

MIKE SHINE

by Jon Hendershott

Back around the first of the year, we asked Mike Shine what his plans were for the coming season. Was he going to continue running?

The Olympic silver medalist and No. 2-ranked 400 hurdler of '76 replied casually: "Haven't been training since the Games. Hope to do some running this spring. Don't like to set long-range goals. Just take one day at a time."

Shine still hasn't begun any serious training, but he has been busy. After Montreal, of course, was the inevitable round of banquets, dinners, speeches and appearances befitting the runner-up in the world championships. He did his student teaching in the fall and then graduated from Penn State. Then he entered the Army at the behest of West Point coach John Randolph; after basic training he was assigned to the Academy where he is an assistant, coaching the hurdlers, naturally.

Life still hasn't calmed down enough, the 23-year-old feels, for him to get back to the level of training that put him into a surprise third place finish in the Olympic Trials and fulfilled that universal boyhood dream: the Olympics.

Shine's talent and determination carried him to the silver medal in a career-best 48.69—and his uninhibited antics during a joyous victory lap with teammate Edwin Moses carried him into the hearts of America, thanks to television.

He agrees with an observation made during casual conversation: the reason that he hasn't run this year is that the competing in the Olympics and winning a silver medal were simply the ultimate highs of his career. After that, anything else would be anticlimactic and not worth the effort, mental and physical, put forth for the Olympics.

Shine: That's pretty much it. I guess it stems back to the first time a kid ever thinks about the Olympics. It was always in the back of my mind that it would be great to run in the Games someday. It didn't start to become a reality until about the middle of '74, my sophomore year. My times showed I might have a chance if I trained hard enough the next two years.

When I made the team, it was probably more of a shock than winning the medal. You know as well as I do that the U.S. is so God-awful dominant in the intermediates that if you make the U.S. team, you've got half the world beat already. From the beginning my attitude was that I would be just as happy and satisfied to make the team as I would be winning a medal.

T&FN: Have you, in fact, really wanted to get back to hard training and competition?

Shine: After I won the medal, it was pretty hectic for several months. Things gradually died down and I said to myself, "Hey, this is really great. I've won a silver medal—and I'm tired. It has been a long 30—June 1977



Dave Stock

road." You train every summer for four years and it got to be a drag—not a drag in the sense I hated it, but just that it was a strain.

I really wasn't sure what I wanted to do or where I wanted to go. I did my student teaching last fall and then the job opportunity came up at the Point. I was moving around a lot and I really didn't care if I went out and trained. I was just riding the wave, enjoying all that had happened. Even now, I'm not settled enough to get into a real solid program again. It will probably be until next fall before I'm really settled. My dad doesn't think I'll have enough determination to go another four years.

T&FN: What do you think?

Shine: I don't know. But I stand out coaching or I see a meet on TV and I get itchy. I can't just tell the hurdlers what to do; I have to show them. So I really feel the desire is still there, if I can just get myself going again.

T&FN: Would you be upset if you didn't?

Shine: Hmm, I don't think so. I've gone pretty far and I don't think I would be disappointed if I didn't go farther. I would like to because that's me, because I'm a winner. I don't like to be a loser.

T&FN: You don't consider yourself a loser after Montreal?

Shine: Not at all. But I don't feel I should go out and not come up to the standards I've already set for myself. I think people have a tendency to think that once a guy wins an Olympic silver medal, he should be that good for the next eight

years. If he isn't, people get down on him and say he was a flash in the pan.

I don't want people to say that about me. I want to go out a winner, essentially. I think people underestimated me the whole four years I ran, because I don't think you can find many other people who were as consistent as I was over a 4-year period.

I would like to do that again; come back consistently enough to place well in any meet I run in, not necessarily winning but putting forth a good showing and proving that I'm not over the hill yet.

T&FN: You mention dual forces which pull at an athlete—his own expectations of himself, which are often the absolutely toughest demands of all, and the expectations of others, which can sometimes be stifling. What do you expect of yourself and what do you think others expect?

Shine: Well, I'm a very realistic person. I try to be aware of what people expect, but when I set goals for myself, I try to stay within what I think I can achieve. You know, don't open my mouth and stick my foot in it by saying I'm going to run 47-flat in the hurdles.

I try to keep my goals very realistic and low-key so I don't have to press myself and then get down on myself if I think I'm not making it. I do wonder sometimes what people think and this is why I like to be a winner because people relate much better to a winner than a loser.

Like I said, my dad has washed me up countless times since I started running in seventh grade, but something he has said about me is very true: When I get into the blocks, whether it is for a heat, semi or a final, I'm out to win. I'll give 150% to win. I always run full-tilt because I want to win and I don't know any other way to run. When it comes down to brass tacks, I can get just as up for a rinky-dink dual meet as for the NCAA or Olympics because I know my reputation is on the line every time I get into the blocks. There's nobody going to beat me and have an easy time of it.

On the other hand, there are times when losing is good for you. Getting beat in the NCAA last year couldn't have come at a better time for me. When Nolan Cromwell was knocked out in the semis, I thought I had it made. I had beat the hot flash of the moment and I was in. I ran a PR [48.97] in the final and still got beat. That told me that no matter how good you are, or think you are, there is always somebody who can kick your can. That made me sit back and look things over and say, "Okay, Shine, let's be a little more

modest and pay attention to what you're doing." I had to be humbled and I think everybody has to be humbled sometimes. It makes them a better runner and a better person.

T&FN: At Montreal, you said you were super-satisfied with silver. Some foreign journalists seemed to wonder how you could be so jazzed by finishing second.

Shine: All people like that had to realize was that I had just run the fastest race of my life and I had beaten all those people other than Ed to get where I was. Just the idea of competing in the Olympics is winning to me, because that is the ultimate track meet.

T&FN: Would it take the Olympics to spur you to duplicate what you did last year, at least timewise?

Shine: That's a good question. I really wouldn't want to say... Here I go again being very hard to open up and say something definite. Then I'd be scared to death the whole time I was trying that I might not make it.

However... given the way I ran at the end of last year, consistently in the 49s and twice in the 48s, I honestly feel that when I get back in good shape I can again run in the 49s and hit 48 when I have to.

I don't think it would have to be an Olympic situation. I've got my step pattern down. I may never be a 13-stepper, so I'll stay with my 15s, at least for a while. I feel a 15-stepper can compete at the highest levels with 13-steppers and I proved that. I

can't alternate lead legs, plus I'm a stubborn type and since I've got a good thing going with my form why should I screw it up by trying something else? But I might try it and see what happens.

T&FN: Permit me one more personal opinion—knowing the kind of guy Ed Moses is, quiet, serious, pretty straight-forward, and knowing your happy-go-lucky personality, it seems to me that if you hadn't won a medal, we never would have had that great victory lap. Moses is too reserved to have taken it by himself.

Shine: My sentiments exactly because I could see it coming. I had known Ed only a short time and he is a very quiet, modest guy. He does the job on the track where everybody can see it and I knew he would just walk right off the track.

But I thought there was no way, baby. I said, "C'mon man, this only happens once in a lifetime and it might never happen again, so let's take it for all it's worth." It was one of those doors of opportunity you either jump through, or you stand there wishing for the rest of your life.

T&FN: Every kid talks about running in the Olympics, but I'm sure they never take those dreams seriously. So what has been your reaction to all that's happened?

Shine (after another long pause): Wow! That's it. It's hard to explain. I felt proud, both for myself and for the U.S. I felt very proud to hear our anthem while I was on the stand.

It was a dream that was so far out of reach. Even at Montreal, I had to pinch myself and tell myself this was really happening. I'd see guys like Willie Davenport, guys I read about when I was young, and it was hard to place myself on that same level with them. I had to keep telling myself that I was there because I had proved I could compete at that level.

I guess that's what made it so unbelievable when I crossed the line and saw only Ed in front of me. I realized, "Hey, guy, you did it, you won second." Then everything went blank and I just went kinda loony.

I had done it, it was over and it was a tremendous release. I didn't have to worry about staying in shape, I could do anything I wanted. I didn't have to worry about breaking my leg when I went skiing. It was over and it was such a relief. That's maybe the biggest reason I went crazy—it was over and I had finally accomplished the total, ultimate end.

T&FN: It was the ultimate?

Shine: I don't think it could be anything but that, especially if one has devoted as much time and energy as any Olympic-class athlete. It bothered me when Dwight Stones said that he didn't want to hurt himself because it was only the Olympics.

That's his thing, but I would have broken both my legs just to get across that finish line to place even third. It was that important to me. □



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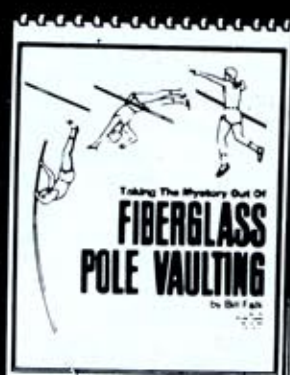
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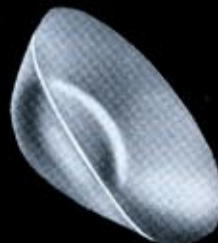
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