

Last Tuesday Jim Spivey ran the 27,000th mile of his career. He knows. Spivey has kept track of every stride he has run since his first one as a sophomore at Fenton HS in Bensenville, Illinois, in 1975.

He loves to run. He loves to train and race and talk about running. He loves to keep track of his workouts—he's logged each one precisely for the last 8 years. He is not boring.

This is a man who has a talent and has made a successful life out of exploring the outer reaches of his ability. He clearly relishes the life, one that allows him to test himself against the best runners in the world, against the clock, against his own limits.

Jim Spivey is one of the fastest milers in the world. He has been for years now, and in early July became just the third American ever to break 3:50. He still seems surprised at his success, perplexed by his failures, and ever eager to toe the line. His finishing kick is obviously not born of leg speed or max VO_2 , but of an internal energy, a lightness of spirit that lifts him to new heights.

I got tired before Jim Spivey did. He's a loyal man. He has run in the same brand of shoes since 1975, and he's had the same coach since 1978. He'll answer every question you ask him, as if he's loyal to your interview.

Spivey brings a special quality to his sport, but he thinks it brings something special to him.

T&FN: The mile is called the glamour event of track. You manage not to seem so glamorous. What kind of car do you drive? Tell us about the groupies.

Spivey: I drive a fast car, an '86 300 ZX Turbo. And there are no groupies. I know I'm not glamorous. Maybe it's my Midwestern background. I won 13 Big 10 titles, but I think I'd have become a bigger name on either coast. Lack of a big reputation—notoriety—may hurt me negotiating contracts, but it sure takes a lot of the pressure off.

T&FN: Speaking of big names... who is Steve Scott and why is he doing all those things to you?

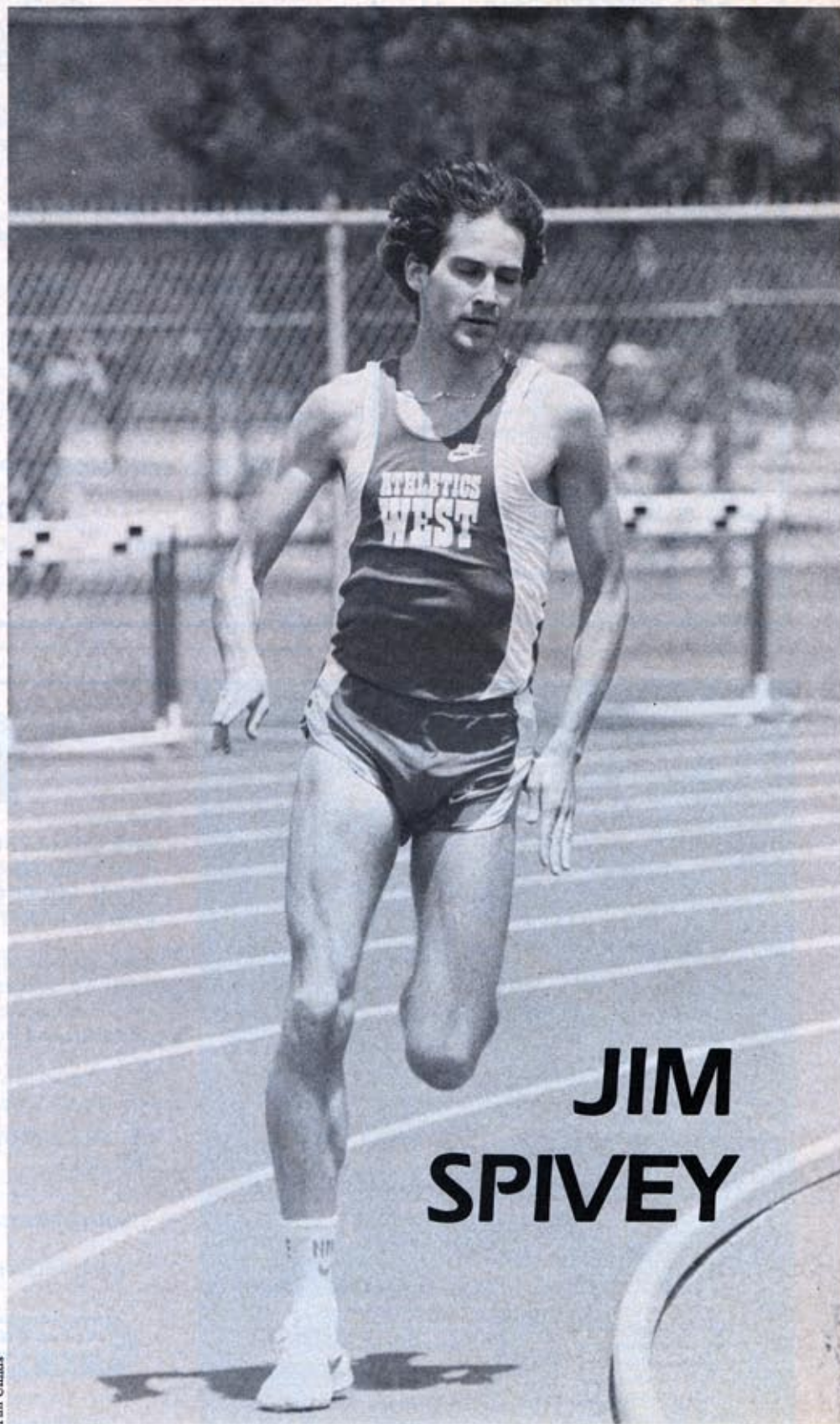
Spivey: Doing what?

T&FN: You know, kicking your butt.

Spivey: Steve is a great, great runner. He's able to hold his peak for so long. I've gone into a lot of races thinking I'd beat him. Then I haven't. Often, it's just tactics. Next year I plan to be able to run right with him again.

T&FN: How do you see yourself as a tactician?

Spivey: I usually sit too far back and kick too hard. I still have to build confidence in my ability on that third lap, on that part of the race 60%-90% of the way home. Once I do that, I think I can achieve what I want to achieve.



**JIM
SPIVEY**

Tim Childs

T&FN: *What are your goals?*

Spivey: Each year I find myself saying "I can still go faster, but did I do the best I could?" I enjoy running. I still want to train. I still want to race. I just want to improve.

T&FN: *Your entire 1986 season seemed rather selective. Not many indoor races, only the top U.S. invitationals, TAC, then a very, let's call it "sane," European season. What was your plan?*

Spivey: I had planned to race selectively. Coach [Sam Bell] figured it was the only way to go. Halfway through the '85 season, I completely lost my strength. I never felt so bad as I did late in the '85 European season.

T&FN: *Why was that?*

Spivey: Short question, long answer. My last year in college—1982—I trained the most I ever have, 65 to 75M per week. In 1983 I had a good year, ran 3:50 on 60M weekly. In '84 I averaged 34M a week leading up to the Olympics. I placed 5th in LA, but I think that was due to the base I'd established the previous two years.

T&FN: *Is there a moral to this story?*

Spivey: I'm getting to it. After the Olympics, in the fall of '84, I was running 16 or 17M a week. When it came time last year to dip into my reserve tank, I came up empty.

T&FN: *The tank seemed fairly full this year.*

Spivey: Well, last fall I ran 60M per week, and I established a good base again. I ran an abbreviated indoor season, 'cause I had some Achilles problems. I had a fairly successful U.S. season, and then I went to Europe.

T&FN: *And how was that? You lived over there, didn't you?*

Spivey: I lived in London and it was the key to my summer. I was there for 77 days, trying to duplicate my home environment. Instead of racing every 3 or 4 days—keeping on the move because you don't have any place to hang your hat—I was able to jump in the tube [subway] to the airport, fly to the meet, race, then fly home.

I couldn't have asked for a better situation. I'm definitely going to do the same thing next summer.

T&FN: *You got a mile PR in your first European meet. Was that expected? How did it compare to previous PR races?*

Spivey: I never expect a PR. I knew I was in great shape. I had just run 10 x 440, averaging 57s on a very short cycle. I also ran a 1:48.7 880 a week before.

How did it compare? I felt great in the race; I thought I had a chance to win it. Then Cram passed me and I found myself struggling to go with him. Mentally I could do it. I can appreciate the achievement now, but, boy, I was signing autographs real slow after the race.

T&FN: *Did that time in Oslo cause you to expect other fast ones in later races?*

Spivey: Yeah. I can always tell when I'm gonna peak. I thought there'd be no problem running 3:31 the rest of the year.

T&FN: *You didn't.*

Spivey: Well, I just never really put it all together.

T&FN: *Was running in Russia at the Goodwill Games a valuable experience?*

Spivey: Truthfully? [He laughs and we go off the record.]... The food was terrible. We drank bottled soda water the whole time. We were so happy to get out of there.

I swore in '81 I'd never go back. I went back. But it would have to be a pretty important meet before I'd go back again.

T&FN: *Was the Goodwill Games an important meet?*

Spivey: The Drake Relays was more important, and I ran the half-mile there.

T&FN: *What's going on with your 5K career?*

Spivey: I tried to move up to 5K. I had 8 weeks of 60M before Tom Black. At that race I went through a mile fine, the second mile was not so good. I fell off the pace by a few seconds.

I told myself, "Hey! You didn't come here to lose." So I outkicked Gerry Donakowski to win in 13:40. And I thought it hurt too much to run that slowly.

I didn't realize at the time it was a good effort. And I couldn't get into a 5K in Europe, so that ended my chances. I'll run a couple next year.

T&FN: *Those European promoters are some harsh critics.*

Spivey: I'll tell you one thing. They go by your last race, not your PR. But, they know how to put on a track meet.

T&FN: *You once referred to the 2M as "a long race, a calendar run where you mark off the days." How do you feel about 5K?*

Spivey: The 5K is that way, too. Basically you sleep for the first 2M, then you wake up. You can't become involved until the second half of the race. If you get into it too soon, you can use up all your energy.

T&FN: *You also used to enjoy cross-country better than track.*

Spivey: The last cross-country race I ran was the '82 NCAAs. It was really muddy. I have a phobia about feeling that bad in the last 3000-4000m.

I still like to train on the grass with 25 guys. I like to use it as a measure of conditioning. You can compare yourself against other runners without the pressure of the track. Cross country is more man against man. Track is so much just you against the clock.

T&FN: *What's your training like?*

Spivey: I do my morning run at about 11:30 a.m. I'll go out for 3 or 4 miles, the

first at 7:00 pace and the last one at 6:10. Afternoons vary. I'll usually run hard twice a week, and I drive to Bloomington once weekly to work out with the Indiana University team.

T&FN: *What are those workouts like?*

Spivey: They vary, of course. Right now we're doing cross-country stuff. In spring, we might do 4 x 880y in 2:04 with very little rest. Other days we could fartlek 2000m, alternating tempos. We'll run one 220y in 39, the next in 29. We'll cover it in, say, 5:36.

This summer in London I ran 4 x 880 averaging 1:57 into a very strong headwind. I was pretty pleased with that.

T&FN: *I don't think I could free-fall a half-mile in 1:57. What else are you doing?*

Spivey: I put some free weights in the garage. I lift for about 45 minutes at 75-80% max, 2 sets, 10-12 reps. I was benching 110 pounds when I started, and I got up to 145. That's the first time I ever benched more than my weight.

T&FN: *Now I know why I'm interviewing you and not vice versa. Tell me about road miles.*

Spivey: If I didn't have to run them, I probably wouldn't. The 5th Avenue is fun. Road miles are good 'cause you're definitely in the spotlight. I just question how valuable they are for competition.

T&FN: *Do you care about road miles?*

Spivey: Sure. I never go through the motions. When I race, I race. I don't go to a competition to train through it.

T&FN: *Can you race and spectate at the same time?*

Spivey: Yes. Sometimes. Sometimes you just can't concentrate the way you should.

T&FN: *What are your plans for the '87 season? What kind of base are you planning?*

Spivey: Jack, my goal is 70M weekly. That's my goal. I usually hit the low 60s at best. In high school I never ran more than 5 or 6 miles a day and that included a morning run.

I question how many miles I can do. It's really hard for me to stay on pace through Friday. I start the week really strong, but by Saturday I'm backing off.

T&FN: '87?

Spivey: We definitely want to shorten the season. Coach Bell has already told me no more than 3 or 4 races indoors. I'm looking at Millrose, Meadowlands, L.A. Times, and the World Indoors.

We haven't sat down and figured it out yet. Coach wants me to start later. I may open up at Pepsi, and do just 3 races before TAC.

I hope to set up a base in London again. Go over for a few weeks in July. Come home and make the Pan-Ams, which are here in Indianapolis. Then I'll head back to Europe.

—continued—

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SPIVEY INTERVIEW—continued:

T&FN: *You were the year's third-fastest miler. In the world. They must be so impressed at your local grocery store. How does it feel?*

Spivey: Surprising! You'd think Aouita certainly would've gone faster. Hey, I changed my life last year. I quit my job [selling radio time for pro basketball's Indiana Pacers]. It was difficult to leave. All your life you hear about athletes who don't have a career after competition. I never wanted to be like that.

T&FN: *You lost me.*

Spivey: My times improved because I became more dedicated. Quitting my job allowed me to increase my hours of sleep, and that allowed me to train harder.

I'm surprised to rank so highly, but I also know I worked for it. And I'm confident I'll go faster still.

T&FN: *Is that the usual athletic bravado?*

Spivey: Sure, but I learned so much this year that'll be helpful next year.

T&FN: *Such as?*

Spivey: For one thing I'll be better prepared for the big races. Typically, I'd show up for a major competition without cleaning out the carbs. John Walker told me that I've got to get a good blowout before I can expect to run fast. I know now he's right.

T&FN: *The man has been around. Say, Jim, I found an interesting quote of yours: "I think there are very few people who can kick with me."*

Spivey: I used to think that! This year I couldn't get the gears in right. Much of it was mental. Even a kicker says sometimes, "I can't catch him. There's no reason to kick." When you do that, you're dead. □

James Calvin Spivey was born March 7, 1960, in Schiller Park, Illinois, and is 5-10/135. Graduated from Fenton High School in Bensenville, Illinois ('78) and Indiana University ('82). The NCAA 1500 champ as a senior, he was a member of the '83 World Championships 5000 team and finished 5th in the '84 Olympic 1500.

His placings in major meets: 1500—'80 7)Oly Trials; '81 3)NCAA, 4)TAC; '82 1)NCAA, 4)TAC; '84 1)TAC, 1)Oly Trials, 5)Olympics; '85 1)TAC; '86 2)TAC, 5000—'80 4)NCAA; '83 2)TAC, 9sf)World Champs.

PRs (with place on U.S. all-time lists in parentheses): 800 1:46.5 '82; 1000 2:16.54 '84 (5); 1500 3:34.19 '84 (6); Mile 3:49.80 '86 (3); 2000 5:05.79i '86; 3000 7:51.47 '86; 2 Miles 8:24.14 '86; 5000 13:19.24 '83 (12).

His progression (with World and U.S. Rankings in parentheses):

Year	Age	1500	Mile	5000
1976	16	—	4:35.5	9:21.7 2M
1977	17	—	4:18.3	9:00.3 2M
1978	18	—	4:08.01	9:11.1 2M
1979	19	3:44.66	—	—
1980	20	3:38.56 (x, 8)	3:58.9i	13:38.97
1981	21	3:37.24 (x, 5)	3:57.0	—
1982	22	3:37.34 (x, 5)	3:55.56	13:33.47 (x, 9)
1983	23	3:36.4 (x, 4)	3:50.59	13:19.24 (x, 2)
1984	24	3:34.19 (9, 2)	3:53.88	13:37.51
1985	25	3:35.15 (x, 3)	3:52.95	—
1986	26	3:34.4 (x, 3?)	3:49.80	13:40.42