



Lightning Bolt

He's an Olympic champion, a world record breaker, and the face of PUMA's groundbreaking new running shoe: We sat down for a quick chat with the fastest man in the world, the one and only Usain Bolt. *By Yi-Hwa Hanna*

With a personal best of 9.58 seconds in the 100 metres category, Usain Bolt can proudly say he's had the world's fastest ever run. Not only has he smashed several world records, he's even beaten his own previous world records. And thanks to his undeniable charisma, genuinely likeable personality and good-natured attitude, the seemingly unbeatable Jamaican sprinter boasts a massive horde of fans all over the world for more than just his many awe-inspiring sporting achievements—as a public figure, the aptly-named Bolt is a truly inspirational figure when it comes to never giving up on your goals, reaching exceptional heights—even if at first, they might seem impossible—and always keeping it real (even while being the highest paid athlete ever in track and field). It's little wonder, then, that when PUMA was ready to create their most energised running shoe to date—a product that's been nine years in the making and that's set to change the face of running footwear technology—Usain was the first person they called. We caught up with the superstar athlete at the shoe's launch in New York City in February to find out how he stays motivated, how we can improve our own running game, and what the deal is with all of those chicken nuggets.

Some people say running is, in large part, a mind game—do you agree?

I think competition is a mind game, but if you're just going into something for fitness, you've just

got to get fit so you've just got to run! But when it comes to track and field, mentally, when you have to compete against somebody, it's really tough. You've got to be mentally strong. So I think definitely it is [important] when it comes to competition but if it's just for recreational sport then it's not so much.

What usually goes through your mind right before a race?

I try not to think about the race itself, just random things—what I'm going to have for dinner, video games, just any random stuff that I plan to do. I'll [think of] a new playlist!

How do you deal with failure?

One thing my coach taught me when I just started is that you have to learn to lose before you can learn to win—so I take every losing experience as a [learning] experience. So for me, when I lose, all I do is recap: What did I do wrong, what do I need to be better. I take it as a learning experience, then make it into a positive thing.

How does it make you feel when you see other athletes run?

I appreciate everything, especially distance running. What amazes me is how they warm up—they run as much as they run, if they run the track, when they're warming up—the long distance runners. Me and Mo Farah, we're good

friends, so I see him and I watch these guys warming up—and they're about to run 10,000 metres and they're warming up for 30 metres just running and running in circles, and it's just ridiculous! I'm always amazed by that.

During relays, how do you keep your team's spirits and energy levels up?

For me it's always so great because everyone enjoys relays, because all the pressure is off. Because we have some great athletes on the team—me, Asafa, Blake—we know what we're all capable of. So we're never worried about if we're going to do well, it's always about laughing and joking around and we just talk about random stuff and always make fun of other people! We're always close to the Trinidadian team and they always make the final, so we always banter against each other—who's going to go head to head—and it's always fun. So for me, the experience with the team is just wonderful, just to be around the guys, to compete with them and chill with them, just the experience. That's always one of my favourite moments in every championship, just hanging out with the guys.

Some people say, "My body isn't built for running; I'm not the right shape and I'll never be fast"—but you have scoliosis and it clearly hasn't stopped you! Do you think someone's

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natural build could prevent them from ever being a great runner?

As my motto goes, I think anything is possible. I don't think people should set themselves limitations for doing something like that—nobody thought I would be fast because I was too tall. They thought I would be limited. But I did it—for me, it's about if you want it. It's all about what you want in life, because a lot of people go out there and when they fail, they just give up. It just takes work. If I was like that, I would have probably stopped, because when I started out I was always getting injuries because of my scoliosis—it took me a while to figure out that this was my main problem, and this was why I was always getting injured. So if I'd stopped when I was getting injured all the time, then you probably wouldn't have seen the greatness! [Laughs.] For me it's all about determination. It's always about figuring out a way [and asking yourself]: 'How can I be better? How can I get this done?'—because where there's a problem, there's always a solution. That's the key.

Does it get harder for you to train as you become older?

No, that's one thing I always keep saying to myself—you're tough, but...watching all the athletes compete, and doing as well as they were doing at their prime, gives me motivation. My coach keeps saying, 'Listen—you're going to do great, you've just got to work hard. You're not old, I don't know why you keep telling yourself that!' A lot of athletes go on for years, even after they've passed the [typical] age of being great—but they still compete at high levels. I'm 28 now, I'm at a great age, so all I have to do is just put the work in and I'll be great. I'm not worried, I know I can.

Is there a part of training that you really like?

[Laughs] Starts—everybody likes starts days! Otherwise no!

What would be your top three tips for the average person who is trying to improve their running?

Do it a lot more than once a week! Get the IGNITE shoe [Laughs]. Just enjoy it, really.

You're the fastest man in the world—what are you really slow at doing?

Everything else! It's not even a joke—I'm really lazy and laid-back, so I'm very chilled out about everything else. I don't really do anything else fast—it's just running. People always ask me how that's possible, but I walk slow, I talk slow...

So you save all of

your energy for the running then?

Exactly! [Laughs.]

You're also great at cricket and football. Are there any other sports that you're really bad or good at?

I can't play golf—I don't have the patience. I can't play tennis [either]. Table tennis not so much—I'm ok. I'm really good at badminton. I can play volleyball pretty well too!

What do you look for in a life partner or a relationship?

It's all about the honesty, ambition, and just someone that you can laugh with. And that's one of my biggest things—someone that you can always laugh with about anything and everything. And hot—she has to be hot!

We've heard about the chicken nuggets—do you have any other guilty food pleasures?

Not really! I like wings—chicken wings, like KFC—but that's really it. But I'm not allowed to right now... I haven't had wings in so long! I'm trying to eat better, and have a better diet, because my coach says we need to cut down on that, so I'm much more focused on trying to eat properly now.

Have you incorporated any other changes to your diet?

I eat a lot of vegetables now, which is weird for me! It's good—I haven't really changed much, but I don't eat a lot of fast food now and I eat a lot more vegetables. I also don't eat late at night anymore—if I'm hungry I'll eat fruits.

Any sauce with your nuggets?

Hot sauce! Barbeque sauce.

Some people say that you're a real-life superhero—if you could pick any superpower (that doesn't involve speed!), what would it be?

Oh, not speed-related? Come on! Ok, [I'd be like] Nightcrawler. I love how he can disappear and just reappear anywhere.

So, teleportation then?

Yeah, teleportation! That would be really cool.



IGNITE YOUR RUN

Boasting technology that's been nine years in the making, PUMA's new IGNITE running shoe is its most energised yet. The key to its standout performance? Innovative foam technology that's been designed to maximise energy return to keep you running longer. "EVA foam has been in the sports industry market for the past 20-25 years. But we asked ourselves, 'What's next? EVA is lightweight, but if you increase the energy return, you're going to lose cushioning. How can we get both together—what can replace it?'" says Kohei Hagio, PUMA's Global Head of Running Training Footwear. Thus the IGNITE foam—proprietary foam that provides responsive cushioning, optimal rebound and comfort—was born. Tucked in each shoe's heel is ForEverFoam, a compound used heavily in the automotive industry that's new to this market and the reason behind the shoe's long-lasting durability. "Training every day is pretty tough," said Usain Bolt. "I start out with a running shoe to warm up before going into a spike, and I need a shoe that is comfortable and keeps my energy up. I love IGNITE for that, and can feel it make a real difference. It's a pretty good looking shoe as well." Once the technology was in place, it was time to work on the design. Inspired by the new brand philosophy of Forever Faster, they looked to nature for something that represented the visual aspect of energy: A comet. "From the colours, to the lines and materials of the shoe, we brought that to life. The idea of sparks and energy, [even on] the sidewall—it's all about speed and energy. This shoe has its own colour palette that isn't on any other shoe for this season," says PUMA Footwear Designer Jacob Garcia. Working with Usain Bolt on the new shoe, it was only logical for the design to take inspiration from one of the fastest moving objects in the universe, he explained. And the result? A shoe that's made to harness energy and improve performance for serious and casual runners and novices alike, and all in one beautiful package.

Available in-store at all PUMA retailers from March 10th for Dhs530.

