

# Carmelita Jeter

by  
Jon  
Hendershott

Carmelita Jeter—fast in London and especially as anchor of the U.S.’s World Record 4 x 100—has been busy since the Games.

Photo shoots, promotional travel for sponsor Nike; TV appearances; a Children’s Hospital Gala. She even played with the baby cheetah at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., named after her.

All because the 33-year-old Californian, already the second-fastest woman ever to sprint 100 meters, added to her renown by winning a complete set of medals in the same Olympics with her 4x1 gold, 100 silver and 200 bronze. She became just the third woman in Games history—and the only American ever—to do it:

**T&FN:** What are your feelings about that three-medal accomplishment?

**Jeter:** It’s an amazing achievement. I was just so blessed and happy for what I did in London. To know it was my first Olympics made it all the more amazing to me.

**T&FN:** Also considering that you didn’t make the Trials 100 final in ‘08. What happened then and was that a 4-year motivation to keep you moving forward toward London?

**Jeter:** Yes, it was a big motivation. I think not making the ‘08 final had a lot to do with me making the ‘07 Worlds and winning a bronze medal.

I think I didn’t train as hard for ‘08. I think I felt like I would just be given a spot, but

**T&FN:** Of your three medals, was one any more special than the others? Or were they all just separate rewards for separate situations?

**Jeter:** Every race was different and took different preparation. But still, winning the 4x1 gold medal and breaking the World Record was the highlight of my 2012 season. Breaking a record that people said couldn’t be broken.

So much talk was, “Women can’t break records.” That was so annoying; to hear over and over what women couldn’t do.

Then to go out and break the record—not just break it, but absolutely demolish it. It felt really good on a woman’s side, to show that women could break records.

When I crossed the finish line, you could see I was full of excitement, joy, tears. I was full of everything because it was just an epic moment—and not just for the U.S. team. It was epic for women in general, plus we were the USA team. It was a double treat.

**T&FN:** Can you describe the feeling of looking at that clock and not only seeing a time under the old 41.37 record, but even under 41-flat itself?

**Jeter:** When I got the stick, I just rushed toward the finish line. Of course, when you’re anchor, all you’re thinking is, “I have to get to the finish line. The others—Tianna Madison, Allyson Felix and Bianca Knight—did such a great job, I can’t ruin it.” That’s all I thought.

As I got closer and closer to the line, I realized, “We’re about to break the World Record!” 36, 37, 38 seconds: I was literally looking at the clock as I’m running. I’ve never been a person to express so much emotion. When I ran 10.67 back in ‘09, I was extremely excited and I cried and screamed.

But when we broke that World Record, it was a feeling that I can’t even describe. As I

ran, I felt like I was running on air; not even touching the ground. As I got closer to the finish, I pointed at the clock because I thought, “There it is. People said we couldn’t do it; couldn’t



MARK SHEARMAN

## Jeter In A Nutshell

•**Personal:** Carmelita Jeter (rhymes with better) was born November 24, 1979; in Los Angeles, California; 5-4/117 (1.63/53)

•**Schools:** Bishop Montgomery HS (Torrance, California) ‘98; Cal State Dominguez Hills ‘03; now represents Nike

•**PRs:** 60—7.02(A) ‘10; 100—10.64 (‘09) (2, 3 W, A); 200—22.11 (‘12) (12, x A); 400—53.08 ‘09

•**Coaches:** Warren Edmonson (Cal State Dominguez Hills); Larry Wade (professional); John Smith (pro)

•**Major Meets:** 60—2)USi ‘07; 1)USi, 3)WCI ‘10; 2)USi ‘11. 100—2)NC II ‘02; 2)NC II ‘03; 3)US, 3)WC ‘07; 5sf)OT ‘08; 1)US, 3)WC ‘09; 1)US, 1)WC ‘11; 1)OT, 2)OG ‘12. 200—3)NC II ‘03; 6)OT ‘08; 2)US, 2)WC ‘11; 2)OT, 3)OG ‘12. 4x1—dnf-h)WC ‘09; 1)WC ‘11; 1)OG ‘12

•**World/U.S. Rankings:** 100—3, 2 ‘07; x, 6 ‘08; 1, 1 ‘09; 1, 1 ‘10; 1, 1 ‘11; ?, ? ‘12. 200—x, 7 ‘08; x, 6 ‘10; 2, 1 ‘11; ?, ? ‘12.

it doesn’t work that way.

I got a reality check, probably the best one I could have ever received. After not making that team, I did a lot of things differently: I changed my coach to John Smith. I changed my mentality so track became my life and my career, my job. I think that’s what really pushed me to do as well as I did this year.

just get the stick around, let alone break the record. But we *did* it.”

And in no way did I want to come across as disrespectful to any of the other runners. But I just could *not* hide any of that emotion that was just spewing out of me. There was no way for me to tuck it in or stop screaming. I

just couldn't do it. I would have been almost as excited just for us to be on the podium—but for us to be on the podium *with* a gold medal and *with* the record, that was the cake, the icing and the ice cream all in one.

**T&FN:** *Has it been a great benefit to face the large number of top-class competitors in the women's sprints since you first emerged in '07? You know you have to bring your very best to every race.*

**Jeter:** It helps me and it also helps the women's sprints. It helps us to put our events at the front of the stage. It helps us to where no top meet can be held without us. It really helps us as women in our sport that we have

But when you're training, you have to train and think, "OK, it's real now. Everybody is training hard and running well." I definitely feel it's great for the sport and I'm not backing down from it at all. I feel it's great exposure for all of us. And I also hope that as well as we all are running now really promotes track and field.

**T&FN:** *Among the top women sprinters, what are the interactions like? You see each other in races, yes, but what about off the track?*

**Jeter:** I wouldn't say that we have relationships, but there also is no ill will on anyone's part. Away from the line, I speak to

no need for bad blood. We don't run around looking at each other sideways.

**T&FN:** *Did that positive attitude toward your competitors also carry over to the U.S. 4x1?*

**Jeter:** It did. We were playing, talking, laughing, cracking jokes. We were all women who deal with each other in the same races, but when we went out there, we went out as a team. We put everything aside and went out as a unit. That's one big thing that took us around that track and brought us the record.

**T&FN:** *You have said that the 100 World Record is now a viable goal. Also that you want and enjoy meeting your prime rivals in race after race. Is that*

*because they push you to be your best and maybe one day you can get a record?*

**Jeter:** I do believe that the World Record is obtainable. But it's obtainable only if you have the best of the best on the line. Plus the best conditions, like a 2.0 tailwind.

But I definitely feel it's achievable and having the best women on the line brings the best out of you. You know that you can't play around. You have to bring your best, because that brings out the best in everyone.

And I want to make it perfectly clear that I'll never run away from a race. I'm always willing to race. The training can be difficult, especially to know that it's okay to rest. But I'm a competitor and I want to race anybody, anytime, anywhere.

**T&FN:** *Have you and John discussed the level of training needed for you to run 10.48 while also not causing your body to break down with injury?*

**Jeter:** We have discussed that and, being that I'm going to run until 2016, how I'm going to keep my body intact. How we can't push every day as if I was 23, instead of 33. And how we're going to attack the meets in 2013. We have to be smarter all the way up through 2016.

Being that I'm 33 this year, we definitely have to approach each year differently. We can't put so much stress on my body.

Being that I love to run all the time, John is going to have to pull in my coattails and say, "OK, Jet, we have to make

sure we don't get you hurt. We have to make sure we keep you going for four more years." I just won't run as much. We definitely have a plan going toward Rio and that is to not tap my body out.

**T&FN:** *You were just an 11.6 sprinter in college at a Div. II school. But after that, including '08,*



**"I pointed at the clock because I thought, 'There it is.' People said we couldn't do it; couldn't just get the stick around, let alone break the record. But we *did* it."**

really top-notch people bringing their A-game to every race.

It helps grow the generation behind us, to help them improve and get better. It's great that we're running well; great that we have to bring our top game to every race. That's a definite plus.

all the women. At the end of the day, we're still women. We still are a great force in the sport. I don't hate anyone.

But once we get on the track, it's business. It's my career; this is what I do, what I love. And it's my job. But we're in an environment where we're around each other a lot. So there's

## Carmelita Jeter — continued:

what motivated you, kept driving you to put in the work to get to the top?

**Jeter:** I had a great college coach at Cal State Dominguez Hills in Warren Edmonson. He was part of UCLA's team in the early '70s and was a world-class sprinter. I still talk with him and he is still such a great mentor to me.

He was the one in '08 who told me not to give up. He said, "You have so much potential, so much left in you. Please don't give up." I told him I wouldn't. He is a really big part of me being so successful.

It's so hard to find a great college coach, a coach who believes in you so much. Just having Warren always in my ear, telling me great things about myself, really pushed me to make the Olympic team. But more than that, he most

### Now A 200 Threat As Well

While she first established her name in the 100, Carmelita Jeter emerged in the last two years as a force in the 200 as well, winning an '11 Worlds silver and Olympic bronze this season. Yet the half-lapper wasn't anything new to her:

"Actually, in high school and college, I ran the 200. But the first year I got with John Smith, I said, 'I'm not running the 200 anymore.' As time went on, though, I embraced and enjoyed the 200 more. I really wanted to be on the big stage in the 200 and that meant at the Olympics.

"The crazy thing is, I was dinged up all of 2012. I had a back problem, which then caused a hamstring problem. When I had those injuries, John said, 'What can I do differently so that you don't get hurt again?' He did a great job making sure it didn't happen again.

"I first got dinged up in Shanghai in May—racing the 200 in the rain. Getting hurt put a pause in training. I was still hurting at the Trials, yet I made the 100 team. John and [agent] Chris Layne both said, 'You're not doing the 200. You made the 100 and we'll take that.' But I thought, 'Uh, no. I did all the off-season 200 work and I am running it.'

"So I made the team and I felt, 'I want to get on the medal stand in the 200.' I was fortunate and blessed to get the bronze medal. And I love the 200 now. I don't think anyone would be able to pull me out of it. It's a part of me and I'm doing it.

"I was determined to run it. But besides John's great coaching, Chris also did a fine job, saying, 'I don't think you should compete this week.' I'm a student at this game, but I still listen. That's probably the biggest part of being a great athlete, to listen.

"When those you trust say it's time to sit, you sit. When they feel you're ready to go, you go. That's something really important that I learned this year: to listen to the people who have my best interests in mind."

wanted me to graduate from college. He just wanted me to be great as a person. Between '08 and '12, I relied on all the positive energy that he always had for me.

**T&FN:** On another personal matter, you have said that your mother and especially an aunt who passed away from breast cancer always were central to you.

**Jeter:** This year was hard. I had never lost someone as extremely close to me as my aunt, Brenda Washington. I bought my first home right down the street from her. She actually picked out the house.

So when I lost my aunt last March, it was a difficult time because I still had to be an athlete and still had to do my job. But it was difficult.

Sometimes I don't think people realize that athletes are human, too. Yes, we're paid to be ready to race, but we're still human. So it hurt.

It was the most painful thing I ever dealt with. I would train and go right from the track and stay at the hospital with her all day. It was probably the worst thing ever.

**T & F N :** Looking ahead, does having an automatic bid for the '13 Worlds make it any easier on your and John's attitude and approach for next season?

**Jeter:** I don't think it makes it easier. I started back training on November 12. But every year, someone else is stepping up. Someone else is training harder because they want to be the best. It isn't easier, because I have that bull's-eye on my back.

Every year, things just get harder and you have to train to win, to be the best. Every year we come into the season like, "This is what we need to do" and it's different every year.

**T&FN:** How do you feel that sprinting itself—fast and quick-twitch by its very nature—captures some of who Carmelita Jeter is as a person, a woman and an athlete?

"Sprinting is my life as well as my career. It's what I breathe, eat and sleep. It also reflects my life outside of the sport because I do everything fast."



STEVE SUITON/DOUGMA

**Jeter:** Sprinting is my life as well as my career. It's what I breathe, eat and sleep. It also reflects my life outside of the sport because I do everything fast. I'm really coordinated and I'm very particular about how I do things.

Every night, I write out an agenda of what I have to do the next day. That comes from sprinting because you have to be in the call room at a certain time, start your warm up at a certain time and so on. That's like my day: "I have to be here at noon and then go there at 4:00."

All that translates into my life and everything I do. So my athletic career really folds into my regular lifestyle. □