

## LARRY MYRICKS

**T**here was a feeling of *deja vu* watching Larry Myricks charge down the runway for his final jump at the World Indoor Champs. The 1976 Olympian, an international performer for a decade, hadn't had a moment of glory like this in nearly as long.

But there he was, breaking the sand at 27-0 on his final jump to secure the win over '86's top-ranked Robert Emmiyan—his finest victory since the 1979 World Cup in Montreal. He won that title with a stunning 27-11½ leap (at that time, second only to Bob Beamon's WR 29-2½).

It seemed he was preparing to take his place as one of history's greatest long jumpers. In fact, it was followed by seven and a half years of disappointments, including the Olympic boycott in 1980 (when he was favored to win), and his eclipse by the rising sun of Carl Lewis. He made the '84 team, but finished a disheartened 4th in LA. His first Olympic experience, 1976, was even worse, as he broke a bone in his foot in warming up for the final and missed all of '77.

Still, Myricks persisted, competing well, ranking high, and running up a string of high-quality marks. In fact, he has reached 27-feet for nine years in a row, the longest streak ever. Now, finally, a major victory after 6 years of work with coach Ernie Gregoire.

To ask Larry to put this win in perspective, we reached him at his Southern California home in Ontario where he lives with his wife Sandra and their 3-year-old daughter, Lakeesha:

**T&FN:** Congratulations on your win in Indianapolis.

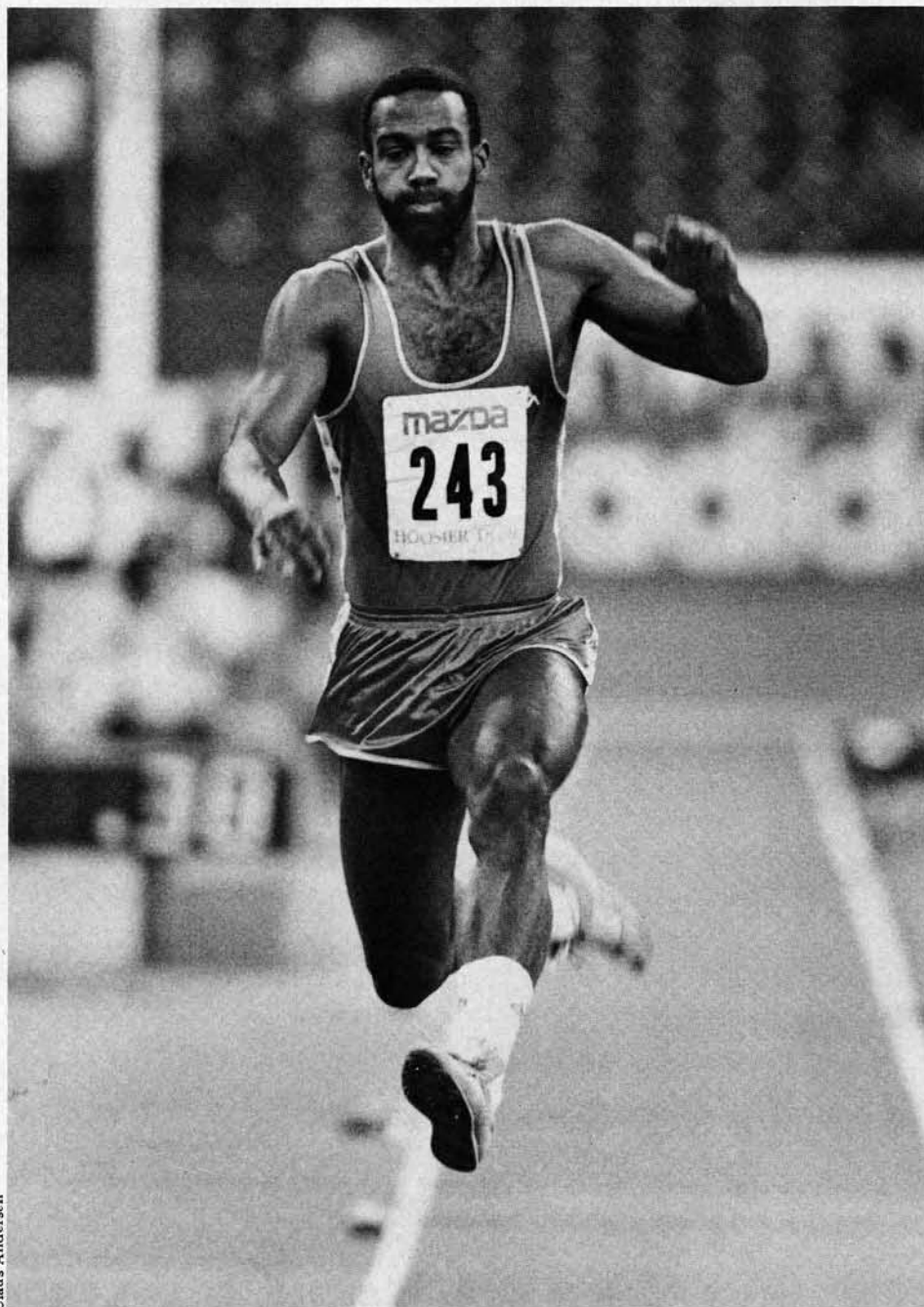
**Myricks:** Thank you. I was very pleased with it. I was really looking forward to the competition, mainly because I was able to jump against Emmiyan—he beat me at the Goodwill Games—and because I wanted to get in a competition with somebody who was going to make me jump.

[Interrupts to tell his daughter: "Go get in bed, we'll find it tomorrow morning. Good night."] It was a birthday present for me and my kid; she was born March 9, I was born March 10.

**T&FN:** You haven't ranked lower than No. 3 in the world since 1979.

**Myricks:** When I look back over my career, I'm very pleased with it. I've been on three Olympic teams; never gotten a medal in any one of them, but then, my goals are a lot bigger than just Olympic medals.

What the indoor win did for me was excite me about the possibility of one day accomplishing those goals. It let me know that after all this time, I've still got it when I need it. The only thing I need now is more time to train, and that's all going to



Claus Andersen

happen for me pretty quickly.

I've always said I'd like my name to be a household word. It may not be for track & field, but one of these days, I'd like people to sit back and say, "Hmmm, so that's who Larry Myricks is." [Laughs] I may have to go out and rob a bank.

**T&FN:** I'm not sure that's better than winning a World Championship. Are you aiming for the World Championships in Rome for this season?

**Myricks:** Yes. I've been telling myself that I'm at least going to go through '89, but it really will depend on how well I do. I

didn't know back in 1976 that I would be in it this long. It just seems to come pretty easily and naturally, and I'm doing well with it.

I've been through that thing where I couldn't seem to get excited, but some time a few years ago, I got it back again. Right now, I'm really enjoying it. Whenever I do decide to quit at this level, I'll probably just go off and do masters-level competition.

If you enjoy it, and you train yourself properly, you shouldn't have any problems staying around for a while. I don't worry about injuries. I've only had one muscle injury that I can remember; that was in '83, when I injured a hamstring. That's the only muscle injury that I can remember. I've broken some bones, that kind of stuff.

**T&FN:** *Tell us about your work situation.*

**Myricks:** I'm working for General Dynamics; been with them for two years. I'm running the college recruiting department. It's a great job, and the company's a place where I can build a career. I can see myself 10-15 years down the road with this company.

**T&FN:** *Do you draw on your sports laurels when you're in that role of recruiter?*

**Myricks:** No, unless somebody quizzes me on it. There are people who work with me that didn't know I was in track & field until they saw me on TV at the Goodwill Games. It was like they would come into the office after the Goodwill Games and say, "Was that you I saw on TV? Were you in Russia, jumping?"

Even with my wife, initially, we didn't talk about it a lot. I think that I ended up with this one because she's the only one who didn't know me as an athlete. But she's very supportive; she knows it's an important part of my life. So she tries to be as much a part of it as she can; I don't think she knows how much a part of it she really is.

That's probably another thing that has kept me going: I've got a lot of dimensions to my life, not just track & field. I don't have to just live, eat and think track & field. I think it all helps.

I guess after getting let down so many times—not seeing things in print, not hearing from people—I just kinda started looking into myself for satisfaction and enjoyment.

**T&FN:** *I remember your win at Montreal in 1979. I thought, "Wow! 27-11½. I'll bet he goes 28-6 next year, and wins the gold medal." I wonder if people were just waiting for you to reach your potential.*

**Myricks:** Well, after '79, a lot of things came into play. In the fall, I got a lot of good training in, and indoors, I broke the WR. I was competing well, and then all

of a sudden, the boycott thing crept up. I had spent all this time and effort getting ready, and then somebody tells me I can't go. That blew me out of the water. It changed my thinking about a lot of things, too.

What I'm getting at is that, if that hadn't happened, I would have never been on that rollercoaster. But after I went up, I came down, and had to start all over. That happened in '80, and then Carl comes along in '81, and all the attention goes to Carl. So it was just one thing after another.

**T&FN:** *What else?*

**Myricks:** There are a couple of things that have given me rude awakenings. One thing I don't mind talking about is the shoe companies. I first got involved with those guys back in '76 when I made the Olympic team. And when I finally settled down and picked one, that was adidas. And I think I was what they say was "loyal"; I didn't jerk them around, I wore their stuff, didn't give them bad pub—that kind of stuff.

So it was a rude awakening when, in '84, they chose not to renew my contract. I guess one of the things that really got me was that, for all those years, you got personal attention—people were calling you, seeing if you needed equipment, if there was anything they could do for you. . . Then, in '84, in December, I get a form letter in the mail. I couldn't understand how I could be ranked—where was I? No. 2 in the world—and not have a shoe contract.

That was a pretty rude awakening, because I was in a position at the time, when I needed the money. But then, that got me on the right track financially. I'm at a point with my family where we both have good jobs, and if I leave track & field today, it would be A-OK. The way I look at it, it was just their loss, and my gain; I gained a lot more sanity and a lot more self-confidence and self-worth.

**T&FN:** *And now Carl is sort of in the same position; he has fallen out of the spotlight, and it seems some people are ready to push him aside. And, Carl's never gotten the World Record.*

**Myricks:** Watching Carl and the way he jumped for those few years, I can only speculate as to why he didn't, and I'd rather not say why, but he should have broken it. It's just like that 200 he ran in 1983 at TAC: he should have broken the 200 record then. I'm sure he knew; that might be why he slowed down.

There's no way a guy can win 4 gold medals and not do any more than he did. I'm talking career-wise. Nobody knows why it happened, but I think he or somebody advised him to do some things he shouldn't have done.

**T&FN:** *He seemed to lose track of himself, and his place in the world, and a lot of people said, "You may be great, but*

*we don't think much of you as a human being." I don't think he deserved that; it seemed the world couldn't take him for who he is.*

**Myricks:** I think we couldn't take him for who he is because we don't know. It seems everything is always so camouflaged. I know Michael Conley, I know Willie Banks, but I don't know Carl. I know of Carl.

And I think that's what the problem is: people just don't know the real Carl Lewis. If there's anyway he can let them know what he's about, other than as a running machine—that he wants to be a millionaire—I think he should do it. And he's working on it, too. I've recently seen him do some things that were out of his character, in a positive way.

He's had his operation, and other problems; he's not competing so well. But for his sake, I hope he can come back and do as well as he's always done. I enjoy competing against the guy, again, because it brings the best out of me.

**T&FN:** *In fact, this is a nice time in your life. A lot of athletes, when they reach their early 30s, can look back on the Glory Days when they were in track & field. But you're still doing it, and you still have worlds out there to conquer, and there must be a lot of satisfaction in that.*

**Myricks:** It's like I tell Milan Stewart; we work out together all the time at Mt. SAC, and it always seems they are working a lot harder than I am, for some reason, and they will bring it to my attention. And I tell them, "I'm saving it all for my Golden Years."

Maybe these are my Gold Years. □

Larry Ellwyne Myricks was born March 10, 1956, in Hinds County, Mississippi, and is 6-2/170. A graduate of Forest Hill High School ('74) in Jackson, Mississippi, and Mississippi College ('79), he now competes for the Mazda TC. Has ranked among the top 3 long jumpers in the world for each of the last 8 years.

His PRs (with positions on the all-time World and U.S. lists in parentheses): 100—10.31 '83 & '86; 200—20.03 '83 (=9, =6); LJ—28-2½ '84 (4, 3). Placings in major 200 competitions: '83—2)TAC, 5h)World Champs; '84—3)TAC, 6)Olympic Trials. His international LJ record: '76—dnc[injured] )Olympic Games; '79—1)World Cup; '84—4)Olympic Games; '87—1)World Indoor.

His progression (with World and U.S. Rankings in parentheses), including LJ placings in major domestic meets:

Year	200	LJ	Major Meets
1974	—	23-6½i	
1975	—	25-8½	
1976	20.5w	26-6½i (6, 3)	1)NCAA 1)OT
1977	injured—did not compete		
1978	20.44	26-5 (x, 5)	4)NCAA
1979	—	27-11½ (1, 1)	1)NCAA 1)TAC
1980	—	27-6i (2, 1)	1)TAC 1)OT
1981	20.7w	27-8½ (2, 2)	2)TAC
1982	—	28-1 (2, 2)	3)TAC
1983	20.03 (5, 4)	27-0 (3, 3)	4)TAC
1984	20.50 (x, 9)	28-2½ (2, 2)	2)OT
1985	20.66	27-8½ (3, 3)	4)TAC
1986	20.86	27-10½ (3, 2)	3)TAC
1987	—	27-½i	