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# Physiology overrides track world for newest Hall of Famer Waldrop

By SKIP FOREMAN  
Staff Writer

"As far as for me, when I quit last year, I always said I wouldn't run as an individual again. I still say that. I doubt very seriously if I'll compete in the immediate future."

Tony Waldrop

With those words, Tony Waldrop, great miler of the early seventies, performer for the University of North Carolina, and world-class athlete, becomes Tony Waldrop, graduate student in the School of Physiology and candidate for a post-doctorate somewhere on this earth.

Those days in which he set the track world on fire have been deposited in memory in the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame, a place usually reserved for the stiff of bone and slow of foot. Waldrop fits neither of those categories, but the Hall has decided to immortalize him nevertheless.

"I didn't know I was that old," Waldrop deadpanned.

Academics have now replaced running in Tony Waldrop's daily routine. After leaving a Masters degree in physical education incomplete, he has decided to go ahead with physiology and complete his degree there.

No matter how hard he tries, however, the escape to a slower pace, so to speak, will not be easy. His room is dotted with various achievements attained during his track career at Carolina. Posters from foreign track meets and some awards are hanging as if his own Hall of Fame had been collected in his room all along, waiting for proper recognition.

The accomplishments will not fade easily, either. In his senior year, he went up against the best milers in the nation, and beat them nine consecutive times, in times under four minutes on all occasions. Winning didn't come that easily, he said.

"Being on the top was not all that people imagined it to be. People think that once they get on the top, it's all that they'll ever really want," Waldrop said. "It was just a matter of competing and knowing that you can do something really well and going ahead and doing it."



Tony Waldrop

He went out and did it, quite well in fact. He still holds the indoor record for the mile in 3:55.0. He won the NCAA indoor mile as a senior, and took the ACC miles, both indoor and outdoor. Waldrop went to Madison Square Garden and became the first miler to break four minutes there.

"Coach (Joe) Hilton did exactly what was

needed to be done. He acted as if nothing real big was going on, and helped me keep a level head."

Waldrop's last runs came with the Philadelphia Pioneers track club. He participated in a four-mile relay at Dartmouth, and later ran a distance medley relay. But fearing that running would again interfere with his attempts to gain a degree, Waldrop gave up the track one last time. His abandonment of the track includes his coaching duties with the Tar Heel track squad.

"I spent more time with that than I guess I should have," he admits. "I knew I had to have a certain level of grades to get into physiology. I didn't question whether I could do that; it was whether or not I had the time to do that."

His last fling with coaching came this past spring when he helped the distance men. Most notable among his pupils were Gary Hofstetter and record-breaker Ralph King.

"The thing about Ralph and Gary is that they have relaxed attitudes towards training. The biggest thing about coaching them was getting them started each day.

"They were very determined and very serious about their running. The reasons they were successful was they could stay relaxed, but still they believed in themselves and believed they could do something." King has been invited to join a group of American track stars for a European tour this summer.

The traveling for Tony Waldrop is over, however. He says he has been to many places, and made many new friends. But the spikes have been put aside for the books. His dedication to graduate work stands as an example of the work that made him one of the top student-athletes by the National Collegiate Athletic Association in 1974.

"I imagine the graduate program in physiology is going to take a lot of time. Running would be out of the question."

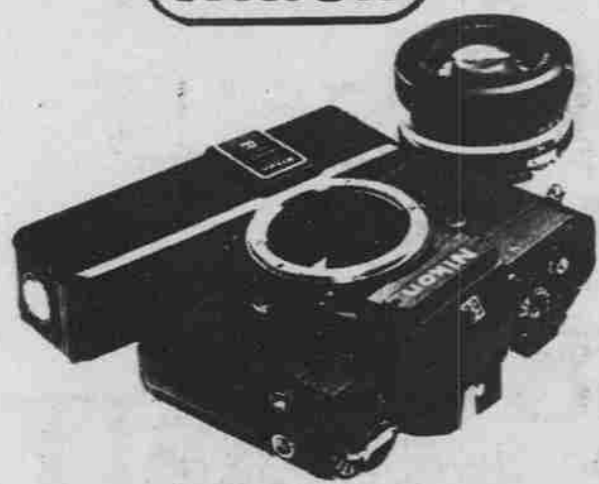
But the graduate program in physiology shouldn't take long for Tony Waldrop. Running the mile surely didn't.

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