

JACKIE JOYNER

Jackie Joyner is a happy woman these days. She's not just the normal pleasant self whose smile and laugh are equally infectious. She's even happier, owning an exuberance of joy that comes from her success this year with the complex event called the heptathlon.

Considering her success this year, she might well be walking on air. She has done three heptathlons this year: each was more than 100 points better than she'd scored before 1986. Each was better than the existing American Record. With those three efforts, she now owns three of the seven highest scores in history.

But it's her top effort that has JJ—as those who know her call her—smiling the most. And why not? With a World Record 7148, she won the Goodwill Games by more than 500 points, an awesome margin over such a loaded field. She simply demolished the previous WR by 202 points, the largest raising of a multi-event WR since the days of Rafer Johnson in the decathlon.

Yes, Jackie Joyner is happy these days. But not finished. Not nearly. "I still have two goals that I would like to achieve," she says with one biggie out of the way. "I would like to be a World Champion and also win an Olympic gold medal."

But that's not all; those are just her goals in the heptathlon. Joyner is an athlete whose talent is seemingly as deep as it is wide. Her brother Al, who won the 1984 Olympic triple jump, says Jackie can do anything, and JJ feels she "can do anything if I put my mind to it."

One of the major things on her mind now is to improve her long jump American Record from 23-9 to at least 24 feet. And she'd like to improve her hurdle marks. In the short race, her PR 12.85 is just 0.06 off the AR. And she feels she can improve substantially in the 400 hurdles, as her PR 55.05 came despite "technical mistakes and inexperience."

Both she and her husband/coach, Bob Kersee, feel there is room for improvement even on the 7148 World Record, principally from more work with UCLA's Art Venegas in the weight events. As the saying goes, there's no rest for the weary.

If JJ was weary when she spoke with us, it didn't show. She's a happy woman these days, and more than happy to talk about her World Record:

T&FN: Singling out events, which one of the seven gave you the most satisfaction in your World Record?

Joyner (long pause): I would say the 200 and long jump.

T&FN: Both of the twenty-three-o's.

Joyner: Yes, except I was thinking meters in the long jump. Actually, I think maybe the long jump gave me the most satisfaction. We hadn't worked very much



All-Sport—Mike Powell

on the long jump. I did some work, but we'd spent maybe one or two days doing only things like driving the right leg up and just getting the feeling of it. At one point I thought I'd forgotten how to long jump because I hadn't worked on it very much!

T&FN: *Is it possible that you could forget how to long jump?*

Joyner: Yes! It is for me! That's why Valerie [Brisco-Hooks] and all of them always tease me. If you ever hear them talking about me in the long jump, they'll say, "Oh, Jackie's wacko when it comes to the long jump!" That's because it's all in my mind that I *have* to do this and *have* to do that, but actually I don't. All I need is two or three days and I can recall things. But sometimes when I stay away from it too long I start picking up the bad habits I used to have.

T&FN: *Why was the 200 special?*

Joyner: Because Bobby has always been telling me I could sprint, but I'd always think to myself, "There's no way I'll be able to run 22 or 23." And Valerie would tell me, "If you'd stop running in phases and just run, you'll do 23."

T&FN: *What's the satisfaction of having set a World Record?*

Joyner: I think it's not so much setting a World Record because I wanted to score 7000 points. Jeanette [Bolden] and Valerie would tell me I could get the World Record, but I'd say that regardless of that, I wanted to score 7000. My goal was to score over 7000, and realistically I didn't have to do that to get the World Record, because the old record was 6946. So what made me happy was that I reached my goal of 7000.

T&FN: *Have you celebrated that accomplishment yet?*

Joyner: No. This morning I went on a road run! And later today I go into the weight room.

T&FN: *How did you celebrate in Moscow?*

Joyner: Giving out autographs. People were very friendly. I was in drug testing for about two hours—until midnight—and when I got out people were still there waiting.

T&FN: *You know Daley Thompson, don't you?*

Joyner: Yes, pretty well.

T&FN: *Have you seen him since your World Record?*

Joyner: Oh yes. We saw him in London on the way back.

T&FN: *What did he say?*

Joyner: He was teasing me. He always does, but we're pretty good friends. He's a nice person to talk with because he's always pushing me. Last year in Rome he told me that I better go after the 7000 score because doing 7m in the long jump had already been accomplished.

T&FN: *Have you realized yet your coincidental scoring of over 7000 points in the 7-eventer on July 7 (7/7)?*

Joyner: Yeah, I did yesterday. I wanted to tell Bobby but then I thought

"I Like The Heptathlon Because It Can Slap You Back To Reality"

he's going to say something like, "You're going crazy again."

T&FN: *I still think there was a message in your wedding date. January 11, at 1 p.m. would be 1/11 at 1. And now you're No. 11. . .*

Do you have much "free" time, or do training and other responsibilities take up everything?

Joyner: I have free time.

T&FN: *What do you do with it?*

Joyner: Maybe go to a movie. Majority of my free time is almost like social time. I do have a lot of time. Some people may not believe that, but I do. I probably have more than most other people.

T&FN: *What's the last movie you went to go see?*

Joyner: The last one we saw was. . . Hmm, me and Bobby saw one in Stockholm, and what was it? . . . Oh, you know why I couldn't remember? Because I fell asleep!

T&FN: *Ahh, a thriller!*

Joyner: Not hardly. It was *Police Academy III*.

T&FN: *I'll remember your experience and skip that one. Do you watch much TV?*

Joyner: Yes. *Dynasty* and *Dallas*. Not every week, but when I get a chance to watch them I do. But sometimes there's work to be done, like housecleaning.

I like to read a lot. Mainly things that will help me be a better person. Like in Moscow, I had this book on faith with me, and that helped me believe in what I was going to do. So many things happen because you put your mind on them. Keep your concentration and don't lose hope.

T&FN: *The heptathlon is a major pre-occupation with numbers, and you must deal with more numbers than anybody but accountants and statisticians. Do you ever find it difficult remembering phone numbers or addresses?*

Joyner: No, I've always been good with numbers. My mother prepared me

well for remembering numbers with this game we used to play when I was growing up. She'd make us search for certain numbers, and we'd find them on things like license plates.

Everybody has special ways of remembering numbers, but the way I do it with phone numbers is to put the last four numbers into the form of a heptathlon score. I remember Tonya Alston used to have a phone number that ended in 58-something. She didn't think I'd remember the number but I told her I would because the last four numbers would be a good heptathlon for her.

T&FN: *Do you know anybody whose phone number ends with "7148"?*

Joyner: No, but I know someone whose number ends in "7014." I remembered it because I'd like to score that many points.

T&FN: *To you, what's the greatest thing about doing a heptathlon?*

Joyner: I think it's that you find out what you're made of. You have to work to be good at it, and that takes time. Nobody's invincible; at any given time you can be beat. I've never gone out and acted like I was the best, even if in my heart I might feel that way. You don't want to be overconfident. I go out to compete and do the best I can do.

That's what I like about the heptathlon, because it can slap you back to reality. Because when you get overconfident is when you forget the little things. Like in the shot at Moscow. I wanted to throw 51 feet, or at least 50 feet. But after I threw just 48-5/8, I had to regroup for the 200.

T&FN: *I'd call 23-flat successful! What's the worst thing about the heptathlon for you?*

Joyner: . . . Nothing really comes to mind. Only thing I can think of is that you have to sit around so much between events.

T&FN: *You think half an hour is too much time to rest?*

Joyner: No, the half hour is fine. It's the two- or three-hour wait, because. . . see, the majority of the time we're doing our heptathlon while the rest of the meet is going on. And before the 800 they always want to give us this long period of time, and I say all they do is give you more time to think about the 800 when all you want is for it to be over!

T&FN: *When a man sets a decathlon World Record or wins the decathlon gold medal, he's often called "the world's greatest athlete." Have you ever heard it for a woman who does the same in the heptathlon?*

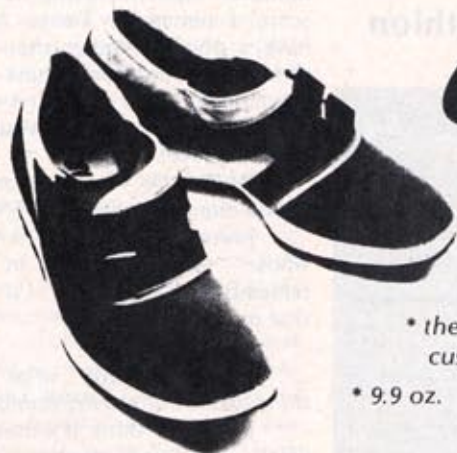
Joyner: No, not until I set the World Record. A couple of people have called me that.

T&FN: *Do you think it's an apt phrase?*

by Howard Willman

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JOYNER INTERVIEW—continued:

Joyner: I think the phrase is appropriate. Only those athletes who've gone through a heptathlon really know what it's about. Some people think it's easy. But you have had different athletes who are good in one event try it.

Like Carol Lewis. Just because she's a good long jumper doesn't give her the right to think that she's going to come into the heptathlon and dominate it, because it takes a long time. Different athletes have said, "I'm going to come into the heptathlon because you guys have got it easy." But it's not easy. You've got to be mentally tough in addition to being physically together.

And you know, a lot of people ask me who my toughest competitor is. Actually, it's that scoring book for me. Your competition is always the same: yourself and the scorebook. That scorebook is always tough; it doesn't lie. And if the conditions aren't good—like in Gotzis this year—that doesn't matter because the scorebook doesn't change.

T&FN: *Is it difficult being married to your coach, or being coached by your husband? Is it hard to separate the relationships?*

Joyner: One thing I can say about Bobby is that he does a good job about separating athletics from our private life. I'll sometimes bring track back home with us.

T&FN: *Do you want to try to separate the two relationships more?*

Joyner: Yes. At first it was hard. But Bobby and I have always been friends. What we have is a very special relationship. But on the track we will have different opinions sometimes on what I should do, and that usually happens in the long jump.

You see, I feel the long jump is *my* event and that I know what I should be working on, but he'll have his own ideas.

T&FN: *What do you and Bob have most in common?*

Joyner: Not our personalities, but our makeup is pretty much the same. I like to win, and Bobby likes to see people excel—not just in track & field, but in careers or anything to better yourself by.

T&FN: *How are you most opposite from Bob?*

Joyner: Oh, I like to talk and he doesn't.

T&FN: *I don't know—I've seen Bob talk for a long time.*

Joyner: Yeah, but I can go on and on and on, and on and on and on, and on and on and on and on.

T&FN: *What are your plans after you're all done with athletics?*

Joyner: I'd like to get into counseling. And hopefully, I'd like to be a sports-caster or broadcaster.





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T&FN: *Have you done any TV commentary work?*

T&FN: Yes, I did some UCLA and USC women's basketball games this year on cable TV.

T&FN: *USC?*

Joyner: Right. They went against a team from Taiwan and I couldn't pronounce any of the names from Taiwan!

T&FN: *Did you enjoy commentating?*

Joyner: Yes. It was good the first time, and I was more relaxed the second time. I feel that it's going to get better and better, and I'd like to do that.

T&FN: *Your brother Al has an Olympic gold medal, but you have a World Record. Would you rather be in his shoes?*

Joyner: Yes. Because he can break a World Record, but not everyone can get a gold medal.

T&FN: *But you can win a gold medal too.*

Joyner: Right. I have another shot at it.

T&FN: *But as it is right now, would you swap places with Al if you could?*

Joyner: Yes. The gold medal can't be broken, but a World Record can.

T&FN: *How does your gold medal from the Goodwill Games look?*

Joyner: Oh, it's OK.

T&FN: *Doesn't quite match up with what an Olympic one would be?*

Joyner: No, but I'll treasure this one. □

Jacqueline Joyner was born March 3, 1962, in East St. Louis, Illinois, and is 5-10/155. Graduated from Lincoln High School of East St. Louis in 1980 and completed her collegiate eligibility in 1985 at UCLA. Married her coach, Bob Kersee, on January 11 and competes for the World Class AC. World Record holder in the heptathlon at 7148 points, she is also a 3-time AR setter in that event as well as the AR holder in the long jump (23-9 '85).

Her PRs (with all-time world and U.S. list positions in parentheses): 100-12.24, '83; 200-23.00, '86; 400-54.0, '83 (51.0r '85); 800-2:09.32, '82; 100H-12.85, '86 (x, -3); 400H-55.05, '85 (x, 5); HJ-6-2, '86; LJ-23-9, '85 (5, 1); TJ-43-4, '85 (9, 6); SP-48-7½, '86; JT-163-7, '86; Hept-7148, '86 (1, 1). Her PRs in heptathlon events add up to 7240.

Major meet finishes: 100H-'83 8)NCAA, '85 3)NCAA; 400H-'85 2)NCAA; HJ-'84 12)TAC; LJ-'79 2)TAC Jr, '80 1)TAC Jr, 8)OT, '81 dnq)IAIW, 12)TAC, '82 2)NCAA, dnq)TAC, '83 3)NCAA, 4)TAC; '84 3)TAC, 2)OT, 5)OG; '85 dnq)NCAA; TJ-'85 2)NCAA; Hept-'81 3)IAIW, 2)TAC, '82 1)NCAA, 1)TAC, '83 1)NCAA, 2)TAC, dnf)WC (injured), '84 1)OT, 2)OG.

Her progression, with World and U.S. Rankings in parentheses ('77-'80 multi scores are pentathlons with 30-inch hurdles):

Year	Age	100H	Long Jump	Multi-Event
1974	12		16-9	
1975	13		17-1½	
1976	14		17-5	
1977	15	14.7w LH	18-8	3471†
1978	16	14.6 LH	18-2½	3680†
1979	17	14.8 LH	20-7½	(x, 8) 3830†
1980	18	14.88w	20-9½	(x, 6) 4048†
1981	19	14.54	20-11½	(x,10) 5754w (x, 2)
1982	20	13.81	21-1½	(x, 6) 6066 (x, 2)
1983	21	13.58	22-1½	(x, 2) 6390 (x, 2)
1984	22	13.53	22-4½	(x, 3) 6579 (9, 2)
1985	23	13.07 (x, 9)	23-9	(2, 1) 6718 (3, 2)
1986	24	12.85	23-0	7148

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