



Built for Speed

The planet's two fastest men (Usain Bolt and Asafa Powell) are Jamaicans, and a number of Jamaican women are ranked among the best sprinters in the world.

But this crop of fleet-footed athletes is just the latest in a long line produced by the island over the last 60 years.

Arthur Wint and Herbert McKenley, fathers of the great track tradition in Jamaica and the Caribbean, signalled the start in the 1948 London Olympic Games and again in

Helsinki, 1952, where they each won four medals.

The tradition continued with Donald Quarrie in the 1970s, Merlene Ottey and Deon Hemmings in the '80s and '90s, to the current crop of speedsters racing in Beijing.

In the following pages, Anthony Foster catches up with Veronica Campbell-Brown, as well as Usain Bolt and his mother, Jennifer. Plus Grace Cameron discovers five reasons why Jamaicans run so fast.

How come Jamaicans run



The Japanese and the Russians have come. In fact, the world has beaten a path to the doorstep of this island of 2.5 million people to find out why Jamaican sprinters are running away from the rest of the field. Some say it's the natural mystic in the air, but *JamaicanEats* did some digging around and came up with 5 reasons we think Jamaicans are blazing up the tracks. - GRACE CAMERON

FAST FOODS

Yam, sweet potato, plantain, mango, otaheite apples, callaloo, and bush tea.

"The old-time food gives you good strength. You get your base from that," reckons Ransford Barnes, Deputy Parish Manager at the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) in the north western parish of Hanover.

Barnes says he suspects that

there is also something in the deep redness of the otaheite apple that would propel an athlete like 48-year-old Merlene Ottey. The sprint queen who still runs competitively (now representing Slovenia),

grew up in Pondside, Hanover, where otaheite is plentiful and plantain outgrows banana.

Many Jamaican athletes are from the rural areas and they would've grown up eating un-

processed food s like yam, sweet potatoes, cabbage, callaloo, and drinking cerasee and mint bush tea, says Samuel Harris, RADA's Deputy Parish Manager in Manchester.

Traditional power-packed breakfasts of green bananas, porridges, liver, saltfish and callaloo provide potent fuel for the body and the mind, says master sports nutritionist Patricia Thompson.

The high carbohydrate diet of many of these athletes while growing up, meant that their muscles had the capacity to store an excess of glycogen which they drew on during exertion. Carbs built up in the system helps athletes to do the rounds during competition.

Iron-rich foods like liver, mackerel and callaloo provide fuel for the brain, which helps to keep their nerves in the intensity of the track, says Thompson.

But, she says, straying to a commercial fast food diet and failure to stick to a high performance diet can lead to injuries and reduced performance.

THE WASHOUT

Many Jamaicans grow up with grandma and grandpa around and those people live long because they know all the medicinal

plants and what is good for what, says Samuel Harris.

Traditionally, your grandmother would give you a wash out (detox) to cleanse your system, says Harris, 50.

The wash out usually happens after the mango season, he remembers. The day before you would get no food. On the day they wake you at 2 or 3 a.m. to give you Indian root pill, or tea like cerasee, jack in the bush, John Charles or Peperalla. Towards the end of the day when you've been cleaned out you would get something like chicken foot soup.

IT'S THE WATER

Keeping hydrated is particularly crucial for athletes. You have to perspire to cool down the body, or you get heat stroke. If you're a water retainer, you can keep the body cool to function better.

There is a theory, says Thompson, that the enslaved Africans who died during the passage to the Americas did not have as much capacity to store water as those who survived.

It also seem that our capacity to store water may be higher, as we are in the tropics, she says.

PASSION FOR SPEED

We have the passion and have created a culture for sprinting, says Alfred Francis, executive committee member of the Jamaica Amateur Athletics Association (JAAA).

That passion and rivalry help people to excel. For example, the intensity and excitement of the annual girls' and boys' athletic championships in Kingston is unparalleled by anything I've seen anywhere else in the world. There is no magic fruit that you can eat to run fast, and our system is not about the number of tracks or economics. What makes us great is the spirit of competitiveness. When Usain breaks the world record, the whole Jamaica walk with pride. Our coaches also spend their own money and make sacrifices. They don't get fame, but they have the passion.



mangoes

PHOTO BY ROSEMARY PARKINSON

IT'S IN THE HILLS AND VALLEYS

of Trelawny, Hanover, and other areas where fleet-footed children manoeuvre the terrain which enables them to build muscles at early age, says Harris. Plus, a lot of those areas are inaccessible, therefore people have to carry food on their head and body, so that early development pays off later on, he adds.

Pocket **Rocket**



When she came home from the 2004 Olympics in Athens, Greece, then Opposition Leader Edward Seaga called her The Pocket Rocket.

And with good reason.

The pint-sized Veronica Campbell had raced into Jamaican history, capturing bronze in the 100m race, gold in the 200 and gold in the 4 x 100m relay.

A champion since her junior days, the 26-year-old first shot to attention when she won 100m gold at the World Youth Championships in Poland, 1999, and the sprint double (100m, 200m) in Chile at the World Juniors.

Now the Trelawny-born star who has been to two Olympic Games - Sydney, Australia, in 2000 where she was a member of Jamaica's 4 x 100m silver medal relay team, and Athens - is heading for Beijing, China, for the 2008 Games.

Anthony Foster got the kitchen confidential from Campbell who recently married fellow athlete Omar Brown.

FIRST FOOD MEMORY...In a word -milk.
FOOD PHILOSOPHY...I believe in eating healthy while consuming all the necessary nutrients from all the food group that is required for the body but in small portions.

THE MORNING OF AN IMPORTANT RACE...Most times I just eat egg, toast, and fruit and drink orange juice or tea for breakfast.

TO RUN FAST...I do not eat anything out of the ordinary as I strongly rely on my God given ability and my work ethics for my success

RIPE BANANA...is not one of the fruits I enjoy eating, but due to the quick source of carbohydrate and potassium it provides I try to have at least one a day.

MY WEAKNESS IS...Haagen Daas ice cream (rum & raisin) and chocolate, but I'm disciplined enough to stay away from them during track season.

FRIDGE/CUPBOARD SURPRISE...

Tostitos and Cheetos - corn is a source of complex carbohydrate, vitamin C and fibre and so they have some healthy benefits.

LAST SUPPER...Maybe a fruit bowl.

- Get her curry chicken recipe on next page

Lightning fast

The world's fastest man says he can't cook but he loves to eat, and his grandma's cornmeal porridge sticks in his mind.



On May 30 in New York city, Usain Bolt ran a stunning 9.72 seconds to set a new world record over the 100 metre event.

The 21-year-old has been erasing records from as early as 2002 when he broke onto the international scene by rewriting the 200m record at the World Junior Championships in Kingston, Jamaica. Last year he broke Donald Quarrie's more than two decade old 200m Jamaican record.

Bolt, who gave up cricket for track, slowed down just long enough to tell us:

FOOD PHILOSOPHY...Make eating fun.

THE MORNING OF A BIG RACE...I eat stuff with lots of carbohydrates and I drink a lot of water and rehydration fluid.

TO RUN FAST...I eat regular food but I try to get in as much carbs as I can.

I DON'T LIKE...vegetables but have to eat them because I'm an athlete.

MY WEAKNESS...Fast foods.

PEOPLE WOULD BE SURPRISED...to find cup soup, bulla, and oreo cookies in my cupboard.

MY LAST SUPPER...would be dumplings and pork.

His mother, Jennifer Bolt says...

He can't do without pork and cornmeal dumpling



Dumpling and chicken and pork has always been her son's favourite meal.

He would eat rice, but would never go a week without dumplings.

"When I cook rice, I would always have to have his dumplings and it had to be cornmeal dumplings," added Mrs. Bolt who is often by her son's side.

When he is coming home, he always calls to say he wants pork for dinner ... I don't eat it, but I pre-

pare it for him. However, he doesn't like the fatty part of the pork.

Usain was a spoilt child, he always got what he wanted.

From time to time he tries his skills in the kitchen, but only to make breakfast -it's always sausage, beacon and egg. Even now, that's the only thing I know he can do."

He likes orange juice and pineapple, but while he will juice the orange, somebody has to do the pine for him.

Veronica's Curry Chicken

1 pound chicken, cut in pieces
Curry power
Olive oil, enough to brown chicken
Onion, pepper, thyme, garlic,
Salt to taste
Water

1. Wash chicken pieces with water and lime juice, season with curry power, onion, pepper, garlic, thyme and salt.
2. Heat olive oil in frying pan, add chicken to hot oil and let brown all over.
3. Add water, cover, simmer until tender.
Serve with fried plantain and steamed vegetables.

PHOTO BY ROSEMARY PARKINSON



Wi likkle but wi 'tallawah'

Over the last 60 years Jamaica has won track and field medals in all but two Olympic Games. And, whether they run for yard or abroad (Donovan Bailey/Canada, Sanya Richards/US) Jamaicans are known for their speed on the track.

A few of the greats

■Arthur Wint

■Herbert McKenley

■Donald Quarrie, who competed in three Olympic Games

■Merlene Ottey, a seven-time Olympian. The International Association of Athletics Federation cited her as "the most decorated woman in Olympics or World Championships"

Others include:

George Rhoden, George Kerr, Lennox Miller, Juliet Cuthbert, Winthrop Graham, Les Laing, Keith Gardner, Mal Spence, Grace Jackson, Deon Hemmings (first Jamaican woman to win Olympic gold), Lorraine Graham, Sandy Richards, Gregory Meghoo, Bert Cameron and David Weller.

Beijing promises

to be exciting for Jamaican athletes with the two fastest men in the world competing against each other in the 100m. AND Veronica Campbell-Brown defending her 200m crown.

Others to watch

Sherone Simpson, Kerren Stewart, Maurice Smith, Delloreen Ennis-London, Danny McFarlane, Novlene Williams and James Beckford.