

OLYMPICS: Metcalfs hope to go to Tokyo in 2020

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“The primary focus was to support Ashton and Brianne (Eaton’s wife who represented Canada in the heptathlon), but I wanted to absorb all I could while I was there.”

With the heptathlon at the start of the games and the decathlon at the end, Metcalf explored during the middle.

Theisen-Eaton, who attended the University of Oregon along with Eaton, was determined to get a medal after a disappointing 11th-place finish in 2012 and there was some hype surrounding the notion of the Eatons both getting gold medals, but Metcalf and most others who follow the sport knew that would be a long-shot.

“She was going for the gold, everyone does, but it was an incredibly talented field,” he said.

The reigning champion, Jessica Ennis-Hill of Great Britain and upstart Nafissatou Thiam of Belgium who set four personal bests among her seven events, including a world record for the heptathlon in the high jump, provided a tremendous challenge.

“You could see Brianne struggle the first day, but she is a fighter and battled back on day two to move into medal contention,” Metcalf said. “Ultimately she was very happy to get the bronze because it was such a star-studded field.”

Ashton was not at 100 percent and he had to dig to keep himself in gold-medal position.

“For example, in the pole vault, where he normally separates himself from the rest of the field, he had to go to his third attempts to clear the heights, and I was just dying watching him struggle more than normal,” Tate noted.

However, even a struggling

Eaton is still better than everyone else in the world. He actually tied the Olympic record, which makes his performance all the more impressive. Olympic commentators and track and field aficionados concur that Eaton is among the greatest of all time.

“People don’t understand that just the length of the day takes a toll on the decathletes,” he said. “I was exhausted as a spectator and actually took a nap in the stadium when there was a break in the events.”

Metcalf was able to spend time with Eaton’s mother, Roz, and the two of them got to greet the champion at trackside after his victory lap, which provided a special moment for the athlete and his high school coach.

Beyond the track and field venue, Metcalf was on the course for both the women’s marathon and the men’s, both of which included exceptional performances by Americans, including three who train in Oregon, which made it special for Metcalf. Because it was a loop course, Metcalf could see the runners a number of times during the 26.2-mile course.

“Pretty cool to see Oregon-raised Galen Rupp get the bronze medal,” said Metcalf. “When you are at street level with those runners you are amazed at how fast they are going for such a distance.”

A number of local residents reported seeing Metcalf along the course sporting his Oregon cap. He was interviewed a number of times because of his association with Eaton.

Metcalf took in other events as well, including table tennis, sailing and beach volleyball.

“Beach volleyball was a blast and like a big party,” he said. “Even the sailing, which happened nearby, was a lot of fun to watch.”

Metcalf’s positive experience with the Olympic spirit led to a bit of a letdown once the games ended.

“It sounds sort of obvious, but you don’t quite process it

unless you are at the Olympics that everyone in the world is there. Where else does that ever happen?”

“On the train, in the stadium, at the venues, you are surrounded by a sense of world peace and world love that is real. Everyone is on the same page,” he said.

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“Since coming home, I am sort of experiencing the post-Olympic blues, to be honest. For me the rest of the world sort of stopped for the two weeks of Olympics, so when I flew into Atlanta on the way home, CNN was blasting too loudly on the airport television and all the negative political rhetoric and bad news just sort of stopped me in my tracks.”

The experience of 2012 and 2016 is something that will stay with the Sisters coach



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and business-owner.

“Just having the ability and opportunity to go to the Olympics is something I treasure,” he said. “I’ve been super fortunate to be able to go to two Olympics.”

Even though Ashton Eaton is unlikely to continue competing as a decathlete for much longer, Metcalf and his wife, Aimee, are talking seriously about trekking to Tokyo for 2020.

“I would recommend going to the Olympics to anyone who thinks they can find a way to pull it off. The overall theme of what the Olympics stand for makes me plan to go in the future.”

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