Back at the start of 1980, Edwin Moses was acknowledged as history's greatest 400 hurdler. Since then, he has reduced his own WR twice more, by almost 0.4, to 47.02, was T&FN's Athlete Of The Year in 1980, was boycotted out of an Olympics; he surely would have won, and became the first in his event to win a non-Olympic World Championship.

Despite these honors, despite having ranked No. 1 in the world each of the 7 years he has seriously run the event, he is best known now as the holder of The Streak. The winning streak, now at 87 finals in his favorite event, sets him apart to people who know little of the sport.

The streak, one of the great feats of contemporary athletics, is a result of his overwhelming dominance. Only 4 runners have ever broken 48.00 in the event. Only one other has accomplished it twice. Moses has done it 25 times.

Caught in the midst of a media blitz, after an interview session with People Magazine and a television filming for Eye on Los Angeles and multitudinous photo sessions, an exhausted Edwin snuck in one more interview before dinner:

T&FN: What do you think now of the 400 hurdles?
Moses: Well, aside from myself it's improved a hell of a lot. It's better than ever. The event has really gone through a total transformation in terms of the guys that come into the event. All the top guys have really taken it seriously as well as myself.

T&FN: Do you feel the athletic ability of 400 hurdlers before was lacking; that it was less than that of athletes in other events?
Moses: I don't think that challenge was there. Just the same as, for example, in the mile. It was quite stagnant for a long time. And then all of a sudden one guy broke the record and other guys started following, and then they got tired of following, so someone else breaks the record. And that develops more competition.

T&FN: What were your career aspirations 10 years ago and how far from them are you now?
Moses: Back then, I was strictly academic. I had no visions of being a sportsman. Of course [having a career in sports] was nowhere near the level it is now in terms of being a professional and making money, which is exactly what can happen now. I'm totally removed from what I thought I would be doing. More than likely I probably would have gone to medical school or been an engineer.

T&FN: What did sitting out last year do?
Moses: I think it gave me a chance to recharge my batteries. Simply that.

T&FN: When you're on the track you seem to be very machinelike, everything seems very well planned. What is it in you that proves you're not?
Moses: I have a heart and a brain [laughs].

I don't know, maybe that's just a perception that I never even thought of. I don't think of myself as machinelike. As a
matter of fact, I was talking to someone
today about computers and technology and
had to come to the conclusion that there
was no machine possible that could do
what I do.

You can get someone to follow
directions: the East German women
sprinters are a good example. They're very
mechanical in that sense of the word and I
don't think that I'm machinelike in any
way compared to them.

T&FN: How much more do you think
is in you?
Moses: I don’t know; I don’t even think
about it. I try not to quantify myself. If
you believe that there’s only so much left
in you, there will only be that much left.
Because when you get to the point where
you think that you have reached that point
you give it up. Maybe that’s why guys
who’ve been through it give it up and have	hose short careers. Maybe they felt that
that’s all they could do.

T&FN: How do you want to be
remembered when you do retire?
Moses: I don’t even want to answer
that. It’s up to the people to remember me
in whichever manner they would like to.
My record will stand for itself.

T&FN: Do you want to see your last
record so far out there that it’s
unattainable for a long time?
Moses: Well, I think everyone in track
& field wants to see a record that no one
can break. I think that’s pretty clear.
No one wants their record to be broken.

T&FN: Can you get it that far out
there?
Moses: I don’t know. I don’t know
how fast I can run. I don’t know how fast
anyone else can run. Maybe it’s that far
already.

T&FN: Do you feel the hurdles will
stagnate after you leave, the way the long
jump did after Beamon?
Moses: Stagnant in terms of someone
else running a World Record, I don’t know.
I guess that would be the only measure.
There are guys who have been able to run
very good races: Harald Schmid, Andre
Phillips, Akii-Bua. Regardless of what I do,
I don’t think the event will ever stagnate.
I think the competition will always be at
world class level as well as any other event.

T&FN: Do you ever look at your
record as being a pure one compared to the
middle distance races which have often
been paced races?
Moses: Absolutely! My personal
feeling is that with all the emphasis on
altitude I think that someone ought to look
at it objectively and come to the same
conclusion as to paced races.

Who’s to say that altitude is any more
of an aid that having rabbits in the race?
That’s not true competition. The guy in the
100m is not having anyone pace him at any
point in time.

When you have someone in the race
not to win I think that’s it’s not true track
& field. And I think that the records are
not at the same level as an event where it’s
straight competition. I think that rabbits
aid considerably more than altitude. I think
it’s unfair, really.

T&FN: Have you ever thought about
going up to altitude to run a major race?
Moses: No, not really.

T&FN: How would you feel if
you’d gone to the Sports Festival this year
at Colorado Springs and run 46.90?
Moses: Well, I would have felt it was
a legitimate World Record, as legitimate as
any other World Record. The same as all
the altitude-aided records, most of the ones
that are broken are broken again at high
altitudes. So, basically it’s the same.

T&FN: Would you have felt that
suddenly you had to chase a record that
was unfairly aided when you run 95% of
your races at sea level?
Moses: No, I don’t feel like that at all.
If the IAAF gives a sanction to a meet, it’s
a legitimate meet. It’s just the same as the
rules having been changed in terms of
having rabbits in the race. As a matter of
fact, the rule probably is still on the books.
But everyone tends to overlook it. So in
that case it is definitely against the rules
and it’s stated. But there’s nothing in the
books about altitude.

T&FN: What about the steroid issue
that’s been raised, in part, by you?
Moses: It’s a very serious problem that
no one is willing to approach. It’s just
the money under the table used to be. I
feel that I’m working at a disadvantage by
having to run against people who use
steroids or whatever else they may be using.
I think there have been people in and
around the sport that have been saying it
for years, but no one has really taken
notice.

T&FN: How prevalent do you think
steroid users are in your event?
Moses: I don’t know. That’s why I’m
for testing. Everyone knows that it’s
happening. It’s not my job to say that some
guy is doing it or some guy is not.

I’m not going to make any statement
to cause any animosity. But the problem
does exist and everyone knows it. Why try
to deny it? A lot of individuals are more
concerned about winning, making money,
then they are about doing it by the rules.

At the TAC Convention, very few of
the athletes wanted random testing. The
fear was that a person could get caught. My
personal feeling is that there’s a certain
element that wants it to be as easy as
possible to continue with the possibility
of getting caught being as small as possible.

T&FN: Could you be better?
Moses: I don’t even think about that.
I don’t want to be better if that’s what it
takes.

T&FN: What do people who don’t
know much about track think of when
they hear "Edwin Moses"?
Moses: Well, even the people who
don’t follow track as closely know that I’ve
won a lot of races. I think that’s the thing
that comes to mind first of all, as well as
my winning a medal in ’76.

T&FN: What does the streak mean to
you?
Moses: It means that those races are in
the past, and I’m training to win more
races. Really, from an athletic point of
view, it’s all in the past. It really doesn’t
have anything to do with what’s going to
happen in the season of 1984. I’m very
careful not to let it interfere with my
training or start taking my competitors for
granted or anything else.

T&FN: Is maintaining the streak a
goal, or is it just incidental to the real
goals?
Moses: I think it’s a by-product more
than anything else. My main goal now is,
of course, to win the Olympic medal, produce
more World Records, keep from getting
injured. Those are the three things that I
think about the most. But the most
important thing is being healthy and doing
the proper training. And I figure that
everything else will take care of itself.

T&FN: Is there a certain point at
which you might not be able to reset goals?
Moses: Of course, but the goals that I
set are really concrete enough. Going out
there every day and training is a goal that I
have to fulfill. The main thing is not to
worry about it. I don’t worry about
breaking the World Record. Most guys who
say they do, never do. Most predictions in
terms of World Records never happen.
I don’t think I really get caught up in that
to the point where I’m just saying I’m
gonna have a World Record just for television’s
sake.

T&FN: At what point do you think
you might have difficulty setting goals?
Moses: I hope never. After I finish
track & field, life is still going to go on and
I’ll still have to set goals no matter what
they are. Whether you’re able to achieve a
particular goal doesn’t keep you from
having a goal and trying to achieve it.

by Dave Johnson