

**A**fter throwing the javelin a stupendous 327-2 for a World Record, nothing will ever be quite the same again for Tom Petranoff.

With one soaring throw, the 25-year-old American went from being a promising up-and-comer, a thrower who ranked No. 9 in the world in 1982 (with a best of 290-0), all the way to the very top. The World Record holder.

That very distinction changed many aspects of Petranoff's life, from the way he and wife Carolyn lived and how he is introduced to people, to the way he is treated at meets in Europe. One throw changed it all.

Talkative, the introspective Illinois native now resides in Southern California following a nomadic academic career which found him at times enrolled—sequentially—at Ball State, Palomar CC, Georgia Tech, San Diego State, Pierce CC and Cal State Northridge ("I'll eventually get my degree, once things slow down"). He admits his WR achievement still boggles his mind, but he doesn't dwell on it. He goes to work every day for Anheuser-Busch, working in employee relations and safety for the giant beer maker. He still trains hard every day; he knows he cannot take anything for granted just because he owns the longest throw in history.

If anything, he knows it may be harder to stay on top than it was to get there. Everyone will be aiming at him, from East German Detlef Michel—who defeated him for the World Championship—to every young new face who looks to the World Record holder for inspiration.

Tom isn't especially thrilled by that part of being the record holder, but he tries not to worry about it. He knows the season just ahead will provide plenty of challenges and incentives.

He admits he has grown from the changes wrought by his record—and that he wants to extend his mark. Adding to the World Record is one change he wouldn't mind at all:

**T&FN:** Can you specifically say how setting a World Record has changed the life of Tom Petranoff?

**Petranoff:** It's hard to list all the ways it has at least affected my life, even if it hasn't changed it. I've said before it's really a kind of culture shock; it brings so many new and different things so fast.

There is so much attention: entertainment people want you on their talk shows; businesses want you to do commercials; the media calls. That is the biggest thing. And, obviously, it's more rewarding financially to be World Record holder.

I think I've grown up a lot. This was my second season competing in Europe, only this time being the World Record holder there was a lot of pressure on me.

**T&FN:** Last year you said '82 could be considered a preview of what you might do in '83.

**Petranoff:** Well, I felt I could do very well and a combination of things contributed to my outlook. Rooming with Bob Roggy both at U.S. meets and in Europe, and seeing all the exposure for being No. 1. I knew I was doing a few

Diane Johnson



**TOM PETRANOFF**

things wrong technically. Plus I found a lot of reinforcement through the USOC Elite Athlete camps and the things done there, like psychological profiles and high-speed biomechanical film analysis.

I could see a lot of things I was doing, especially the relaxing instead of trying to force it like I was in '82. And that's the hardest thing about a javelin thrower, but I think it's the most important part: guys tend to try to kill it. They feel like they have to just kick the hell out of the thing to make it go far, instead of just letting it happen.

You just have to let your technique catch up with your aggressiveness, instead of letting your aggressiveness take over. You can tell when I'm overaggressive because my javelin goes out there like a washing machine and is vibrating all over.

But my World Record throw was like it was on a string. There was no vibration; it's like it was still sitting in my hand. And that's the key to throwing far, just waiting a little bit longer for the connection to be made by your arm to your lower body.

Yet that is the single most difficult thing for javelinists to understand, period. I mean, I've got as good an arm as anybody yet that was my deterrant for 6 years. And it takes a long time to learn to slow down and wait, especially if a thrower has been exposed much to baseball or football with their different types of throwing motions.

**T&FN:** *Now with a few months of perspective, what do you think of your record throw?*

**Petrano:** It's still mind-boggling. I still have to watch replays of the throw to really believe it. I've gotten a lot of satisfaction out of this whole season; some of my worst throws are ones other guys would love to have.

My only disappointment the whole year was in Helsinki and that was because I hadn't designed my training around a rainy day. Neither had Detlef Michel or anyone else, and I'm not trying to take a thing away from him because he deserved that win.

I'm not going to dwell on that, though, because '84 is the big one. Plus, I beat Michel in the stadium where the Olympics will be held. So that's a psychological boost for me.

**T&FN:** *Was the record throw Tom Petranoff's ultimate throw, or is there a lot more in there?*

**Petrano:** Oh, it wasn't my best by any means. I wouldn't be training right now if I thought I couldn't throw farther. People have dwelled on the fact that I broke the record by 10 feet. But the length of a javelin plus a couple more feet is the same length. So a little more than one javelin length that I added to the record isn't that great a distance when you consider how many javelin lengths were covered overall.

Sydney Maree holding the 1500 record for 7 days kind of keeps it all in perspective. I mean, even after I threw my record, I still thought Roggy would come back and beat it. Then I thought Michel would break it.

I was just paranoid about losing my World Record. It's really a sick feeling, like something bad sitting right at the bottom of your stomach. When I would walk downstairs to get the paper the morning after Michel had a meet, I would feel apprehensive.

**T&FN:** *Last year you said that all the throwers helped each other during competitions and there didn't seem to be intense rivalries. Did that situation, and your role in it, change after you threw the record?*

**Petrano:** I really feel that a lot of the guys, like people in general, were caught by disbelief: "How did he do that?" Hey, I said that, too. That was the initial shock of it and then I just tried to forget about it and keep my head together.

I think that people thought I might try to alienate them, that I thought I had become too good for them. Some people probably stereotyped me and thought I would get a big head. But I said to everybody, "I hope you don't have that attitude because I'm still the same Tom Petranoff as before." I mean, I was very glad to have a World Record, but I wasn't going to boast about it, because there were people out there who could beat me.

Really, the toughest part of it was trying to forget about it, to act like it never happened. Because everywhere I went, I was reminded of it. I told people I wanted to forget about it and get on with the season and just be consistent over 300 feet.

You learn that your perspectives can really change. People should try to put themselves in my shoes: all of a sudden, you have just broken the World Record. People have pinched you once or twice, so you know it's real.

You say to yourself, "Wow, this is what it's all about, but... really? I mean... how...?" It's just the awesomeness of disbelief that overtakes you. It's almost like death—it's so hard to believe when someone dies and you wonder how could it happen.

Sometimes it can be a real turn-off as far as holding the World Record. Constantly being introduced as "the World Record holder." Instead of just being me, I'm "the World Record holder." And people want to talk about it and hear about it and all that. Now, if I'm introduced and they say, "Oh, you hold the World Record in the javelin," that doesn't bother me as much. But it does bother me when that is the primary thing you are, instead of just being you as a person.

**T&FN:** *You have said that Carolyn has greatly influenced your career.*

**Petrano:** We first came out to California in '79 after I had gotten to know Bill Webb at Northridge. Carolyn and I have been together since we were 15 years old. I had been bouncing around various colleges and I decided to come to California to train for 1980 and she really supported us while I did that. She worked in a law firm and I just did various part-time jobs for some extra money.

But we were living in a dump of an apartment and pinching pennies for everything. We went through hard times together. Both our parents were divorced, so we looked for support from each other.

When you go through the hard times and can push yourselves and get over the hump, you really grow together. Carolyn was such an important part of that building process. Not only did she work so I could train, but she also told me when I was screwing off and not working as hard as I could.

Plus I eventually didn't want her to have to work; we want to raise a family and those sorts of things, so that was another motivation for me to do well.

She was a kind of guide and a psychological booster. She would put signs up around the house about throwing far and things like that... in fact, I can see one now, so they're still up. That's the subtle kind of motivational things Carolyn would do, and still does.

**T&FN:** *Another thing you said last year was, with Bob Roggy throwing so well, other throwers could try to catch him and thus improve. Now the shoe is on the other foot and everyone might well be shooting at you. How do you feel about that?*

**Petrano:** One thing I've thought about is how fast things change. It's almost as hard to believe I'm World Record holder and have thrown 300 feet nine times as it is that Bob was throwing 250s in Europe this summer.

I hope I've learned from seeing how fast things do change. The hardest thing to do is stay on top. I plan to take a good hard lesson from that and train and work that much harder for next year. □

Thomas Alan Petranoff (Pe-TRA-noff) was born on April 8, 1958, in Aurora, Illinois, and is 6-1½/216. Graduated from Howe Military Academy (Howe, Indiana) in 1976, but did not throw the javelin until he was a frosh at Palomar CC in 1977. He won the TAC Junior title that year and is still 5th on the all-time U.S. Junior list. Beaten out for the third spot on the 1980 Olympic Team on the last throw of the competition. TAC places: 1978, 10th; 1980, 2nd; 1981, 7th; 1982, 3rd; 1983, 2nd. His progression, including positions in the World and U.S. Rankings and on the World and U.S. Lists.

Year	Age	Affiliation	Class	Javelin	wr	ar	WL	AL
1977	19	Palomar CC	Fr	254-2	—	—	—	17
1978	20	"	So	261-7	—	—	102	12
1979	21	unattached		256-6	—	—	—	13
1980	22	AF Striders		280-4	—	5	37	6
1981	23	SC Striders		249-6	—	—	—	27
1982	24	"		290-0	9	2	10	2
1983	25	"		327-2	WR			