

by Dave Johnson

JEFF PHILLIPS

One of the most noticeable newcomers to the international stage in 1981 was Jeff Phillips, recognizable as much for his powerful frame as for his sprinting prowess. That sprinting ability earned him World Ranking positions in both the 100 (6th) and 200 (5th). His build drew second glances everywhere.

Phillips was a prep sensation, equalling Ohio's state best of 9.4, a mark first set by none other than Jesse Owens. Still, that was in 1976, and it wasn't for 5 more years that Phillips again became a big name.

He had attended Ohio State briefly, then spent 2 years at Vincennes CC, where he gave up football because it didn't have a team. Not until his second year at Tennessee did he begin to come into his own.

His eligibility now gone, Phillips remains at UT, finishing up his degree in Physical Education, and running as well as ever.

A member of a closely-knit family with 3 older sisters and 3 younger brothers, Phillips was spending the Memorial Day weekend at his parents' home in Columbus when we caught up with him:

T&FN: Last year you had a big breakthrough: 2nd in the NCAA 100, a TAC 200 win. What happened that everything came together so well?

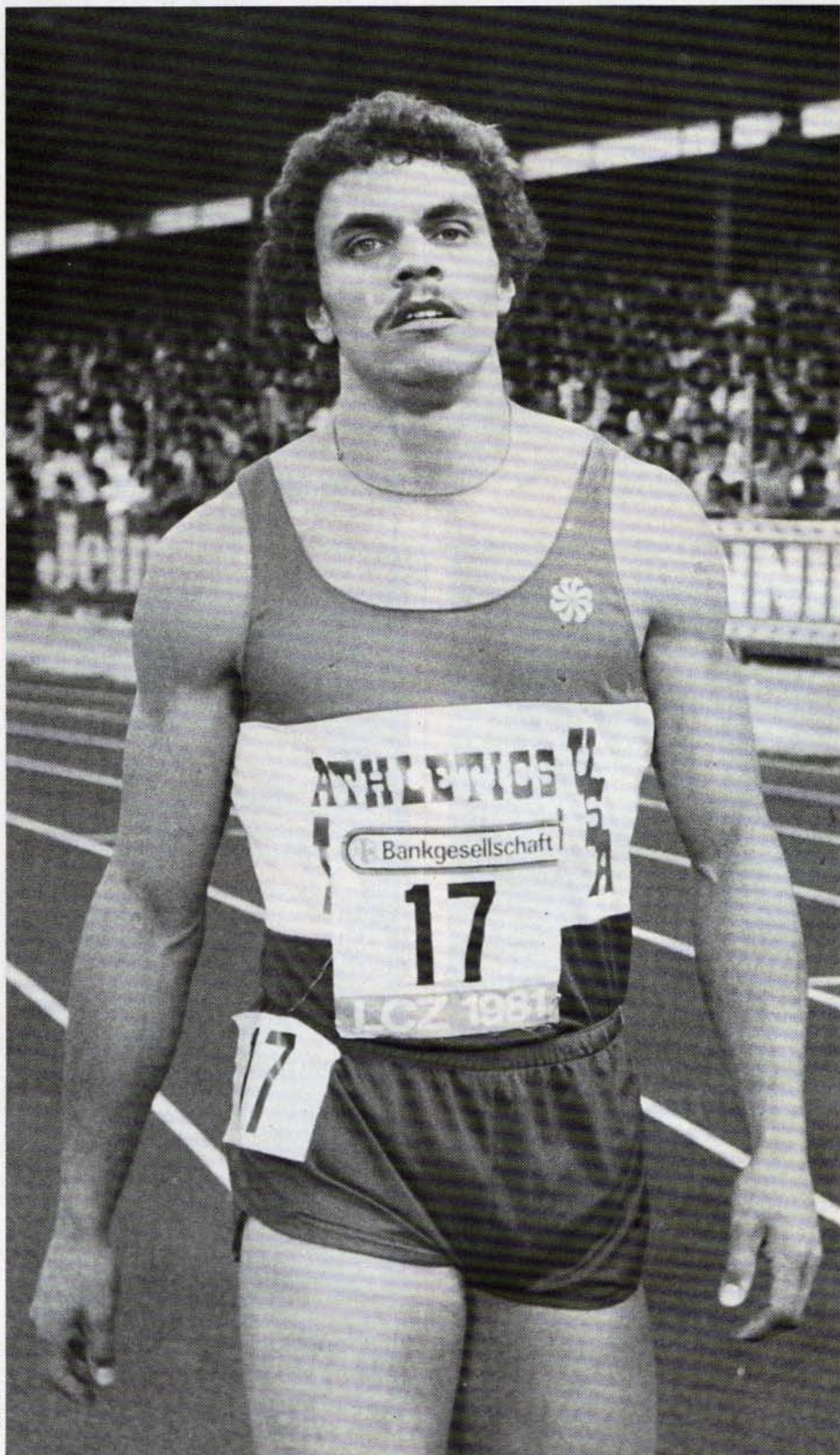
Phillips: The 2 years I had in junior college were alright, but they weren't the best. The coach that I had was spread out between teaching and coaching, and he was the only coach there too, so he had to obligate his duties to the whole track team.

Now that I've come down to Tennessee, you know, it took me a year to get settled into the groove of things. Basically, I just said to myself that I want to go out and get on top, like everybody else. So I just made up my mind in that sense.

Then the coaches that I have, between Billy Maxwell and Stan Huntsman and Ralph Boston and Jason Grimes, all of them really helped me to excel from last year and into this year. And will keep on helping me until '84, hopefully.

T&FN: You've said everybody looks for their piece of the pie. What makes the difference that you're starting to get more of that pie?

Phillips: I think basically what I'm talking about is just wanting the recognition like all the other people. Like Greg Foster and McTear and Floyd and Lattany. They've all got really big names. Somebody mentions sprinters, and automatically they think Stanley Floyd, Mel Lattany. Personally, I wanted to be that way too. I wanted people to say, "Oh, you know, sprinters—that big guy, Phillips. He's a sprinter."



Horstmüller

I wanted people to recognize me that way. I wanted to go places and do things in track & field that I'd never have the opportunity to do. And now I'm on that right road, and I want to continue to excel.

T&FN: *What race fits you best?*

Phillips: I look at myself more as a 200m runner. The 100 is a good race; it's an excellent race, but I have so much more left after 100m that I feel I can run a better 200m.

There's a lot of 100m sprinters out there, but there's not many 200m sprinters, so I'd like to maybe take some of the glory off the 100 and put it into the 200m.

T&FN: *You mentioned getting a share of the publicity. When you were a kid who was it you looked at?*

Phillips: Jesse Owens I guess, as a little kid, and Bob Hayes. But basically, when I was a little kid I didn't really have any desire in track & field. I just did everything I could to be active and it wasn't until 5th grade. I ran an elementary track meet and said, "Hmmm, this is pretty nice." I just liked beating little kids, other little kids my age. I was being noticed; I wasn't very noticed as a little kid. But then track & field just opened up, and here I'm just running in these little meets and doing really well bringing home blue ribbons, and mom and dad putting them up on the wall.

T&FN: *Last season was your first in Europe. What was that like?*

Phillips: It was a different experience. It was a whole new experience. I think getting used to the food and the customs of those people over there was a big change. I didn't really have a successful year over in Europe.

If I go back this summer, which I hope to do, I will know how to act, how to negotiate around things. I'll be more settled than I was last year. Last year I guess I was probably the only person over there who had never been over there before.

I was always asking people, what do we do? What time is it? What time is it back in the States, what time is it here? Just little things like that.

T&FN: *Was that the main reason for your inconsistency over there?*

Phillips: Yeah, I think that's what it was. First time over there, and I was fascinated. I was out looking at things, taking pictures instead of being back in the room thinking about what I was supposed to be there for.

T&FN: *After the Soviet Union, where you doubled in the dual meet, things started to unravel for you.*

Phillips: I got over there and I fell out of my training. I can work out by myself, and I can do it for maybe 2 or 3 days in a row. But any longer than that and I just lose concentration. I think that's what happened. But that matured me a lot.

T&FN: *You've often had problems with your hamstrings. What's behind that?*

Phillips: I had an imbalance between *The Bible of the Sport*

my quadriceps and my hamstrings when I first came down here, but then last year we corrected it. I'm doing a lot of squats to build up the quadriceps.

T&FN: *How strong are you?*

Phillips: I have a 315 bench, 525 full squat, about 600 pounds dead lift.

T&FN: *How does that compare to the weightmen on the Tennessee team?*

Phillips: That's right there with them. I work out with Bruno Pauletto [67-2¼], Jon Newell [60-11¼], Chuck Locke [63-3½]. We're all right there together. I get mistaken, "Hey, that's a shotputter or a javelin thrower."

T&FN: *Does your large musculature ever provide a problem?*

Phillips: I think the only problem it provides is buying clothes. Like dress clothes, I can't just go and buy stuff off the rack.

T&FN: *You've gotten into yoga recently. What is that doing for you?*

Phillips: I started in September. It's helped my relaxation a great deal. I'm not tense, I'm not nervous before a meet or during a meet. I can sit down, relax, be cool.

The stretching has helped my flexibility a great deal. When I first started, he showed us a stretching drill for our hips and when I first started I couldn't touch my nose to my foot. But now I can put my foot behind my head.

When you see me stretching funny, that's what I'm doing. Usually I go off into a corner where nobody's at, and do it, 'cause people look at you kinda strange when you're standing on your head before a meet.

T&FN: *Do you feel different when you're running this year?*

Phillips: Yeah, I'm more relaxed, I'm more in control. I don't have any wild movement of my upper body like I used to. I used to swing my upper body from side to side. The last few weeks I've noticed that my upper body has been almost motionless compared to what it used to be. I watched myself on the Pepsi meet, and that was the only thing I was looking at.

T&FN: *Do you have difficulty looking at yourself on tape and realizing that it's really you? You know, the same way people can't believe it's them talking when they hear themselves on tape?*

Phillips: It really doesn't look like me, come to think of it. I say, "Hey, do I really run like that?" But I'm used to it now. We take videotapes at school and I'll say, "Wow, I didn't realize I was doing that movement, or that motion, or I was running that wide out with my arms."

But that's the art of having that videotape. You can tell yourself or have someone tell you you're running terrible, your arms are way out here. But you're not really going to believe that person unless you can see it for yourself.

T&FN: *You ran the 9.8 hand-time at*

Tom Black. How did that race feel? Can you feel what kind of time you're running?

Phillips: Yeah, it starts around the middle of a race. And then the way I feel, my body's feeling. I feel my legs are really turning over real fast.

T&FN: *Can you almost time yourself?*

Phillips: Yeah, but that's more in the slower races. In the faster races I have no idea. But it felt faster than NCAAs last year.

T&FN: *What do you do for recreation?*

Phillips: Basically I like to be outside. Working, fiddling around the yard.

T&FN: *You're mostly a homebody?*

Phillips: I enjoy being at home, being here in Columbus with my family, or being down in Knoxville in my apartment. I'm comfortable in the kitchen doing something. I like to cook.

T&FN: *What are your specialties?*

Phillips: Pies and cakes, stuff to get fat on.

T&FN: *Is the different food one of the more enjoyable aspects of travelling?*

Phillips: Yeah. I'm not big on trying new things, but I'll taste them, see if I like it. When we were in Russia I tasted some cow tongue, horse meat, other weird stuff. I didn't like it, it didn't agree with my stomach.

T&FN: *What places have you really liked?*

Phillips: I think the only place I didn't like was the Soviet Union. But I really like Italy, Brussels, places like that. The freer countries, the food tasted a lot better.

T&FN: *How long do you want to continue?*

Phillips: I'd like to go right on through '84 to hopefully make the Olympic team. My biggest objective right now is a gold medal. Probably in the 200m. But either way, if it comes in the 100, the 200 or the relay.

I turned down pro football contracts because of just that one objective, the gold medal. I think that a gold medal would replace any big fat football contract that anybody has to offer. I think that, right there, means more to me, representing the U.S. as an Olympian. And then after '84 maybe going into pro football. I'll have done everything there is to do in track & field by then, I hope. □

Jeff Phillips was born May 16, 1957 and is 6-2/208. A 1976 graduate of Whitehall High School (Columbus, Ohio), he was the No. 3 prep All-American in the 200 that year. He has a long jump PR of 25-0, set in 1981. In 100, was 7th in 1980 NCAA, 2nd in 1981. In 200, he was 2nd in 1981 TAC. His progression (with World and U.S. Rankings in parentheses):

Year	Age	Affiliation	100	200
75	17/18	Ohio HS Jr	10.4	21.1v
76	18/19	" Sr	10.3	20.9
77	19/20	Ohio St (ineligible)	—	—
78	20/21	Vincennes JC Fr	6.35i	—
79	21/22	" So	10.2w	20.6
80	22/23	Tennessee Jr	10.32	20.61
81	23/24	" Sr	10.11 (6, 5)	20.36 (5, 4)
82	24/25	Athletics West	10.20	20.27