

WHY YOU'RE NOT A ^{Track} STAR

by Tianna Tashelle Bartoletta



**FOR ALL OF US ON THE ROLLER COASTER OF WORK, SCHOOL, LOVE, AND
LIFE, WHO NEVER QUIT BUT COME BACK STRONGER, FASTER, AND
SMARTER THAN BEFORE. EVERY TIME, WITHOUT FAIL.**

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**LEARN EVERYTHING YOU CAN,
ANYTIME YOU CAN,
FROM ANYONE YOU CAN-
THERE WILL ALWAYS COME A TIME
WHEN YOU WILL BE GRATEFUL YOU DID.**

~SARAH CALDWELL

Who The %\$*@! Are You?

Before the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro I would not have been surprised if you had no clue who I was and why I had the nerve to write this book. I mean seriously, my name isn't Allyson Felix, Justin Gatlin, Usain Bolt, Carmelita Jeter, Shelly Ann Fraser-Pryce, or Sanya Richards Ross...to name a few.

You're probably thinking, "if anybody was going to write a book about how to be a track star it'd be one of them."

I totally agree with you.

But this isn't a "How To Be a Track Star" book now is it? No. This book is a thoughtful exploration into why you are NOT a track star. In this regard I am more than qualified.

Keep reading, because I am about to tell you why.

I was a certified badass when it came to high school track. I won nine state titles and held two state records in the long jump and state records in the 4x100 meter relay with my team from Elyria High School. Me, Jesse Owens (yes THE great Jesse Owens), and Susan Nash are the only three people in Ohio history to win four state titles two years in a row.

My performance in the classroom and on the track earned me a scholarship to the University of Tennessee. As a freshman with the Tennessee Lady Volunteers I got my butt kicked on a regular

basis, I did not win a single meet the entire school year. It wasn't until the summer of my freshmen year that I won the long jump at USA Track and Field's (USATF) Junior Outdoor National meet. A few weeks later I was lining up for introductions for the long jump final next to Marion Jones at the 2004 US Olympic Trials in Sacramento.

I took eighth place.

My sophomore year was a different story. I came into my own as a long jumper and even showed some glimpses of speediness in the 60 meter dash. I won the Southeastern Conference Championships both indoor and outdoor in the long jump and won both the indoor and outdoor NCAA Championship titles as well. I took second at the 2005 USATF Senior Outdoor Nationals but rebounded a few weeks later by winning the IAAF World Championship title in the long jump at just 19 years old in Helsinki, Finland. I won another gold medal the following year at the 2006 IAAF Indoor World Championships in Moscow, Russia.

Then after that...

Radio silence.

I couldn't sprint, run, or jump to save my life. I was dropped by my sponsor, picked up by another for dirt cheap, and dropped again. I went to the 2007 IAAF World Championships in Osaka, Japan (but only because reigning world champions get a free pass to attend the next world championships) and I didn't even make the final there. That was one of my lowest moments.

I struggled for six long miserable years to get back to the “badass” I had been with no success.

Then late in 2011, I met someone who did not hesitate to give me their opinion and analysis about why I sucked and how I could change that.

Was it harsh? Yes. Was it true? Absolutely. Did it work? Hell yea.

Less than a year after that conversation I had an Olympic Gold medal around my neck, an American Flag draped across my shoulders, and my name in the history books for being part of the squad that shattered the world record in the 4x100 meter relay.

I was out with a back injury in 2013 (a freak weightlifting accident); but 2014 and 2015 had been stellar seasons for me too. In 2014 I won both Indoor and Outdoor National titles in the 60, and 100 meter dash respectively. I took second at nationals in the long jump (after taking that six year hiatus from the event). I ended the year ranked #2 in the world but I had the three longest jumps of the year, was the only one to jump over 23 feet (7 meters), and won the diamond league race title.

In 2015, I won the 60 meter dash national title again but couldn't defend my title in the 100 meter dash. However, I won my first ever outdoor long jump national title, jumping a personal best of 7.12m (that's 23' 4.5"), and putting myself back on the world championship team, a whole ten years after my first title. I won the 2015 IAAF World Championships too with a new personal best of 7.14 meters (that's 23' and 5 1/2").

Now we are nearing the end of the 2016 outdoor track season and at the time of this writing I'm the new Olympic Champion in the long jump taking gold with a new personal best of 7.17 meters (that's 23' and 5 3/4"). I also helped the 4x100 meter relay defend its Olympic title by running the leg of my life in lane one, we ran the second fastest time ever at 41.01. The only team that ran faster had me on it too!

My point in sharing all that with you is not to brag about my accomplishments (because that's not really my personality) but to shine a light on what I didn't do. Did you notice that between the years 2006 and 2012 I was virtually non-existent, completely written off, and forgotten about? Unlike the well known track stars I rattled off at the beginning of this chapter I wasn't making a name for myself, or creating a legacy of success, or turning out medal performances and world leads when it was time to compete.

Why not though?

How did I go from being a double world champion to a loser?

There's a reason.

Actually, there are five of them and I'll share each of them with you shortly but we need to get on the same page about something first.

IF IT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU

YOU WILL FIND A WAY.

IF NOT,

YOU WILL FIND AN EXCUSE.

Reasons Versus Excuses

I'm the first to admit (now that I've seen the light) why and how I fell from grace in 2006 and why I stayed in that pit for so long. I have my reasons. But I do not have excuses. There is a difference, and that's exactly what we need to address before going any further.

An "excuse" is an explanation for why something did or did not happen, not necessarily based in fact and almost always bypasses any acknowledgement of your own role in the matter. Basically an "excuse" is an explanation that most likely blames someone or something else for what happened.

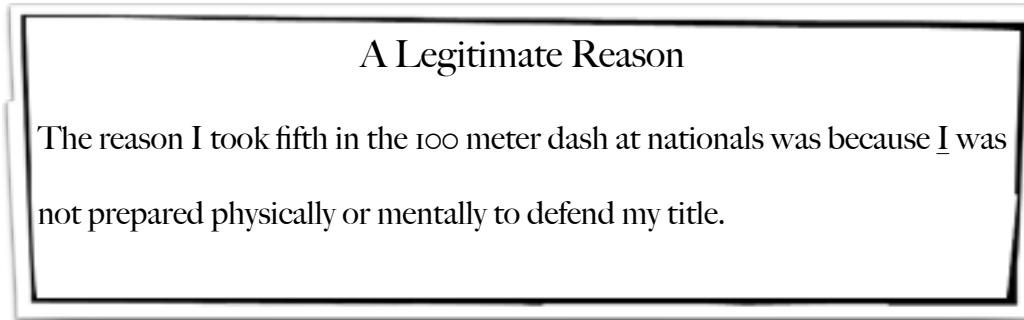
I took fifth in the 100 meter dash at the 2015 USATF Outdoor Nationals so I'm going to use that as my example going forward.

An Excuse

I took fifth in the 100 meter dash at USATF Outdoor Nationals this year because my coach didn't have me ready physically or mentally.

Now let's leave that excuse alone for a moment and take a look at the definition of a "reason." A reason is an explanation for why something did or did not happen based in fact and

acknowledges your role in the matter. Let's use the same example from above to showcase the difference.



See what I did there? Both the reason and the excuse feature the same issue: That I was not mentally or physically ready or prepared. But the excuse puts full responsibility on my coach while the reason holds myself accountable.

Stay with me because this is really important.

Did my coach do an insufficient job preparing me for the 100 meter dash that year? Yes he did.

Did I know that we weren't doing the work I needed to defend my title? Yes I did.

The truth is, I chose to do nothing about those facts until it was way too late. My coach was held accountable for his failures (I fired him), and I am holding myself accountable for mine.

In the following chapters you will be presented with five reasons you're not a track star. They are indeed reasons and not excuses because "you" are being held accountable for your actions (or lack thereof).

The beautiful thing about knowing the reason why something happened (or didn't happen) is that reasons have solutions and that means positive changes can be made.

Excuses don't have solutions, they have scapegoats, and there are no solutions for athletes who can't accept they have a problem.

It's time to get to the five reasons. You ready?

KNOW YOUR WHY-

THIS IS THE DRIVING FORCE

BEHIND EVERYTHING.

REASON

→ **You Don't Have A Clue About Your "Whys"**

You can't call yourself an athlete if you haven't been mid-workout and at some point said to yourself or to anyone within earshot for that matter, "why am I doing this!?" I still ask myself this question. Honestly, depending on the workout I might even shout this question to the universe.

This isn't a rhetorical question. You **SHOULD** have an answer.

Athletes that don't know the answer to this question quit when things get difficult and unpleasant, and believe me it **WILL** get difficult and unpleasant.

Athletes that know the answer to this question are able to use that answer to get and stay inspired.

Knowing why you are doing something goes a long way in helping you to get it done. You will study hard for that test if you really want a good grade. Or, you don't study at all if you don't care about what grade you get.

You work hard on the track because you want something, if you're out there just to be out there you aren't going to last very long, or perhaps you will finish out the season but your performances will scream, "I don't know what I want. I'm just here because there's nothing better to do."

Why am I a track athlete? Because I love competition, because I want to be the best, and I want to see how far I can jump and how much I can drop my times in the sprints.

When I'm in the throes of one of those workouts (usually in the fall) when I swear I can no longer feel my legs I remind myself why I'm out there. I want to see how far I can go, how good I can become, I want to win.

Why are you a track athlete? Do you know?

When I was in middle school I was a track athlete, because besides wrestling, it was the only other sport available to participate in during the spring quarter. I played volleyball in the fall, basketball in the winter, and joined track in the spring. In high school, I continued with track and field because I figured it was my best chance to get a college scholarship. In college, I trained hard in order to keep my scholarship. When I turned pro I was determined to keep my salary, earn prize money, rack up more bonuses, and win medals. Now, I run for the reasons I shared with you earlier; I want to see how far I can go and how good I can become!

A knee injury late in 2006 derailed me and I slowly lost sight of my "whys". Rehabilitation was painful, I was afraid to jump because my injury had happened in the long jump pit. My confidence was at an all time low and so was my bank account. Things were going really badly for me so I got a part-time job- I got three part-time jobs actually. Over time, the desire that I had felt as a new pro faded, my sponsors reduced me for my inability to uphold my end of the contract, which put me in an even worse position financially. Suddenly I found myself asking the question, "why am I still doing this?"

I did not have an answer, and it showed.

I got embarrassed at almost every competition because of my bad performances and I decided that I was ready to leave the sport, but before completely leaving the sport I hatched a plan. I decided that I was going to enroll back into college and run in enough meets overseas to pay my tuition. Running for tuition became my "why."

I struggled and was still training (if you could call it that) but I didn't quit, because I had a reason, I had a "why". It wasn't a very inspirational or motivating "why" but it was enough to keep me in the game.

My point is this: a weak "why" is better than no "why".

If you don't know why you are doing what you're doing it's only a matter of time before you quit. Take the time to think about what you want out of this sport and why.

EXCELLENCE IS NOT A SKILL

IT IS AN ATTITUDE

~ RALPH MARSTON

REASON



Your Attitude Sucks

There are all types of attitudes. But I can tell you for sure, if you aren't where you want to be then it's in part your attitude that is holding you back.

I knew this kid who thought he was God's gift to track and field. He was incredibly full of himself and absolutely delusional about his abilities. One day after witnessing him completely ignore the instructions given to him by his coach I piped in.

"I bet I can beat you to ten meters out of the blocks in my flats." He looked down at my feet. "No please, you can keep your spikes on" I said. He gave me this half crooked, "in your dreams" kind of smile, I held his gaze not backing down at all. He accepted my challenge and we lined up at the starting line. Less than two seconds later I'm walking back towards the starting line triumphant while Mr. Self Proclaimed Track Star dragged his feet in defeat. Not only did I beat him to ten meters, I beat him by 5. To make my point clearer. I told him that I was able to beat him doing the exact same thing his coach had just asked him to do. He refused to make the change because he "knew better." But I proved him wrong. He was embarrassed but he learned two very valuable lessons from me that day. In the first, he learned he wasn't nearly as good as he thought he was.

The second lesson he learned was that his attitude, which made him unwilling to listen and learn, was holding him back.

Are you that person? Are you so sure of your abilities that you are difficult to coach? Or are you on the other end of the spectrum and so unsure about your abilities that you are afraid to try because you expect to fail? Neither attitude is conducive to becoming a track star.

I won each of my world championship titles because I believed I was the best in the field. I was deeply confident in myself because I knew I had worked really hard in training and I would have found it impossible to believe that someone else was outworking me. There is no better feeling than to be at the starting line or on the runway when you can look around and think “Nope, no way you outworked me this year” and know without a doubt that they don’t stand a chance against you.

I failed to make the world championship team in the 100 meter dash in 2015 because I didn’t believe I belonged there. Yes, I made the finals and ran under 11 seconds in every round but I believed that I hadn’t done the work required to make the world’s hardest and number one track team. I was afraid, and so I ran afraid. I ran tense and used all of my available energy to feed into my anxiety and self doubts. I made my fears a reality because my fear was what I chose to focus on.

Your mental preparation must be as thorough and as challenging as your physical training. At some point you are going to be competing with other athletes who are just as good or better than you are. In these situations the athlete with the mental edge wins. Developing that mental toughness takes practice. It is the hardest type of work in sport but if you neglect it you can go ahead and start the countdown clock to your early retirement.

This is the time to do some honest self-evaluation:

Are you a coachable athlete? In other words, do you listen?

Are you willing to admit what you don't know and willing to learn from someone who does?

Are you willing to be a student of your sport and study your specific event?

Are you bombarded with negative thoughts?

Are you confident in your abilities?

Are you truly as good or as bad as you think you are?

Are you honest about your strengths and weaknesses?

Do you quit when it's too hard or do you dig in?

Do you believe that success and accolades should come easier to you?

Do you feel like you deserve to be successful?

Do you feel you've earned your success?

Ask and answer these questions for yourself to determine the extent of mental conditioning you need to take yourself to the next level. If you can sit back and answer these questions truthfully you are already on the right track.

YOUR BODY
IS YOUR MOST
PRICELESS POSSESSION
SO GO TAKE CARE OF IT!

~JACK LALANNE

REASON



You Are Not Treating Your Body Right...At All.

You are not your body. Your body belongs to you and as long as you are its owner it is up to you to take care of it and to tweak it to your specifications so that it can do the job you need it to do at its highest level. Think of your body as a race car, the ultimate high performance machine. Race car drivers and their teams are constantly doing maintenance on their rides. They put in only the best oil or the highest quality gas and they always have the right tires on their vehicles.

For some reason, we athletes don't always treat our bodies this way. You should only give your body the most premium foods, the best equipment, and provide it with the best recovery. I learned this really late in my career, and by late I mean seven years into my professional career, a whole fifteen years after I started!

I'll start with the most simple thing first. You **MUST** do a good warm up before your workout and a good cool down after. I've done the "jog two laps-stretch a little-do a few sloppy drills and call it good" warm up. That is really dangerous. You can get away with it for a while but the entire purpose of the warm up is to prepare your body for the workout. If you don't get your muscles adequately warm and then you try to go run, jump, or throw your cold muscles can more easily pull or tear. The cool down is equally important but is often skipped, even by us professional athletes. Cooling your body down is just as important as warming it up. The cool down is how you tell your body it did a good job and that the hard work is over. Cooling down properly is the best way to slowly bring your heart rate and core body temperature back to normal. A good cool down can be what your old short cut warm up used to be: jog two laps, stretch, and do a few exercises like crunches or barefoot walks.

In high school, the night before every big meet my teammates and I would go to Applebees and devour baskets of buffalo wings. I'd even ask for extra sides of sour cream so that I could dip my wings! The morning of the meet my parents would take me to McDonald's where I'd order a Sausage, Egg, and Cheese McMuffin meal (and a Sprite to help settle my stomach after eating that junk before racing). Immediately after my races I'd devour a bag of Gummi Savers candy. I was not treating my body like a high performance machine. I was feeding it junk and blatantly ignoring that it was making me feel sluggish. I know nutrition is a boring subject for some but it is a game changer so I'll make this quick.

Try to eat five to six times a day. That means get up early enough to have breakfast and then about 3 hours later have a small snack. Then have your lunch. When you get home from school have a healthy snack, and then have a decent early dinner if possible. Let me explain what "decent" means in this context. A decent dinner means that you have some protein: chicken, beef, or fish AND a vegetable of some kind preferably green, and leafy.

I eat every three hours whether I'm hungry or not. I eat for fuel. This is one of the hardest things for me to master because I love food, I love to cook, and I especially love to bake but if you want to be a beast on the track you have to have the discipline to get your body to the right form to do it. I record what time I eat my breakfast, I then take my cellphone and set several alarms three hours apart. I label them "Fuel Up" because that's all I'm doing, I'm simply taking my "car" to the "gas station" and "topping it off". If breakfast was at seven, then my next alarm is at ten, lunch is at one, I have a snack at four, and dinner at seven.

Let's talk about what qualifies as a snack for the athlete who wants to be a track star. 100 calorie bags of almonds, walnuts, or cashews are excellent choices. Kind Bars, or granola bars (real ones not the Kudos ones which are basically candy bars) are also good choices. Fruits and cheese sticks are also good snack choices, and a protein shake could make a good snack too especially if you're feeling hungry. Remember, "decent meals" means that you have some protein: chicken, fish, beef, eggs, or a good old fashioned protein shake AND some veggies. Having bread and pasta is okay but try not to go crazy on the amount you eat or the sauces, butters, or oils that you add to it to make it taste better. When you eat properly you don't have to "diet". Your body will retain what it needs and shed what it doesn't. This is not about being skinny, this is about finding that sweet spot where you feel strong, light, energized, and healthy at the same time.

To help you identify what an ideal weight for you is, keep a daily workout/competition journal. Note what you weigh, the workout you did that day, the times you ran or distances you threw or jumped, and jot down notes about how you felt. Over time a pattern will appear and you will be able to see at which weight you perform and feel your best.

Eating as often as five to six times a day keeps your body fueled and your energy levels high, which also means you'll be more alert in class. This new alertness could lead to higher grades and to better practices. Better practices lead to better performances. We're talking track star worthy performances.

Now let's talk about sleep. During sleep your body repairs itself, rebuilds muscles, and flushes toxins from your brain and muscles. Sleep is the ultimate recovery tool. You can take ice baths, live in compression boots, and do weekly pool workouts but nothing will make your body feel more brand new than a good night's sleep.

3 Tips For Better Sleep

Stop watching television at least an hour before you want to be asleep, the light from the t.v. (the same is true for cell phones and tablets) messes with your brain and tricks it into thinking it's daylight which makes you stay up longer.

If you like to read before bed switch to an actual book with a reading light rather than reading on a tablet with a back light. If you need the noise from the television (I love falling asleep with the television on) try sleeping with an eye mask to block the light.

Eating dinner earlier can help, as well as avoiding sodas and other caffeinated drinks after 2pm, and there is this amazing tea they sell at most grocery stores called "SleepyTime Tea" it is a warm and relaxing herbal drink that might just work for you.

Staying hydrated is extremely important. If you don't drink enough water during the day you're at risk of suffering from dehydration which causes cramps, muscle strains, headaches, and all sorts of other problems. I know some schools and teachers are really strict about eating and drinking in class. I recommend two strategies. First, talk to your teacher privately tell them you're on a strict eating/fuel plan that allows you to function more highly in the classroom and in your sport. They'll probably say, "that's nice, but if I let you eat and drink in class I have to let everyone else." That's when you say, "I understand," so when it's time for you to fuel up, politely raise your hand, ask for a bathroom or hall pass and step outside and chug your bottle of water and quickly devour your snack. Shoot for drinking eight bottles of water a day.

I know, that sounds like a lot.

I'll share with you how I do it. Let's start with the morning.

Before my feet even touch the floor as I'm turning off my alarm clock I chug half of the water from my big bottle. That's 16 ounces (that's one of eight bottles down and I've been awake for less than a minute). I scoot around the house for about half an hour getting my gear, back pack, and other things ready before I make my breakfast.

During breakfast I sip 8 ounces (that's a cup) of water with my eggs. I drink another bottle of water on my drive to practice. I can do this because it takes me an hour and fifteen minutes (each way) to get to the workout facility where I train from my home. By the time I start practice I've taken down 2.5 of the eight bottles of water that I need for the day.

I change the type of water I drink during practice. Because of the amount of sweating that takes place during one of my workouts I switch from regular bottled water to water with electrolytes. That can be Smart Water, Propel, or something similar. Electrolytes are important because we lose vital minerals in our sweat and we need to replace them. Sweat tastes salty because it is made up of minerals and water. Drinking electrolyte water not only rehydrates us but replaces the minerals lost in our sweat.

Gatorade and Powerade both make a low to no sugar option and either of these would be good choices to sip during your workouts. I drink two to three bottles of Propel during each workout. Now, before it's even 12:00 in the afternoon I've consumed 4.5 to 5.5 bottles of my 8 bottle goal. On days that I hit the weight room I drink another bottle during my lift, now I'm at 6.5 bottles down. On my way home I drink another bottle of water, I'm at 7.5 and right before bed (just like I did in the morning) I chug another bottle and now I'm at 8.5 bottles for the day!

Mission: accomplished.

For you, being in school for most of the day might make this a little more difficult. If I were in your position I'd try to drink a whole bottle right when I wake up, that's one down. A cup of water with my breakfast (force it down if you have to) that's 1.5 bottles down. During school, take a big reusable water bottle and make sure it's filled up. Shoot for drinking 8 ounces of water every hour. You'll know how much to drink because these bottles are typically labeled with measuring lines. This means that you'll drink the equivalent of one bottle every two hours. Now that the

school day is over your goal is to drink 2 to 3 bottles of electrolyte water during practice (depending on how long training is). Drink another cup of water with your dinner, chug a whole bottle if you can before bed and you've done it! You've done what most athletes can't do, you've properly hydrated your body! Keep this up and you'll start to notice that you feel better, you sleep better, your skin looks better, and you're not nearly as hungry as you used to be.

Athletes often overlook the importance of nutrition. When you're young you can get away with a lot of things like eating candy during a meet and still winning the race, but I will never know how fast I could have run or how much farther I could have jumped if I was treating my body with respect and taking care of it as if it were a multimillion dollar race car. The earlier you make good nutrition a habit the faster you will get to track stardom, and the longer you'll be able to stay there.

A Word From The Wise

Nutritionists say you should eat breakfast within an hour of waking and that you should NEVER skip breakfast. Never. Your body has been starving for hours and hours while you were asleep, if you skip breakfast you start your day burning calories and energy you don't have. That puts you at a major disadvantage before the day even starts.

SURROUND YOURSELF

WITH THE DREAMERS AND THE DOERS;

THE BELIEVERS AND THINKERS;

BUT MOST OF ALL,

SURROUND YOURSELF

WITH THOSE

WHO SEE THE GREATNESS WITHIN YOU,

EVEN WHEN

YOU DON'T SEE IT YOURSELF.

REASON



The People Around You Suck Too

We all know who they are. They say something and we smile or laugh because we aren't sure if they are jokesters or jerks. They give you backhanded compliments and can say something nice and cut you down in the same sentence. We keep these people around for a variety of reasons but these types of people are toxic and should be cut off.

One thing you must understand and comprehend, and the earlier the better, is that no one makes it to the top on their own. Your favorite musician or pop star may have walked up to accept their Grammys by themselves but they had to thank a long list of people for helping get them there. The same will be true for you. I have an entire team that I unofficially refer to as "Team Tianna." They may not have wristbands or t-shirts but each of those individuals are in place and do their jobs extremely well which helps to elevate me to the podium. Here's an example of who's on my team:

My coach: Unlike a lot of you in school I have a say in who my coach is. I need my coach to be smarter than me, mentally tough, passionate, engaged, and excited about winning. I need my coach to demand excellence in everything from how I tie my shoes to how I position my big toe when I run. Sometimes you get stuck with a coach that isn't any of these things. If you find yourself in that position then take on the responsibility of making sure that at the very least the relationship is healthy. Maintain regular communication with them, ask questions and look for the answers together. Discuss what you need from them (motivation), and tell them what they'll get from you (hard work).

A physical therapist: My PT makes sure my aches and pains don't turn into full blown injuries. I know that middle and high school athletes don't always have access to PT's or athletic trainers. If this is the case for you I'd suggest you pay extra close attention to your body, make stretching a priority in the morning, after practice, and before bed, and perhaps go to a weekly yoga class. Pliable (flexible) muscles are less likely to get injured.

A chiropractor: Training beats the body down in ways it's sometimes hard to imagine. When I jump and land in the pit my bones shift under the contraction of my muscles and the force of impact. I see my chiropractor at least once a week to get all of my bones adjusted and put back in the right place.

A massage therapist: most people consider massages a luxury, for me they are a necessity and are not pleasant. These aren't massages in a spa with nature sounds playing lightly in the background. These are "there's a knot in this muscle so I'm going to dig my elbow into it and separate the fibers from one another to get the knot to relax" type of massages. I get these one to two times a week depending on the type of workouts I've done and how my body feels but I'd recommend trying to spring for a massage at least two or three days before a big competition. Do NOT get a sports massage the day before you compete. Massages cause a type of trauma to the muscles and they require recovery time. Drink a lot of water after a massage to speed up the healing process.

A strength coach: I love to lift. I did not lift free weights in high school. I do not believe it is necessary. Lifting too early can be risky because the body is still changing a lot at that time, developing muscles around growing bones could cause future problems. Instead, I did a lot of resistance band training, body weight exercises, sled pulls, parachute runs, and weight jacket drills. Now that I am an adult there is no better way for me to develop explosiveness than in the weight room and I have a special coach for that. I tell my strength coach what my goals are, he gives me a blue print of exercises that will help me achieve those goals. In middle or high school your track coach probably doubles as your strength coach and it's important for both of you to remember that the goal is to develop specific strength you can use.

A sports psychologist or mental conditioning coach: If there is any "Team Tianna" member worth spending extra money on it's this one. This sport is more mental than it is physical and if you have someone coaching you up mentally alongside your physical preparation there is no way you won't reach your goals. This is not like seeing a regular psychologist where you sit on the couch and vent your problems. Perhaps sometimes that's necessary but most of the time sessions consist of visualizing your perfect performance, or working together to create phrases that resonate with you, or cues that will help you execute better than you otherwise would. A sport psychologist or mental conditioning coach can help you prepare for specific events. Once my mental conditioning coach and I envisioned a whole track meet and all of its different possible scenarios. Like, "What happens if you get to the track later than you wanted to?" Answer: I'll do this abbreviated warm up so I'll feel less anxiety. "How will you respond if you foul your first two jumps" Answer: I'll move to my secondary approach mark and do a safe jump to get into the

finals. “What will you do if the food situation is not ideal” Answer: I’ll pack oatmeal and other snacks in my luggage.

Luck favors the prepared. This is just another level of preparation.

My Training Partners/Teammates: This is sometimes a crap shoot. Meaning, you just never know what type of people or personalities are going to be in your training group or on your team. Recently there was a guy in my training group that always had an excuse for why he didn’t run well or finish a workout. Over and over and over we had to hear him say how he could have run a faster time if he hadn’t of felt something in his hamstring that made him drop out of the race. I don’t do well with these type of people but I don’t have a choice in who’s on the team so my solution is to not to engage. I am not mean to him, I offer him advice when he asks for it, I say hello and goodbye but I don’t need that kind of athlete draining me of my energy. On the other hand I had two other training partners who were just training machines they would make me want to go out and work harder, do more, lift more. These are the training partners I keep close to. They’ll bring the best out of you. Identify who on your team is going to drain you with their excuses or will give you life with their excitement and work ethic. Stick with the people who will make you better even if that means you’re the only girl doing block starts with the boys, or you’re a freshman running 300s with the seniors. Surround yourself with the people who can take you to higher heights.

Friends/Family: You can choose your friends but you can’t choose your family. However, you can draw a line in the sand about what you’re willing to put up with and what you won’t with both.

It's easier with friends because you're on the same level as peers. A friend that is constantly pressuring you to skip practice is selfish. They aren't thinking about you and the goals you have for your future, they aren't being supportive. The bottom line is this: if your "friend" is overall indifferent or unsupportive of what you are trying to accomplish in order to better yourself let them go. Now.

Family is more difficult. Most of us were raised with that well known adage that children should "honor their parents", that talking back is a no-no, to be respectful, and to put family first. I don't disagree with any of these ideals especially if these expectations are mutual. That's where a lot of things can go wrong though. So what if you have bad parents (and they do exist) and they are completely disrespectful to you, or they are abusing you, or are constantly shutting or putting you down? What if they step all over your dreams? Brush you off? Never take you seriously? As their children we still feel we owe them respect even though we aren't getting any in return. The problem with this is that it teaches us from a young age that we can and should respect people who disrespect us. That's a really bad pattern to take into adulthood.

As young people you are still heavily dependent on your family for support and going without them simply isn't an option. That doesn't have to be your story, I suggest you call a family meeting and have an honest conversation about what you are trying to achieve in school and on the track and ask them to back you up. It's so much easier to have the support of your family and friends. They can provide encouragement in tough times, and are the best to celebrate with in good times. But know that if you don't get that support you can still make it, you'll just have to

get a whole lot tougher. At the end of the day these are YOUR goals and dreams and it's YOU that can make it happen.

Who you surround yourself with matters. You can't make the podium alone it takes a team.

Choose the best team for you and you can be on your way to becoming one of the best. Jim Rohn, a best-selling author and motivational speaker says that we are the "average of the five people we spend the most time with." He means that the people closest to us can't help but to rub off on us or influence us. It is extremely important to make sure that you have the right five people surrounding you. Actively seek out people and athletes you admire and can learn from and stay in touch. Increase your "average" and it will improve your wellbeing and your performance.

**ALWAYS DESIRE
TO LEARN SOMETHING USEFUL**

~SOPHOCLES

REASON

→ **You Have No Idea What You're Doing**

It was a lucky break that I was sent to Chula Vista for an Olympic Development track and field camp back in 2001. Had I not been sent to the Olympic Training Center I would have quit track and field and moved on to something else entirely. On one of the first days of sprint camp, Coach Tony Wells asked us what our hardest workout was. My hand shot up into the air, he nodded his head in my direction. I said, "repeat 300s." Other girls nodded in agreement and I was proud to be standing there saying that I had done a repeat 300 workout and survived. Coach Wells responded by saying this, "What the hell are you running repeat 300s for?" And he waited for an answer. Embarrassed, all I could say was, "I'm not sure sir. I don't really know." And at that moment I knew that I didn't know anything about track and field. For the rest of the week I learned everything I could about proper running form, how to write workouts, race modeling, and race strategy. I went into the camp knowing nothing but came out of the camp far from an expert but knowing a lot more than I did.

Let me tell you the difference knowledge makes. Before the camp, my personal best in the 200 meter dash was 24.25. Immediately following the camp I ran in a summer track meet on the same track where I ran my previous personal best only this time I ran 23.92. I hadn't trained in any significant way at all during the summer camp. I didn't suddenly become faster, but I was taught **HOW** to run the 200 and I used what I learned in the following meet to drop my time by a lot.

Knowledge is power. Knowing why something works and how to do it is the key to becoming a track star.

Another reason I love track and field is that it's very scientific. Track and field is all about physics (a lot of which is the study of motion). Physics operates by certain laws. Isaac Newton's Three Laws of Motion and the Law of Gravity are the most familiar. Track and field's relationship with physics is good news for us because it means that for every issue that may arise there is an answer. So no matter where you are in the sport or what level you're competing at you can improve if you learn the science behind what you're doing! This is amazing because some athletes are simply talented so they win, but you can also be SMARTER and win!

You don't have to be as nerdy as I am to appreciate this. Here's a quick example of how I use science in track and field. If you're a long jumper you need both speed and power: you run down the runway, then you have to takeoff at the board, launch yourself into the air, and then land in the sand pit. There is so much science going on here. First, you are generating speed. The whole point of having an approach is to generate the speed you need to jump far.

Calculating Speed: The Speed Equation

$$\text{Speed} = \frac{\text{Distance}}{\text{Time}}$$

Okay. Then you take that speed that you've generated to take off from the long jump board. But wait! One of Sir Isaac Newton's Laws of Motion is at work here! In order to go from running full speed horizontally to taking off vertically you have to apply the first law of motion.

Newton's First Law of Motion

In order to change direction of an object (you're the "object" in this case) it must be acted upon by an external force.

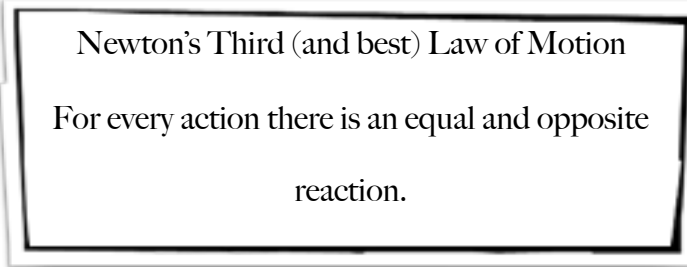
Meaning, in order for you to go from running in a horizontal direction, to jumping vertically off of the long jump board you have to apply a major force (which is why you have to plant your jump leg so hard at takeoff).

The Equation for Force

$$\text{Force} = \text{Mass} \times \text{Acceleration}$$

Let me break this down for you even further because I can tell I'm starting to lose you. Mass is basically what you weigh. Acceleration is how fast you're moving, and let's say force is the amount of "umph" you apply. So if you're running a lot faster you can apply more "umph" in terms of force and jump a lot farther! This is physics 101.

If you need to see an example of this in action I encourage you to go to YouTube and search “Tianna Bartoletta Long Jump.” Watch what I do differently from other jumpers. You'll see that my mass (my weight) is probably about equal to my competitors even though I'm shorter, but my acceleration is much higher, this means that by law I'm able to apply more force on my takeoff. Which leads me to yet another law of physics, the third law of motion:



Newton's Third (and best) Law of Motion
For every action there is an equal and opposite
reaction.

This law is the greatest gift of all. It essentially says, “you get what you give.” So going back to my long jump example, if I'm applying more force than all of my competitors at takeoff, I am going to get all that force back from the ground. That is what gives me the height I'm looking for off of the long jump board. More height equals longer time in the air, and longer time in the air means a longer jump before the law of gravity takes over (yes you guessed it, another law of physics).

These concepts are just as important for running. If you practice bad habits in your drills and you have sloppy running form you are inhibiting the ability of physics to work in your favor. Here's an example: one of the most important skills a sprinter can learn is “the constant dorsiflexion of the

foot". If you were to raise your foot off the ground to balance on one leg, the foot that is not on the ground would look as though its toes were pointing toward the sky that raised foot is dorsiflexed.



Your goal is to run every step striking the ground on the balls of your feet- NOT your toes. Why? Because when you land on your toes your entire foot has to respond to a specific order of events. First, your toes make contact with the ground, then the ball of your foot does, then your heel, then you come back up to the ball of your foot, then back up to your toes, and finally the cycle starts over again. What would happen if you removed your toes from the equation by striking the ground with the ball of your feet first instead? You'd skip parts of the cycle! Skipping parts of the cycle means it takes less time!!! Not to mention that staying dorsiflexed while you're running allows you to keep generating strong forces through the ground, and what did we just learn about forces? You get what you give! It was simply changing the position of my foot like this that took my 100 meter time from 11.05 to 10.85 in the 2012 season!

If I've overwhelmed you with science in this chapter I've accomplished my goal. I wanted to prove to you that there is a lot that you do not know about your sport and how it works. At the same time I want to encourage you to learn as much as possible about your event so that you can

master it. Mastery is the trademark of a track star and can only be accomplished through constant learning and doing.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO

BE GREAT TO START,

BUT YOU HAVE TO

START

TO BE GREAT

~ZIG ZIGLAR

What's Your Reason?

I've given you the five most common reasons why you aren't a track star and living out your potential. I've even given you some quick fixes and a few tips on finding solutions to these reasons as well. However, none of this is going to do you any good if you've gotten this far and still believe none of them apply to you. So keep it real, which of these five is your reason for not being a track star? Is it one? Is it a couple? Is it all of them?

There's nothing to be ashamed of here. At some point in my track and field career I've had to acknowledge the reality of each one of these reasons. At one point, all five of these reasons were relevant to me simultaneously. Recognizing where you need to improve is the first step in your quest to be a track star.

The point of this book isn't to make you feel bad. I want to help you improve! I love track and field and want to see the sport continue to grow in its popularity and quality of performances for years to come and well after I retire.

There isn't enough time in a life or in a track career for you to make all of the mistakes I made, plus your own, and then mount a comeback and become the successful, unstoppable track star you want to be. So learn from my mistakes, take my word for it, identify your reason (or reasons) and start working on the solutions. Head to www.sprintrunjump.com to explore the solutions to the five reasons I've named in this book.

If you're having trouble figuring out your goals or why you're participating in track and field at all your solution is: VISION.

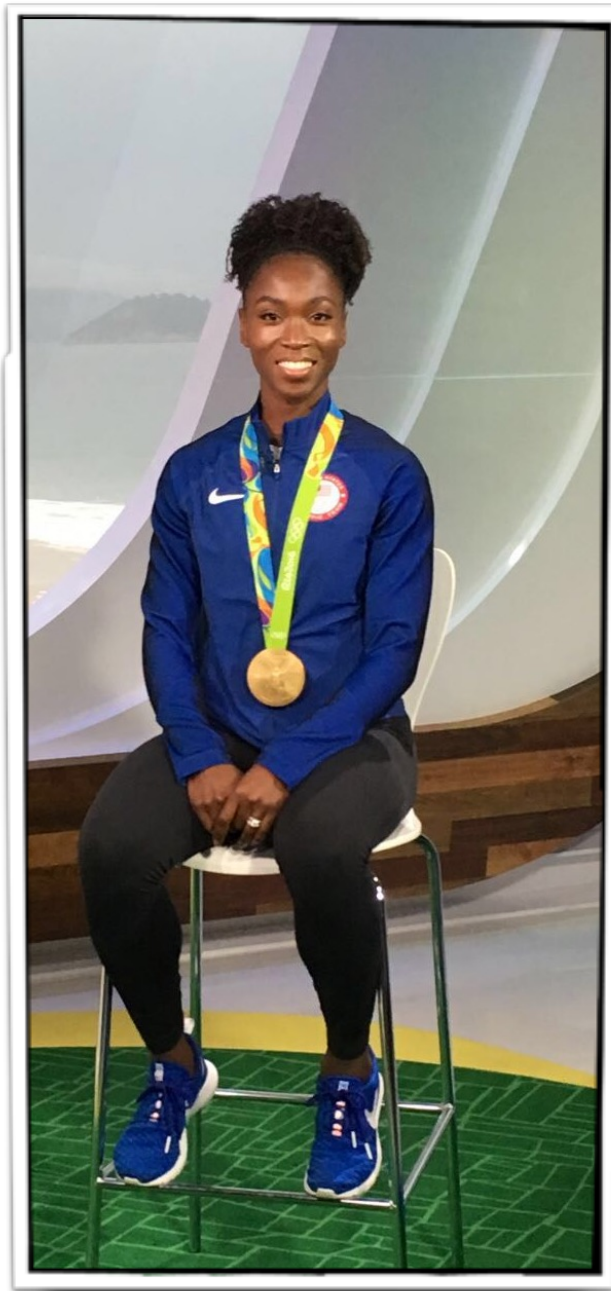
If you lack confidence or mental toughness your solution is: ATTITUDE.

If you never have enough energy or you feel like you're not in control of your body your solution is: BODY.

If you aren't surrounding yourself with the right people your solution is: TEAM.

If you feel you have way more to learn about the sport or you don't know where to start your solution is: TRACK 101.

All of these solutions: VISION, ATTITUDE, BODY, TEAM, TRACK 101 are clickable tabs on the sprintrunjump.com website where you can find more information.



Tianna is currently traveling the world for training and competitions. Be sure to visit sprintrunjump.com for updates and more information.