

It takes only a few seconds of conversation with Daley Thompson to realize that he is a man possessed. The heart, soul, mind, body and spirit of the outgoing Britisher is that uniquely self-punishing, but self-revealing, discipline known as the decathlon.

For Thompson, life is the decathlon and vice versa. He trains for it 7-8 hours every day. His life revolves around the decathlon, either training for it or competing in it—and his competitions are infrequent so there is a lot of training done.

And there isn't anything Thompson hasn't done in his life's pursuit: 3 World Records; gold medals in the Olympics, European, Commonwealth and World Championships; ranked No. 1 in the world 3 times, equal to the most ever; owning 4 of the 10-highest scores in history.

Even after all that, Thompson isn't satisfied. He keeps coming back for more. He just wants to keep improving. He moved to Southern California

six months ago to prepare for his third Olympics. He shares a house on the beach with sprinter Marty Krulee and his training partners include American 10-eventer John Crist. Thompson spends as much time training on the UC Irvine track as he does at the house. ("The Irvine people have been so helpful," he says.)

He is a talkative, outgoing man, this driven athlete born Francis Morgan Thompson to a Nigerian father and a Scottish mother (his father called him by an African name, Ayodele, which was shortened to Dale and pronounced like "Daley"). His years of effort have given him a deep perspective of himself and his passion for the decathlon.

To Thompson, it isn't the decathlon, as though you are speaking of a passing acquaintance. To him, it is simply "decathlon," the name of a lifelong nemesis but also a respected old friend:

DALEY THOMPSON

T&FN: You haven't lost a decathlon outright [that he has completed] since 1978; you have set records; you have won everything a decathlete can. So what keeps you at it—besides the fame, wealth and groupies?

Thompson: That's all there is! There is nothing else!

Seriously, first of all I put a lot of time into it. Because I put so much time into it, I don't actually feel I have yet produced the kind of performances I'm capable of. The last couple of decathlons I've done, I haven't had a personal best in an individual event—they were good scores but I didn't get any individual bests.

T&FN: Is that important to you, too, as much as the overall score?

Thompson: It is, because it means I'm improving in individual things as well. You can't always be doing the decathlon, so it's nice to have good individual events come along, too.

T&FN: Is the biggest lure of the decathlon still the challenge of putting all 10 events together?

Thompson: Yes, that's still the biggest challenge. Just getting the thing right. Not only do you not have to weigh too much, or too little, you've also got to have the right strategy in training and all that. So it's not a simple thing.

T&FN: You obviously have let it take over your life. You are the decathlon and it is Daley Thompson.

Thompson: We're inseparable. It's my life; that's all there is to it. I don't think I can ever replace it. There are other things I can do, of course, but nothing would ever

be the same.

T&FN: In the past, you said your life was very tunneled, very concentrated on nothing but eating, drinking and sleeping the decathlon. Is it still?

Thompson: Then it was 100%, now it's about 98%. But it's more intense while I'm doing it. It's very serious now—but I do know there are other things in life. On the other hand, knowing there are other things in life makes me realize even more there isn't anything I want to do more than decathlon.

T&FN: Because you have done so much in the event—won everything, set records—you have become a highly visible media star in Britain and Europe. How does that affect your approach?

Thompson: I'm trying to get away from that as much as possible, to tell the truth. After a few years of it, I know that isn't me. There are a lot of people in sport that thrive on that kind of stuff, but that isn't my primary reason for doing what I do. It's not even in the first 10 reasons why I do it.

The reason I most want to do decathlon is because it's *me*, plus improving and enjoying it and all that kind of stuff. Whether there are a million people watching me or one person, I'm still going to perform exactly the same. At the end of the day, it's how badly I want it that is going to get me those extra few points, not a million people cheering for me.

And the idea of commercial endorsements or making money doesn't even enter into it when I'm doing it. On the other hand, that is part of the whole thing too

because, at the end of the day, bills have got to be paid.

I've got a house to pay for and a dog to keep and an auntie to look after. But I never let that interfere with anything I'm doing. If it's a case of getting a \$200,000 contract that asks for five days from me and I've only got four days to give, then I'll turn it down.

T&FN: Is it something hard to live under a microscope, since the British daily press tends to splash its leading athletes all over the papers at the slightest pretext?

Thompson: Oh, it can be terrible. For that reason, I hardly ever go out. People stare at you a lot. If you go shopping, you'll get 20-30 kids following behind you. Some enjoy that kind of stuff, but it's not for me.

For me, there's a time and place for it. When I'm changing my tracksuit and I've just finished my session or whatever, then fine. But that never seems to be when it happens; it's all the rest of the time. I've always been a private kind of person, so that's another reason I don't go anywhere.

The reason why I'm in California now, living and training, is that the weather is so bad at home—even just last week it was snowing—and I want to be in such good shape, I've just come over three months earlier than I normally do.

My commitment is such that I know I'm okay at the moment, but I would like to be better. The extra couple of hours I can put in every day might be reflected in my scores at the end of the year.

T&FN: You said earlier you don't go out much, but what do you do to get away from it?

Thompson: I don't need to. It's so consuming with me. Marty Krulee and I sit around reading magazines on track and running. We talk about it. I don't even want to get away. It's been such a part of my life for so long—and I hope it is for another 5 or 6 years.

T&FN: In the past, you have said that you felt you proved yourself through the decathlon. Even after all you have achieved, do you still feel that way?

Thompson: Yes, I've still got a lot to prove—but mostly just to myself. I have high expectations of myself. In fact, my expectations mostly are things I can never hope to achieve. But I *might* be able to, so it's always there pushing me on just that little bit farther.

T&FN: You obviously like the mental challenge as well as the physical.

Thompson: Oh yes. It's like a chess game. It's not that there are tactics in it, but there are variations. It's not going to be



Mark Shearman

done the same way every time.

Yes, you have to get geared up 10 times and that's the difficult thing. The actual competition isn't that physically demanding. The thing is to try to get the mental push to get 10 personal bests; you aren't going to manage it—but you *don't* tell yourself that. You just get on with it and try to do your best regardless. That's really the hardest thing about decathlon; trying to do 10 things better than you have ever done them before.

It's fascinating to me. It isn't a one-off thing like a sprint or something like that. There are so many different facets you have to try to master. Plus there are so many different combinations of how things can go. Obviously, with 10 things you have 10 times the chances of things going wrong. Once you get to a high level, it's difficult to get back into it if something does go wrong. So it can be very complicated—or very simple. But you never know how it will be until you are in the middle of it.

T&FN: *To you, losing has always been very personal.*

Thompson: Oh, it's like the end. I've never felt so bad as when I lost the '78 Europeans in Prague. In fact, one reason I train so hard now is that I never want to feel like that again. It was such a low I couldn't believe it.

T&FN: *If you could set away from the decathlon for awhile and concentrate on another event, what would it be?*

Thompson: Well, I would do it only if I could be the best at it. I would be a fool to do something that I wasn't as good at. There's no incentive at all for me. I can go to a competition in the long jump, say, and it is only a fraction above a training session in my mind, regardless of how big a meet it is. But put me in a competition where I'm getting some points at the end of it, and I'm a different man.

T&FN: *Your heart and soul are right in the pages of that scoring table.*

Thompson: They really are because no matter how hard I try to get myself up for an individual event, it doesn't even feel like the same event. Sometimes in individual events I tell myself I'm running twice as fast as I do in a decathlon—but I don't come within two feet!

T&FN: *Is your greatest opponent yourself, or somebody else out there?*

Thompson: Nah, it's me. If I ran 10.00 in the 100, I know I would think I could go faster. I've got such high expectations of myself. Even if I beat something that I never thought I could do, I would think, "I'll go for it again next week."

T&FN: *In your biography, you said, "Competition is my life." Is that just on the track or everywhere?*

Thompson: I'm better now. It used to be for anything and everything. Now it's pretty much just channeled into this. It doesn't always work, but I try to be as

COMPUTER SYSTEMS FOR TRACK COACHES

USE A COMPUTER'S POWERFUL CAPABILITIES AS YOUR ASSISTANT

- Rank your athletes performances
- Lists, Tables, Charts, etc.
- Evaluate high school prospects
- Whatever you need or want
- Computerize workout schedules
- Help in selecting a computer system
- Computerize meet/race results

Use Your Computer or Mine
15 Years Experience

Call or Write: Marvin C. Reed, 714 N. 74th St., Scottsdale, AZ 85257, (602) 947-4150

A REVOLUTIONARY CONCEPT IN SPORTS TIMING



LC DIGITAL QUARTZ STOPWATCH WITH PRINTER SEIKO SYSTEM PRINTER SP11

PRINTOUT ENLARGED TO SHOW DETAIL

YEAR-MONTH-DATE — 1984 7 22
 TIME OF DAY (24 HR.) — START 14:01
 ACCUMULATED/SPLIT TIME — SPLIT / LAP
 1-2:08'13 24
 0:00'14 25
 INDIVIDUAL/LAP TIME (TAYLOR) — 2-2:08'22 89

LAP NO.-HR.-MIN.-SEC.-1/100 SEC.

UP TO 99 PRINTOUTS



PHONE AND MAIL ORDERS WELCOME



Stopwatch simultaneously records split, lap and accumulated elapsed time up to 10 hours in hours, minutes, seconds and 1/100 seconds. When connected to the compact, portable thermal printer, measurement data can be printed out immediately upon being recorded on the stopwatch. Up to 8 different times can also be stored in stopwatch's memory for future recall and print out. Stopwatch with HARDLEX mar-resist crystal, carrying cord; printer with carrying pouch, belt and two rolls of thermal paper. **\$225.00**

Also available from SEIKO—similar stopwatch without printer unit. (Water resistant.). \$95.00

SCHOOL PURCHASE ORDERS WELCOME

YOUR PRIME TIME HEADQUARTERS FOR THE LOS ANGELES OLYMPIC GAMES



FELDMAR Watch and Clock Center
 WORLD'S LARGEST SELECTION OF STOPWATCHES CHRONOGRAPHS, FINE WATCHES AND CLOCKS
 9000 W. PICO BLVD. Dept. TF
 LOS ANGELES, CA 90035 (213) 272-1196

THOMPSON INTERVIEW—continued

calm as possible. When I was a kid, I just had to be first at everything, from catching the bus to finishing my lunch first. Now, I feel it's more directed. It's a matter of learning: you either learn and grow, or you wither.

T&FN: *You have changed as an athlete from the Daley of Prague, or Moscow or even Athens. But how have you changed as a person?*

Thompson: As you Californians say, I've "mellowed out." I wouldn't use those words, but in a way they are rather accurate. Kind of become almost normal; for as much time as I have outside decathlon, I've become fairly normal. But then, since I spend only 10 minutes a day away from it...

I've calmed down within myself. In fact, it's probably difficult to believe, but I feel more confident now. I felt confident before, but I feel even moreso now. It comes from the experiences, all the hard work, all those things. It's the cumulative effect. It's something in the bank.

T&FN: *And you have refined the mental game to the nth degree.*

Thompson: I wouldn't say I have done that. Maybe by the time I finish. I still feel I have a lot to learn about decathlon. Just because the variations are always so different. You'll do a 100 well and your long jump won't go well. It's trying to figure out why, when the conditions may be fairly similar and all that and you feel good. It may be something you have done in training. You are trying to refine things all the time.

You have to try so many different combinations that it takes a long time to get them all together right.

T&FN: *What will you ever do with all your energy once you get out of this game?*

Thompson: If I do have another ambition, it's just to be a good father. That's all. My lady now is very understanding—not of decathlon, but of me. I guess those are one and the same, at least for the next six years. □

Francis Morgan "Daley" Thompson was born July 30, 1958, in London, England, and is 6-5/194. Three times a World Record setter (8622 '80, 8704 & 8743 '82) he is undefeated over the last five years, during which he has won titles at the Olympics, World Champs, European Champs, Commonwealth Games and Getz International. His top 4 performances rank Nos. 2, 5, 6, 8 on the all-time World List, PRs: 100, 10.45 '79; 200, 20.88 '79; 400, 46.86 '82; 1500, 4:20.3 '76; 110H, 14.31 '82; HJ, 7-1/4 '82; PV, 17-1/8 '81; LJ, 26-3 '80; SP, 50-8 1/4 '79; DT, 155-8 '81; JT, 214-6 '80. His progression (with World Rankings in parentheses), including performances in major meets:

Year	Age	Dec	Rank	Major Meets
1975	16/17	7012†		
1976	17/18	7812†		18)OG
1977	18/19	8124	(4)	1)Euro Jr
1978	19/20	8467w	(3)	2)Euro 1)Comm
1979	20/21	6954	(—)	
1980	21/22	8622	(1)	1)OG
1981	22/23	7936	(—)	
1982	23/24	8743	(1)	1)Euro 1)Comm
1983	24/25	8666	(1)	1)World Champs