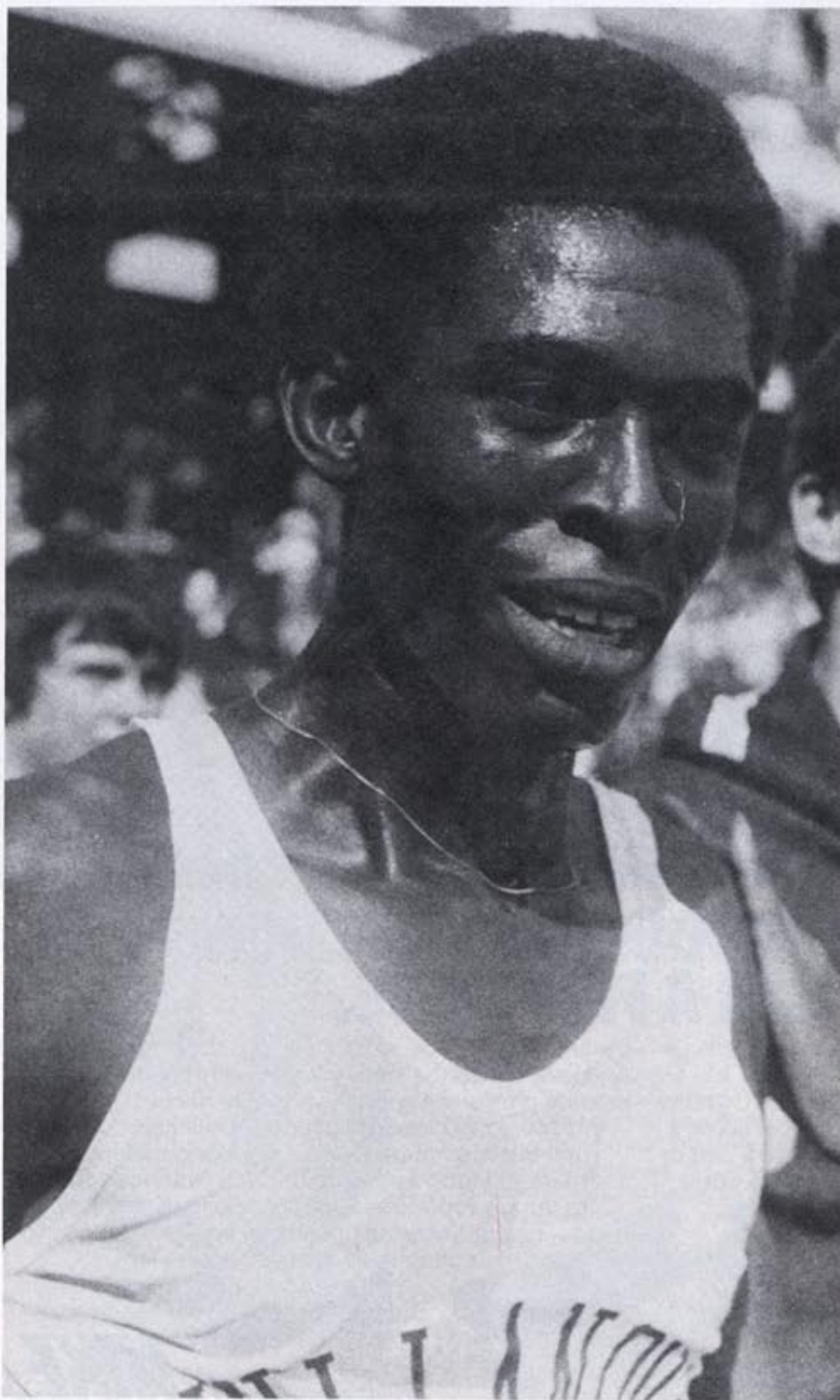


SYDNEY MAREE



Steve Sutton/Duomo

"I don't have a home, really. I am an outcast wherever I go."

Much has changed in the life of Sydney Maree since he spoke those words of despair to *T&FN* 2 years ago. He has weathered the continuing exclusion from international athletics caused by his South African origins.

He has married Lisa Rhoden, a promising U.S. 800 runner whom he met at the 1980 East Tennessee Invitational.

He has suffered the loss of his coach, Jumbo Elliott, who had demanded much and given more. And most recently, Sydney was accepted as a permanent resident (a direct step to citizenship) of the U.S. According to a February IAAF ruling, that opens the way for him to compete immediately in international meets.

What has remained constant through these years of turmoil have been Maree's indomitable spirit and formidable talent.

As a youngster in the black township of Atteridgeville, outside the South African capital of Pretoria, he would rise at 5:00 a.m., run 3-4M, travel an hour by train to school and then do another workout in the afternoon.

In 1974 he gave up soccer for track and 2 years later clocked a 3:57.9 mile.

This dogged determination has at times nearly been the ruin of Maree the athlete. Injuries have plagued him all 4 years at Villanova, yet he has still risen to the occasion brilliantly.

He has won NCAA outdoor titles (in fact, he's the only man to win both a 1500 and a 5000) and has earned a reputation as a consummate relay runner, an essential quality for a Villanova athlete.

Despite severe injuries, he performed splendidly at this year's Penn Relays (see p. 8).

Some athletes are destroyed by fire; others emerge tempered by it. For Sydney, the recent years have been ones of growing awareness of self and of the ironies of his position.

He remains an open person, but who will now ask, apologetically, that his answers to delicate questions be kept off the record. After one such instance during a phone conversation, he admits with a laugh, Lisa wrote her reaction to his timidity on a piece of paper and held it up in mid-conversation. It read, "Chicken!"

When *T&FN* reached Maree at his apartment close to the Villanova campus, he had just completed a final exam in what must be the perfect subject for one who has been through as much as he has. Course title: "Moral Philosophy."

T&FN: How was the exam?

Maree: Oh, it was very exciting! It was very challenging to study Socrates, Dewey,

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Sumner, all the other guys. It was a difficult course.

T&FN: *What else are you studying?*

Maree: I was taking two Economics courses—one was a seminar in Economics required of all seniors—and a Calculus course.

T&FN: *How has married life been so far?*

Maree: Well, it hasn't been that bad.

T&FN: *You'd better sound a little more positive than that.*

Maree [laughing]: Well, it's excellent! I never had this type of experience before. It is very encouraging to me. Back on campus I had a roommate. Now it is like I have a roommate and a little more.

I have a wife, someone I can talk to. We do so many things together. And I realize this is not a roommate that after 4 years I will be parting with!

T&FN: *Do you get to spend much time together?*

Maree: Yeah, we definitely do. We go to school at the same time, come back at the same time. I am very thankful really to have found someone like Lisa, someone who is so warm, so soft, someone who cares so much.

T&FN: *Wow!*

Maree: Really.

T&FN: *You've been running really well despite being injured. Are you in good shape?*

Maree: Yeah. I'm not 100% healthy. I pulled a muscle two weeks ago doing 300s.

T&FN: *Do you ever feel that you're fragile?*

Maree: You know what happens is that sometimes I push myself a little bit too hard. Some people's bodies can tell in advance, "You are pushing a little too hard." But I have been so happy that I can participate now that I have to be very careful—my effort is 150 times what it was.

T&FN: *Do you consider your kick to be the strongest part of your running?*

Maree: It is amazing. I haven't been in a race where I had to think that I wouldn't have my kick, where I would have to die at the end. I have always had a little more left that I could have spent economically in the beginning of the race, to cut off those extra seconds I try to get rid of at the end.

T&FN: *Do you think that your kick is as good as anybody's in the world?*

Maree: Sure. Definitely, yes.

T&FN: *Is it a match for Nyambui's?*

Maree: Yeah. You know what, I haven't raced Nyambui in an ideal situation, where I have had him in my mind, where I have had two weeks to prepare. But now I know that I might have to face him in the 1500 meters at the Nationals, and I'm getting physically and mentally ready to face him.

T&FN: *What event do you think is your best?*

Maree: That is hard for me to say. When I ran that mile in South Africa [3:53.7 in '79], it was a superb effort, but

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it did not take that much out of me. And you saw the 5000 [13:20.63 in '79 NCAA]. I would say that it is the best event of my career so far. If I can produce one of those fast last laps in a mile, then I am all set.

T&FN: *What are your track goals now?*

Maree: I am still training towards becoming the best athlete in the world. But I have no stipulations as to when I want to break the World Record.

T&FN: *In what event?*

Maree: Well, the 1500, the mile, the 5000, and the 3000. I don't have any stipulations as to when, but those are the goals.

T&FN: *How are things different for you now with Jumbo gone?*

Maree: I feel that Jumbo and I, side by side, have fought the international committees to give me my fair opportunity to compete internationally. Now that the battle is won, Jumbo is not there anymore. I feel that this is the time he is vitally needed, so that our hard work will not have gone to waste.

Because I have never been so confident in my career. I have never gone out each day training, picturing myself going against Coe, going against Ovett, going against the best in the world, being given a fair chance.

I don't have in my head, "Well, I'm training in case they let me run." Now I feel very much for the people of South Africa who are not being given the opportunity to participate. But since I have the opportunity now, I will definitely make use of it.

T&FN: *How do you think you will fare against Coe and Ovett?*

Maree: Well, I cannot predict at this point, really. Looking at their performances so far, the type of races that they ran were races where the conditions were ideal, where the atmosphere was set up. By "set up," I mean they went out there with the sole purpose of breaking the World Record, having assistance from all of the runners.

If I have a chance to have someone do for me like they do for them, I definitely think I should be able to fare very well.

T&FN: *Which one do you think is the better miler?*

Maree: I cannot really tell. But off his record so far, Ovett has established himself very well, going undefeated for several years at both the mile and 1500.

But a guy like him and Wilson Waigwa are the type of guys I would never like to race against, because we are all kickers. If we don't have a rabbit, the race wouldn't be that good. I would like to run against Seb any time. He is an ideal type of guy to race against. Coe is the type of guy who races the whole way, not just kicks.

T&FN: *What is your assessment of Steve Scott?*

Maree: A very strong miler. Speed and

strength combined. He is a very good guy to race against, because he isn't afraid to go out and take the lead. Sometimes he won't let you go by him, and that makes for good times.

T&FN: *Do you like the Villanova tradition of running a lot of relay races?*

Maree: Well, definitely, no. But what can you do about it? That's how it's done. We have had so many Olympians at Villanova, and they all went through that type of initiation.

T&FN: *Do you think that the emphasis will continue now with Jumbo gone?*

Maree: Yes, definitely. The coaches and everybody are just trying to keep up the traditions, further Jumbo's ideas, further Jumbo's beliefs. I am one of those people too.

T&FN: *Was your decision to apply to become an American a difficult one to make?*

Maree: Well, in a way it was. If I look at the stand I took a couple of years ago, it is so much different from the one I am taking now. In a way I altered my stand a little bit. They always say, "A wise man always changes his mind." I think that would be very appropriate to me.

T&FN: *What do your parents think of your plans?*

Maree: They are very supportive of them. As long as I am happy, they are very supportive of what I am doing.

T&FN: *With all that has happened to you in your career, you should do well as a Poli Sci grad student.*

Maree: Well, I'm mainly interested in International Relations. This [South African issue] has bombarded my career for so long, that I may as well pursue some knowledge in this field.

T&FN: *What would you say are the greatest changes in Sydney Maree between now and when you arrived here 4 years ago?*

Maree: I'm much broader with what I have learned experience-wise in my 4 years in the United States. I am more aware of where to put myself in all these different ironies. One of the biggest things is that I am able to make decisions without being emotionally involved. There are realities which we have to face. Now I am able to accept defeat without breaking down. □

Sydney Maree was born September 9, 1956, in Pretoria, South Africa, and now measures 5-11/145. He graduated from Vlakfontein Technical High School in 1977 and will graduate from Villanova this year with a degree in Economics. He intends to continue in grad school at Villanova, pursuing a degree in Political Science. In addition to his 1500/mile and 5000 talents, Maree has run 7:43.0 and 28:21.46. He won the 1979 NCAA 5000 (and ranked No. 10 in the world) and 1980 NCAA 1500. His progression:

Year	Age	Affil	Class	1500	Mile	5000
1976	19 S	Afr	HS Jr	3:42.0	3:57.9	
1977	20	"	Sr	3:41.2	3:57.2	
1978	21	Villanova	Fr	3:38.9	3:56.0	
1979	22	"	So	3:38.2	3:53.7	13:20.63
1980	23	"	Jr	3:38.64	3:55.9	13:58.9
1981	24	"	Sr	3:40.11	3:55.51	13:38.31