



Tianna Bartoletta: A Long Jumper Who Sprints Or A Sprinter Who Long Jumps? Both!

BY **KAREN ROSEN** | **AUG. 12, 2016**, 1:04 A.M. (ET)



Tianna Bartoletta celebrates after placing second in the women's 100-meter final at the 2016 U.S. Olympic Team Trials for Track and Field at Hayward Field on July 3, 2016 in Eugene, Ore.

Speed is a double-edged sword for Tianna Bartoletta, the only Team USA athlete doubling in the 100-meter and the long jump at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

The faster Bartoletta runs, the more the sprinter in her celebrates and the long jumper in her struggles to adapt.

“In 2012, I had gotten so fast I couldn’t nail those last two steps in the long jump,” said Bartoletta, who placed second last month in both the 100 and the long jump at the U.S. Olympic Team Trials for Track and Field.

“The faster you run on the runway, the exponentially faster those last two steps have to be so that you can maximize the jump. And so it just gets really scary. You’re hustling backwards, working against yourself to slow down to jump.”

At the 2012 Olympic Trials, Bartoletta qualified only in the 100. (She decided to forego the long jump to compete in the 200, where she was sixth.) In London, Bartoletta finished fourth in the 100, running a personal best time of 10.85 seconds, and also won a gold medal on the world-record-setting 4x100-meter team.

She then took a step away from track and field, and in the process actually figured out how to nail those last two steps in the long jump.

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Where did Bartoletta find the answer? Oddly enough, at the top of an icy bobsled track.

"Once I joined the bobsled team after the Olympics just to get away from the sport, I realized I actually could get that foot down because I had to do it to jump into the back of an accelerating bobsled," said Bartoletta, who was a push athlete. "Watching video with the coaching staff and the bobsled team, I was seeing myself do the very thing that I believed I could no longer do.

"So I was able to come back as a long jumper. I'd always wanted to, but I just couldn't get the speed and the confidence and the takeoff together."

After a few months with the bobsled team, Bartoletta was ready to return to track and field.

In 2014, she was the national champion in the 100-meter and 60-meter (indoors) and placed second in the long jump outdoors.

At the 2015 world championships in Beijing, Bartoletta was back on the podium, but this time in the long jump. She won the gold 10 years after her victory in the same event at age 19.

That brings us to 2016, where Bartoletta said, "This year, all signs pointed to my speed being way more than it had been in the past."

She could have concentrated only on sprinting, but as a reigning world champion who'd never made the Olympic team in the long jump, Bartoletta said, "This was really important to me to not give up on, but it was difficult because I was so much faster on the runway."

She adopted the philosophy of her favorite book by Susan Jeffers, "Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway."

"Once you nail it one time at that full speed," Bartoletta said, "you're like, 'Oh, I lived. I survived. My knees are intact. Hey, let's do it again!'"

Bartoletta said the 100/200 and 200/400 doubles are much more natural than her mix of track and field.

"The only difference between those events is race strategy," she said. "But the 100/long jump double, it's going from an all-out sprint to almost a rhythm, running very controlled. Sometimes I get my signals crossed and I run too slow in the 100 because I'm running too controlled and then I run extremely reckless on the runway, and I don't get the jump off that I should have. It's just a matter of making that mental switch. The training is the same."

But the schedule for the U.S. Olympic Team Trials for Track and Field in Eugene, Oregon, presented a new challenge.

The heats for the 100 happened to fall smack in the middle of the long jump final. Bartoletta trained to go between the events, changing shoes and mindsets.

"The trials was the hardest meet of my life," Bartoletta said.

Not only did she have to contend with the schedule, but her husband, John, had a medical emergency that forced him to go to the hospital.

"He was so sick while he was coming into the stadium and trying to coach me through that ordeal," Bartoletta said. "He was able to keep it together until we got home and I took him back to the hospital."

Bartoletta and her husband laid the groundwork for going between the events. They spoke to the marshals and officials so she could skip the call room before the 100 and



Tianna Bartoletta leaps to victory in the women's long jump at the 2015 USA Outdoor Track & Field Championships at Hayward Field on June 27, 2015 in Eugene, Ore.

the mixed zone after it. Jasmine Todd was also attempting the double.

“It was a big production behind the scenes to make sure that we could do both,” Bartoletta said.

Then the men’s decathlon long jump ran long, further complicating the logistics.

On her first jump, Bartoletta went 23 feet, ½ inch (7.02 meters) which was more than an inch farther than reigning Olympic champion Brittney Reese.

“When I saw the distance,” Bartoletta said. “I looked at John, and I was kind of like, ‘Oh my God. It’s happening according to plan. I can relax.’ So I just went back and I put on my sneakers and started doing my sprint drills to get ready for the 100.”

She passed her second and third jumps, knowing she would qualify for the long jump final and get three more jumps if she needed them.

In the 100, Bartoletta easily won her heat. Todd, meanwhile, took all three of her jumps. She did not qualify for the long jump final, but advanced to the next round of the 100.

Bartoletta couldn’t resist the urge to take one more jump. After Reese leaped 23-11 ¾ on her fourth attempt, Bartoletta said, “I felt all the energy, and I wanted to jump again, too.”

But it was right after her race and she had not fully recovered, going only 22-4 ½. “I should have just relaxed,” Bartoletta said with a laugh.

That’s because her first jump held up as the second-best of the competition.

“She made the team and her spirits just soared,” John Bartoletta said.

In the 100-meter final the next day, Bartoletta ran a personal best of 10.78 seconds. She was only four-hundredths behind winner English Gardner and edged Tori Bowie by three-thousandths of a second for the runner-up spot.

She was also second in 2012.

“A lot can happen in four years,” Bartoletta said. “It’s such a long time in this sport. I’m just grateful that I was able to get here because my season wasn’t that great to start with. I was a long shot going into the trials myself. There are still people who believe that my running 10.78 in the final was a fluke and that maybe Eugene’s track is a little short in 100 meters because we always run fast there.”

She laughs it off. “Naysayers,” she said. “The Olympic Games is going to be fun. All we have to go do is what we did and we’ll be proud of whatever happens.”

In Rio, the schedule is much friendlier. Bartoletta runs the 100 on Aug. 12 and 13, and then the long jump does not start until the night of Aug. 16.



Tianna Bartoletta celebrates after winning gold in the women's long jump final at the 15th IAAF World Championships at Beijing National Stadium on Aug. 28, 2015 in Beijing.



Tianna Bartoletta runs in the first round of the women's 100-meter at the

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No woman has won the gold medal in both events at the Olympic Games. Only Jesse Owens (1936) and Carl Lewis (1984) have done it. In 1988, Heike Drechsler of East Germany won the silver in the long jump and the bronze in both the 100- and 200-meter.

At the 2000 Sydney Games, Marion Jones of the United States won the gold in the 100 and the 200 and the bronze in the long jump, but was stripped of her medals in a doping scandal.

So how does Bartoletta like her chances? "I believe that I can make both finals," she said. "I know that with 100-percent certainty. After that, I do not think about the outcome. There are two things that can happen. Once you get in the final, the adrenaline and the emotions reach a new level of intensity and that can either shut you down or it can focus you."

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"For me, I have to just focus on my execution. If I go into the final thinking, 'OK, I need to win this race,' I've skipped over a whole checklist of things that I need to do correctly in order to make that happen."

"I pretty much say I want to come home with three medals. That's as far as I take that."

Growing up, Bartoletta played basketball and volleyball and went out for track and field just because she wanted something fun to do.

"I originally chose the long jump on the first day of track practice because I thought it would get me out of running," she said, noting that her school didn't have a track so athletes had to run laps around the parking lot. "But I was wrong about that. Long jumpers had to run anyway."

And she found she had a talent for that, too. Her first success, though, was in the long jump, where she surprised the world with her gold medal in Helsinki.

"I feel like I've had two different careers," Bartoletta said. "I feel completely separate from the young girl that won the 2005 world championships."

"She'll be 31 years old on Aug. 30, but her body hasn't been through the wear and tear of other athletes her age."

"It's a blessing in disguise that I kind of flew under the radar," Bartoletta said. "I had seven horrible seasons when I didn't really train, didn't really push myself, so I might still have the body of a 23-year-old, considering that I haven't really been training hard for this entire period of time."

After meeting her husband, Bartoletta dove into track and field with a new outlook, a new diet and a new coach. She ate plenty of protein, including filet mignon daily with John usually at the grill, and cut down on sugar and carbs.

"Eating better food has actually made a bigger difference in my strength levels and the weight that I've been able to maintain," Bartoletta said.

She began working with renowned coach Rana Reider, commuting three hours each way from her home in Tampa, Florida, to his base in Daytona Beach.

This season, she has had to travel internationally to continue to train with Reider.

Bartoletta went to South Africa and Holland, leaving behind John and her two Teacup Yorkies, Bailey and Baxter.

"It was a very different kind of lifestyle to be training on the road constantly," she said.

Bartoletta made the best of it, discovering a little Italian restaurant in Holland that made great steaks.

"Everyone on the circuit, agents and coaches alike, say, 'We always know you know where to find food,'" she said. "I'm really good at research. It's one of my hidden talents. I was even able to find at Morton's steakhouse in Shanghai this year."

"I know how important it is to maintain your diet and it's extremely difficult to do on the road. It's really worth it. I know a lot of athletes are

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struggling financially, but I would implore anybody to invest in your diet, to not cut corners. The diet pays dividends.

For Bartoletta, using financial lingo is no coincidence.

"She's very businesslike now with her career," said John Bartoletta. "With her change in training and lifestyle 5 years ago, everything came together — psychological things, diet, training regimen."

Yet Bartoletta doesn't feel she has unfinished business in the 100 after taking fourth in London by such a small margin.

When she asked Reider what it would take to win a medal, he said 10.80 seconds.

"Well, I hadn't run that before," Bartoletta said. She ran 10.92, 10.94, and couldn't break the barrier into the 10.80s.

"And then finally, the day of the final, John reminded me about this book I used to listen to, 'As a Man Thinketh,' by James Allen," she said. "I listened to it the day of the final and the gist of his essay is, 'You can do what you believe you can do.'"

"So when I saw my name up on the board, even though it said fourth, when the time came up 10.85, I was elated, because it almost seemed I'd just learned the secret to life: if I just believe I could do it, I can do it."

She is the only member of the women's 4x100-meter to return to defend the title.

"That was magic," Bartoletta said of the London relay. "Everything about that relay was perfect. I had 100-percent trust in each girl who ran that final with me. I knew that even if the exchanges were ugly, that we were going to get the baton around the track — it was just how much faith we had in each other and how bad we wanted to win."

She said she and her teammates, Allyson Felix, Carmelita Jeter and Bianca Knight, were relaxed in the call room.

"Where other teams were stone-faced and saying silent prayers and sometimes saying super loud prayers, we said our quick team prayer and then we laughed and we joked," Bartoletta said. "Basically, when it was time for us to separate to go to our different positions, it was just, 'See you on the other side, I'll get you the baton, love you' and that was that."

"It was just amazing. And I really hope we'll be able to feel that again, but it was so special. I'll never forget it."

And she has many more memories to make. "I don't think," Bartoletta said. "I've reached my peak yet."

And that goes for all of her events.



Tianna Bartoletta wins the women's 100-meter at the USATF Outdoor Championships at Hornet Stadium on June 27, 2014 in Sacramento, Calif.

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