



## Inside Track: Barringer hones versatility

Tue May 12, 2009 By Joe Battaglia / Universal Sports



★★★★★ (4 ratings)

### Related



**Inside Track: Joe Battaglia archive**

Collection of track & field articles written by Universal Sports...

If [Jenny Barringer](#) had any regret about her first three years at the University of Colorado it was never completing an indoor season at full strength.

So, not surprisingly, when she sat down after the Beijing Olympics to outline her goals for the immediate future, fast times in the steeplechase weren't first and foremost on her mind.

"I have never gotten a fair shot at an indoor season," Barringer explained in a recent phone interview. "My freshman year, I ended up sitting out the indoor season. I ran my sophomore year but I was really sick the whole season. I ran a last-chance meet at Notre Dame and it was the only time in my life I have ever stepped off the track. My junior year, I took the season off because practically looking at the season with the chance to make the Olympic team, it would have been too long of a run to come off World Championships and go to cross-country, indoors, outdoors and then the Trials.

"This year, when I sat down with my coaches, I said I want to get at least one of every race because I wanted to leave college with some really fun indoor times. We kind of designed my season so that I would have one shot at every (school) record and going into nationals I would kind of get to choose what I get to do."

Barringer has certainly made the most of those opportunities.

At the University of Washington Husky Classic in Seattle in February, Barringer won the 5,000m in 15:01.70, setting school and collegiate indoor records. The time is the second fastest ever run by an American woman indoors. At the Big 12 Conference meet, she won the mile in 4:25.91, setting meet, school and collegiate records. The previous collegiate mark of 4:28.31 by Vicki Huber of Villanova had stood for 21 years. At the NCAA Indoor Championships, Barringer took the 3,000m in 8:42.03, establishing new meet, collegiate and school records.

She continued to rewrite the record books this outdoor season. In her very first race at the Oregon Relays, she won the 1,500m in a meet- and school-record 4:08.38, shaving three seconds off her PR. She came back at the meet to run 2:05 for 800m, a PR by over four seconds. At the Payton Jordan Cardinal Invitational, she set her fifth NCAA record of the year in winning the 5,000m in 15:07.64, the fastest time in the world so far this year.

"It's been a blast," Barringer said. "For me, the whole indoor season and beginning of the outdoor season was back to almost that giddy, excited feeling you get when you step on the track and are ready to do something that people aren't ready for. My last outdoor season, I focused primarily on the steeple. I never even ran a 5K last year. I ran a mile, but it was slow and I was leading the whole way and hadn't really honed those skills of running with the lead. I haven't run some of these distances in two years."

Barringer will finally turn her attention back to the 3,000m steeplechase at the Big 12 Championships on Friday, when she runs the race for the first time since setting the American record of 9:22.26 in a ninth-place finish in the [Beijing Olympic final](#).

At this point, you practically need an accounting degree to keep track of Barringer's events and times. What started out as a mission to have fun and make up for lost time, has transformed a budding star into the hottest professional prospect in the collegiate ranks.

Not even Barringer could have imagined establishing herself as arguably the most versatile middle distance runner in American before even clearing her first barrier of the year.

"It blows my mind a little bit," Barringer said, "because I think of the people who I admire on the track right now, the women I really think are phenomenal, and to think I could step on the track and rival one of the 1,500-meter specialists and one of the 5K specialists is really cool."

Barringer's ability to do so goes beyond physical fitness. She said her Olympic experience, on and off the track, injected her with a major boost in confidence, especially when she factored in her age and life situation to those of the Olympians she was surrounded by.

"It was cool to get the American record and it was fun for a day, but after you get that one day to be happy, you go back to work," Barringer said. "I was rooming with [Shalane Flanagan](#) in Beijing and she comes back to the room with a bronze medal. Being surrounded by that, it really, really solidified that sense in me that what I've been doing is great but it's not good enough yet.

"[Nicole Teter](#) was down the hall with a ton of other people who are quite a bit older than I am. I thought, 'It is cool that I get to be around these people and get to be a little fish in a big pond. I was only 21 when I was there, a junior in college. I was till juggling everything that goes along with being that young, like schoolwork, my relationship with my parents, taking care of things like rent and roommates here in Boulder. Not

that other people don't have life issues, I just know that I'm going to get better at it and I'm going to be more accustomed to these things and I'm getting an early start.

"It has given me a boost in a sense," Barringer added. "There are mornings that I wake up and still can't believe that I went to the Olympics. But knowing that I made it there but didn't accomplish everything that I wanted to definitely gives me fuel for working harder now and staying on track."

In March, *The Runner's Tribe* assembled a [ranking of American middle and distance runners](#) similar to the NBA trade value column written annually by ESPN's Bill Simmons. Factoring in past accomplishments, age and potential, Barringer was the top ranked runner on the list.

"On a narrow and personal focus, I was glad that somebody finally recognized that I've been on a roll and have been working really hard and I'm really young and I've been doing all of this while carrying full loads of school work," Barringer said of her ranking. "I think my potential to improve has quite a steep curve because I'm still in 15 credit hours of school getting As and Bs. It was cool to see somebody recognize my range, the records I have taken and my potential to improve from here."

"As the voice for all the steeplechase runners out there, my response was that it's about time that somebody finally lobbied for all of us and said if all of those really great 1,500-meter runners or 5K runners want to run the steeple, it's there for them to do. It's not some kind of inferior event that other runners are barred from running so the women that are tops in the steeple, why should they be discriminated against."

When Barringer steps to the track she does so unburdened by the outside expectations of pundits, prognosticators and fans. One thing she remains quite conscious of is her standing as an ambassador for the steeplechase, an event which just made its Olympic debut for women in Beijing.

Perhaps the greatest thing Barringer accomplished this indoor season did not come in the form of records but in the awareness she has brought to the steeplechase as a byproduct of her versatility and success. Neither Barringer's name, nor that of [Anna Willard](#), who has the second-fastest time in the world this season (4:06.90) in the 1,500m, can be mentioned without including the fact that both were Olympic finalists in the steeple.

"Anna has done just as much hard work as I have in getting the steeple out there," Barringer said. "She is one of the premier 1500-meter runners this year and is also an incredible steeplechaser. I've gone out on the track and run some of the best 5Ks this year and I'm still steeplechasing. It's people like Anna, who is out there running times that lead the country in other events and still running the steeple that's going to bring all kinds of recognition."

"When someone like Anna runs 4:06 it really legitimizes what she does in the steeple because if a 4:06 1500 translates into a 9:22 or whatever in the steeple, it gives a relative comparison that helps legitimize what we do. That's exactly how the steeple is going to get on an equal stage, by having women who run the steeple run legitimate times in other events as well."

### **Vlasic could boycott GL opener**

Croatia's [Blanka Vlasic](#), the Beijing Olympic silver medalist, is apparently prepared to boycott the DKB-ISTAF meet in Berlin, the first of six IAAF Golden League meets, on June 14 because meet organizers seem unwilling to pay top appearance fees to athletes.

As one of the most popular track and field athletes in Europe, Vlasic is one of a handful of athletes who can command top dollar for headlining a meet. After her victory at the [Doha Super-Grand Prix](#) on Friday, Vlasic's Austrian-based manager Harald Edletzberger told the *German Press Agency* that DKB-ISTAF meet officials will not meet his client's asking price.

"The ISTAF has come out saying they will not pay any appearance money for the top stars," Edletzberger said. "We are not happy with this, because it is not fair to the athletes and also to the other meetings which are paying an appearance fee."

Gerhard Janetzky, manager of the DKB-ISTAF meet, said that with shrinking budgets in these tough economic times, top-name athletes may have to accept cuts.

"We have a budget of around 2.7 million Euros, and 17 disciplines compared to 19 last year," he said. "We have slightly cut our budget for the athletes in favor of promotion (of the meet). Fact is that we are in tough talks with many managers. We pay prize money and of course we pay appearance fees as well. It is only natural that they are all playing for high stakes."

Edletzberger said he and other athlete managers have petitioned the IAAF to intervene on behalf of the athletes. IAAF spokesman Nick Davies told the *German Press Agency* that he was unaware of any petition and that, "The question of prize money is up to the meets."

Vlasic finished one victory shy of earning a share of the \$1 million Golden League jackpot last season. Should she boycott the meet in Berlin, she would be backing out on a potential showdown with World Indoor champion [Ariane Friedrich](#) and would likely be forfeiting a chance at the lucrative prize this year.

### **Faster focus**

Beijing Olympic 200m gold medalist [Veronica Campbell-Brown](#) of Jamaica recently said she is more focused on improving her personal-best time in the 100m than she is on bettering her times in what has become her [signature event](#).

"I am hoping I can run at least 10.6, a little closer to the [world record](#) (of 10.49 seconds by Florence Griffith-Joyner), but I don't know," Campbell-Brown said of her 2009 goals in a *Jamaica Observer* interview. "I just have to continue to work hard and see where my talent will take me."

Campbell-Brown has a personal-best of 10.85 seconds in the 100m, a time which she ran in Zurich in 2005. She said that too much time has elapsed without another PR.

"The 100 has been stagnant for a while in terms of my time and that is because of the technical things I need to fix in the first phase of the race," Campbell-Brown said. "I'm more focused on running faster in the 100m and I believe that once my 100m is fast that will make my 200m

easier."

### Bolting by

Richard Thompson's nickname is "Torpedo."

While watching the young star from Trinidad and Tobago win Olympic silver in the men's 100m in 9.89 seconds, it's not hard to see how he got the moniker.

But even as fast as Thompson is, he can't help but, to this day, marvel at how fast Jamaica's Usain Bolt ran to beat him in Beijing. In an interview with the *Jamaica Gleaner*, Thompson described the experience thusly: "It was kinda like a full bus passing you. He just shot off."

This is Thompson's account of how the race unfolded ([watch video](#)):

"The gun goes off and I have the best start I have ever had in my life. I'm in front for 30 meters. Bolt isn't too far behind me. I'm executing the race perfectly. I go all the way to 30 meters and I'm driving. I come up slowly, relaxed and everything, and generating power at the same time.

"I just feel Usain pull up at the side. Within 10 meters, between 40 to 50, I could just feel him separate himself so quickly. It's the most crazy thing I've ever seen in my entire life. At that point I wasn't even fooling myself. I knew the race was over. I knew the gold medal was gone unless (Bolt) had got injured or he had fallen. If he had fallen he may still have beaten us."

### World champs win

Three athletes who won gold at the 2007 World Championships in Osaka - Americans Jeremy Wariner and Kerron Clement and Bahamian Donald Thomas - made successful returns to the Japanese city on Saturday, winning their events at the IAAF Grand Prix.

In the men's 400m, Wariner looked strong, picking off runners in the back straight and taking a big lead into the homestretch. His winning time of 44.69 is the second-fastest time in the world this season. Wariner's Olympic teammate David Neville faded badly late in the race.

"I ran a good race, and a good time," Wariner told the IAAF. "I am satisfied with my performance although I made some mistakes. I have to maintain speed all the way through."

In the 400m hurdles, Clement faced serious challenges from Kenji Narisako of Japan and Tristan Thomas of Australia. He opened a slight lead coming into the home straight and held on to win in 48.60, the second-fastest time in the world this season. Thomas was second in 48.68 and Narisako third in 48.77.

In the men's high jump, Thomas cleared 2.28m/7-5¼ to win the event, while American Tora Harris finished second at 2.25m/7-4½.

### National road champs

It was a big week for road racing as national champions were crowned in the mile and 25-kilometer distances this week.

On Thursday, David Torrence and Shannon Rowbury were awarded inaugural USA championships for their victories in the TC1 Mile in Minneapolis. Torrence won the men's race in 3:59.3, a time which earned him a \$10,000 bonus for dipping under four minutes. He also pocketed \$4,000 for edging out Jon Rankin (4:01.7) and Bobby Curtis (4:02.0) to win the race. Although she didn't meet the time bonus standard, Rowbury's performance in the women's race was even more dominant. She won in 4:33.4, finishing comfortably in front of Sara Hall (4:39.1) and Sara Vaughn (4:41.3).

On Saturday in Grand Rapids, it was Dan Browne and Sally Meyerhoff who took home 25K titles at the Fifth Third River Bank Run, which has doubled as the USA Championship race for the last 16 years. Browne, a 2004 Olympian, earned his third career title in 1:15:56, while Meyerhoff claimed her first in 1:27:28. Both runners finished second to Kenyans in the overall finish, with Isaak Kimaiyo running 1:15:36 and Genoveva Kigen 1:27:16.

### Ivuti on course

Kenya's Patrick Ivuti overcame warm conditions to set a course record in winning the Prague Marathon on Sunday. Ivuti hit the tape in 2 hours, 7 minutes, 48 seconds, breaking the previous record of 2:08:52 set by Elijah Lagat in 1998. The time was two seconds off Ivuti's personal best.

At the halfway point of the race, the lead pack consisted of 10 runners. Ivuti, the 2008 Honolulu Marathon and 2005 Chicago Marathon champion, was the only runner still with the pacesetter. He briefly surrendered the lead to Kenyan Stephen Kibiwott but retook his advantage with a kilometer to go.

### Record return for Ennis

After being sidelined for the entire 2008 season with a stress fracture in her foot, British heptathlete Jessica Ennis enjoyed a stellar return to competition this weekend, winning the IAAF Combined Events Challenge in Desenzano del Garda, Italy.

Ennis scored 6,587 points, eclipsing the personal-best score of 6,469 points she set in a fourth-place finish at the 2007 World Championships in Osaka. Ennis' score also bettered the meet record of 6,565 points set by Liliana Nastase of Romania in 1992, and ranks third all-time on Great Britain's performance list. Only Denise Lewis (6,831) and Judy Simpson (6,623) have had higher scores.

"Last year I missed everything because of the injury," Ennis told the IAAF. "This gave me more motivation to come back. I am now in my best shape ever. I came here to qualify for the World Championships in Berlin, so (the personal best) it is a big bonus."

### World-leading jump

Cuba's Yargelis Savigne, the 2007 World outdoor and 2008 World Indoor champion, hop, skipped and jumped her way to a world-leading mark at a meet in Fortaleza, Brazil on Sunday. The 24-year-old triple-jumped 14.73m/48-4, improving her world lead by three centimeters.

"I was hoping for a jump in the 14.50 range," Savigne told the IAAF. "I'm very happy because of that, and also because I was able to go beyond the most optimistic thoughts."

### Mile mavens

The University of Oregon men's middle distance squad continued its roll of dominance this year by setting a collegiate record in the 4x1,600m relay at the Oregon Twilight meet in Eugene on Saturday.

Matt Centrowitz, Olympian Andrew Wheating, Shadrack Biwott and Olympian Galen Rupp teamed to cover the four miles in 16:03.24, breaking the previous collegiate record of 16:04.54 set by the University of Michigan at the 2005 Penn Relays.

Individual splits for Oregon's runners were: 3:59.53 for Centrowitz, 3:59.60 for Wheating, 4:05.21 for Biwott and 3:58.93 for Rupp. Because Biwott is Kenyan, Oregon's time cannot count as an American record.

### Reaching new heights

American Jesse Williams continued his torrid jumping in 2009 by setting a new personal best in winning the high jump at the Oregon Twilight meet.

The 2008 Olympian cleared 2.34m/7-8 on his first attempt at that height, crushing the meet record of 2.20m/7-3 and breaking his previous outdoor best of 2.33m/7-7¾. His clearance is the top mark in the U.S. this year and No. 2 in the world.

"I definitely feel like this is my year," Williams told *The Eugene Register-Guard*. "Winning (Olympic Trials) last year but not doing well at the Olympics really motivated me to do well this year. The World Champs is this year and I definitely want to bring back a medal, preferably it will be gold. I feel like I am definitely one of the best in the world and I can contend for anything."

### Reeve to run in New York

With more than 6,000 runners representing more than 75 charities-both record numbers-the ING New York City Marathon is aiming to raise \$21 million during the 40th running of the race on Nov. 1.

Among the highlights will be Matthew Reeve, the son of the late actor Christopher Reeve, running the marathon as part of Team Reeve, which will be raising money for the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation supporting spinal cord research. He'll wear bib No. 1275, recognizing the 1.275 million people with spinal cord injuries. In March, Reeve, a 29-year old filmmaker, was just 15 when his father broke his neck during an equestrian competition in 1995.

"Matthew's decision to run in the ING New York City Marathon epitomizes everything this race is all about: the triumph of the human spirit against all odds," Mary Wittenberg, president and CEO of New York Road Runners and race director of the ING New York City Marathon, said in a statement. "The first Sunday in November is always an uplifting day, and we're thrilled to join Matthew in celebrating his first marathon in New York."

Last year, \$18.9 million was raised for the 41 charities included in the official New York Road Runners-managed charity program. Since the program's inception in 2006, nearly \$50 million has been raised.

"Raising money for charities to make a difference in the lives of so many is important to our organization," Wittenberg said. "It is our priority to help charities use the platform of the marathon to raise money at a time when it's a challenge."

### Lessons from Liu

Almost one year after a devastating earthquake left 68,172 people dead and another 17,921 missing in southwest China, 2004 Olympic gold medalist Liu Xiang visited students in a primary school in Beichuan County, an area hit hard by the quake, and showed them how to run hurdles.

According to a *Xinhua* report, Liu had a physical education class with about 100 students from Ping'an Hope Primary School on a 40-meter-long and four-meter-wide space between the school's prefabricated buildings. He spoke about various methods for running hurdles and demonstrated how to do it right for the pupils in about 20 minutes.

### Unusual world record

As a decathlete, Dan O'Brien set a world record of 8.891 points in 1992.

O'Brien the hopscotcher is apparently equally exceptional.

On Thursday, the 1996 Olympic gold medalist set the world hopscotch record, according to Guinness World Records, by completing a game in 1:21.63 at Chelsea Piers in New York City.

Who ever knew they kept times in hopscotch?

