

2 Olympic Dreams That Didn't Happen

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This is the first in a series of articles on Olympic hopefuls from the Carolinas.

The rent was cheap, \$100 a month, but there wasn't much room for stretching exercises. When you share a trailer with two other guys, stretching breeds contempt.

"I had my little cubicle," said Tony Bateman, a distance runner from Charlotte. "There was room for my bed and dresser and maybe just enough room to open the dresser drawers. I was living as a hermit really. But that's what makes it special."

Bateman, 28, lived like a caged animal for the better part of nine months in Auburn, Ala., because he was training for the 10,000-meter race in the Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, and no sacrifice was too big or too small. But now, he's not going to make it.

Neither is Charlotte resident Reginald McAfee, unless he decides to use his tickets for several attractive spectator events at the Summer Games. Then again, McAfee,



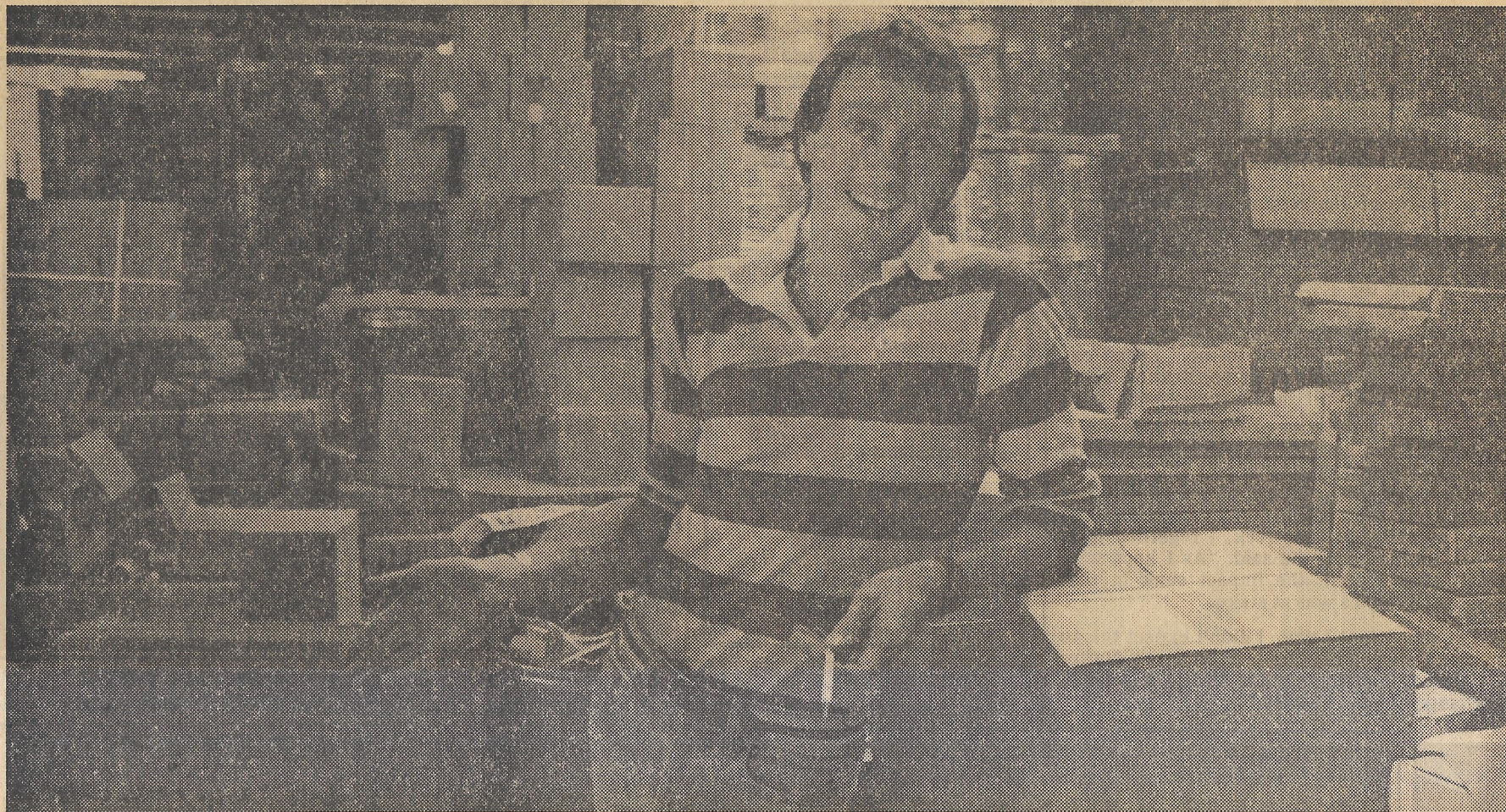
Carolinas'
Candidates

**The Road
To L.A.**

33, never expected to win any medals. He never expected to wear a red, white and blue uniform in any competition or even parade around the Los Angeles Coliseum with the U.S. team in the opening ceremonies.

All McAfee wanted to do was to qualify in the steeplechase for the Olympic Trials later this month in Los Angeles. But, despite a year of sweat, toil and strange looks from friends, he's not going to make it.

"I was running twice a day, lifting weights twice a week, practicing on hur-



Staff Photo By SUSIE POST

Tony Bateman failed in his bid for the Olympics 10,000-meter race — life goes on

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Continued From Page 1C

dles," said McAfee, customer relations coordinator for Xerox in Charlotte. "I would use the whirlpool and sauna to recover, and I mean really recover. I'd be in bed by 9. Friends would come over in the

"There's a lot to be said for what you get

for his fiancee.

Occasionally, he wonders what went wrong. Should he have done more mileage? Was he concentrating enough? He watched Tuttle qualify for the U.S. team with a third-place finish in the re-

evening and say, 'Where's Reg?' My wife would say, 'He's in bed.' I was boring. But it was like I was chasing a dream. Everybody has his dreams."

In an Olympic year, the dreamers get out of bed. They run, they jump hurdles, they throw a shot put, they lift weights, they dive. They play soccer or volleyball or field hockey. They ride a bicycle, row a boat, paddle a canoe.

Whatever they once did well — perhaps almost well enough to be an Olympian if not for an injury, a bad break or a boycott — they try again to do better. Whatever they always thought they could excel at, given the proper time and practice, they take a shot at learning.

And even when the dreams die, when they realize it's time to put on work clothes and get on with the rest of their lives, the dreamers usually feel at least as much satisfaction as disappointment. At least they tried. And tried. And tried.

"There's a lot to be said for what you get from the steps you take to try to achieve your goal," said McAfee. "You can't measure everything by the bottom line. I had good times I wouldn't trade for anything."

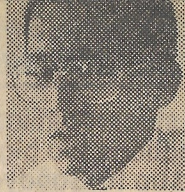
For McAfee, a former all-America at North Carolina and the first U.S. black to run a sub-four-minute mile, the bottom line was simple. He could not approach world class level in the 3,000-meter steeplechase with just a year of training in that event.

The steeplechase qualifying time for the June 16-24 Olympic Trials is 8:40.8. McAfee's best time, recorded a few weeks ago in a meet in Knoxville, was 8:50. That's an encouraging performance for someone competing in the event for only the fourth time, and he had at least one more chance to qualify before the Trials. But he passed it up.

"I knew what it took to do that 8:50," said McAfee, who reached the Olympic Trials in 1972 as a runner. "And I knew the time to get was 8:40. I didn't think I had 10 seconds left to give."

For Bateman, too, the bottom line was clear, though more difficult to accept. A former N.C. State runner and graduate of Charlotte's Garinger High, Bateman has had some success running 10,000 meters (10Ks), once winning the event in The Observer Marathon and twice finishing second there. He's won some others, and in a 1982 meet in Knoxville, he clocked a 28:41, better than the 28:46 needed to qualify for the Olympic Trials.

Unfortunately, that was before the official Olympic qualifying period. And as Bateman concentrated his training on this year, he found that



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— *Reginald McAfee*

instead of improving, he was falling off. Instead of getting closer and closer to Olympic level, he was getting further and further away. In the same recent meet where McAfee learned he couldn't cut it in the steeplechase, Bateman ran 10,000 meters in 30:32. He was finished.

"I didn't seem to have quite that zip," said Bateman, former head track coach at Vanderbilt and assistant coach at Auburn. He had chosen Auburn as a training site because he could work with marathoner John Tuttle under the supervision of Auburn coach Mel Rosen, the sprint coach for the U.S. Olympic team. He got a part-time job checking ads with the Auburn Plainsman, a student newspaper. Everything seemed right.

"Auburn is a good place to train," said Bateman. "It's a small town. No one bothers you. Mel Rosen can get you in the right races. And when John Tuttle came back from finishing fourth in the New York City Marathon last October, I knew I had made the right decision. I was gung-ho."

So he endured life in a crowded trailer, ran 90 to 100 miles a week, worked on strength, helped out with the Auburn track program. And waited for a reversal that never came.

Along the way, there were complications. Last November, Bateman's father died after a long illness and Tony returned home to east Charlotte. His concentration shaken and his training disrupted, he finished 14th in 30:00.8 at The Observer Marathon, well off winner Sosthenes Bitok's pace of 28:26.1.

He returned to Auburn, but found himself traveling regularly to Rome, Ga., to see his fiancée, Edie Brantley. The wedding is set for June 30. Getting on with life, you know.

Bateman works for a Charlotte swimming pool company, an interim job to save money. He's busy planning for his June 30 wedding, finding a place to live as a married couple and checking into area job prospects in coaching for him and marketing

cent Marathon Trials and probably, for a second, imagined his own possible shining moment.

"There are so many ifs," said Bateman. "Who would have thought (Pete) Pfizinger would win the marathon? Who would have thought John would be third? But I was definitely a long shot. I'm glad I did it. I'm more settled with myself. I'm excited about getting married, settling down, getting a job. I just wish my resume said 'U.S. Olympic team.'"

For McAfee, a Cincinnati native with a masters in business from N.C. Central, life after the Olympic dream won't change as radically. When he decided to try the steeplechase and aim for the Olympics after watching the event on television in last year's World Championships, he never quit work. He just gained some aches and pains.

He got up at 5:30 a.m. for his morning run in the dark near home on Raintree Golf Course, lifted weights at lunch, hustled after work to run at McAlpine Greenway Park. Often he stopped at South Mecklenburg or Myers Park to work with hurdles. He used benches to simulate the steeplechase's water jumps.

He talked to steeplechasers and other experts, gathering every bit of information he could. When friends saw him carrying a book on East German training methods, they knew he was serious.

His fast improvement amazed competitors. He never fell in a meet. His technique was smooth. But he couldn't make up for lost time.

"I'm glad he only started a year ago," said Jim Cooper, a Charlottean who has qualified for the Olympic Trials in the same event.

McAfee, 5-7 and 135 pounds, might gain back some of the 20 pounds he lost in training. He'll spend more time with wife Rosa and daughter Andrea, who was born last May, just as he began training.

"That same energy I had been using will be channeled in different directions," said McAfee. "I'll still go on and enter some road races. When you've spent this kind of physical energy, you hate to see it go to waste."

Bateman also will keep running and, even without the Olympic goal, he'll compete some. "I still have the tools," said Bateman. "I'm the same person. I'm not going to hang it up. I'll try to stay at it as much as I can. maybe another year or two years. This sport breeds craziness."

And like any other Olympic sport, it also breeds dreamers.