

The gold medal is packed away, sent to his coach's house for safekeeping, and Joaquim Cruz has the whole month of September off to do nothing but watch TV and play a little basketball, to rest up from an unprecedented season of 800 running which began in March and ended in late August.

In between, he won the 800 and 1500 in the NCAA, the Olympic 800 gold, and ran four of the six fastest times in 2-lap history, including marks of 1:42.34 (CR), 1:42.41, and 1:41.77 (CR), this last only 0.04 from Seb Coe's WR. All at the age of 21.

Cruz's climb to the top may seem meteoric, but years of careful preparation were involved. At age 11, Cruz was taken under the wing of Luiz de Oliveira, a strong-minded man often at odds with the Brazilian track & field establishment. He coached Joaquim to a World Junior Record of 1:44.3 in 1981, and Cruz followed him to the University of Oregon when de Oliveira entered graduate school there. Agberto Guymaraes and Jose-Luis Barbosa followed soon after, and de Oliveira probably became the first coach in history

to have three athletes in an Olympic Final.

Cruz and Luiz are close—"we think alike about track," says Joaquim—and have become closer still since the death of Cruz's father two years ago. His mother and two older sisters live in an apartment in Taguatinga, one of the poor satellite cities outside of Brasilia, the capital, and his two older brothers have left home to start families of their own.

For the time being, however, Cruz's home is a modest apartment just off campus in Eugene, where he is in his third year of study in PE at Oregon. On this day, he is watching his Olympic races on videotape for the first time, chuckling at the announcers' continual pronunciation of his name as "Wha-keem" instead of "Zho-ah-KEEM" and shaking his head in wonderment when one exclaims, "What a performance!"—not about Cruz's controlled 1:43.84 win in the semi, but about Steve Ovett's desperate all-out dive for the final qualifying spot in the same race.

Mostly, though, the confident yet low-key Brazilian watches as if it is someone other than himself out on the Los Angeles Coliseum track:

JOAQUIM CRUZ

T&FN: Before the Olympic Final, were you nervous?

Cruz: Well, I was a little bit anxious, because, you know, it was a big race, and I wanted to do well, but I kept telling myself "Be cool! [Laughs.] It's just one more race, and if you keep cool now, you're going to do well." It's funny, because my coach was more nervous than I was, and I just couldn't stand next to him that day. It was like, "Don't pass your nerves to me, okay?"

T&FN: Was there anyone you were looking for in particular as your competitor?

Cruz: Sebastian Coe. Sebastian Coe and Earl Jones. As you can see now [points to TV], I kept all the time looking, looking for those guys. Maybe if I had run without all the time looking back, I would have run a good time.

T&FN: 1:43.00 is not good?

Cruz: Well, I was prepared to run better, as you saw from the results in Europe. But it was a good time for that race.

T&FN: What was your race plan?

Cruz: I was supposed to run the first 200 strong, and if somebody decided to take the lead, I would let him, and that's what happened. The guy from Kenya [Edwin Koech] took the lead and it wasn't necessary for me to fight for the lead because the pace was already strong. He

slowed down a little bit going past the 400, but it was okay. It was a good pace still. Anyway, I was supposed to follow the leader until the 650, and then kick, and that's what I did.

T&FN: Do you remember your feeling as you crossed the finish line?

Cruz: Thank God it's over!

T&FN: After the Olympics, you came back to Eugene for a few days then went to Europe. When you left, was the World Record on your mind?

Cruz: Yeah. Before I left here, I got a bunch of telephone calls; people saying bad things about me in Brazil. They said that I didn't run the 1500 because Luiz didn't allow me to; that Luiz was saving me for Europe. Somebody in Brazil said that. That made me really mad, and I said, "The only thing I can do now is to run fast and try to break the record," and by doing that I would show those people that I don't need them. So in the first and second 800s, I tried real hard, but the third, I just gave up because I was tired up here [points to head].

T&FN: When you ran 1:41.77, you gave up in that one?

Cruz: Not give up, but I stopped thinking about the record. I was surprised at the time, because before the race, I wasn't feeling anxious, I wasn't feeling excited about it, and I got mad and worried about it, because those feelings are the

most important ones to have—like psyche.

I talked to Luiz and said, "Luiz, I'm not feeling anything at all about this race, and I'm worried about it. I don't want to go there and run bad." He said it was impossible to take me out because they did everything to set up this race for me and the people are here for me. So I said, "Okay, but I don't want to run anymore if I feel like this," but of course if I go there I am going to do my best. So I went there and ran what I ran. I was really surprised.

T&FN: You know, when you take a watch and try to stop it on four hundredths...

Cruz: It's one step!

T&FN: How fast can you run in the 800?

Cruz: All I can tell you is that Luiz's workouts are very good and have helped me a lot; you can see that. He has been working very hard to give me better workouts, and I think with better workouts and more dedication, I'll be running under 1:40 soon. I don't know when, but I hope so.

T&FN: Is the 800 your favorite distance?

Cruz: Right now it is, because I have been running it more than the 1500. But next year, I'm going to run more 1500s because I want to run good times there. I have the speed and I have the strength, so why not try? And I also want to try the 5000 sometime. I want to start running distances early.

T&FN: Have you made a decision on whether to run for Oregon again this year?

Cruz: The results in the Olympics were the decision. My answer is, no, I'm not going to run for them because next year I will have a long season. I will have to start later this year to prepare myself for the World Cup in Australia. I think I got tired mentally because I started competing so early. In Europe, when I stopped to think how many times I had run, it seemed that the NCAA was a year ago, and I was tired of running. But I am going to keep training here and going to school here.

T&FN: Is your training mainly speed work or endurance or...?

Cruz: We have a base period, then a specific period, then a competitive. We work out more speed in the specific and then a lot more in the competitive, but during the base, I work only on strength.

T&FN: This year, you ran 1:41, Koskei ran 1:42. Gray ran 1:42, Jones ran 1:43... it's like all of a sudden the 800...

Cruz: Well, I was talking to Luiz and I told him I was the cause of a new generation [laughs]. It's funny because I asked the meet promoters to put in a rabbit for



Kevin Morris

me to try to break the record, and those guys using *me* as a rabbit; they just had to keep going behind me and run a good time.

Three years ago, running 1:45 was the average; two years ago everyone was running 1:44. I said, "Well, something must change. Why is Sebastian Coe all alone up here and nobody is running close to him?" So every race, I go there to try to run fast. If I lose, somebody is going to have to run fast. I think that is one of the reasons I most like to run fast—to make other people run fast.

T&FN: *What are your impressions of Sebastian Coe, as a runner?*

Cruz: He's a great runner, and I don't want to give you any reasons for that, because they are there: 3:47, 3:31, 1:41.73. I admire him a lot, he has great speed, and I think if he runs long distances like the 5000, 3000, he might break the records, because he is very strong, too.

T&FN: *You're only 21 now. Do you know how long you plan to compete?*

Cruz: Juantorena stopped this year, and he's 33 or 34. And Mamede from Portugal set the [10K] record and Lopes won the marathon and he is 37 or so. What I need to keep running is just to take care of myself and stay healthy.

T&FN: *It seems that you're able to stay pretty anonymous in Eugene. Do people bother you now that you're the Olympic Champion?*

Cruz: No, they don't bother me, maybe because I am a little bit shy and when people congratulate me and say I did well, that it was "amazing," or something like that, I just don't know what to say. "Thanks" doesn't seem enough. I just try to hide myself.

T&FN: *Are you a hero now in Brazil?*

Cruz: I have been getting a lot of attention in the newspapers and magazines, and they say I am, but I don't feel I am, because I haven't been back to Brazil yet. Maybe if I go back at Christmas.

Also, thinking about being "a hero" bothers me a little bit. I want to be like everybody, like anybody. I don't want to be "different." But now I guess maybe I will have to be. . . □

Joaquim Carvalho Cruz was born March 12, 1963, in Taguatinga, Brazil, and is 6-2/170. A student at Oregon, where he won NCAA 800 titles in '83 and '84 and the 1500 in '84, he is trained by Brazilian coach Luiz de Oliveira. The World Junior Record holder for 800 at 1:44.3 ('81), he now trails only Seb Coe on the all-time World list. Debuted in the mile this year at 3:53.00. His progression (with World Rankings in parentheses):

Year	Age	Affiliation	800	WR Meets	1500
1977	14	Brazil			4:02.3
1978	15	"	1:51.4		
1979	16	"	1:49.8		3:54.2
1980	17	"	1:47.85		3:47.3
1981	18	"	1:44.3	6)WCup	
1982	19	"	1:46.95		
1983	20	Oregon	1:44.04 (2)	3)WCh	3:39.5
1984	21	"	1:41.77	1)OG	3:36.48