

**T&FN INTERVIEW**

# Trey Hardee

by Jon Hendershott

**A**fter defending his decathlon world title in Daegu, Trey Hardee didn't expect to be spending this fall in rehab. But the 27-year-old Alabama native has been diligently doing his physio after the reconstructive surgery of the ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow ("Tommy John Surgery"—see p. 32), which Hardee tore on his final javelin toss in Korea.

Hardee and coach Mario Sategna aren't worried that the situation will harm the Texas grad's chances

of making his second Olympic team next June. They have their plans set already and are confident in the outcome, as Hardee told us in early October:

**T&FN:** How is the rehab going?

**Hardee:** I just started doing some weight stuff, like curls. Getting hold of some weights. It's feeling great. We're probably one day away from getting full range of motion. We're almost there. After a week or two, we anticipate it

being back to full range.

**T&FN:** When did you have the surgery?

**Hardee:** Let's see, I've got it right here on my wrist—September 16. I still wear my hospital ID bracelet, initially so I could remember which week of therapy we're on.

A big thing is that I'm honestly not in a hurry. I think people get in trouble when they get ahead of themselves. Then they can get a lot of setbacks. I've done that before with

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ERIC L ANDERSON/THE SPORTING IMAGE

we’re peaking for London, not at the Trials. We’re right on schedule; nothing changes because of this.

**T&FN:** *So is there really any worry in your mind or Mario’s that the rehab from the surgery could adversely affect your chance to make the Olympic team?*

**Hardee:** Ummm, not necessarily. It’s unfortunate that this happened and I’ve had to go through this. But at the same time, having it happen when it did is the biggest blessing of all. So we’re in a good position.

I PRed in four events this past season and the way training is going and my body is behaving, we’re just now getting to my peak. We have just now started to see the potential of what could happen if I put one together.

So we’re being patient, but very focused at the same time and confident that if we just do our stuff—do what we’re supposed to be doing—everything will take care of itself.

There’s no sense of urgency, no worries, no panic. It is what it is, we’re moving through it and we’re going to be fine at the end of it. I can do what I need to do to get ready. And another thing is that I’ve already got an automatic bid for 2013 [the next Worlds]. That’s an awesome feeling to have.

**T&FN:** *Of your world titles, can you contrast Berlin ’09 with Daegu ’11 as competitions? Or don’t you even try to compare the two?*

**Hardee:** Berlin taught me a lot of things about how to approach a competition and what you need to feel during a competition. But as far as something like facing adversity, Berlin didn’t teach me much. It was a relatively smooth meet for me. I was rolling, I was confident and had a great time.

Plus, I wasn’t supposed to win. Maybe I could sneak in and get a medal, but I wasn’t supposed to do as well as I did. So that approach made it a little bit easier to do.

Going into Daegu, I don’t think I was overconfident but I had never been quite that confident. Then, I got food poisoning pretty bad and maybe even a case of the flu. It took me about two weeks to get back to where I could train. But my confidence was pretty shaken. Then I ran a 10.53 hundred at the Thorpe Cup, with a 1.1mps aiding at the

wind. That was the slowest time I had run in maybe seven years. At Götztis, I ran into an 0.7mps wind and I ran 10.44.

I wasn’t shattered by that time, but I was shaken. I thought that Daegu was going to be pretty tough because I knew my Day 1 scores weren’t going to be good.

The food poisoning kind of took my pop away, my power. But my technical events were happening. The Day 2 events all were there,

except for the hurdles. I knew they weren’t going to be that good.

So going into Daegu, I just thought, “I’ll take what my body gives me.” I honestly couldn’t believe I was 2<sup>nd</sup> after the first day. I thought I would struggle to be in the top 5.

Talking with Mario after the first day, we decided we had been given a gift, so let’s capitalize on it tomorrow. We knew those events are mainly going to be good.

[Laughs]

I don’t think a n y b o d y thought I could win Daegu. Even you guys didn’t pick me [our Preview picked him 2<sup>nd</sup>].

I went into it thinking I was the guy to beat, but e v e r y b o d y not living in Austin, Texas, t h o u g h t Ashton would win.

**T & F N :** *Your Götztis score [seasonal best 8629] was*

*the second-highest of your career, so that must have been tremendously encouraging at that early point in the season.*

**Hardee:** Absolutely, because before both Götztis and the USAs we hadn’t even yet kicked into speedwork in our training. We were ready to blow it out of the water in Daegu. Honestly, it wouldn’t have surprised Mario and me if I had scored 9000 in Daegu. We knew that could happen, but it just didn’t really come together.

Maybe in the long run, it will be a good thing. I think that if I had blown it out in Daegu, maybe there wouldn’t be as much motivation for 2012. But I did well there—and I know there’s better stuff coming up.

**T&FN:** *In some ways, did you have to go through the huge disappointment of Beijing—being 4<sup>th</sup> before the pole vault and then no-heighting—to become the athlete you are now?*

**Hardee:** Without a doubt. We wouldn’t have gone back to the drawing board in the fall of ’08 and winter of ’09 if I hadn’t failed like I did in front of millions of people.

Without that, Berlin really wouldn’t have happened and neither would have anything after Berlin. So everything was

## Hardee In A Nutshell

•**Personal:** James Edward Hardee III was born February 7, 1984, in Birmingham, Alabama; 6-5/210 (1.96/95)

•**Schools:** Vestavia Hills (Birmingham) HS ’02; Mississippi State 2003–04; Texas 2005–06; now represents Nike

•**PRs:** see separate box

•**Coaches:** Steve Dudley, Keith Powell (Mississippi State); Mario Sategna (Texas, professional)

•**Major Meets:** 5)NC ’03; 2)NC, dnf)OT ’04; 3)NCi, 1)NC ’05; 9)NC ’06; 2)OT, dnf)OG ’08; 1)US, 1)WC ’09; 2)WCI ’10; 1)WC ’11

•**World/U.S. Rankings:** ’04—x, 10; ’05—x, 5; ’06—x, 5; ’08—5, 2; ’09—1, 1; ’11—1? 1?

## Hardee’s PRs

**Trey Hardee’s decathlon-event PRs add up to 9156:**

100..... 10.39 (’10)  
LJ ..... 25-10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>/7.88 (’11)  
SP ..... 52-3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>/15.94i (’11)  
HJ ..... 6-9/2.06i (’10)  
400..... 47.51 (’06)  
**First-day total: 4671**

110H..... 13.69 (’11)  
DT ..... 172-10/52.68 (’08)  
PV .... 17-4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>/5.30(A)i (’06)  
JT ..... 226-4/68.99 (’11)  
1500..... 4:42.23 (’06)  
**Second-day total: 4485**

other injuries, so we kind of learned our lesson there. We’re patient, but we’re focused at the same time.

**T&FN:** *Do you see the recovery and rehab really affecting much your ability to do things like lifting, vaulting and training for the other throws?*

**Hardee:** Basically, all the surgery did was push back heavy lifting by maybe 3–4 weeks. In the grand scheme of things, that’s not a lot. We’re training for the Olympic Trials, yes. But

## Hardee Interview

kind of put into place for me—and I wouldn't change anything either. I learned I can control only what I can control.

**T&FN:** When do you think you "became" a decathlete, even though you have said you hated it after your first one?

**Hardee:** I think it was after my soph year ['04] that it really became my thing. In my frosh year and most of my soph year, I thought, "I need to get good at one event so I can stop training for this decathlon thing."

But I *did* enjoy it. When it was over, it felt awesome. There were some events in it that I really loved to do, like the pole vault. I also loved running the 100, but then I would close my eyes until the hurdles, because I like the hurdles, too.

Then I would close my eyes until the pole vault and then until the thing was over. But with each one you do, you get a little better. You can squeeze out a PR and that's always exciting.

It wasn't until NCAAs in '04 when I first scored over 8000 that I thought, "OK, I can legitimately be pretty good at this." In '04, I got the A-standard for the Trials so I got to compete in those—yet a year before, I didn't even know what the 10 events were in a decathlon. So it was this whirlwind of, "Maybe this is what I'm supposed to be doing."

**T&FN:** Can you say what it is about the event that drives decathletes? Master all 10 events, or perform well over both days, or win medals or score

high? What impels you guys, because it is such an all-consuming event?

**Hardee:** I think it's some of everything. At this point, it's a little bit of my livelihood and a lot of chasing that elusive mark. Even if it's not a perfect score, it's getting bests in maybe

he vaulted just 4.80 [15-9].

That's the first thing a decathlete says after he lists his bests: "In my PR score, I only threw the shot whatever."

Mario says that when he PRed [8107 in '97], he only high jumped 6-1 [actually 6-2¼/1.89].

So you can always get better. There's never that perfect meet.

**T&FN:** Is the drive and dedication a basis for the camaraderie among decathletes? They all know it's a battle for survival and not really against each guy but against the scoring tables.

**Hardee:** A big part is the mutual respect from knowing that they're putting in the same kind of work you're putting in.

They had to sacrifice just as much as you did to get there. They did every event you did; you didn't do any more or any less than they did. They tried just as hard as you did. You're all competing against the event.

**T&FN:** What do you feel you have to improve on? Is it each event, or how you put them together, or mentally or what?

**Hardee:** I think that after '10 and this season, we have the technical models and the cues we need to do every event. When you get to my age [28 in early February], it's a matter of staying healthy.

Keep it together; keep it in the cage; keep it loose.

Don't be afraid to take

days off when you need them and stay on top of injuries and nagging pains. Nothing really will change except that I'm doing a lot more rehab now.

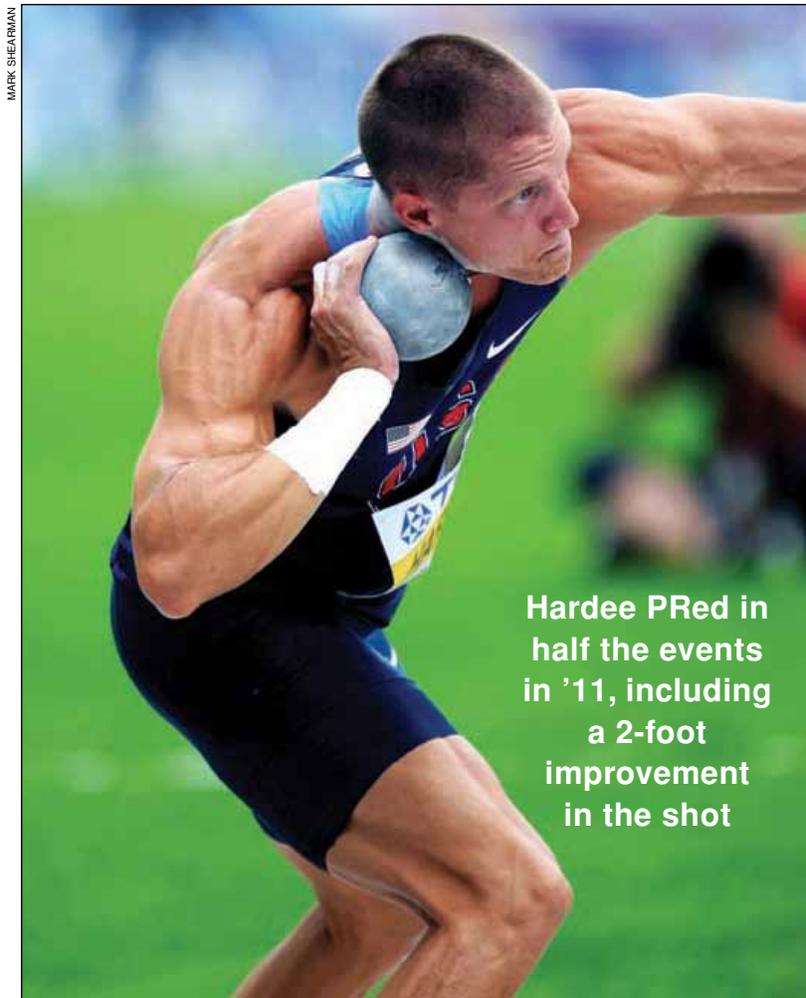
**T&FN:** Have you and Mario talked about next year and competing? Just individual events until the Trials maybe?

**Hardee:** Oh no. A guy on the team had Tommy John surgery and competed the next year and improved in every event. He had surgery in July of the previous year.

There's also the World Indoor heptathlon in '12 and I have an automatic bid as the decathlon champion, so that's not out of the cards.

We'll just take everything as it comes. We don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves; it won't be any different from any other year. We'll just let my body dictate what we're going to do.

But yes, that's right [laughs]: there's no javelin in the indoor heptathlon! □



Hardee PRed in half the events in '11, including a 2-foot improvement in the shot

8 out of 10 events.

We know that you can always get better. No one has ever put one together that's been perfect. Even when Roman Šebrle broke 9000,

## Coming Back From Surgery

Recovery time from Tommy John surgery can often vary from 6 to 8 months. Trey Hardee thinks his outlook is much shorter:

"Tom Pappas ['03 world deca champ] had this surgery—back at the turn of the century. [laughs] He was ready to throw in 4½ months and actually threw in competition after 6. That's my timetable, but I've got the liberty of having more time than that. I've basically got 9 months until I need to be able to throw once.

"As long as I'm able to train—which I will be; able to train completely normally except that I won't be able to throw the jav as far as I want—I could throw the jav left-handed at the Trials and probably still make the team.

"When that time comes, I think I'll be ready to score 8400—with a left-handed jav throw. I played around throwing left-handed back in '06 after I had surgery on my right wrist.

"I think that recovery timetable is absolutely realistic. Even after week 1 of my rehab, I was two weeks ahead of schedule. And after week 2, I was three weeks ahead of schedule. I'm doing stuff that's still ahead of schedule and doing it without pain.

"Obviously, there are some things I can't do yet. But my training is as normal as it can get. I'm going to be able to do all the lifting.

"It remains to be seen, but there's no reason I shouldn't be ready to go as long as I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing and following all the protocols."