



Inside Track: Goucher gaining speed

Thu Jun 18, 2009 By Joe Battaglia / Universal Sports



★★★★★ (27 ratings)

Related



Inside Track: Joe Battaglia archive

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

Two weeks ago, [Kara Goucher](#) had one of those workouts that athletes dream of, the type that gives them the confidence that there are no boundaries to how hard they can push their bodies or what they can accomplish.

Reality set in three days later.

"On the Wednesday before Prefontaine, I had one of the greatest speed workouts of my life," Goucher said in a phone interview. "It was a PR workout. I PR'd in the 200. I PR'd in the 300. I was like, 'Oh my God, I'm going to rock it on Sunday.' But on Sunday, I still had trouble walking because I was so sore from that workout. My body was like, 'Why are you doing this?'"

When Goucher announced last month that she was going to run the World Championships marathon in August, she said the decision was prompted in part by the dissatisfied feeling she was left with after a third-place finish at the [Boston Marathon](#).

Goucher was passed late in that race ([watch video](#)) by Salina Kosgei ([stats](#)) of Kenya and Dire Tune ([stats](#)) of Ethiopia, and was unable to respond to their definitive move. Determined to avoid a repeat of that in the future, Goucher decided to use the spring to run an abbreviated track season so that she could work on developing a stronger finishing kick.

Although Goucher ([stats](#)) has a track background, she has trained primarily for the marathon for the last year, which for her has meant conditioning her body to handle consistent 5:20 mile pace for 26.2 miles. Asking her body to adjust to running almost a minute faster the last month has been difficult.

"It's literally been 15 seconds a quarter faster, which is crazy," she said. "But I do think that if I wasn't trying to keep my mileage up and had more time, I could get my speed back. It's just that in this little five-week period that I've set myself up with, it's really been a lot harder than I thought it would be."

Goucher's performances on the track have yielded a mixed bag of results.

Last month, she bypassed on flying cross-country to the [Reebok Grand Prix](#) in New York to stay local and run at the Nike Mile in Eugene, where she set a PR of 2:06 in the 800m and later ran a mile in 4:37. Two weeks ago, she ran the 2000m at the [Prefontaine Classic](#) ([watch video](#)) and finished seventh in 5:41.28, some 10 seconds off the pace.

"Prefontaine was a huge disappointment," Goucher said. "I don't care if I get beat, I just want to know that I'm competing. Really, from the beginning of this track season, the whole purpose was to work on my closing speed. But that day, I was just done. Even before the race started I knew I was in trouble because I had done this great workout three days earlier and it was still in my legs."

At the suggestion of her coach, Alberto Salazar, Goucher flew up to Canada for the Harry Jerome Track Classic in Burnaby, British Columbia to run a 1500m. She finished third in the race in 4:09.77 and was much more pleased with her performance.

"I got boxed in at the beginning but I ended up running perfect splits of 66 and I closed well," Goucher said. "I thought that was the first real I've done where I actually executed my plan. Even though I didn't win, and I wasn't running for the win, I felt like I ran evenly and I closed well. I felt that was really the only race I've run this spring even though I've spiked up three times."

Next up will be the USA Outdoor Championships next week in Eugene, where [Goucher](#) is the defending champion in the 5000m. Although she said she feels well prepared for the race, winning again is far from foremost on her mind.

"I think I'll be in the hunt, but my whole goal for all of this continues to be to work on my closing speed" Goucher said. "Alberto is like, 'Even if you don't win, as long as you get in there and learn how to kick and learn how to shift at the end, that's the main goal.' It's one thing to do it in practice, it's another thing to do it in a race."

"I know people think we are crazy to go back to the track and the track is so different from the marathon. But you know what? If I would have been able to find that gear in Boston, it might have had a different ending. That's what I'm trying to do and what I'll try to do at USATFs, run with everybody and then really execute a kick."

"Whether it leaves everybody behind or not, it's about knowing that I did it, that I switched that gear and went for it," Goucher added. "There is not going to be a point in the race where I say, 'I can break it open now. I'm going to go now.' Maybe it costs me a win or will cost me second

place, but I'm going to put myself in a position where I have to kick for it."

Should Goucher finish in the top three and earn a spot of the U.S. roster for the World Championships, she said she will forgo taking the position to allow another runner to go to Berlin.

"Absolutely, I would pass the spot," she said. "My goal is the marathon. With the 5000m you have rounds and the 5000m and marathon are so different. I would have to make so many sacrifices in my marathon training to be presentable at the World Championships in the 5K that I would lose sight of my ultimate goal, which is becoming the best marathoner I can be."

Goucher said her preparation for the Worlds marathon would resume in earnest immediately after Nationals, and likely would include an increase in mileage.

"It's a little bit of a shorter block than I had leading up to Boston, so we're going to try for a little more aggressive mileage this time around, but for only five weeks or so," Goucher said. "It'll be like I literally finish that race and it will be fun and the next day I'm going to do a 20-mile run. It will be an immediate switch of gears."

Although the transition from the marathon to the track in such a tight window has been arduous, Goucher said she believes it is ultimately what is going to get her to the top.

"All of these races that I've done, I've chosen them for a reason," Goucher said. "Maybe they haven't been glamorous, but everything is related to the marathon in Berlin. I know running a 1500m in Canada doesn't seem like it would help me in Berlin but I believe it will transfer over."

"When I ran those indoor races before Boston, I never really put myself in a position where I had to really dig down and kick. That's what all of this has been about, putting myself in that position, even if I have to hold back at the beginning to put myself on that edge where I have to fight down that last 200 meters. I believe this is going to help me."

Diamond setting

On Tuesday, the IAAF announced a slight expansion to structure and a schedule of meetings for the new Diamond League series set to begin in 2010.

The Diamond League will now be composed of 14 meetings across the United States, Asia, Middle East and Europe. When the formation of the League was announced in March, there were 12 meetings on the circuit and three more meetings in Berlin, Doha and Rome had expressed interest in joining.

Doha and Rome fulfilled criteria for membership in the League while organizers for the ISTAF Berlin meeting decided to withdraw their application. Meet organizers announced their decision via release on Tuesday as well. At the time being, it appears that the ISTAF meet will remain in Berlin. A further announcement on that is pending.

According to IAAF spokesman Nick Davies, a 15th meet is unlikely to be added to the series in the near future, but the sport's governing body is looking into the possibility of a second tour that would run concurrent to the Diamond League where meets could be promoted and demoted in status.

"The General Assembly of the Diamond League decided that, at least for the first period of the Diamond League contract (2010-2012), there would not be any additional meetings added," Davies said in an email to *Universal Sports*. "The IAAF is, however, working on creating a new permit (name not known yet) group of meetings around the world -- from which the promotion to and relegation from the Diamond League - would be made. This is being studied at present."

The Diamond League schedule for 2010 will look like this:

City	Date
Doha	Friday May 14
Shanghai	Sunday May 23
Oslo	Friday June 4
Rome	Thursday June 10
New York	Saturday June 19
Eugene	Saturday July 3
Lausanne	Thursday July 8
Gateshead	Sunday July 11
Paris	Friday July 16
Monaco	Thursday July 22
Stockholm	Friday August 6
London	Friday/Saturday August 13-14
Zurich	Thursday August 19
Brussels	Friday August 27

Staying put

She is unquestionably the hottest commodity among collegiate runners today, but [Jenny Barringer](#) is quite content to put off her jump to professional running.

The 2008 Olympian, who set six NCAA records this year, became just the third American woman ever to break four minutes in the 1500m outdoors and won her third NCAA title in the steeplechase, said she will return to the University of Colorado in the fall to exhaust her final season of eligibility in cross-country.

"The part about being at CU and deciding to stay, I have full resolve and don't regret it for a second," Barringer told the *Daily Times Call*. "So, that part of it is very easy. Telling other people I'm not taking their advice - that's the hard part."

Barringer ([stats](#)) said she will likely begin the process of settling on an agent, selecting a coach and dealing with prospective shoe sponsors in September. She said most people have respected her decision to stay in college and haven't pressured her to strike while the iron is hot.

"I suspect, again this summer, some people with strong opinions and good offers will try to persuade me," Barringer said. "I've been so outspoken about my decision that more and more people are really respecting that and respecting the fact I won't change my mind."

Barringer, who was featured in a full-page photo this week in *Sports Illustrated*, intends to graduate in December with degrees in political science and economics and has said that she wants to attend law school one day. She continues to be active in the Boulder community. She works with her church, aids refugees, and tutors a deaf 4-year-old boy in sign language.

"She's the most accomplished female track and field athlete ever at CU, and maybe the most accomplished athlete of either gender ever at CU," Colorado coach Mark Wetmore said. "She's an impeccable role model. She has set school records that young women for generations will be chasing."

NYRR, NBC ink new deal

On Monday, the [New York Road Runners](#) announced a new three-year extension of its exclusive broadcast deal with NBC Sports and WNBC to provide expanded coverage of the [ING New York City Marathon](#) at both the local and national level, beginning with the 2009 race on Sunday, November 1.

New this year, NBC Sports will increase its national same-day taped coverage of the marathon from one hour to two hours-from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. EST. This two-hour same-day coverage is the only national TV network coverage of any major marathon outside of the Olympics. WNBC is scheduled to air live coverage of the marathon from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. locally, and will begin its pre-marathon coverage at 6:00 a.m. on the Sunday edition of the "Today in New York" show.

"We are so pleased to continue to expand our partnership with WNBC and NBC Sports and to bring more of the ING New York City Marathon to more people as part of our 40th-running celebrations," Mary Wittenberg, president and CEO of New York Road Runners and race director of the ING New York City Marathon, said in a statement.

Stun run

[Meselech Melkamu](#) ([stats](#)) of Ethiopia turned in one of the true shocking runs of the season thus far when she became just the fourth woman in history to break the 30-minute barrier for 10,000m at a meet in Utrecht, Netherlands on Sunday.

The 24-year-old finished the race in 29:53.80, the second-fastest clocking in history and one which broke [Tirunesh Dibaba's](#) ([stats](#)) African record of 29:54.66 set in the Beijing Olympic final last August. The women's 10,000m world record remains 29:31.78 by China's [Wang Junxia](#) set in Beijing in 1993.

Showdowns set for Rome

In addition to the stars that the IAAF has contracted to compete in all six legs of the Golden League, several more committed this week for the Golden Gala in Rome on July 10, creating some interesting matchups in the third meet of the series.

Italy's [Antoinetta Di Martino](#), the silver medalist at the 2007 World Championships in Osaka, has signed on to compete in the high jump, further deepening a field that will include reigning world champion [Blanka Vlasic](#) ([stats](#)) of Croatia and perhaps [Ariane Friedrich](#) of Germany, who cleared a national-record 2.06m/6-9 to win the event during Sunday's Golden League opener in Berlin ([watch video](#)). Friedrich ([stats](#)) is scheduled to compete at the World University Games in Belgrade that week but it remains to be seen if she will change her plans and instead opt to compete for the \$1 million jackpot.

Jamaica's [Asafa Powell](#) ([stats](#)), who won the 100m at the Golden Gala in 2006 and 2007 and shares the meet record of 9.85 seconds in the event with [Maurice Greene](#), will square off against a pair of other sub-10 runners, American [Mike Rodgers](#) ([stats](#)), and [Churandy Martina](#) ([stats](#)) of the Dutch Antilles. [Daniel Bailey](#) of Antigua won the 100m in Berlin and is alive in the race for the jackpot.

Olympic 4x400m champion and 400m bronze medalist [Sanya Richards](#) ([stats](#)) will look to add a fourth Golden Gala win in the 400m to her resume while remaining in the hunt for a third career jackpot victory. Richards will oppose fellow American [Allyson Felix](#) ([stats](#)), the two-time world champion at 200m and defending Golden Gala champion.

The men's long jump is not one of the Golden League events, but will feature a rematch of the thrilling Prefontaine Classic competition between American [Dwight Phillips](#) and Panama's [Irving Saladino](#), winners of the last two Olympic gold medals. Phillips ([stats](#)) jumped a sensational 8.74m/28-8¼ in Eugene, equaling the fifth best performance outdoors in history and beating Saladino ([stats](#)), who jumped 8.63m/28-3¾, the second best mark of his career.

Kenyan [Asbel Kprop \(stats\)](#), the Olympic silver medalist in the 1500m and winner at last year's Golden Gala, will look battle fellow Kenyan [Haron Keitany \(stats\)](#), who finished runner-up to [Augustine Choge \(stats\)](#) in Berlin on Sunday, running 3:30.20.

The women's 3000m steeplechase will be held at the Golden Gala for the first time. It is only fitting that the event will be ushered in by Russia's [Gulnara Galkina-Samitova \(stats\)](#), who won the first Olympic gold medal in the event in Beijing while setting the world record of 8:58.81.

Cause for concern

After thoroughly dominating the world half-mile scene last year, an incredibly substandard opening to the 2009 season by [Pamela Jelimo](#) has Kenyan officials and fans worried.

Jelimo's plummet from the top of the sport has been alarming in its swiftness. Last season, she went unbeaten in the 800m, winning the event at the African championships in April, setting a world junior record in Hengelo in May, winning Olympic gold in August, and winning her sixth straight Golden League meet in Brussels in September to pocket the \$1 million jackpot.

This year, the 19-year-old has yet to win a race. She opened with a sixth-place finish at a meet in Rabat, Morocco last month, the first defeat of her career. Jelimo ([stats](#)), a policewoman in Kenya, skipped the Kenyan Police championships in order to run at the [Prefontaine Classic](#) in Eugene. After taking an early lead, she wound up finishing dead last in a race won by little-known American Maggie Vessey ([stats](#)) in 2:00.18, a time almost six seconds slower than Jelimo's best of 2008.

Jelimo has also been competing in local Athletic Kenya-sponsored meets and hasn't won there either.

Kenyan national team coach Julius Kirwa told the Chinese news agency *Xinhua* that a continued slide by Jelimo would quickly slam shut all the doors she opened for herself a year ago.

"Meet organizers will start shunning her when she stops adding value to their events," Kirwa said. "If she continued on her winning streak her bargaining power would soar but as things stand now, she has a lot to prove before she attracts their goodwill."

Knowing that the Kenyan public is concerned and pundits are beginning to question if she was a one-hit wonder, Jelimo has appealed for a show of patience while she tries to regain her winning form.

"I know my performance of late has been below average," she said. "On the bright side it is however a wake-up call for me to work harder and gain my form and winning ways."

Festival fiasco

The [Festival of Excellence](#) in Toronto was supposed to be a once-in-a-lifetime event for track and field fans to our north. Meet organizers went so far as to reportedly cut [Usain Bolt](#) a \$250,000 check just to bring a slice of Olympic glory, and ostensibly the chance of witnessing history, to Canada.

But the event turned out to be a disappointment on all fronts.

While [Bolt \(stats\)](#) was delivered, favorable weather was not, which all but killed any chance of seeing the Jamaican star make any attempt at approaching his world record of 9.69 seconds. Despite torrential downpours and a sopping track, Bolt won easily in 10.00 seconds. The clock in the stadium and the one shown on the ESPN broadcast recorded Bolt's time as being 9.2 seconds.

That was apparently only the tip of the iceberg.

According to Michael Hollett of *Now Toronto*, the whole handling of the meet was clumsy.

Hollett claims that organizers reneged on a promise of free tickets to selected Toronto public school athletes, telling them the day before the meet that the tickets were withdrawn and could be purchased for \$250 each.

Additionally, he said large portions of the stadium offered only obstructed views of the track and were sold for the same price as full-view seats. Frustrated fans in one section jammed a stair landing to try and catch a glimpse of the Bolt race, blocking the views of those behind them and causing a near riot.

VCB doubles up

Jamaica's [Veronica Campbell-Brown](#) continues to round into form after missing training time due to a toe infection on her left foot, and is looking more like she will be ready for a sprint double at the World Championships in August.

At a meet at Central Florida on Saturday, Campbell-Brown ([stats](#)) won the 100m in 11.04 seconds and the 200m in 22.58 seconds. The 100m race was her third of the season and first under a legal wind reading, and the 200m race was her first of the season at the distance.

Campbell-Brown, who has a bye to Berlin as the reigning 100m world champion, now owns the fastest 200m time by a Jamaican this season. Olympic bronze medalist [Kerron Stewart \(stats\)](#) clocked 22.62 earlier this year in Temple, Arizona, while [Simone Facey](#) ran 22.65 at the [Reebok Grand Prix](#) in New York on May 30.

Baring all...again

In March, French pole vaulter [Romain Mesnil](#) ([stats](#)) was featured in an internet video running naked through the streets of Paris in a clever attempt at luring a new apparel sponsor after his deal with Nike was not renewed.

Since then, the French web hosting site, ovh.com, won an eBay bid to become Mesnil's official sponsor and, as a thank you to the company, the world and European silver medalist has decided to shed his clothing once more.

In this webisode ([watch video](#)), Mesnil is just one of several people in the Roubaix Valley region of France to contract a virus that causes them to go through daily life in wearing nothing but their birthday suits.

Here's hoping they get this "virus" controlled better than swine flu.

Triumphant return

Olympic champion and world-record holder [Dayron Robles](#) of Cuba returned from an injury to win his first race of the season Wednesday, clocking 13.30 in the 110m hurdles at the Thessaloniki 2009 meeting in Greece.

Robles ([stats](#)) injured himself racing during an indoor meet in France in February and had not competed since. He said he plans to compete in seven to 10 more meets before the World Championships in Berlin this August.

Shoe in

Olympian [Galen Rupp](#) of the University of Oregon completed his perfect season last weekend, winning both the 5000m and 10,000m titles at the [NCAA Outdoor Championships](#) in Arkansas, giving him seven national championships on his career.

As if we needed further evidence of his greatness, Rupp ([stats](#)) showed another flash of his tremendous potential under unusual circumstances during the 5000m final.

During the first lap of the race, another runner stepped on Rupp's shoe, nearly knocking it off. Unsure of what to do, he caught the attention of coach Alberto Salazar who instructed him to stop and put the shoe on properly.

Hoping to capitalize on the situation, [Ryan Sheridan](#) of Iona smartly pushed the pace and tried to gap Rupp. But before the lap was even finished, Rupp regained contact with Sheridan and the rest of the pack. After several painfully slow laps, Rupp was running in next-to-last place with less than a mile to go. In the span of about 120 meters, he managed to pass 11 other runners and vault himself into fourth place.

Over the final 400 meters, the race turned into a duel between Rupp and [David McNeill](#) of Northern Arizona, who stayed glued to Rupp's hip as long as he could. But with 200 meters to go, Rupp took off and sprinted to victory in 14:04.12. ([watch video](#)).

Kluft to skip Euro meet

Long jumper [Carolina Kluft](#) will not compete for Sweden at the European Team Championships next week as she continues to struggle with her comeback from a stress fracture in her left shin.

On Monday, Sweden's coach Stefan Olsson said Kluft ([stats](#)) needs a break from competitions to train more. Last week, she finished fifth in a competition in Konigs Wusterhausen, Germany jumping only 6.07m/19-11.

"After the competition in Goteborg...I needed to know if I could jump in two competitions so close together," Kluft said after the competition in Germany. "I found out that I cannot in my present condition. I haven't yet recovered from the last competition."

