

SEBASTIAN COE

by John Burles

When you have the sort of season Sebastian Coe enjoyed in 1979—setting World Records in 3 events—it would be understandably easy to have difficulty ever producing a comparable campaign.

The problem is magnified when one has done his record-setting in that most public of all running domains, the mile. Compound the whole situation by the presence of a countryman who takes away a pair of your records and the pressure becomes intense. Climaxing the whole situation is the fact that this great rival is Steve Ovett and that both live in Great Britain, noted for its voracious press. The mental pressures have not been slight.

The 24-year-old Coe is bearing up just fine, however, as 1980 brought another WR and two Olympic medals and 1981 has dawned as another world-beater.

We sat down for a chat with Sebastian in late June, shortly before his pair of July World Records, with Olympic decathlon champ Daley Thompson an interested bystander.

A grad student in economics, Coe displayed his keen mind as we covered the ins and outs not only of Seb Coe, but also of our sport and its current state of flux:

T&FN: Sport is all about enjoying yourself. Is there still the same enjoyment in athletics that you started out with?

Coe: It hasn't changed at all. Obviously, the pressures are different. The expectations in a way are different but I don't think the day-to-day enjoyment has changed. The pressures are more—there's no doubt about that.

T&FN: Do you still look on it in the same way as you did in the early days?

Coe: I, I think so. Obviously, some of the sparkle of the early days has gone. It has increased in other areas. There are some areas where I enjoy my athletics more, some where it's a bit less.

T&FN: Where do you enjoy it more?

Coe: In a funny sort of way I enjoy the freedom. I think most athletes would admit that you get to a certain level and you do lead a fairly privileged existence. You can fly around the world and see countries. You can even choose countries that you have not raced in before, just because you haven't been there, and that kind of thing.

T&FN: Do you see athletics as a career? That is, sport as a career?

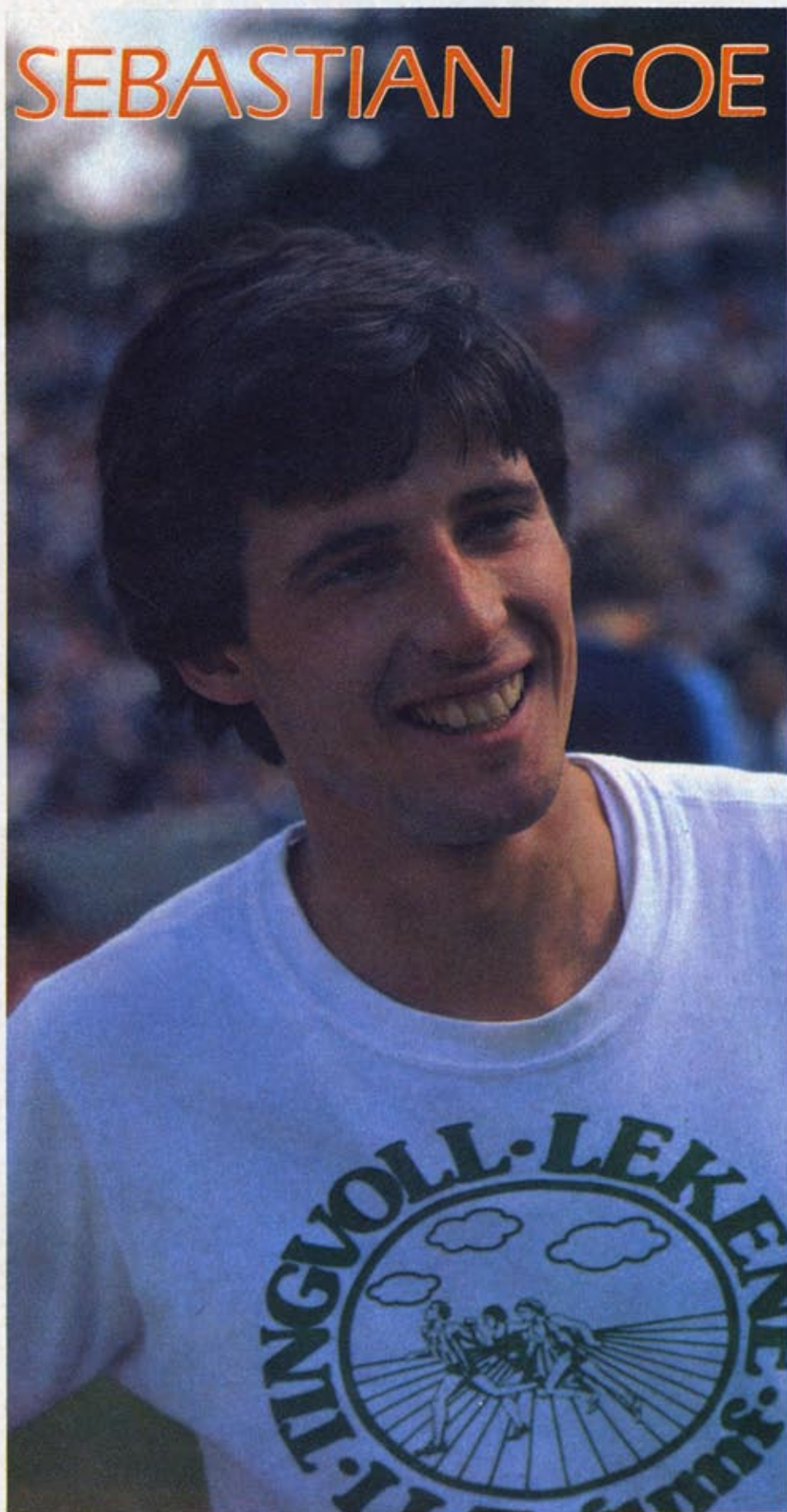
Coe: No.

T&FN: When you finish running will you turn to something else?

Coe: I should think so. I don't think I will stay in the sport.

T&FN: Athletics is going through a transitory period at the moment. Rather a rocky period because it may go Open. How would you like to see it emerge?

Coe: Hopefully stronger and better equipped than it is at the moment to face



Mark Shearman