



DAVE LAUT

T & F N I N T E R V I E W

With a quick spin, Dave Laut put the final nail in the coffin of frustration which had bothered him all season; the first in which he seriously concentrated on the rotation style of shot putting.

The Goleta, California, resident had been the leading U.S. putter in 1979, ranking No. 3 in the world; 1980 and 1981 were not nearly as satisfying. The Olympic year was frustrated by injury and last year was complicated by the TAC results. Dave won at Sacramento, but his winning mark—his first-ever 70-footer—was questioned by many, regarded as a mismeasurement. He came into 1982 seeking vindication. It came in West Germany late in the summer.

In Koblenz, on August 25, he reached 72-3 to equal Brian Oldfield's American Record and come within 5" of Udo Beyer's World Record.

A month-long stay in Europe and a busy competitive schedule had given him the conditions he need to try the spin style under the fire of conflict.

The UCLA grad talks easily and casually about the ups and downs of his career and the technique which has propelled him into the No. 3 position on the all-time world list:

T&FN: You didn't lose all summer after the East German meet. Was there any one thing behind all that great throwing?
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Laut: The biggest thing this year is that I finally started to harness the potential of the rotation style of throwing. In the 2-3 years previous that I had used it, my approach was mostly experimental. But now I'm starting to feel positions and to really learn the event. That's really the biggest thing: just learning the rotational style.

For example, I always thought that the rotation was pretty much like a discus thrower's style. But it's quite a bit different. And the amount of lift you get out of your legs with the rotation is amazing. I never felt that with the glide.

Just discovering things like that has made me feel I'm just tapping the potential of the style. It was a little shaky at the beginning of the year; I didn't do well in the TAC meet with it.

But I think it was the quick succession of meets later in the summer that finally got me going. The competitions were so close together that I was able to concentrate more between meets and stay away from training.

T&FN: It must be very exciting because you're a long way from nailing the style down and getting the max out of it.

Laut: It's been hardly a total of two years that I've used it. Half of the Olympic year, only three or four meets last year. And at the beginning of this year, I was pretty undecided if I would use the rotation or not. In fact, I used the glide in my first outdoor meet.

But I got to thinking, "Hell, I don't want to be weighing 285 or 290 just to be able to throw fairly well." I felt I could get a lot more out of my 255, which is what I weighed most of the year.

I felt very strong at that weight, but you get the added dimension of speed with the rotation style. You have to have a lot of speed and quickness when you use the spin.

T&FN: What caused you to consider the spin in the first place? Might you have hit a plateau with the glide?

Laut: I think I did. You just reach a point where there isn't a whole lot more you can improve on. I mean I worked on technique, but I was still having some of the same problems after 10 years; left foot in the bucket and stuff like that.

It got to the point where I might get stronger—add 20lb to my bench press but get only 5-6" of distance with the glide. I

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just thought, "Shoot, this isn't for me." I wanted to work with the spin because there is so much potential with it. Brian Oldfield showed that—and, as he points out, three of the five throwers over 72 feet have used the spin.

T&FN: *Can every thrower use the spin effectively?*

Laut: Well, I just feel you have to adapt yourself to the style. There are some things Brian does, particularly out of the back of the ring, that I'd like to do, but I just can't do yet. His might be the one perfect technique, yet everybody is individual. Everyone has their own unique body configuration and you have to be able to be flexible and do what is best for you. Just because something works for one guy doesn't mean you can get the maximum out of it.

T&FN: *Were you worried at all about switching to the spin, especially after having such a great year in '79 with the glide?*

Laut: Well, I knew the reason I hit that plateau. In the Olympic year in 1980, I just plain overtrained. I also injured my knees, my left knee in particular.

But throwing with the rotation didn't hurt my knee. Using the spin was a total gamble, but I had to do something because I couldn't throw 66 feet in training with the glide. It would just kill my knees.

About my third meet using the spin, I threw 69-2¾. I thought it was great. But at the TAC and Olympic Trials, it backfired on me. It was that consistency thing: I started thinking too much about the style, complicating things unnecessarily.

I was thinking too much and it was a premature time to switch, but I felt I didn't have any choice. I knew it was a gamble and it cost me, but I think I will make up for it in '84.

So I stuck with it, although there were times it was terribly frustrating. But Sam Adams, who has helped me a great deal with it, said to hang in there, that it would come together. He told me I could throw 72 feet weighing 250lb; I thought that sounded impossible. But I *did* it. I weighed 251 when I threw 72-3. That really opened my eyes.

T&FN: *What is the toughest thing to master about the style? Establishing consistency?*

Laut: The hardest thing is to learn to harness the momentum you gain. I used to come out of the back of the circle very hard, but when you do that, you can miss positions. I have to come out of the throw under control and land in a position where I can feel my legs under me and my hips moving into the throw.

T&FN: *Does that help establish consistency?*

Laut: Well, the biggest thing for my consistency this year was eliminating all nervous thought and just letting the style flow. Because the meets were so close

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together this summer in Europe, I just took them in stride. I knew what I could do, and I just let it happen.

I simplified the style enough so that I was able to reach a good level of consistency in Europe. I got to where I felt if I didn't throw 21 meters [68-10¾], it felt like I wasn't up to par. My whole level was up and now with the 72-foot throw, it's even more so. I feel if I don't throw near 70 feet, something's wrong.

Yet I also know there will be times when I can't throw that far. Maybe it's early season and I'm training hard and I'm real strong in the weight room, but I don't have that snap in throwing. So I have to remember that. But it's a great feeling to be at a higher level. It's a stepping stone to even better things.

T&FN: *Was there one meet that was a breakthrough for you?*

Laut: It was the Russian meet when I threw 71-5½. I was very frustrated by the TAC meet because I had been throwing very long in practice, my lifting had been going well and I felt very strong. Everything seemed to be right on the money.

But things were like a dartboard. The bull's-eye was 70 feet and I felt I would hit the center at the TAC meet. I had been hitting all around the middle and everything seemed to point to a 70-foot throw. But I just didn't do it at TAC and it was very frustrating.

T&FN: *Why did the AR come at Koblenz? Were you getting in the groove with the spin because the meets were so close together?*

Laut: Things just started picking up. I got in some good training, but I think the real big thing was speed and quickness from lack of lifting. You still have to train, but that training is focused toward throwing instead of lifting.

Dang, it was just an amazing feeling. There was a lot of energy at Koblenz; it was a night meet and the people were real close. I was really psyched, but I didn't think I would throw 72-feet until I popped one that far in warmups. And I had another very long one, maybe World Record range. It kind of shocked me, but everything just seemed to come together there.

T&FN: *It's notable that you got the AR late in the summer, after a long season. . .*

Laut: Co-AR. I'll have to let that fester awhile. Sort of like a 69-11¾ throw.

The thing I remember about the throw was the effortless feeling of my upper body, which means my lower body was working very efficiently. I didn't even watch the measurement but I knew it was a long throw because it landed right near the little-globe stake they had out there at the World Record.

But it sure was exciting because that's what you work and drill for. Getting out to

that little world-shaped sticker.

T&FN: *It must have been satisfying to you in another way to get your PRs this year because those throws surpassed the 70-10½ from the '81 TAC. Even though the officials kept insisting that all the throws were measured correctly, did you possibly feel badly to win a national championships under those questionable circumstances?*

Laut: Yeah, I did. I never want to win anything I don't deserve. We have to leave things up to the judgment of the field event judges, but if they messed it up, I don't even want to touch it. It's not worth it to me.

There are some people who say it wasn't the right throw and things like that. I don't know. I feel it was and I had people tell me it looked like the throw landed the right distance beyond the 21-meter line. Now sure, people would tell me the side of it that favored me, but if it wasn't a good legit throw, I don't want to touch it.

It's the same thing with the AR: Oldfield believed he threw 22.03 at Modesto. I wish and I hope someone can confirm the measurement [it was recorded as 22.025, incorrectly, which rounds down to 22.02], because I don't want anything under those circumstances.

I mean, I've got to hold my whole life in front of me—and I feel I'm going to get the World Record anyway.

T&FN: *Which must make the future appear very exciting, considering you have been working seriously with the spin for such a short time.*

Laut: Well, I've never been one who likes to make predictions. I'm never good at it. And yet I have to be realistic enough to realize that, even though this is the first year I've been able to think seriously about it, the possibility of a World Record is there.

It's a real goal for me now and I'm staring it right in the face. I've got a long way to go in terms of technique and strength, and while I have to keep a cool head and perfect the technique, I'm also very excited because the record *is* a realistic goal. So I'm going to go for it. □

David Lester Laut was born December 21, 1956, in Findley, Ohio, and is 6-4/255. He now lives in Goleta, California, with his wife, Jane. Graduated from Santa Clara High (Oxnard, Ca) in 1975 and UCLA in 1979. Attended Moorpark CC as a frosh and San Jose CC as a soph; now competes for Athletics West. His progression, with World Rankings (wr), American Rankings (ar), and positions on world list (wl) and American list (al):

Year	Age	Mark	wr	ar	wl	al	Major Meets
1975	18	65-9(hs)	—	—	—	—	2)Cal HS
1976	19	56-10¼	—	—	—	—	—
1977	20	61-9½	—	—	89	21	1)Cal JC
1978	21	66-1¼	—	6	20	4	1)NCAA 4)TAC
1979	22	69-3¼	3	1	3	1	1)NCAA 1)TAC 4)WC
1980	23	69-2¼	—	5	10	2	6)TAC 6)OT
1981	24	70-10½	5	3	3	2	1)TAC 3)World Cup
1982	25	72-3	?	?	1	1	3)TAC