



Olympic competitor, track and field, 1968 Summer Olympic Games, Mexico City, Mexico



Runner's High

Mexico City, October, 1968. It's the year of the Fosbury Flop, the first doping tests, the first woman to light the Olympic cauldron—and all at 2,240 metres above sea level. Olympic and world records are set and broken and broken again in the rarefied air: long jump, high jump, triple jump, pole vault and sprints. But for the middle- and long-distance runners, the altitude has the reverse effect. "It was a huge factor," says Trerise, the memories flooding back. "The feeling is that you just want to lie down and go to sleep. There were some very good athletes that weren't able to perform anywhere near their best, and that would have been devastating. I was lucky that I was able to perform well."

A member of Canada's track and field team (now known simply as "athletics"), Trerise's event was the 1,500 metres, or the metric mile. His personal best was 3:39.6, a Canadian record at the time. The altitude added only eight seconds, putting him in the top 13 in his event.

"I made it from the quarter final to the semi final," Trerise recalls. "I was tremendously excited. And then in the semi final I did not perform well at all, and didn't make it. That was tremendously depressing. But what I remember more than anything else was being proud to be there and to have competed at my best on at least one of the two occasions when I stepped on the track."

Trerise left Vancouver to study history at the University of Oregon, and it was as a junior in college that he competed at the Olympics. An historic event by any standard, Trerise's journey to Mexico City that fall also immersed him in history on a grand scale.

Fifteen thousand Mexican students, wanting to take advantage of the attention focused on the Olympics, marched through the streets carrying red carnations and gathered in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas chanting, "*No queremos olimpiadas, queremos revolución!*" ("We don't want Olympic games, we want revolution!") Ten days before the start of the Olympiad, at sunset, police and military forces equipped with armoured cars and tanks surrounded the square and fired live rounds into the crowd. Government sources put the casualties at "4 dead, 20 wounded," but independent sources reported 200–300 deaths. The event is known as the Tlatelolco Massacre.

Back in Vancouver, a degree and an Olympiad under his belt, Trerise was unsure of his next step, and took an aptitude test to help him decide on a direction. "Law, teaching or the priesthood," came the results. He chose law.

Trerise is currently a senior litigator in the labour and employment group at Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP. Comparing his work to civil litigation, where he started out, Trerise says, "It's more of a 'get in there and roll up your sleeves and do it' kind of discipline. In labour law, you just go straight to the heart of it." He draws clear connections between the work he does now and his days as a world-class athlete. "You get to learn about yourself, what your limits are, where your strengths are," he says. "You develop resilience out of athletics because unless you're extremely talented, you win some and you lose some, and that resilience is crucial to trial work."

Trerise is a committee member for an initiative to put a track on the University of British Columbia's main campus. "It's been a long time since the university had a proper track and field facility," he says. "Along with rowing, track and field has been incredibly productive at UBC for putting people on the Olympic team. What supporters can look forward to is UBC track and field getting back to its former level of glory." The name of the initiative? On Track.