

# The last lap



Tanner Garza — THE BATTALION

Senior sprinter looks to cap off accomplished collegiate career

By Seth Stroupe

► Deon Lendore knows a few things about races. He's been winning the majority of them since he started running competitively at 16.

The sprinter's journey at Texas A&M has been a fruitful one that encompasses four years of individual honors, a team national championship in 2013 and an Olympic medal ceremony in London. And it all began with a YouTube video.

"One day in high school, a friend and I were watching YouTube videos when I first saw Texas A&M run the 4x400 meter relay," Lendore said. "It was a video of the 2010 team that won the NCAA championship in the event. I was amazed. I got in contact with Texas A&M, came up to visit, saw the environment and how the people were, how great the track team was — all of that just grabbed me. From that point on, I knew that this was the place."

Lendore, a business senior, was never scouted in person by Texas A&M because he grew up in the small island nation of Trinidad and Tobago, a state located seven miles off the coast of Venezuela, a location that makes recruiting visits logistically difficult.

"Growing up in Trinidad is a totally different atmosphere," Lendore said. "It's a smaller island so you grow up knowing just one main culture. It's not like the U.S., where there are so many different cultures. But growing up on an island was a lot of fun. You think about the Caribbean, we enjoy ourselves and we have a good time. We love to party."

In 2012, Trinidad had its best showing ever in an Olympics, bringing back a record four medals from London. One of those medals was a bronze in the 4x400 meter relay, for which Lendore was the anchor leg, the country's second-ever medal in the event and the first since 1964.

"The race was at night and walking out into the stadium all you could see was the flashing lights in the stands," Lendore said. "I tried not to look up or get too scared. I was only 19, running with the best in the world. I was running against some of my idols. There's a lot of pressure and it's hard trying not to let it get to you. But I think running in the Olympics is the best thing that's ever

happened to me. It really helped me out for the rest of my college career. After something like that, you learn how to cope with the big stages."

Lendore's coach credits his workmanlike approach above everything else.

"The guy just works," said head track coach Pat Henry. "There isn't a workout that I put in front of him that he doesn't put out total effort in order to accomplish. I'm going to put workouts in front of guys from time to time that are very, very difficult, but he does his best to get it done every day. In four years, he's probably missed only four or five training sessions. His consistency is the biggest part of what's helped him become successful."

That same consistency and work ethic is what propelled him to the highest honor in his sport, the Bowerman Trophy.

"They have one award in track and field, so it's really our Heisman," Henry said. "The thing you have to remember about track and field is that it accounts for 30 percent of all athletes in NCAA. It's huge. There are 20-plus events under the track umbrella, but there's only one award."

Lendore was well aware of the implications when he first appeared on the

Bowerman watchlist. Still, he ignored the pressure and proceeded to go undefeated in his junior campaign, winning 14 consecutive races and sweeping the indoor and outdoor NCAA championships in the 400 meters en route to becoming the first Aggie man to win the Bowerman.

"People put you on the list, but you have to stay on top of your game," Lendore said. "You can't really lose any races. I'm very thankful that I was able to be the Bowerman Award winner for 2014. I would love to be there again next year, but I know that's going to take a lot of hard work."

This is his last semester at Texas A&M, and like most seniors Lendore wants to make the most of it. In May, he'll graduate with a degree in business management.

The professional circuit beckons, as does another shot at Olympic glory in Rio. The world outside of college can be terrifying and full of uncertainty, but it's also full of limitless possibilities.

"I think Deon knows what he's done to this point, and I think he knows what he can accomplish," Henry said. "There's a lot more in the tank for Deon Lendore."

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### MANZIEL CONTINUED

the draft. Manziel was taken No. 22 by the Cleveland Browns, flashing his signature "money" sign as he walked across the stage to shake the commissioner's hands.

As the season ended, Manziel said he should have worked harder in his first year.

"I'm not the Johnny Manziel that came in here a year ago," Manziel said. "It's been a year of growing up for me. This is a job for me now. I have to take this a lot more seriously than maybe I did at first still going home and doing whatever I was doing in the offseason."

The A&M athletics department expressed its support in a statement Monday.

"Johnny will always be an Aggie, and we wish him well in another step in his journey," the statement read.

Manziel fans like ocean engineering junior Chase Lucia wonder if he can find the NFL success most Aggies expected of him.

"I think [Manziel] is messing up too royally," Lucia said. "I mean, the Browns came to his house because he missed his treatment appointment for his hamstring. He just needs to use the rehab so that people will see that he's progressing. If he messes up after this, he's done."

International studies junior Kevin Bittner said Manziel has all the skills, but needs the mental discipline necessary to succeed at the NFL level.

"I think that Johnny has everything it takes to be the Browns starting quarterback except for the mental discipline," Bittner said. "I think rehab is a great step toward Johnny becoming a respected NFL quarterback."

### BATS CONTINUED

Kyle Field may kill some of the bats and force those remaining into other campus buildings.

"Any bats that cannot find a suitable roosting site that provides the right thermal conditions will likely die," Lacher said. "I expect a significant number will be looking for spots near Kyle [Field] and those will be campus buildings."

Early removal efforts in 2013 resulted in the infestation of 1,000 bats in Cain Hall, right across from Kyle Field. The university responded by sealing potential entry points and building bat houses around campus to relocate the population. To some critics, these steps are not enough.

Lacher said it often takes several years for bats to become accustomed to new roosts.

"A lot will depend upon the design of the bat houses and how easy they are for the bats to find," Lacher said.

Conservationists are concerned what the reduced bat population might mean for the surrounding area. Shelby Vega, president of the Texas

A&M chapter of the Society for Conservation Biology and wildlife and fisheries sciences senior, expressed concerns for undesired effects.

"All bats do good for people as far as insect control and it is important to remember that," Vega said.

Lacher said the impact on the insect population would be significant if the relocation process fails to protect the bats.

"The 250,000 bats in Kyle Field were consuming from 50 to 150 million insects each night," Lacher said. "Many of these are agricultural pests, so that could be a significant loss of free control of crop damage."

Vega said Texas A&M should look for a way to better coexist with the bats.

"If they could figure out a way to collect their waste they could have a

very sustainable source of fertilizer," Vega said. "Bat guano is very high in nitrogen and makes an excellent fertilizer."

Whether the preventative and relocation efforts are successful will only be known when the bats migrate back to College Station from Mexico in the spring. In the meantime, Ray said the removal will continue.



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Bat homes have been placed around campus as relocation sites.

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