

It's sometimes hard to believe that Doug Padilla is 27 years old, shaves, and is married. And at 5-9/132, he has the slight frame and scrubbed looks of one whose mother probably never had to remind him to wash before supper.

But Padilla on a running surface, with a style once described as "coltish," is a different being: mature, tough, independent. A splendid indoor runner who holds American Records for the 3000 (7:44.9) and 2M (8:16.5), he carried that ability over to the 1983 outdoor season, setting an AR 7:35.84 for the 3000, winning the national 5000 title and finishing 5th in that event in the World Championships.

He now lives in Provo, Utah, where the 1381m altitude affects his training regimen, keeping his mileage significantly lower than that of most top runners.

The major turning point in his life came with his Mormon mission to El Salvador, as he matured physically and gained insights into life:

T&FN: During the last year you took over as America's top 5000 runner. What is it about Doug Padilla that makes him the top man?

Padilla: Gosh, I don't know. I guess the biggest thing is that I've grown a little older; I've gotten a little stronger now. I've gained a little more experience, perhaps gained a little more confidence. I think it's just a matter of getting a little more mature and things starting to jell a bit more.

T&FN: When you were at BYU you took two years off for your mission. How much was the two years you had over most American collegians responsible for your success?

Padilla: Well, I think that has a lot to do with the success that I've had. I just turned 27, but I feel like my body is behind my age.

I went to high school as a freshman and I was 4-11. People thought I looked like I belonged in grade school. When I was on my mission at 19, people thought I looked about 16.

When I got back from my mission at 21, I went to Great America [an amusement park] and they had the Amazing Alfreda, who would guess your birthdate. And she thought I was 14. I've just always been behind.

Right now I don't think I look 27; people say I look 21 or 22. I think that physically I've always been very immature.

Growing up through school I was always the smallest person in my class. And in grade school that meant I was smaller than the girls.

So I think it's just a matter that the two-year mission kind of gave me a chance to catch up a little bit. In high school I think I was competing against a lot of people that maybe were 4 or 5, maybe as much as 6 years older than I was

DOUG PADILLA



Simon Balgetman/Duomo

physically, because some guys really mature at 18.

You look at some guys, they've been shaving for two years at 18. I didn't really start to shave every day till about two years ago.

T&FN: *Where do you think you'd be now if you hadn't taken those two years? If you had gotten out of BYU at age 22, would you still be running?*

Padilla: I doubt it. I wouldn't have hit near the degree of success that I did and so it would have been very difficult to justify that input of time. Athletics West wouldn't have been interested in me. You can never really say, but I think it would have been difficult.

T&FN: *You were 5th in Helsinki. That's awfully good, yet is it a disappointment?*

Padilla: I have to view it as being very positive. I look at a lot of people who never made it to the final who definitely should have been there.

And the only thing I can say is that, boy, we got in there and the nerves and the pressure and everything was a little bit more than what we'd expected.

I've gone through a lot of national championships and a lot of collegiate championships and I've never come up against anything which had the pressure and the nervousness that I did there. I was very surprised.

I did not expect that sort of pressure, I really didn't. I figured, "Oh, you can only get so nervous." Well, apparently I can get more nervous than that. And I think that had a big effect.

I'm really quite pleased that I did make it through each of the qualifying rounds and did make it to the final. When it came to the last lap in the final I was disappointed. I felt if I'd had a lap like I normally do rather than about a 60-something, I could have been right in there. I could have been in the medals perhaps.

So it was disappointing looking at it that way, yet overall, there's no way I could be disappointed. I made it to the final, I got to the meet. I didn't really perform badly.

I guess there's a lot of people who are disappointed in the way I ran, but I have to look at it as a positive experience. It taught me an awful lot. I learned things that I could have never learned any other way. It wasn't too bad. Like you say, 5th in the world. That's a lot better than I've ever done before.

T&FN: *Who is the "we" you mention?*

Padilla: Oh, there's a lot of people. Coach [Sherald] James, the distance coach at BYU, he's the man who works with me. He sets up all my workouts and everything. And he was over in Helsinki with me and that helped a lot. I think that's one reason that things went as well as they did.

Then Pete Petersons works with me quite a bit. We make a lot of decisions on where to go and what to run. And then Dick Brown helps a lot. My wife puts in a few things here and there. So it's kind of a group effort.

T&FN: *You did a lot of rabbiting in Europe in 1982. Was that a benefit?*

Padilla: It was a big benefit. For one thing it put me in big meets. Maybe if I'd been in just super shape and I was ready just to run some great times and be competitive but yet couldn't get in a race, then maybe it would have been a detriment. But it wasn't.

I was tired, I was in fair shape, but mentally I was kind of burned out. I just wasn't really ready for the racing, so the rabbiting gave me the opportunity to get into some good meets, see how they went, get used to the feel of them.

T&FN: *What was it about the rabbiting that helped your racing?*

Padilla: My style of racing is, "Let's follow and see what happens and hope I can move early enough to get the fast kickers." And here, rabbiting, that put me in a position where I had to take the lead.

It was my job to go out and push the pace and sit on it and take everybody through. And that was something that was really pretty foreign to me. So that helped me a lot right there.

T&FN: *Are there people that you're meeting that you have looked up to for a long time?*

Padilla: I don't know. Due to the way I grew up, being really small and very immature, I had no aspirations athletically. You know, like in 5th grade, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" The big guy who was 6-2 in 6th grade would say, "I want to be a baseball player," or, "I want to be a football player."

Well gee, that wasn't in the realm of possibilities for me. I just didn't believe I could be a decent athlete at all. And so even as I looked at people who were running very well, it still was hard for me to say, "I want to run with him."

So I had to take little steps gradually. I had to get to one point and say, "Wow, maybe I can get two steps higher." I was never looking at the top of the staircase. A few years ago, after Ryun, looking at people like Matt Centrowitz or Marty Liquori, it wasn't in the realm of possibilities. So I never really had many idols that I looked up to. That was ludicrous for me to think that I could be like somebody who was one of the best in the world.

T&FN: *Aside from your aspirations, do you have people you see as inspirations?*

Padilla: I guess some of the people now who really impress me would be like Abraham Lincoln. I look at some of his writings and the way he handled things. And the beliefs that he had.

I'm really impressed with the faith

that they had in God and the amount of confidence they placed in Him, in fact the trust they put in Him, recognizing the need that they had on Him. Like Patrick Henry, when he said, "Give me liberty or give me death." You know, if somebody was to say that today that's kind of strange.

Afterward he said, "Is peace such a great prize that we'll buy it with whatever price it be?" And most people would say, "Yes, it is." But when you sit and you look at it you say, "No, not whatever price."

Yes we want peace, but yet we're willing to stand up and fight for the right to do what we want, to be free. I guess recently I've just been really impressed with some of those things and recognize they're some of the things we need today.

My dad was obviously a big influence on me. The way he handled things, his confidence, just looking to the good things in life. Having a positive attitude; you make of life what you want to make of it.

T&FN: *Do you see track as an end in itself, or is it leading somewhere?*

Padilla: I guess you could make it an end in itself. I think that it would be sad if you do.

Sports are interesting, they're very much a microcosm of life. It's a very good teacher. You take it and you look at a season and you put in the preparation and you set your goals and you work toward something.

And relatively quickly, by the end of the season, you've already reaped your reward. And it's very much a matter of you reap what you sow. You get out of it what you put into it.

That's really what life is. The only problem with life is it takes to the end of your life before you recognize what you've accomplished. And so a lot of times, with many people, it's too late. So, if you can learn the principles of paying a price and sacrificing and being consistent and diligent and working toward the end, then by the time you get to the end of the season you can see the result.

You get out what you put into it. □

Douglas Floyd Padilla was born October 4, 1956, in Oakland, California, and is 5-9/132. Graduated from Marina (San Leandro, Cal) High School and attended Chabot CC for one year. Spent his Mormon mission in El Salvador before completing his eligibility at BYU. Major meet finishes: NCAA 1500—4th '81; TAC 5000—15th '79, 5th '81, 3rd '82, 1st '83; NCAA 5000—9th '79, 6th '80, 4th '81; OT 5000—8th '80; World Champs 5000—5th '83. NCAA indoor 2M champ in 1981. Holds 3000 AR and indoor 3000 and 2M ARs. Other PRs: 1:49.4 ('80), 3:56.3yi ('82), 5:03.84 ('83), 7:35.84 ('83), 7:44.9i ('83), 8:16.9yi ('83). His progression (with U.S. 5000 rankings in parentheses; ranked 7th in 1500 in '81):

Year	Age	Affil	Class	1500	3000	5000
1974	17	Calif HS	Sr	4:20.0yi	9:15.4y	
1975	18	Chab CC	Fr	4:10.7y		15:14.0
1976-78		dnc	(Mormon mission to El Salvador)			
1979	22	BYU	So	3:46.6	8:46.6yi	13:43.0
1980	23	"	Jr	3:42.97		13:36.50
1981	24	"	Sr	3:38.37	8:26.0yi	13:33.5 (7)
1982	25	AW		3:41.4i	7:46.2i	13:20.55i (5)
1983	26	"		3:37.95	7:35.84	13:17.69