

Observer Athletes of the Year

Track Man: Sebastian Coe

Sebastian Coe — a slight, dark-haired man from England's Midlands city of Sheffield — has been called the finest middle distance runner in history.

Coe made that conclusion all but inescapable with three world records in a 42 day period in 1979. On July 5th, in Oslo, he took the 800 meters in 1:42.4. On July 17th, also in Oslo, the mile record fell in 3:49.0, and on August 15th, in Zurich, the 1500 meter was bested in 3:32.1.

In 1980 he went to the Moscow Olympics where he lost the 800 meters to his arch-rival Steve Ovett but bounced back to capture the gold in the 1500 meters.

Sebastian Newbold Coe was born in Chiswick, West London on September 29, 1956. "Some of my first recollections are of running," he said. "Looking back it seems that from the time I could walk I preferred to run. It just seemed natural."

Coe was trained by his father who later said, "At fourteen I knew he was good. At sixteen I felt a strange kind of certainty that if I was patient I had a world beater."

In 1977 Coe won the European Indoor 800 meter championship at 2:1.1, a tenth of a second out of Carlo Grippio's world record of 1:45.5. After a serious injury in 1978, he became the first Briton to do the 800 meters under 1:44, winning the United Kingdom record. He also beat world record holder Filbert Bayi in the 1500 meter at 3:57.7.

Following his triple victory of 1979 Coe headed for Moscow, rejecting his government's pleas that its athletes boycott the games. "I was also anxious that any government, Conservative or Labour, should not initiate sporting sanctions for some short-term political pay-off. After that, nothing in sport would have been sacred, and international sport — the World Cup in soccer or anything else — would have been placed in an impossible position."

After a heartbreaking loss to Steve Ovett, a fellow Englishman, in the 800 Coe geared up for the 1500.

"I tried to drive again at 40 meters out, and in the next few strides I knew I had nothing left if



Coe begins his victory lap after having won the Olympic Gold in the 1500 meter race.

anyone came back at me. The anxiety over the last 20 meters was unbearable, and it showed in my face as I crossed the line. After a few yards I sank down onto my knees. When I watched that display on the replay it was a bit embarrassing, but it was such a

bloody marvellous relief."

The *London Daily Mail* wrote: "Coe did more than win the gold medal. He lifted the soul, he ennobled his art, he dignified his country . . . Watching him run, invincible, over the last 300 meters was unforgettable. Watching him afterwards made you even prouder, for his conduct in triumph matched his humility in disaster . . ."

Coe's career did not end with the Olympics. On February 11, 1981, he set a new 800 meter indoor world record of 1:46.0 and in June destroyed his own global mark in the 800 with a sensational 1:41.72. Coe believes he will run faster. "There are a lot of things you can do with the 800 and this distance always excited me. I expect to run about 1:40 soon."

Running, records and medals are all a part of Sebastian Coe's life but they are not all of it. He is a student first. He plans to retire after the 1983 World Championships or the 1984 Olympics. "By then I will have spent enough time concentrating on one thing, and even then it might be too long."

Regarding the importance of his Moscow victory, he said, "The importance of my gold medal in Moscow was not just my own pride, but the position of influence I hope it gives me to help shape athletics, to prevent it becoming a promoter's and sponsor's carve-up, to keep it open for young people coming up so that they can get races without being told when, where and even how they must run. If you become famous it gives you an obligation. . . In all sports we have to protect the fundamentals of sportsmanship, self-determination of the individual and the pursuit of excellence free of commercial expediency, and as Voltaire said, 'the price of freedom is eternal vigilance'."

Kermit's gone



HAPPIER DAY: Kermit Washington autographs a ball for a fan.

"No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a part of the continent, a part of the main." Kermit Washington was certainly a big part of any organization he ever joined, especially the Trail Blazers.

Tuesday morning Kermit announced his retirement from the Trail Blazers and from the National Basketball Association. Plagued with back, hip and ankle injuries, Kermit has had enough.

"It's a Catch 22 situation," said Kermit. "If I practice, I can't play because of how my body feels, and you can't play if you don't practice." During pre-season training, an old back injury recurred, aggravating a knee injury and causing Kermit to stop practice. An ankle injury caused him to miss the first five games of the 81-82 season. The

season has been that way for Kermit, off-again, on-again, with more injuries in between.

After a visit with the Los Angeles Lakers' team physician, Dr. Robert Kerlan, and a long conference with the Blazers' team physician, Dr. Bob Cook, Kermit decided to call it quits. He could abuse his body no more.

"It's very difficult for an athlete to quit. The fighter who used to be champ always wants one more fight. This was no rash decision. I've done everything that I could."

Kermit was one of those rare athletes who transcended the normal prototype of an NBA player. He had the reputation of being one of the warmest, sincerest, and hardest workers in the NBA. Night after night he came to play and while he was in the floor, you knew he would always give his all.

Just as he gave his all on the court, he was a role model in the community. No matter how tired, he never begged off from an autograph. No matter how tired he never shunned a personal appearance.

Kermit was not blessed with a lot of natural ability, but survived the rigors of the NBA through sheer hard work. While other players slept, Kermit was up doing three to five hours of running a day. He was the first to arrive for practice and always one of the last to leave.

Kermit was one of the most sought after players in the NBA. After attending American University, he began his NBA career as a first-round draft pick of the Los Angeles Lakers, where he remained for 4½ years. He then went to Boston for a half-season and San Diego for one season. Kermit came to Portland as a part of the Bill Walton trade package in 1979.



200 meters



1,000 meters



600 meters



1,400 meters

Four phases on the path to the 1500 meter gold medal in the 1980 Olympic Games. At 200 Straub (338) has the lead, which he held for three-quarters of the race. Coe (254) is running wide. Ovett is number 279. At 600 meters Coe is relaxed, behind Straub. At 1,000 Straub suddenly begins his long burst for home and Coe and Ovett respond. At 1,400 Coe makes his second 'kick' to take Straub and leave Ovett behind.

Tina Blair now an OSU Beaver

Tina Blair, who was one of the top high school basketball players in Oregon, is adapting well to the Oregon State University style of

play. Blair, 18, is the daughter of Billy Blair and JoAnn Lomax of Portland. She was one of OSU's top recruits on its women's basketball team this season.

Ake Hill, OSU women's head basketball coach, said Blair will receive more playing time as the season progresses. She stated, "Tina has great finger control and uses her strong build well to help her rebounding."

The 5-10 high post, who was all league for three years at Marshall High School, was surprised the intensity of the practices in college. She said, "I didn't realize you had to devote so many hours to the game." She added that it took some getting used to.

The hard work has paid off though, as Blair scored her first two

points as a Beaver, sinking two free throws at the end of the game to beat San Jose State in double over time.

The freshman is playing an average of 10 minutes a game. Blair said, "Rebounding and good defense are my strong points." She is averaging three rebounds a game and had five early season steals.

Hill said that next season Blair will be moved to forward. "This will require a transition from inside to outside shooting," stated Hill, and added, "If we work on her form, I'm confident her shooting will come quickly."

Blair, a business major, said the change in position is going to take a lot of practice. She stated, "I'm really going to have to work on my outside shots." She added that she is ready for the challenge.

OSU hosts gymnasts

Oregon State University and the Shanico Inn of Corvallis have entered an agreement to sponsor the second annual OSU Shanico Inn-Vitality gymnastics meet. The meet will be a two-day affair featuring eight of the top women's gymnastics teams in the country. The meet will be held on February 19th and 20th at OSU's Gill Coliseum.

The field for the 1982 meet includes Oregon State, Oklahoma State, Ohio State, USC, Brigham Young, Washington, Washington State and Oregon.

Oregon State won last year's initial Shanico meet (145.90) and Sandra Smith of Louisiana State was the individual all-around champion (37.75).

Alexander's leads league

The first half of the Salvation Army Saturday Basketball League has been completed and Alexander's Landscaping remains undefeated. High point man thus far is Welton Jordan of the Portland Tabernacle team. Welton has averaged 28 points a game and scored 42 points in Saturday's match against the Moore Street Blues. Additional high scorers Saturday were Wendell Coxeff of Alexander's Landscaping, 26; Ricky Overton of the Moore

Street Blues, 27; Lester Crain of the Moore Street Whites, 25.

The second half of the season gets underway this Saturday, January 30th at 11 a.m. in the P.C.C. gym.

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