

Law of Attraction Magazine

By Tianna Madison Bartoletta - 2015

ON THE AFTERNOON OF

August 4, 2012, my husband, John Bartoletta, and I were lounging in a flat we had rented for the duration of the Olympic Games in London, England. Athletes have the option of living in the Olympic Village during the Games, but I had decided that to eat, sleep, and focus the way I needed to in order to compete to the best of my ability, I had to separate myself from the sometimes chaotic and party atmosphere of the athlete housing. It was an amazing feeling to finally be in London, but I had a job to do: I needed to bring home a medal.

The Olympic Games was a big deal for me. This was my third time trying to make the team. In the 2004 Olympic Trials, I placed Eighth, In the 2008 Olympic Trials, I placed Fifth. And only the top three finishers make the United States Olympic Team.

It had been a long journey to the Games in London. In 2005, I won my first World Championship title in the long jump. I was just a sophomore at the University of Tennessee and only 19 years old. Suddenly, with that victory, I was thrust into world-class-level competition. I earned a silver medal in the long jump the following winter at the indoor World Championships, cementing my status as an elite athlete.

I didn't know it then, but that silver medal would be the last medal I'd earn for a long time. I left school early, leaving a semester before finishing my degree, and spent the next six years struggling to get back to that elite level of competition. I battled injuries, poor coaching choices, frustration, and low self-confidence. I was desperately hoping for a break in my bad luck that could get me back on the right path. Every year brought worse news: My sponsors were reducing my contract or had decided to discontinue sponsorship, and I was jumping, on average, 2 to 3 feet shorter than I had been early on in my career!

A GODSEND

Finally, I caught my break. One evening in September 2011, I took myself to dinner as a way to unwind before a big exam. I had decided the previous summer to reenroll in school and pursue a degree; I figured it was time, since my track career was stagnant. During dinner, a handsome man struck up a conversation with me. For three hours, we laughed and talked about our lives at present and where we saw ourselves in the future.

Although it was the best evening I'd ever had, the conversation was brutally honest. Within that three hours, John told me that I could be a great athlete again. He told me that the talent I displayed several years earlier was still there, and that I owed it to God to do whatever I could not to squander it-and that it all started with me believing that it was possible.

Well, I didn't quite believe that I could do it again at the time, but something about this man speaking so honestly with me without truly knowing me made me want to try. So I took his word for it. I trained harder than I ever had, I was finally getting my diet under control, and I entered into a healthy and supportive relationship.

John was truly a godsend throughout this journey to the Olympics. He took the time to cook for me, because maintaining a healthy diet had been a struggle. He even packed dinners into Tupperware to eat at home so I could stay on track during the week! He also helped me connect with my new coach. The three of us together decided that because I had been struggling with the long jump for so long, I needed to stop jumping altogether and start training as a sprinter. I had dabbled in the sprints throughout my career, but never to the extent that I would fancy myself a sprinter. This would be new territory for me.

WHAT MATTERS MOST

In the United States, track-and-field athletes compete for themselves until big events like the World Championships or Olympic Games. Major championships are when we come together to become Team USA. In between those major events, we hire our own trainers or coaches, we pay them for their time and expertise, and we practice typically six days a week in preparation to make Team USA in the summer.

Elite training is expensive! I am responsible for paying my coach his monthly fee and paying for massage therapy, chiropractic services, nutritionists, strength trainers, and for the cost of vitamins and supplements.

I was in no position to afford any of these things, having had six years of sponsor trouble and bad competitions. It was John who made all this happen for me; he knew I couldn't afford it, and he knew this was what I needed to break through. His complete dedication to helping me succeed made me realize how important our relationship was.

I learned over the past seven years that track and field is fleeting, that there will be good performances and bad performances, but at the end of the day, the loving relationships you have are most important. So, I decided that John and I would complete this Olympic journey together. I made sure we traveled together, we made an event of driving to practice together on Saturdays, and I tried to keep my travel to Europe to a minimum- both to allow my body recovery time (the rest period between workouts or competitions) and so John and I didn't have to spend a lot of time apart.

I may have trained hard on the track from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. every day, but John really gave me what I needed to stay the course around the clock. Elite training is a full-time job; athletes need to put as much emphasis on how much they rest or sleep as they do on intense workouts.

COACHING COMPLICATIONS

My last month of training -- between the 2012 Track and Field Olympic Trials and the Olympic Games -- was spotty and lackluster, to say the least.

Initially, my coach and I had been on the same page about my wishes to spend as little time away from home as possible, as well as my desire to get the most out of recovery time by cutting back on unnecessary travel. But, slowly, our coach-athlete relationship began to unravel.

I was driving two and a half hours one way each day for my training sessions, because my coach worked out of Daytona Beach, Florida, and I lived in Tampa with my husband. However, my coach didn't like that I had such a long commute; he wanted me to move to an apartment in Daytona while training. I shot down that idea because living with John and having his support around the clock has made all the difference for me. Needless to say, my coach had certain opinions about what I should do that I strongly disagreed with.

As time went on, the communication between us became sparse. My coach trained seven other athletes, both American and international. As the season started, he was obligated to travel to their competitions. When he had to leave, I'd wait for an email from him that contained my workout for the day. As the relationship became strained, the emails arrived less frequently.

Typically, it is considered beneficial for athletes to enter a few competitions before big events, because sprinting in practice is not the same as sprinting in a race. A race is far more intense and requires a mentality that is difficult to simulate in practice. So, after the Olympic Trials, athletes pack their bags and head to Europe for a series of competitions that act as fine-tuning before major events.

Because I was coming off of years of lackluster training, I knew I would benefit more from doing intense training sessions: In one training session, I can run three times as much as I can at a competition, where an athlete runs one race and then heads off to the next town for the next competition. I knew if I could get in more home training sessions, I would be a lot better off than if I packed up and left for Europe.

My coach had other ideas. He decided to set up training camp in Austria so his athletes (both American and international) would be able to continue their training together for a few weeks leading up to the Games, and they would need less time to acclimate to London's time zone.

That would have been a great idea, except that my husband could not make the trip; his businesses would have suffered too greatly. (My husband owns HighStreet Financial, his own wealth management firm, and trades commodities. He is also the creator of a social platform startup named UNation, which requires a lot of his time.)

Because I was fully committed to the idea that John and I would do this together, I did not go to Austria. I stayed home and trained myself as hard as I could and hoped it would work out in the end.

Needless to say, this is not the way an athlete would choose to feel before a major competition.

DOUBTING MYSELF IN LONDON

At the Olympic Games, there are three rounds of the 100-meter dash. The preliminary round is run to take the total number of athletes in the race down to 24. Three semifinal heats with eight runners each take those 24 athletes from the preliminary round down to eight. Then, in the Olympic Final, the last eight runners battle for the medals.

I had made it to the final, but that day a lot of questions began to run through my mind. Did I do the right thing by staying home? Should I have taken my coach's advice and raced more? Did I unknowingly knock myself out of medal contention because I wanted to do this my way with my husband?

Regardless of the fact that I'd already had a fairytale year, the seeds of self-doubt were starting to take root. I was convinced I was lacking something.

I needed to run faster than 10.90 seconds. Every coach I had spoken to over the year had said that the only way to have a chance at a medal in the 100-meter dash was to run faster than 10.90. I needed to break that time barrier.

In my first race of the year, we had flown to Ponce, Puerto Rico. I competed in three events: the long jump, the 100-meter dash, and the 200-meter dash. The long jump and the 100-meter dash overlapped in the schedule, so I took three jumps and rushed over to the race's starting line, as I realized the officials were lining up the runners. I quickly brushed the sand off my body and set my starting blocks. Three minutes later it was time to race. The official gave the commands, "On your mark, set..." and the gun fired to start the race.

I ran 11.01 seconds that night. It was the fastest I had ever run.

My next race was in New York City, and the women I was racing there were former world champions and an Olympic medalist. I was fearless and wanted to show the world and myself that I could keep pushing my speed barrier. I took Second, losing to the Jamaican woman who would go on to win the Olympic gold medal.

That day I ran 10.97 seconds. Again, it was the fastest I had ever run.

Come July, it was time for the Olympic Trials. Just like the Games, we had to run three rounds of the 100-meter dash. My first race, the preliminary round, was a success: I

advanced easily to the semifinal, running 11.10 seconds, which was the fastest time of all the competitors that day.

The following day, I ran the semifinal, taking First in my race at 10.96 seconds. It was again the fastest I had ever run.

Two hours later we ran the final, knowing the top three finishers would make the Olympic Team. I took Second. The winner ran 10.92 seconds. I ran 10.96 ... again.

When I finally got to Europe, I had one tune-up race in Monaco before heading to London. I took Second. The winner ran 10.96 seconds; I ran 10.99.

It felt like I had been running the same times all season long. Having to train without a coach in the last month leading to the Games made it nearly impossible to put the finishing touches on my race strategy.

I felt as though I was on the edge of a breakthrough but that maybe I hadn't had enough preparation to run any faster. It was killing me. I had run the most sub-11-second races of any runner that season thus far-and yet running even 10.89 seconds was proving to be out of reach.

To add insult to injury, I lost both my preliminary and semifinal rounds at the Olympics, running, respectively, 10.97 and 10.92 seconds (a new personal best).

I was starting to get depressed and angry-with myself and with my coach. I felt like I had come all this way, had run so many lifetime bests, only to hit the proverbial brick wall when it mattered most.

I started to see myself breaking into tears after the race because I didn't medal. I started to feel the embarrassment of letting my country, my husband, and myself down.

THE BIG SHIFT

John witnessed this downward spiral of mine, and he decided that maybe the best thing to do was to give me some space. He decided to go work out at a neighborhood gym we had discovered in London. As a former platform diver, he'd always been accustomed to maintaining a healthy and fit lifestyle. Though it has been decades since he's competed, we make it a priority to find healthy eateries and gyms when we travel.

He was on his way out of the door when he made a suggestion that would change my life. He asked, "Why don't you listen to As a Man Thinketh on your iPod while I'm gone?"

For about an hour, in the quiet comfort of our rented flat, I paced the floor in my cozy sweatpants and Ugg boots as James Allen's words etched themselves into my heart

and mind. One phrase from his essay resonated deeply with me, "Good thoughts and actions can never produce bad results"

Understanding crept like electricity through my bones, and I knew exactly what I had to do. First, I had to remember that I had worked harder than ever. My hard work leading up to the Olympic Final was my good action.

As for good thoughts, until this point, all my thoughts concerning my competitions had been positive and affirmative, whether I won or lost. I had only made it this far because of my positive attitude. The negativity I was sulking in would only harm me.

I knew then that regardless of my last month of training, all I needed to do was believe that I could run faster than 10.90 seconds and believe that I could do it that night for the 100-meter final with the entire world watching.

READY TO RACE

John returned from the gym, and I thanked him for his insight and assured him that I was ready. We walked to the Olympic Village. We kissed each other goodbye at the athletes' gate. The next time I see him would be after the race. We'd either be celebrating, or he'd be consoling me. I waved one final time and walked off into the Olympic Village.

A few hours later, I stood behind the starting blocks in lane 9. Staring ahead at the finish line, thousands of flashing cameras glistened in my peripheral vision. In a stadium of 80,000 people, I heard nothing but my positive affirmations and John's voice encouraging me to take my life back and to make myself proud.

The gun went off.

Less than 11 seconds later, it was all over.

I looked up at the Jumbotron for the results. It was impossible for me to tell what place I had gotten. It was so close!

Because I lost my semifinal, the lane I ran in for the final was randomly selected. The semifinal winners took lanes 4, 5, and 6. I drew lane 9. In a way, being that far away from the fastest runners who are in the middle of the track makes it hard to feel how fast you're going, or to judge how fast you need to go to place well. I couldn't see the other runners in my peripheral during the race, so all I could do was wait to see how I had finished. The results began to appear on the board.

No! I thought for a split second. I just barely missed out on the medals.

But then I saw the time and thought, Oh, my God. Simply by saturating my thoughts with intention, I dropped nearly a tenth of a second off my fastest time ever!

The finalists were escorted to a back room to collect our belongings, and I heard a familiar voice behind me screaming, "Are you kidding me?!" John had made his way beneath the grandstand and was yelling at the top of his lungs. I ripped around and jumped into his arms and together we cried and celebrated our personal victory.

It didn't matter that I didn't have a medal to show for it. We won!

We learned a valuable lesson that day: We learned the power of belief, intention, and the reality of the Law of Attraction.

COMPETING AS A TEAM

Later that week, I went on to win a gold medal and break a world record with my U.S. teammates in the 4x100-meter relay. It was the first time in three Olympic Games that the United States was able to finish the race without being disqualified. Previous Games were marred with botched handoffs and dropped batons.

We broke a record by more than half a second that had been untouchable for 26 years. The four of us were able to rewrite history.

Just a week earlier, three of us had been racing against each other for medals in the 100-meter dash final. That night, we were able to come together as a team and win a gold medal for our country. We carried our American flags around the stadium in

celebration. It was a surreal experience, and we were proud to represent Team USA in victory.

John and I walked hand in hand through the stadium after the race with the gold medal in my backpack, discussing our dinner plans. We hopped in a waiting car to transport us back to our flat, and as the stadium grew smaller and smaller in the rearview mirror, we left the Olympic Games knowing that we had won an even sweeter victory-and opened a door to a lifetime of manifesting the things we really want and desire, simply by conquering our doubts and changing our thoughts.

Thanks so much for taking the time to read my story. My husband and I shared it with our friends and family when we returned home because it's so encouraging to know that the only thing standing between us and anything we desire is our thoughts!

I took a little break after the Olympic Games before lending my speed to the U.S. Bobsled Team. I competed with the team until December, when I returned to track-and-field training six days a week in preparation for the World Championships in Moscow, Russia.

Every day I use the power of my thoughts to train, to be a great wife, and to have the strength to make this journey again.