

by David Gleason

**I**n the mercurial world of sprinting, superstars can disappear just as quickly as they dash to prominence.

As a novice (even though he had rated No. 8 in the nation the year before) straightaway sprinter in 1979, James Sanford could do little wrong. A 200/400 standout as a prep and as a USC frosh, he turned to the 100 in that sophomore year and ran well enough—winning the AAU and World Cup—to rate No. 1 in the world. His 10.07 was the world's fastest sea-level time.

He was even more impressive as 1980 began, churning to a 10.03 (and 19.7) at altitude in April then improving to 9.88w and a sea-level record 10.02 in May.

The track world's appetite was whetted for something it hadn't tasted in 12 years—a World Record at 100m.

That hunger went unsatiated, as Sanford fell victim to an increasingly sore hamstring which finally gave way when the pressure reached high levels at the NCAA. His brilliant season suddenly over, Sanford watched young Stanley Floyd make the same kind of emergence to the top of the sprint world.

A premature comeback attempt during the European summer kept Sanford a question mark. How well would he recover from his injury? He had already had 1½ good seasons at the top, and many promising young sprinters had disappeared in less time than that.

Early 1981 results indicate that he is back at full strength. In 3 indoor meetings he beat Floyd twice, equalling the 50m WR (5.61) in the process. Outdoors, he moved to an early world lead of 10.18 and then demonstrated fabulous top-end acceleration in a 10.10w win at the King Games.

Now 23, and armed with new attitudes regarding too many fast races, the USC redshirt looks back with justifiable pride and relief on the ups and downs of the past 2 years, and tells us of his thoughts for the future.

**T&FN:** Coming back must have been hard, with an injury like that.

**Sanford:** Well, it took about 4 months to heal. Even when I was over in Europe, it was still hurting, but I wanted to run.

I just missed it. I wanted to see how it felt, and I went out and ran on it anyway. It wasn't healed at all; matter of fact, it was still hurting then. I don't know; for the love of running, you know, I just wanted to try it.

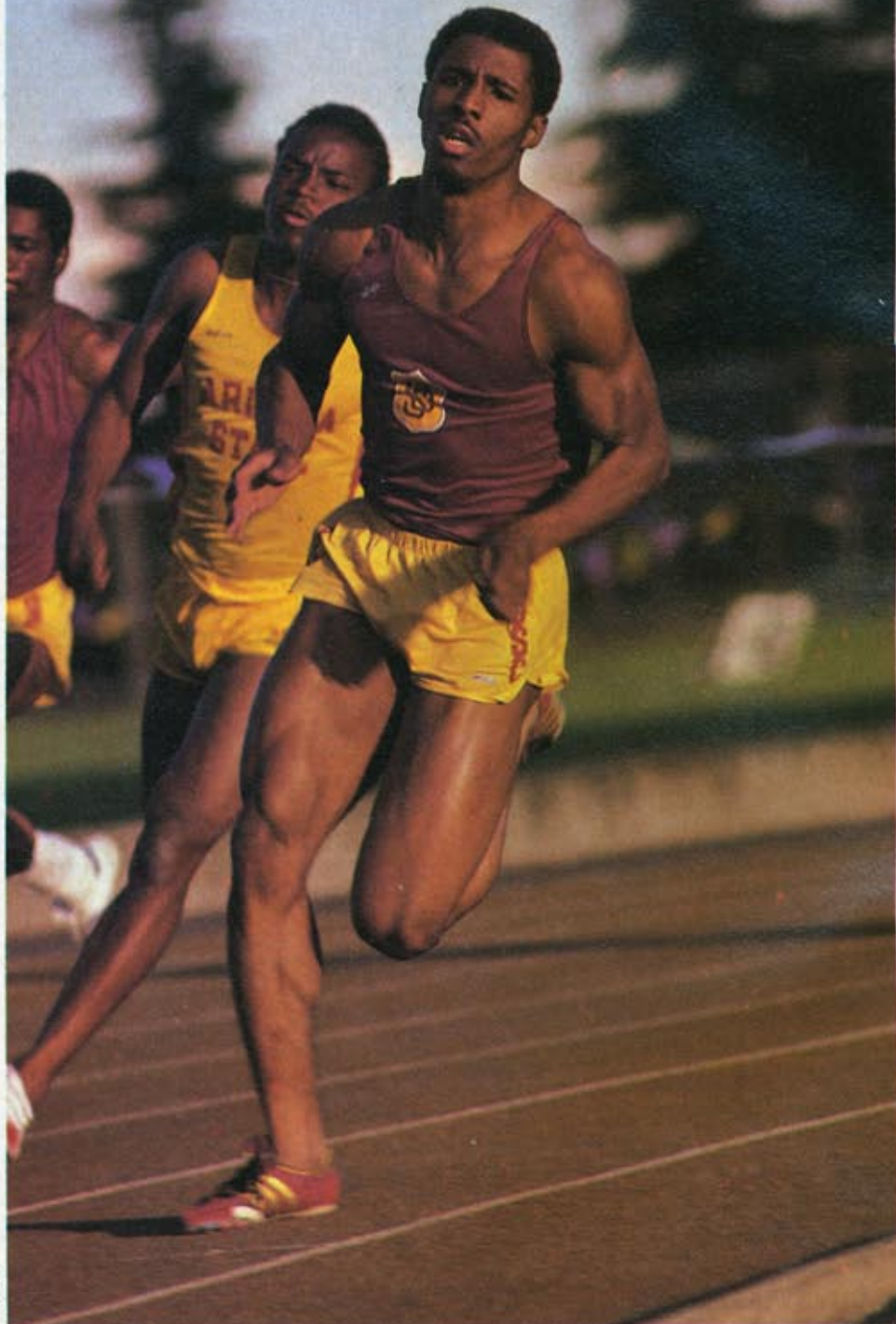
**T&FN:** This is a direct question. What did you learn from that?

**Sanford:** What did I learn? Well, it was the first time that something like that has happened to me.

In fact, I knew it was coming, because I was hurt after the Pepsi meet, and the Brooks meet. It was starting to bother me, but I thought it was my ultimate test, you know: I'd been at the top, and then I got hurt. And all of a sudden, I began to fall back down to the bottom.

I just wanted to work hard in coming back. Some people aren't as fortunate, I

# JAMES SANFORD



Bill Ross



guess; but I always have that positive attitude. I was always optimistic that the good will always prevail over the evil.

**T&FN:** *Where does that attitude come from; where do you get it?*

**Sanford:** It's something I've always had. I guess it's the competitiveness in me, and wanting to run. It's something I love to do, and anything I had to do, well, I was willing to sacrifice anything to get me back into running.

I'm amazed. I feel much stronger than I did last year. And that's the great thing, that's the significant thing about it—I'm so much stronger than last year.

But [sighs] in the beginning, I just didn't know if I was ever going to be the same. My mother told me, "The true test of a good athlete is getting hurt and being able to come back. Not only that; you'll be better than ever."

That inspired me. That made me want to keep going, knowing that I had people behind me, telling me, "You can do it."

**T&FN:** *I guess the pressure's off, since you're not running for the team this year.*

**Sanford:** Yes, it's off. I think it's great, because now I don't have to worry. If I'm hurt, I can take off. They're not relying on me, so thank God for this year.

But next year, I think we're going to be loaded with talent. We did really well in recruiting for next year, and we should have a pretty outstanding team. I don't think I'll have to run as much, and I'm happy for that. And I guess I would like to go out on a winning note, possibly with a national championship team.

Last year—and it was my fault—I was wanting to run too much. You know, once you get that certain fever, you don't know when to quit. And I think that was the problem, that's what was wrong with me.

You get that feeling, and it's something else. I mean, you want to run everything! You want to run every week. Now, I think I'm a little wiser. It's a fun thing to do, but you've got to watch yourself.

Like I said, I knew that sooner or later, my leg was gonna give. I didn't think it would be the NCAA, but I figured it was going to be either the TAC meet or the Olympic Trials.

I'm not saying that I'm happy it happened, but I think in a way, I am, because there was no Olympics, and when it did, I didn't feel too bad.

It was hard, because I knew it was coming, and I figured that people were going to be a little negative on me.

**T&FN:** *Did that happen?*

**Sanford:** Well, not too much, but I could tell. It was like they, not lost faith, but like they didn't think that I'd ever come back.

But I was always saying to myself, "I can do it, I can do it, I can come back, and I'm going to prove it to them. When there's a downfall, there's an uprise." And I'm telling you, there's an uprise, and I'm

happy for it. It's good to be back.

**T&FN:** *Do you want to run a World Record this year?*

**Sanford:** That's right, that's right. It's a certain feeling. I'm starting to get that feeling just like I had last year, not only physically, but mentally, too; that I can do it.

It sounds strange, but it's just this feeling that's been telling me that I can do it. . . not like it's "at will"—but something similar. Like at Stanford [10.10w]: if I had really gone out and run, I think I would have run nine-something.

But I decided just to win the race, but I didn't realize that the time would be so fast. I was, oh, very much surprised.

**T&FN:** *You want to run the World Cup again this year?*

**Sanford:** Oh, yes! [laughs] That's another one of my goals, because I'm the defending champion, and I would like to go back and represent the U.S. in the 100m and perhaps the 200m, too. I'm not going to gear up for just the 100, but also the 200.

**T&FN:** *You're going to run in Europe, of course.*

**Sanford:** Oh, yes. That has an effect, too. It you don't run there, I think it can hurt you a little bit in the rankings, so I'll have to go there.

**T&FN:** *You mean like when you were ranked No. 1 in '79. Was that important to you?*

**Sanford:** That was important! I mean, I never had a clue that I was going to be ranked No. 1 in the world. I was just going out and winning the races, I mean. . .

**T&FN:** *That's all it takes!*

**Sanford:** Then in that [World Cup] race. . . you see, I didn't like the 100, I didn't like it. . . It seems like it just wasn't my style, you know? I preferred the 400, but as the years go on, I've totally forgotten about the 400. I'm more interested in the 100 and 200 now.

**T&FN:** *Because you're successful?*

**Sanford:** Oh, yes. Once you're doing great at one thing, and you were doing fair at the other thing, why not stick to the thing you're doing best? So I thought I'd stay where I am.

**T&FN:** *I'm interested in how you felt about Stanley Floyd last year, since he had such a great year. You had a great year right up until the NCAA, and that's when he sort of took off.*

**Sanford:** Yeah, that's when he took off. Stanley is somebody I respect, and you can't take anything away from him. The man had a great season last year, and hey, I praise that.

And now, I would like to run against him a couple of times. I think I'm ready, and I think he's ready. I think people are going to get some pretty interesting races.

Some people say we have a rivalry going, but I don't consider it a rivalry. I mean, I just consider, he's maybe the No. 1

sprinter and somewhere along the line I'm maybe No. 3 or 4, and we're just colliding against each other, and may be the best man win. That's the way I look at it; whoever wins, wins.

And then again, you can't disregard the others; you have to put them into perspective, too.

**T&FN:** *What else are you doing now other than running? Does school take up most of your time?*

**Sanford:** Just about, just about. I'm just about finishing up. I won't finish in June, but I should finish up in the fall of '81, but I'll stay in school, and hopefully I can take some upper division and graduate courses. And after that, I'd like to try something new.

**T&FN:** *Like what?*

**Sanford:** I don't know. Try and see if I can convert to football, and if I can't that's fine. I never said I was a football player. [Laughs] I'll seek work in my major.

I'm a public administration major and in time, I'd like to go into urban planning. They've got a nice program at USC, a very nice program.

**T&FN:** *What is it about public administration that appeals to you?*

**Sanford:** It's something that pertains to the public, and I like being with people talking with people, dealing with people in general, helping them with certain problems. Mainly, just helping them through life. Doing the best I can for them.

I know of a few places—there's one especially in Pasadena—a planning corporation out there. Somewhere along the line, I'd maybe like to apply there.

**T&FN:** *This is one of those "big" questions: if you could say right now what you'd like to do with the rest of your life, what would you say?*

**Sanford:** Well, shoot, I've always taken this thing: what I've learned, I'd like to teach to others. And I've always thought about maybe being a coach, too. Somewhere along the line, I can teach a young man what I was taught through my years.

Maybe somewhere along the line, coach a young man to do the things that I've done. I think that would be nice: having somebody, you know, work with somebody, who can do just about what you've done—or more. That would be great. □

James Alvin Sanford was born December 27, 1957, in Los Angeles and now measures 5-10/165. As a senior at Pasadena High, rated as No. 1 prep in the 200 and No. 3 in the 400. Bothered by injuries, he has never won an NCAA individual crown (although he has been on 3 winning 4 x 100 teams), finishing 3rd in the 1978 200, 2nd in the '79 100 and 3rd in the '80 100. His progression (with World and U.S. Rankings in parentheses):

Year	Age	Class	Affil	100	200	400
1977	19	Sr	Ca HS		20.80y	46.60y
1978	20	Fr	USC	10.39 (x, 8)	20.24 (9, 4)	45.77
1979	21	So	"	10.07 (1, 1)	20.19 (6, 2)	46.39
1980	22	Jr	"	10.02 (4, 2)	20.26 (8, 4)	47.07
1981	23	SCA		10.18	20.57	