



Jade Carey, of the United States, performs in the floor exercise during the artistic gymnastics women's apparatus final. (AP Photo Jeff Roberson)

JADE CAREY'S LONG ROAD TO THE OLYMPICS ENDS WITH GOLD

By WILL GRAVES
AP Sports Writer

Jade Carey traveled the world for a spot in the Olympics. Germany. Qatar. Azerbaijan. Australia.

A lot of long flights. A little bit of jet lag. One unrelenting vision of what could be possible.

She wasn't going to let a little thing like a sticky patch of carpet get in her way.

The 21-year-old American gymnast soared to gold in the women's floor exercise Monday night, her powerful and precise routine capping a roller-coaster 24 hours in which she narrowly avoided serious injury during the vault finals when her right foot caught just as she was preparing her entry.

Carey's score of 14.366 gave the U.S. women's team its fifth medal of the Games and assured that each of the six athletes who came to Tokyo — Carey, Simone Biles, Sunisa Lee, Jordan Chiles, Grace McCallum and MyKayla Skinner — will be checking some serious bling in customs when they return home.

Considered one of the favorites after coming in second during vault qualifying, Carey was thundering down the blue runway Sunday when she tripped. Her planned Cheng vault instead became a simple back tuck, her medal chances evaporating in the process.

Stunned, she recovered in time to complete her second vault but finished well off the podium before quietly retreating to the waiting arms of her father Brian, her lifelong coach, and the comfort of her teammates.

Knowing his daughter had less than a day to regroup in time for the floor finals, Brian Carey turned off the "coach" switch and flipped on the "dad" one.

"I told her, 'You know, right now, you feel like yesterday was the worst day in your life, but today can be your best day. So just don't give up. Keep going,'" Carey said. "And she killed it."

Stomped it, more like.

Carey doesn't leap off the floor as much as she explodes. Her tumbling is as dynamic as anyone in the world not named Simone Biles, and she's working on a triple-twisting double-layout element that — if she ever completes it in international competition — will be given the single-highest difficulty value of anything currently being done in the sport.

While it's not quite ready to be unveiled when it counts, Carey also didn't need it. A day after her meandering road to the Ariake Gymnastics Centre nearly ended in disaster, she responded with what she called the best routine of her career.

Carey could hear teammates roaring from

the stands during her routine, Biles perhaps the loudest of them all.

"They were honestly the best teammates ever, especially (Sunday) night," Carey said.

Even if they aren't teammates, at least, not technically. Carey earned a spot in Tokyo by taking advantage of what turned out to be a one-time-only offer by the International Gymnastics Federation. The sport's governing body made a provision for the 2020 Games that allowed athletes to lock up an individual nominative spot if they racked up enough points at World Cup events.

So the Careys spent 16 months flying to different continents, piling up podiums on vault and floor exercise along the

way. They formally accepted the spot on the eve of the U.S. Olympic Trials, even though they knew it meant she was giving up a shot at making the four-woman team that ended up winning silver during the team competition last week.

Sound confusing? It is. The FIG has already abandoned the practice and is returning the team sizes to five women per country for the 2024 Games in Paris.

Yet all the paperwork and the politics and the patience paid off with a performance that brought her teammates to their feet and her father to near tears.

"It was definitely hard sometimes," Jade Carey said. "I'm really glad that we stuck with our decision and did what we did. It was for the better."

Vanessa Ferrari of Italy earned silver, the 30-year-old's first Olympic medal after near misses in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 and London in 2012. Her dramatic routine — one that would fit right in at La Scala opera house in Milan — gave Italy its first women's gymnastics medal since 1928 and capped a long comeback from a torn Achilles tendon four years ago.

Five years removed from a horrific broken left leg suffered in Rio de Janeiro, Samir Ait Said of France came in fourth, sticking his dismount on the leg once so mangled it appeared his career was in jeopardy. Said admitted he's dealing with a left bicep injury so severe his coach tried to convince him to opt out. Instead, he pressed on.

Asked if he believes bad luck is following him around at the Olympics, the 31-year-old shook his head.

"No," he said.

Why?

"Because I'm going to win in Paris in three years."



Jade Carey, of the United States, poses after winning the gold medal for the floor exercise during the artistic gymnastics women's apparatus final. (AP Photo Ashley Landis)

OLYMPIC SPOTLIGHT

ALLMAN'S JOY: DISCUS THROWER WAITS OUT RAIN FOR GOLD MEDAL

By PAT GRAHAM
AP Sports Writer

The path to Valarie Allman's gold medal — the first for the U.S. track and field team at Olympic Stadium — started with, of all things, a plate of spaghetti.

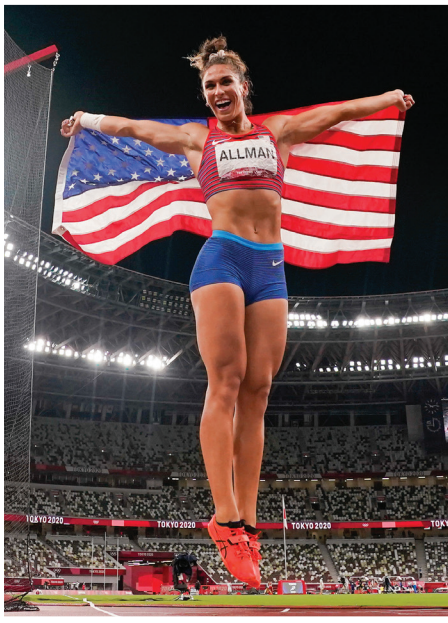
That promise of pasta from her high school team was enough to lure her into the discus and to the point she reached on a rainy Monday night at the Tokyo Games: A breakthrough — and a much-needed gold medal for the United States.

Allman opened the final with a throw of 68.98 meters (226 feet, 3 inches) and then waited through an hour-long delay and around 50 throws by her competition. But nobody could pass her.

About that life-altering meal: As a teenager, she was a dancer who dabbled in different track disciplines. But she hadn't found her true track calling. The throwers on her high school team in Longmont, Colorado, said she could partake in a pasta meal with them on one condition: She had to give throwing a try.

That's how the discus became her thing.

"Looking back, gosh darn, that was the best spaghetti dinner of my entire life," said the 26-year-old Allman, a multi-time All-American while at Stanford who now and trains in Austin, Texas.



(AP Photo/David J. Phillip)
Valarie Allman, of the United States, celebrates after winning the gold medal in the women's discus throw final.

Worked out well for the U.S., too.

Hardly anyone figured the country's first medal at Olympic Stadium would come from women's discus. Not so much because of the event — American Stephanie Brown Trafton won it at the 2008 Beijing Games — but because of where it

fell on the schedule: Day 4.

The fact she had to wait out a rain delay only added to the drama. She and her fellow competitors could be seen sitting under cover, with rain gear draped across their heads, after the downpour hit. She was in a groove before the stoppage, too. All she thought about during the delay was staying calm. She tried to think about her technique.

And while her first throw would be her top attempt, no one could catch her: Kristin Pudenz of Germany was second and Yaime Perez of Cuba captured bronze.

"I'm still waiting for my feet to touch the ground," Allman said.

Light on her feet, Allman has a certain rhythm in the ring. That's from her dancing days, which she's carried over to the discus.

"It's a second-and-a-half dance that you do hundreds of times, and really repetitive, but gosh darn, I do think it's a dance," she said. "It's poetry. It's grace. It's balance. It's powerful. It's figuring how to do it as efficiently as you can."

She and her coach, Zebulon Sion, have steadily built her into a gold medal-winning discus thrower with picture-perfect technique.

"It's not how she finishes, but what we try to do is, in the middle, collect her energy and release that energy," Sion explained.

To think, it all started with a plate of spaghetti.



OLYMPICS ON TV

TUESDAY, AUGUST 3

(All times Eastern)

Schedule subject to change and/or blackouts

BASKETBALL

4:15 a.m.

USA — Men's Basketball (Quarterfinals)

8 a.m.

USA — Men's Basketball (Quarterfinals)

12:30 a.m. (Wednesday)

USA — Women's Basketball (Quarterfinal)

4:30 a.m. (Wednesday)

USA — Women's Basketball (Quarterfinal)

BEACH VOLLEYBALL

9 a.m.

NBCSN — Women's Beach Volleyball (NBCfinal)

10 a.m.

NBCSN - Women's Beach Volleyball (Quarterfinal)

8 p.m.

CNBC — Men's Beach Volleyball (Quarterfinal)

CANOEING

10:30 p.m.

CNBC — Men's and Women's Canoeing (Sprint Qualifying, Quarterfinals)

DIVING

8 p.m.

NBC — Men's Diving (Springboard Final)

2:30 a.m. (Wednesday)

USA — Women's Diving (Platform Qualifying)

EQUESTRIAN

6 a.m. (Wednesday)

NBCSN — Equestrian (Individual Jumping Final)

GOLF

6:30 p.m.

GOLF — Women's Golf (Round 1)

GYMNASTICS

8 p.m.

NBC — Gymnastics (Men's Horizontal Bar; Women's Balance Beam)

KAYAKING

10:30 p.m.

CNBC — Men's and Women's Kayaking (Sprint Qualifying, Quarterfinals)

SKATEBOARDING

9 p.m.

CNBC — Women's Skateboarding (Park Preliminary)

11:30 p.m.

CNBC — Women's Skateboarding (Park Finals)

SOCCER

4 a.m.

NBCSN — Men's Soccer (Semifinal)

7 a.m.

NBCSN — Men's Soccer (Semifinal)

SWIMMING

5:30 p.m.

NBCSN — Women's Marathon Swimming (10km Open Water)

6:10 a.m. (Wednesday)

USA — Artistic Swimming (Duet Final)

TRACK AND FIELD

8 p.m.

NBC — Men's and Women's Track & Field (Semifinals and Finals)

VOLLEYBALL

9:50 a.m.

USA — Men's Volleyball (Quarterfinal)

4 a.m. (Wednesday)

NBCSN — Women's Volleyball (Quarterfinal)

WATER POLO

1 a.m. (Wednesday)

CNBC — Men's Water Polo (Quarterfinal) ---



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