

Shalane Flanagan

by Sieg Lindstrom

Already the American Record holder in the 5000 (and the indoor 3K), Shalane Flanagan didn't just move up to the 10,000 in the Olympic year.

She bounded up, erasing Deena Kastor's AR with a 30:34.49 race in her debut 10K before winning an electric OT duel with Kara Goucher, then overcoming a brutally untimely case of food poisoning to earn the Olympic bronze.

The Tar Heel alum also placed 3rd in the Trials 5000, 10th in the tactical 5 in Beijing and added the USATF road 5K title to wind up her year. Better than fair-to-middlin' in a distance she says she was never sharp for in '08.

While rival Goucher tacked on a marathon debut in New York (see p. 29), Flanagan, held off for now—although she definitely wants to explore the 26-miler, in which her mother, Cheryl Treworgy, ran 2:49:40 for a WR in '71 and her father Steve ran 2:18.

Come the new year, Flanagan will head to altitude in Mexico with two other members of coach John Cook's

group, Olympic milers Erin Donohue and Shannon Rowbury. There they will train, as in '08, with retired marathoner Germán Silva.

T&FN spoke with Flanagan just after NYC Marathon Weekend, on which, she explained, she stayed home with husband Steve Edwards in Chapel Hill, celebrated Halloween with her nephew and grilled in the backyard.

Flanagan: It's been kind of a big celebration the past two months more than anything. Coach had us take off close to a month. At first when he told me that, I thought, "There's no way I'm going to be able to do that," but I actually really needed it. I really enjoyed my time off. I went to visit friends and family all over the country.

T&FN: Looking at your season, you didn't just go out and race randomly. You ran USATF Cross

Country, the 8K Championships and the big 10K at Cardinal plus the Trials and Games, of course. You've been very careful with picking your spots.

Flanagan: Yeah. I have a really hard time going out to race just for the sake of racing. I really have to have, for better or worse, a very tangible goal—whether it's to break a record, win a championship.

I have a hard time toeing the line if there isn't something at stake, because otherwise I figure I may as well be training so I gain that extra level of fitness. Maybe I don't get as much race experience but I think in long-term development it will save me a little bit.

T&FN: How did you manage that transition from the emotional peak of the Trials to the ultimate peak at the Games?

Flanagan: I was pretty much useless that week after the Trials—10 days almost. It was a little hard to get back into training with intensity because here is the culmination for a lot of athletes and I felt it was extremely hard to get back and get psyched up for training.

But my husband and I through talking to coach [Joe] Vigil and coach Cook decided to go back to altitude in Colorado Springs, at the Olympic Training Center, and just focus and get reinvigorated with the trails.

Coach Cook didn't come. It was just my husband and me. But we do a lot on our own so we manage ourselves pretty well. There was just a bunch of Olympic athletes in general at the Training Center that were going to be going to Beijing. So it was kind of an exciting place to be, to be honest. You had wrestlers, you had swimmers and all that.

We were there two or three weeks and we flew directly to the training camp from Colorado Springs.

T&FN: What kind of training did you do?

Flanagan: We went back to a little bit of strength and kind of relied on that we'd do most of our speed once we got to Dalian. I just got in some good quality tempos and good quality stuff on the track—longer repeats.

T&FN: What do you mean by longer repeats?

Flanagan: I'd have to look back and

Flanagan In A Nutshell

•**Personal:** born Boulder, Colorado, July 8, 1981; 5-5/113 (1.65/51)

•**Schools:** Marblehead (Massachusetts) HS '00; North Carolina '04; now represents Nike

•**Coaches:** Michael Whitteley (North Carolina), John Cook (pro)

•**PRs:** 1500—4:05.86 ('07); 3000—8:33.25i AR ('07); 5000—14:44.80 AR ('07); 10,000—30:22.22 AR ('08)

•**Major Meets:** 1500—1) ACC, 10) NCAA '01; 1) ACC, 3) NCAA '02; 1) ACC, 5) USATF '03; 6) OT '04. 5000—1) ACC, 2) NCAA, 2) USATF '03; 3) OT, 11) OG '04; 1) USATF, 7) WC '05; 1) USATF, 8) WC '07; 3) OT, 10) OG '08. 10,000—1) OT, 3) OG '08

•**World/U.S. Rankings:** 1500—x, 6 '03; x, 9 '04; x, 2 '07. 3000—x, 5 '03; x, 3 '05; x, 1 '07. 5000—x, 4 '03; x, 3 '04; x, 1 '05; 10, 1 '07





“I pretty much knew [I had medaled], but it was like a NASCAR race out there”

see what I did [laughs]. Maybe not necessarily long-long repeats, but I remember specifically one workout that gave me a signal that I was getting into the kind of form that I needed to be. Because I'd done it earlier in the year right before Stanford and that was a good indicator of what I was going to run, and this one was even faster than the earlier one.

I think we did—I want to say, 8 quarters in like 70 with very little rest, 60–90 seconds. At altitude I may have had to give myself a little bit more rest. Then I think I had maybe a 3K kind of time trial in between and then 8 more quarters at 70 or faster.

So just to be on my legs that long—for me the 10K is the pounding—with decent quality was the goal.

T&FN: *So you were supremely prepared and then just before you were to fly from Dalian to Beijing for the 10K, you got food poisoning.*

Flanagan: Yeah.

We had decided to fly out on Tuesday and our race was Friday night. Monday night I woke up and was just extremely ill. My poor roommate, Amy [Yoder Begley], heard me get up and down a million times and we had to fly out early that morning.

I was just trying to get myself composed so that I could even get on a flight.

So I was meeting with my coach and some doctors at 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning, trying to get some medicine in me so I could get on the flight, but it was just clear it wasn't going to happen.

I was going to have an incident along the way if I tried to go to the airport. So I had to stay behind, hoping I could fly out the next day. I was fine by Wednesday to fly, still not feeling great.

Wednesday after

I got in I was able to get a run in but Wednesday and Thursday running was very tough because I literally had to stay at the track. I couldn't go anywhere where there wasn't a facility within 100 meters.

I was just praying to get through a run. The first one I got through without a pit stop was Thursday night, and then I raced Friday. It was cutting it close. Literally within 24 hours things changed for the better but if I had gotten sick any later it would have been too bad.

T&FN: *What did you do to try to recover?*

Flanagan: I couldn't get an IV because they claimed that that was illegal; like I would be trying to cover up some type of drug. It was kind of limited: just good Imodium and some electrolytes was about all I was allowed to take. But I had a good feeling warming up that I think things are going to be fine.

T&FN: *Coach Cook mentioned after the race that Amy and Kara were using ice vests during their warmup. He asked if you wanted to use one too and you replied, pardon my French, "[expletive deleted] it—we don't need an ice vest."*

Flanagan: His language rubs off on me. You mix a Bostonian with a guy whose language is not PG-rated [laughs], so it makes for an interesting mix.

But I had never really, to be honest, used an ice vest. Nike was nice enough to buy one for me and I'd used it a little bit in Colorado Springs but it wasn't part of my normal routine and

The Medal-Winning Strategy

After her travails in just reaching the Beijing starting line, Shalane Flanagan employed a simple race strategy to earn her 10K medal:

“My goal going in was just to be top 6 and at one point when the front pack broke away from me I remember saying, ‘OK, I’m in 6th position; I’m going to defend this position like my life depends upon it. If I can pass some people, so be it, but I’m going to defend this spot.’”

Coach Cook felt like it was going to be an honest race. So I was kind of prepared. And I knew when it went it was a solid move. I knew it wasn't one to just let them go; I knew it was a solid move considering the people that were at the front. I thought, ‘There's no way I'm going to just let people take off.’”

She moved up to 3rd by the end but appeared unsure whether she had medaled. Was she just looking for confirmation or really unsure?

“I pretty much knew, but it was like a NASCAR race out there. There were so many women and when you really get in a zone, at least for me, it's almost irrelevant whom you're passing. I don't say, ‘Oh, there's so-and-so.’ It's irrelevant; it's a body.”

“It is relevant because I needed to know if I was in 3rd or not but I was pretty sure I was in 3rd. I just wanted some confirmation because it's a pretty big moment. And I wanted to make sure it was for real. I was kind of in disbelief, really, that it really did happen after what I'd just been through.”

“Not one runner out there doesn't actually dream of medaling. Everybody dreams of medaling. So it's very surreal when it actually does happen.”

it really wasn't that hot that night. We lucked out; it was phenomenal weather. I just felt it's not even close to being as hot as some of the workouts I've done in North Carolina.

T&FN: *With all your careful preparation upset by the illness, did you just decide you'd run and*

The coach's best friend

Dozens Of Diversions To Keep Your Team Motivated.

Coach, *TRAINING GAMES* can be a lifesaver for you in helping to keep your team motivated, fresh and enthusiastic. Eric Anderson offers a number of running exercises and diversions that will enliven your daily workouts and will help to build team cohesiveness.

And there are discussions of various other topics that will make your day more productive and your athletes more effective: dealing with pain, visualization and mental games, racing tactics, safety factors, counseling and communication, off-track activities, much more.

There's a reason why *TRAINING GAMES* is one of our best-selling books. Order your copy today and find out for yourself.



Training Games: Coaching Runners Creatively, by Eric Anderson. 2nd Ed. 1996, with additional games. 160pp. Paperbound. With cartoons by George Anderson. \$17.50 from Track & Field News, 2570 El Camino Real, Suite 606, Mountain View, CA 94040. Postage/handling per item: add \$2.95 for US delivery; \$12 for foreign delivery. Calif. residents add 7¼% sales tax (\$1.27 per copy). Visa/MC/AMEX orders welcome; call 650/948-8188 M-F 9-5 PT. Online order: www.trackandfieldnews.com

Flanagan Interview

see what happens?

Flanagan: Yeah. In hindsight, I think it was a blessing in disguise getting sick. I know that sounds weird but it really forced me to really save a ton of energy and just relax those last couple days.

I mean I didn't do anything. I just laid around. I was depleted in terms of liquids and such but my legs were really fresh because I didn't do anything for about 3 days. I felt like, in a way, the sickness distracted me and alleviated some of the internal pressure that I was putting on myself to do something special because here was something that happened that I couldn't control.

So when I got to the starting line, I was just happy to be on the starting line.

T&FN: You placed 10th in the Olympic 5K. How did you feel about that?

Flanagan: The first 4 days in between the 10 and the 5 I didn't even sleep. I was on such a high. It was a little hard to come down from the clouds and refocus.

But at the same time I was excited to get back out on the track, but I think some of the sickness started to creep in, the fatigue of that kind of an effort that I put forth. It was a little bit superhuman. It was like I had all these emotions and energy and it went into that one race, and that was about all I had.

So when I stepped on the track for the 5, that prelim was probably one of the hardest races I've ever run. I felt terrible; from the sickness the weaknesses were starting to come out. I had been kind of babying my left foot with some tendinitis, and that was kind of creaky after the 10K. Things started to just fall apart a little bit but I knew I could make the final. And the final was just a weird [tactical] race—very weird.

So I'm bummed it didn't go better but it is what it is. You can only do so much.

T&FN: What are your thoughts on Shannon Rowbury joining your group?

Flanagan: She had an unbelievable year. Every time she would knock down her PR in the 1500, I kept thinking to myself, "Man, that's the event I want to do." She continuously inspired me to want to go out and run a 1500.

She is just a workhorse. She's very dedicated; she fits really well into the group because to be in this group, it's kind of unique in the aspect that you have to be pretty independent and accountable for what you're doing because

Coach Cook isn't here every day looking over our shoulder. Erin's in New Jersey, I'm in North Carolina, and Shannon's in San Francisco.

T&FN: Maybe it's beneficial that you only get together for certain parts of the year?

Flanagan: Yeah. In the fall we have our own time to kind of work at our own pace and not worry that, "Oh, Shannon's more fit than me right now." We can do our own thing, but we know when we show up at our training venue during the winter we have to be ready.

Despite her 5 & 10 successes, Flanagan wants to try shorter distances



T&FN: Are you doing Cook's famed supplemental exercises now?

Flanagan: Oh, yeah. Coach Cook always has new stuff for each year. So we're learning some new stuff right now that we're integrating with our old material.

If one of us has weak hips, then we all have to work on our hips. Right now we've kind of assessed that I have weak glutes so we're working on the glutes right now. He'll create new random exercises, especially during the offseason, wherever our deficiencies are. We have our own vices so we work on those aspects of our running that we're weak in.

T&FN: What motivates you for '09?

Flanagan: I want to get back and run some shorter races and really enjoy a full track season. You know, I was very picky this year. I'll probably still be pretty picky but I really want to endure a European campaign.

I really have not endured it fully and embraced it fully. I would like to get back on the track and run a lot of 1500s, 3Ks and 5Ks, stay away from the 10K for a while and let those longer distances come in the next couple of years. □