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...
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 wasted 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're going to compete 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. Jeannette [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 ac-
complishment 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...

Should 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
got 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 remem-
bering 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 score 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. No-
body's invincible; at any given time you
can be beat. I've never gotten 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 heptath-
lon, 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 48-5/4, I had to regroup for the 200.

T&FN: I'd call 23-flat successful!
What's the worst thing about the heptath-
lon 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
The Bible of the Sport
September 1986–25
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 if you’ve 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 Gozis 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 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 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 sportscaster or broadcaster.
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 their names from Taiwan!

T&FN: Did you enjoy commenting?

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 7140 points, she is also a 3-time AR holder 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 (1:00 '85); 800-2:09.32, '82; 1500-4:21.66, '86; 880-2:12.9, '86; 100H-11.7, '84; 200H-23.5, '86; 400H-55.06, '85 (x, 6); 880H-2:30.2, '86; LJ-23.9, '85 (5, 1); TJ-43.4, '85 (9, 6); SP-48.7, '86; JT-103-7, '86; Heps-7148, '86 (1, 1). Her PRs in heptathlon events add up to 7240.

Major meet finishes: 100H-3rd 8 NCAAs, '85 3 NCAAs; 400H-2nd 2 NCAAs; HJ-84 12th 15; LJ-79 2nd 15; JAV-81 1st 15; JAV-80 1st 15; JAV-79 2nd 15; NCAAs, eqq 15; TJ-84 2nd 15; Heps-7148, '86 1st 15; 21AAW, 2nd 15; 21AAW, 1st 15; NCAAs, 1st 15; JAV, 2nd 15; JAV, 1st 15; 21AAW, 1st 15; TAC, dnf/INJ (injured), '84 1st 15; TAC, 21AAW.

Her progression, with World and U.S. Rankings in parentheses: ('7-80 multi scores are pentathlons with 30-inch hurdles):

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