

US Athlete of the Year

BRIAN OLDFIELD

Interviewed by Tom Jordan

For a man who answers his phone, "Spartacus speaking," Brian Oldfield can act far from gladiatorial. To be sure, the popular image of Oldfield the Wildman, partial to carousing and craziness, does have large elements of truth in it. It is no coincidence that the only name roommate and world discus recordholder John Powell seems to have for Brian is "Hey, flake."

But there is another side to Oldfield. As the T&FN US Athlete of the Year sat relaxed and somewhat subdued in his comfortable Cupertino, Calif. apartment, he only occasionally proffered the outrageous statements which are a part of the self-perpetuated legend. Not to say that the new claimant to the longest indoor and 3 longest outdoor shot throws of all time doesn't always speak with gusto and at length about his event and himself:

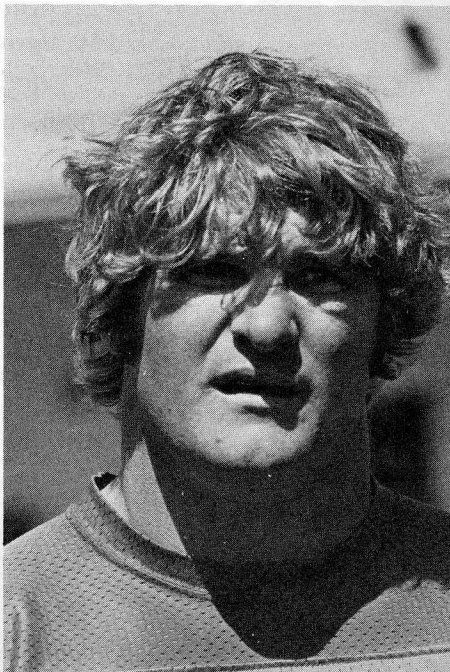
T&FN: Can we assume that the 75-footer was the highlight of your season?

Oldfield: The 75-footer was a high point because of everything that happened: It brought attention and credibility to me. But it was something which should have happened a long time ago. I started out in December with a fractured wrist. Then I did a couple of clinics which made me very tired, and I went down to Long Beach and popped my oblique [muscle] from the insertion of the 12th rib. Then two days before the LA meet, they told me Feuerbach was going to be there.

I really created a monster in that meet. I warmed up for a half-hour before the meet, taking throw after throw out over 75-0, and I couldn't keep it together. I just kept getting weaker and weaker. So then about two weeks later was the San Francisco meet and that monster I had created in LA was let loose on my 5th throw [72-6½, longest indoors or out at that time].

Outdoors at El Paso, I knew I had it together. I knew I was going to break the record because I threw 69-5 at Durham screwing up badly. So on my first throw, I threw 71-9 and I decided to see if I could break my indoor record. So the 73-1 came and that was nice, and my last throw came up and I was satisfied. I actually intended just to take an 80-foot foul or whatever, just go crazy on one. And when the throw was done, I looked down and the toeboard was in front of me and I was still in the circle, and I said, "Wow, maybe I broke the 73-foot record." Then they measured it and I went berserk, and said, "Get a steel tape." They had old nylon ones which kind of stretch a taste. I wasn't going to let them round that back—I needed it bad. It's so much easier to say 75-0 than 74-11 and three-qwatters!

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Chip Gane/Sportsphotos

T&FN: How did you view 75-feet before the season?

Oldfield: My goal was 23 meters (75-5½). I had a bet with Ricky Bruch for \$10,000 that I would get that. Actually, he was just going to give me \$10,000 if I did it. He told John [Powell] after I threw 75-0, "You sure it was dollars; I thought it was crowwwns."

T&FN: Does anyone else throwing today have the potential to reach 75-0?

Oldfield: The potential is always there. Like I got 70-feet just on dumb luck—hobnob around, just a big kid and stuff. I knew I could do more and I think other people are going to realize that it's not like 71-feet is an ultimate thing anymore.

T&FN: You don't think the steroid detection test is going to cause a decline in performances?

Oldfield: I'm throwing over 70 right now without steroids. The 'roids seem to give you that psychological crutch, and I experience cramps and stuff with them. I don't think they're that great. People who are using the 'roids—it's to come up to a high level, but once you're up there, you don't need them anymore.

T&FN: What do you think explains the poor performances among the amateurs this season?

Oldfield: I think it's the lull before the storm. People are looking at the Olympics and playing little psych games

with each other, not going for records.

T&FN: Do you regret not being a part of the Olympic scene anymore?

Oldfield: Well I have regretted it. And as an amateur, I could probably be making more money right now, and I wouldn't have people running around saying "It doesn't count!" It would be nice to go to the Olympics and throw the shot and discus. To win the shot, it would sort of be like being a bully, as far as I'm concerned. But the discus is starting to excite me now. I'd like to break that record, too. After Powell came back from Europe, we threw and I beat him 5 different times. I was throwing about 220 without a wind.

T&FN: Rumor has it that you and Al [Feuerbach] have some workouts together.

Oldfield: On Saturday, I'll go down and throw. Everybody goes down and throws, not just Al and I. Al's a natural resource in the area. Pete [Shmock] told me not to talk too much about Al today, not get him excited, just let him get mellow. Al and I were throwing there for awhile with a light shot, just to stay in shape, and I guess we were about 3 and 3 for competition. Then he didn't want to compete anymore: The last 3 were mine; the first 3 were his.

T&FN: Who are your picks to make the US team?

Oldfield: Al, and George [Woods], and then it's a toss-up. Believe it or not, it's going to be uglier than last time. I tend to lean toward Jesse Stuart, but there's Albritton, and Pete's taking time off to get in shape for it—he could throw 65-foot right now if he had to.

T&FN: Did you have any trouble getting up for the pro meets after a while?

Oldfield: I think I've got all the competition I want. In 1973, the average 2nd place shot put was 67-5½; it was about the same in '74, and it came down a little bit this year. I'm getting ample competition.

Redundancy crept in once in awhile, but again, it was the PR stuff. I would like not to have to do that. I would really like to just come back between meets and train. My goal is to do everything perfect for one season. I know that my base throw could be 75-0.

T&FN: Is ITA going to make it?

Oldfield: Some way or another, they don't want it to look too rosy. Mike [O'Hara] obviously knows the business better than I do, but they make it out so gloomy a lot of the time.

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