

## Angella Taylor

# The drive of a champion

### Temmi Ungerman

For the Greeks, the athlete in action epitomized the virtues most sought after: courage, strength and endurance, as well as discipline and restraint under extreme pressure. Angella Taylor is a young woman of twenty-two who indeed, does have all these virtues. And these fine attributes have led to a champion.

Angella Taylor's goal is to run faster than any female runner on this planet. But she does not feel that there is any point in just fantasizing. "You have to believe you can really do it. You must have the belief, and then work, strive for it."

Taylor began her formal coaching with coach Charlie Francis only two years ago, and in this short period of time, she has set three world and five Canadian records. She holds the world indoor records for the 200 metres (23.15 seconds), the 300 metres (37 seconds) and the 300 yards (33.4 seconds). She holds the Canadian outdoor records in the 100 metres (11.20 seconds) and the 200 metres (22.68 seconds) and the Canadian indoor records for the 400 metres (52.3 seconds), the 50 metres (6.21 seconds) and the 50 yards (5.87 seconds). Yet Taylor is not content. She must first fulfill her dream.

Her dream is an obsession. "At the moment, it's all I ever want to do. It's my whole life—I'd be lost without track and field. It really is a twenty-four hour thing—I'm constantly thinking about it," says Taylor.

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She compares running to a job. "When you have to go to work to earn money, it's a necessity. For me, my running is like a necessity. It's an obsession. I just cannot function without it." Taylor says it really is not fun, and yet at the same time, she is miserable if she can't work out and run. "I know it's crazy," the sprinter concludes with a shrug and a smile.

An intensity of spirit, health, vitality and determination radiate from the young woman. Even sitting on the steps, wearing sweats, there is a quiet authority about her, and no acouterments are needed to get off her distinction.

At times, Angella Taylor can come across as being just a bit too cocky. But it's okay; for Taylor has the attitude of a champion, and without her self-confidence and self-assurance, she wouldn't be where she is today, or will be tomorrow. "I never want to settle for second place. Don't start the race if you're going to be second. Stop the race and go home. And this applies to anyone in anything. Never accept the fact that anyone is better than you."

To be the very best on earth means a great deal to Taylor. A lot of ego? With a big grin, she says "Yeah."

Taylor is in her first year at York and plans to major in History.



when I strained a tendon on my right knee, mentally, I get totally devastated."

Like so many other athletes, last spring Angella Taylor learnt that the single most important moment in her life, running in the Olympics, was no longer a reality. Now, months later,

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thought still extremely disappointed, her initial hurts have eased and her perceptions are clearer. In retrospect, how does she feel about boycotting the Olympics? "There was no reason for this boycott. I feel it was used for selfish reasons—Carter used the boycott for votes. I am still opposed to the boycott because it did not achieve anything. It was a failure."

It helps knowing there will be alternative meets in Europe where she will run against, and she believes beat, people who would have been at the Olympics. But she still feels nothing is equal to what she calls "the biggest and greatest show on earth". Taylor is looking forward to the 1984 Olympics, but is only taking one year at a time.

When Angella Taylor runs, she is alone. She sees no one, and hears nothing. "It doesn't matter if God Himself is out there, or

whoever, because I just think they are beatable, and so I block it all out and just run."

After winning a race, there is no jumping around or pure glee. In fact, it's never even a surprise for her. "When I win, I know I've done the amount of work required to do it, and I know I will win deep inside. It's just like when I start the race. I have total faith and confidence in myself, so I just go out and do it. I guess people won't believe it, but it is the truth." The only reaction comes when Taylor thinks she has run terribly even if she has won the race, but with a poor time. Then she feels really bad.

What has Angella Taylor learned in the last two years? Simply that she can be as good as anybody else—and better. So for the girl who began running only because "it was something to do", the unleashing of her extraordinary power and energy has taken her very far.

In her energetic pursuit of excellence, Taylor will allow no obstacle in her way. And what if another Angella Taylor comes along? "Well, I plan to be so bloody good, that when she comes up to beat me, she will have to be very excellent," says Taylor.

Angella Taylor did not get to go to the Olympics in 1980, but there can be no doubt that had she been in Olympia in 776 B.C., displaying all her courage, grace and verve, this young woman would have achieved all the personal honour and glory possible of the city states.

Surprisingly, she is not in the Phys Ed program, and her primary reason is that she is unhappy about the lack of specialization in the phys ed department. She would like to specialize in one area: track. But with her qualifications there can be little doubt that after retirement she will find a position coaching track, in particular sprints, as she would like to.

Does Angella Taylor foresee a family life for herself in the future? She replies with an adamant "NO!" For Taylor, happiness in the future is to live in a big roomy house with four or five cats!

She likes York University, but dislikes school. Like training for a competition, she must condition herself to school again after having taken last year off. "Last year, all I did was eat, sleep and train. I got so lazy and now I have to come to school."

On top of school-work, Taylor works out three to four hours a day, six days a week. Indoors she does speedwork, works with the weights, and has muscle stimulation. Having recently returned from Europe, where she competed in several meets and countries, she is preparing for her next major meet, the World Cup, to be held next year in Rome.

Does Angella Taylor mind the lack of social life? "No, I don't miss it. I'm kind of a loner. I'm not into parties. I went to boarding school and so you get used to a disciplined life. Track is like a

profession," she explains. "The level of time and quality required to put in is so high that you must have the right attitude. How can you be good if you party?"

It is said that sprinters are born, not made. Charlie Francis, Taylor's coach feels that her natural ability is a gift. Does Taylor believe this? "I really don't know. Maybe a gift because of my swift improvement. But I have so much faith in Charlie and his training program, I do think he developed me."

Taylor speaks of two weaknesses. One that really bothers her, is a weakness on the part of the Canadian public. "The lack of

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interest and support in Track and Field in Canada really upsets me. How much motivation can you have when there are only one hundred people in the stands? In Europe, it's no different from a football game. There are tons and tons of people and that's when you get incentive to run. That's why sometimes, Canadian meets are such a joke for me."

Taylor believes that she has one major weakness. She fears that perhaps she is too serious about her running, and is heading for a down-fall. "When I have an injury, like recently

Gary Tezlaif



David Himbara