?*

**Lopes:** Well, I feel the Portuguese people expected more from Fernando Mamede than from me. I just try to treat every race the same; if I feel the same about each race, then that should mean the pressure is the same for each race. If I win, that is fine. If I lose, well, that is something that happens and I just try to forget about it and look ahead to the next race.

I didn't feel any expectations because I don't pay attention to that sort of thing. Personally, I just felt very confident because my preparations had gone very well. Every part of my Olympic buildup went exactly as I had planned it.

*(He never comes out and says it but one gets a very definite sense from Lopes that he went to Los Angeles aiming solely to win. Not to win just any medal or place high—but to win. He never thought of anything less than taking it all. He was strong and confident; he was well-prepared and knew he could win.)*

I couldn't have felt better going to Los Angeles. Well, I was still a bit sore after being hit by that car.

**T&FN:** *Oh, really! What exactly happened?*

**Lopes:** Just a couple of weeks before we were scheduled to leave for LA, I was out running on the road. I never saw the car; he hit me from behind. It was a big, expensive Mercedes; I recognized the car as I rolled over the hood.

**T&FN:** *Thankfully, you weren't badly hurt, but it must have been a frightening experience.*

**Lopes:** The only thought I remember clearly was as I watched my elbow go through the windshield. I thought, "There goes the Olympics." Yes, I was lucky not to be seriously injured. The driver never really said he was sorry or was the least bit conciliatory.

I missed about three days of training altogether. I had a large bruise on my left hip that was still there in LA. But after a few days, the soreness started working itself out and I felt as though I was recovering from a very hard workout.

I just tried to not make a big thing out of the whole incident. I got back into training as quickly as possible and was able to get back into my training groove without missing too much serious training.

**T&FN:** *You obviously felt very confident in the race because that's the way you ran, with total self-confidence.*

**Lopes:** That's because everything was hitting just perfectly. All the cylinders were on go. I went into the race determined to stay near the front, stay with the leader's tempo and be ready to respond to any surges or changes in the leading pace.

When I took the lead around 37km, it felt easy and controlled. There was no pushing or straining; just a bit of an increase in the pace.

As I got closer to the Coliseum and I knew for certain I would win, I did ease off some and not push it. But I have always had the philosophy toward racing that nothing is certain until you hit the finish line, so I didn't let up entirely. Still, though, it was one of those days when everything went just perfectly.

**T&FN:** *So other than your run-in with the car, your Olympic buildup must have also gone according to plan.*

**Lopes:** My pre-Olympic plan was simple—race often and just be ready to run whatever pace the leaders did in the Olympic race. I was not worried about the heat and smog conditions in Los Angeles. I had trained in heat and I knew I was prepared for whatever the conditions would be.

**T&FN:** *You ran 27:17.48 for 10,000 in Stockholm when Mamede ran a World Record 27:13.81. What did that tell you about your preparations for LA?*

**Lopes:** That 10,000 told me I was preparing well—and that I had run a fast 10,000! I don't feel the 10,000 really reflects on the marathon because, to me, they are two entirely different events.

When you blow up in a 10,000, it comes on gradually over several laps. When you blow in a marathon, it seems to happen all at once. That is the only thing I have ever feared in any marathon I have run: to blow up suddenly and lose everything in just a short period of time.

Obviously, the 10,000 told me all my preparations were going well, but only in a general sense and not specifically about the marathon. I must say, though, that I feel I made that 10,000 record by running hard in the second 5000.

I mean, I would have been just as happy to win the 5000 or 10,000 in Los Angeles! But I was prepared for the marathon; I felt I could win the marathon so that's where I went.

**Rosa Mota:** I felt that Carlos would win in Los Angeles because of his very high level of fitness. When he is very fit, it is very difficult to beat him.

I knew he was very fit and ready

because he would allow me to train with him. He would slow down to my training speed. When he trains with men, he never allows that to happen.

**T&FN:** *Even your wife was confident. Tell us the story of the shoes you wore in the Olympic race.*

**Lopes:** I wanted to wear a pair of Nike shoes that I got in Europe but one of them ended up being too tight. Five days before the race, I was fitted for a new pair, the shoes were made in Japan and hand-delivered to Los Angeles two days before the race.

There were two pair, one with trim of red, white and blue, and one with gold trim. Someone asked which pair I would wear in the race and Theresa said, "The gold pair, to match the color of the medal he will win."

**T&FN:** *You have been racing at the top world level ever since you won the silver medal in the '76 Olympic 10,000. Why have you developed into such a consistently good racer?*

**Lopes:** The main thing is consistency in training. I have had the same training program for about 12 years. I like to race more marathons and road races than the national coach [Mario Moniz Perreira] does. So I work with him only on the track. I just do my own program.

I listen to my body to avoid injury. You must believe in the pain and the demands made on your body in the closing stages of a marathon. You must forgive your body after a hard physical effort like a marathon. You must let your body recuperate and regain its strength before you test it again.

I always run hard when I am in a race that is important to me. But the most important thing to me is also the most simple—I like to win. □

Carlos Alberto de Jesus Lopes (LO-pesh) was born in Viseu, Portugal, on February 18, 1947, and is 5-6/123. He lives in Lisbon with his wife and two sons. The Olympic marathon champion in just his third race at the distance, he won the IAAF Cross Country title in 1976 and 1984. Until this year the 10,000 has been his primary competitive distance in international championships with a 2nd in the '76 Olympics, 4th in the '82 Europeans and 6th in the '83 Worlds. His PRs (with all-time World positions in parentheses): 1500—3:41.4 '82; 3000—7:48.8 '76; Steeple—8:39.6 '73; 5000—13:16.38 '84; 10,000—27:17.48 '84 (2); Marathon—2:08:39 '83 (5). His progression (with World Rankings in parentheses):

Year	Age	5000	10,000	Marathon
1970	23	14:23.4	30:26.6	
1971	24			
1972	25	13:46.3	28:53.6	
1973	26	13:41.4	28:37.0	
1974	27	13:34.2	28:38.8	
1975	28	13:33.78	28:30.6	
1976	29	13:24.0 (6)	27:42.65 (2)	
1977	30		28:44.6	
1978	31	13:42.6	28:05.0	
1979	32	13:39.9	28:44.3	
1980	33	14:00.2		
1981	34	13:39.2	27:47.8	
1982	35	13:17.28	27:24.39 (5)	
1983	36	13:28.1	27:23.44 (4)	2:08:39 (3)
1984	37	13:16.38	27:17.48	2:09:06