

DANNY HARRIS

Danny Harris Means Possibilities. Sounds like a campaign slogan, and indeed, we interviewed the former Iowa State star on the day after the Iowa Caucuses. But Harris is the man who for many introduced the possibility of life after "The Streak."

In 1984, just 18, he had proceeded from a St. Patrick's Day debut 51.3 for the 400H through 5 World Junior Records to the threshold of Edwin Moses' throneroom and an Olympic silver medal. Those who had grown used to thinking Moses would never lose suddenly began to wonder.

The dramatic possibilities thrilled. What would happen on that fateful day when Moses, Andre Phillips, Harald Schmid and wunderkind Harris all met? Unfortunately, they have all yet to meet at once, but Seoul is on the horizon, and the stage is once again set.

With Harris as a major player the drama has grown more complex. Though he has never ranked No. 1 in the world, last June he of course beat Moses to end The Streak 9 years, 9 weeks, and 9 days (what symmetry!) after it began. At the World Championships, Harris again mined silver, missing victory over the King by a mere 0.02 and holding off Schmid by less.

The three-time NCAA 400 hurdles champ forewent his last season at Iowa State to focus for Rome. He now trains in Ames under Cyclone assistant Steve Lynn and shares a house with his miniature pinscher Killer and his "econ major" roommate.

T&FN: Looking back at '84, did you expect your sudden rise to world class?

Harris: I really didn't. You know, I wasn't really even cognizant of the fact that the Olympics were in Los Angeles until I qualified for the Trials. And as far as moving up on the world scene, I always felt like a track meet was a track meet.

I lost my first three races in college. So I knew how to lose, and I knew how to accept that. And going to the Olympics I knew who I had to race. I had to race Edwin. But I felt comfortable because I did win the NCAA as a freshman.

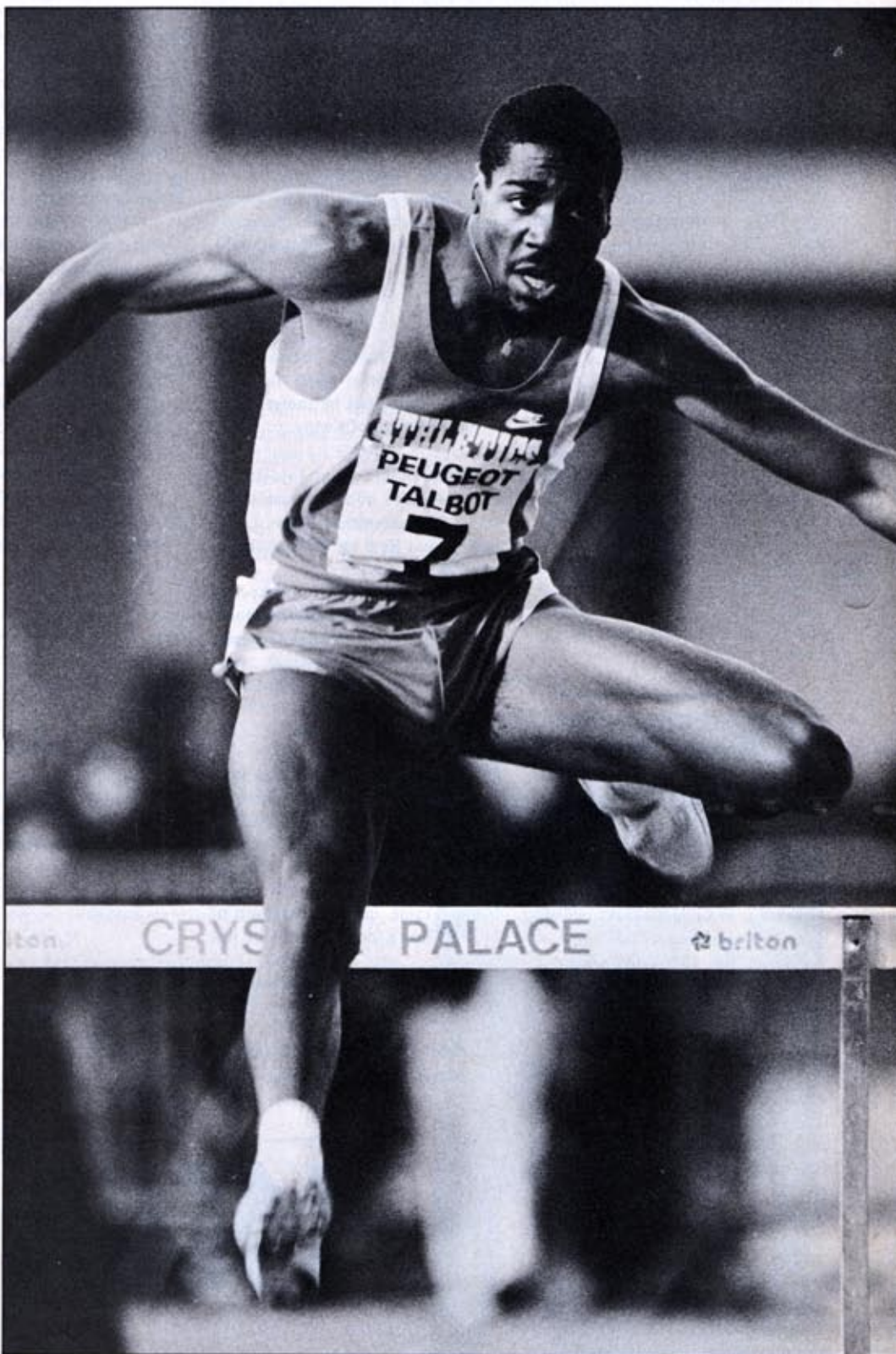
The difference between then and now is I'm older and I've had a lot more races and a lot faster races. I know what to do when it's crunch time.

T&FN: You never dreamed about the Olympics when you were in high school?

Harris: When I was in high school I dreamed about playing in the NFL. That's what I daydreamed about. Not running in the Olympics or the World Championships.

T&FN: How much longer do you think you'll stay in track?

Harris: You know, I really don't



know. It's, uh... It's nice. I'm having a really good time. If I were to win this summer, I don't know what I would do.

T&FN: *You'd retire?*

Harris: Retirement is... I don't know if that's the right word. You know, my goal is to win the Olympic gold medal. And if I do that, then it'll be time to sit down and think about, "What am I gonna do?"

T&FN: *Is there any career area you would like to pursue?*

Harris: I like telecommunications a lot. Not necessarily in front of the camera, but just in the business.

T&FN: *During this year's Super Bowl there was a play in which Rulon Jones hurdled over a Washington lineman and the announcer commented that he looked "just like Edwin Moses." Apart from the obvious financial advantages, is that instant name-recognition something you covet, or do you think it brings unneeded pressure?*

Harris: To be the best means to have pressure. I mean it goes with the territory. But to have your name associated with hurdling just because somebody does it in the Super Bowl, it must be nice.

T&FN: *What did you think of NBC's World Championships coverage?*

Harris: I have the videotape here. I haven't even looked at it [laughs]. Maybe I'll be able to watch it in a couple more months.

T&FN: *Why haven't you watched it?*

Harris: I don't want to watch it. It doesn't have a happy ending.

T&FN: *Is that why you left Rome right after the medal ceremony?*

Harris: No, I was two weeks late for school. I didn't leave because I was emotionally distraught or anything.

T&FN: *So hopefully you won't have to leave right after the Olympics.*

Harris: Yeah. Hopefully I'll be able to stick around for the dinner this time.

T&FN: *How did you feel about the Rome race?*

Harris: Technically, I could have done something better. I didn't feel like I was in a good position coming off the last curve, but I was happy with the race and happy with the time.

T&FN: *How did you plan to run that race?*

Harris: Well, I knew, having Harald and Edwin behind me, that I would have to get out good, naturally, and stay within my own race and not get out too fast. I feel like I could have gone out just a little bit faster, but I can't change that now. It's over with.

T&FN: *So you're just looking to the future?*

Harris: Yeah, Rome was another learning experience. So I'll just take it as that and take my silver and go on with this summer.

T&FN: *Do you feel any closer to Moses and Schmid for having competed in a race as competitive as Rome?*

Harris: Well, I'd say, relatively, there has been a good feeling between us three all along. But, we're all competitors. And when you compete against somebody, I think, there's only so close that you can be before you have to get out there again and put the game face on.

T&FN: *Are fast times or major victories more important for you?*

Harris: The only way I'm going to be able to run fast times is to really be in a situation where I have fast people in the races. I haven't run enough 47s, I don't think, just to be able to go out and say, "OK, I'm gonna run a 47.2 or 3 today and destroy the field." My goal is just to win every race that I compete in.

T&FN: *Do you try to find out what the other hurdlers are doing in training?*

Harris: Well, I don't go out of my way to find out that one little thing that somebody else is doing. I think what I'm doing works for me. That's the most important thing.

All of us hurdlers aren't built the same so we can't really do the same things. I just try and pay attention to myself.

T&FN: *Do you take notice of the young hurdlers coming up?*

Harris: I think they'll make a difference this year. Everybody always forgets; they talk about the guys that are already established. There are some young guys that are out there running the intermediates that are really good.

Somebody could come out and be 18 and do some of the same things that I did. But you have to keep your eyes open for those guys coming up on the inside.

T&FN: *You and Moses didn't talk much after the Madrid race.*

Harris: I don't know what everybody expected us to say. There weren't any hard feelings. At least not on my part. I didn't feel like there were on Edwin's either. He was a little bit reluctant at first, maybe just because he hadn't come to grasp with what had happened.

But I think enough was said after that race. We didn't talk until about 20 minutes after the race was actually over. So some of the people from the press had left and it wasn't in their coverage.

T&FN: *You're not taking classes at Iowa State this semester, and you're concentrating on training. What is your routine like now?*

Harris: I train more now and lift weights more now. I train four hours as opposed to two. And I'm actually trying to find a job.

T&FN: *What sort of job?*

Harris: Anybody who wants to hire me.

T&FN: *Does that mean you don't make enough from track to get by?*

Harris: I guess I'm making enough to survive, but what's "enough"? I can always try and better myself. I'm not going to run track forever.

T&FN: *Tell me about your family.*

Harris: Both my parents are dead. I live with my grandmother. And that's how it was in high school... I have three brothers and two sisters, and I'm the youngest.

T&FN: *When did your parents die?*

Harris: My mom when I was 14, and my dad when I was 3. That's a bummer.

T&FN: *Do you get home to see your grandmother often?*

Harris: Just once or twice a year now, but she'll get to see me a lot more next year when I get back out there for good. She didn't go to Rome, but she was in L.A. in '84. She was also at TAC in 1987; picked one of the races to come to that I lost [laughs].

T&FN: *What about the rest of your family? Did they come to Rome?*

Harris: They all live in Perris and work and have families and I would really much rather have them watch it on TV than come. That's one of the few things that does distract me, is to have members of my family there when I'm running.

You worry about, "Are they alright in the hotel, or are they here in town? Are they going to be able to get into the meet? And are their tickets going to be there when they get there?" They all had their chance to come out and watch me in '84.

T&FN: *When they turn on their sets to watch the Seoul final, will they see another squeaker like the Rome finish?*

Harris: No, I don't think that'll happen this time. I think there'll be a clear winner.

T&FN: *I'm not going to ask you who that'll be.*

Harris: [laughs] □

Danny Lee Harris was born September 7, 1965, in Torrance, California, and is 6'0/170. Now competing for Athletics West, he ran for three years at Iowa State, winning the NCAA 400H title each year. A 1983 graduate of Perris High School in California, he set the HSR for the 300 Low Hurdles at 35.52 in his senior year. The next year, he set five WJRs: 49.55, 49.44, 49.16, 48.81, 48.02.

His PRs (with World and U.S. all-time list positions in parentheses): 200—20.91 '84; 400—45.19 '86; 400H—47.48 '87 (=2, 2).

His progression (with World and U.S. Rankings in parentheses), including placings in major meets:

Year	Age	400	400H	Major Meets
1982	16	—	36.15 300LH	2)Calif HS
1983	17	—	35.52 300LH	1)Calif HS
1984	18	45.3	48.02 (2, 2)	1)NCAA 2)OT 2)OG
1985	19	45.46	47.63 (2, 2)	1)NCAA 2)TAC
1986	20	45.19	47.82 (3, 3)	1)NCAA 1)TAC
1987	21	45.88	47.48 (3, 2)	2)WC

by Sieg Lindstrom