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Ballou and teammates shatter the 4X800 relay world record

Lloyd Jones Jul 15, 2019 Updated 3 hrs ago



The team of (from left) Christine Olen, Aeron Arlin-Genet, Terry Livingston Ballou and Lisa Valle broke the world record for the 50-54 age group in the 4X800-meter relay at the USA Track & Field Masters Outdoor Championships in Ames, Iowa, on Saturday (SANDY LEE TRIOLO PHOTO)

CONWAY — Terry Livingston Ballou was part of a world record on Saturday.

Competing in the USA Track & Field Masters Outdoor Championships at the Iowa State University Cyclone Sports Complex in Ames, Iowa, Ballou ran the third leg in the women's 4X800-meter relay with three friends and shattered the American and World records. They crossed the finish line in 10:14.64 to break the American mark of 10:24.21 and the World record of 10:19.68 set by four British women. The team also set a new meet record.

You can see the world record broken at tinyurl.com/lyxzglm84.



Ballou, 51, a former Kennett High and Holy Cross standout, who lives in Center Conway, shared her thoughts in an interview on Monday.

• **How did this dream team come about?**

“The team came about after we all met at a masters track meet in 2009. We were all in our 40s and pretty good half milers, so we decided to combine forces and go after some American or even World records.

“We looked up the world record for the indoor 4X800 and knew it was within our reach. We decided to go after it at the National Championships the following year, in 2010. The race was in Boston, at the Reggie Lewis Center. We ended up smashing the world record by over 30 seconds; we ran 9:25.49, which averages out to about 2:21 per leg. That record still stands.”

• **Where are your teammates from?**

“Christine Olen, 51, is from Boise, Idaho; Aeron Arlin-Genet, 52, is from Los Osos, Calif.; and Lisa Valle, 53, is from Albuquerque, N.M.”



- **The announcer (who was horrible) was all excited about the American record falling, but you guys had your sights on the world record the whole time, right?**

“Absolutely. The world record was always the main goal. We thought it would be really cool to have the same four women have the world record in both the 40- and 50-year-old age group!

“We were very challenged because of injuries; I was recovering from a stress fracture and then a hamstring strain, and my teammates were dealing with Achilles issues and hamstring issues as well. Honestly, up until mid-June we really weren’t sure we would be able to do it. At our age, staying healthy is half the battle. We have been trying to do this for over a year now. We finally said to each other we just have to go for it, even if we’re not 100 percent. I knew we were all strong enough to do it, but it wasn’t going to be easy by any stretch.”

- **Was the time what you had hoped for?**

“The world record, which I had etched in my brain, was 10:19.68, set by a British team last year. We just wanted to be sub 10:19.”

- **Were you pleased with your leg?**



“I did the best I could do, given the limited training I could get in. My stress fracture healed up in early February, but then my hamstring bothered me so badly that by the end of May I couldn’t run on it. I had to really alter my training, cutting back on my mileage and limiting the amount of speed work. I was hoping to run closer to 2:33 (I ran 2:36), but I know once I get fully healthy again I can go sub 2:30.”

• **Do you like running third or do you have a preference?**

“Third is not my favorite position at all. I prefer to lead or anchor. But since I was kind of the wild card (I had not done a track meet in over 10 months prior to the race), I had to do what was best for the team. We ran our strongest legs at anchor and lead, and the two of us who were dealing with injury were tucked into the middle.

“But as my dad (Bernie Livingston, who coached me in high school and who helped me with workouts for this race, and is still the best coach I know) once said, ‘The most important leg of the relay is the one holding the baton’— meaning that everyone is of equal importance and you all must pull your weight. So we all went into this knowing it was going to be a team effort.”

• **How difficult is it to push for a make like this when you guys were running by yourselves with one to press or pace you?**

“It really wasn’t that difficult. I do a lot of my track workouts alone, and I really know my pace. And the great thing was, all the other teams we were competing against knew that we were going after the record, and they were cheering for us and pulling us along. The support from the spectators and the other competitors was huge. And when you know your team is counting on you, that’s a huge motivator as well.”



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• **What's next? I saw your post you'll be back for the 60-year-old record, but is there a 55-59 mark that you guys can crush, too?**

“Up until a couple years ago, the relay records were only kept in 10-year age groups. Now, they are in five-year groups. So we will 100 percent be going after the 55-59 mark in a couple of years. But before that, we want to get the indoor 4X800 record for 50-54 this winter.

“These girls are not only teammates but we've become really great friends. They are uplifting and competitive and we bring out the best in each other. I look forward to running with them well into our 90s! Maybe even 100!”

Lloyd Jones

Editor