

Olympic Spotlight: Sanya Richard-Ross

Written by Yolande Lezine, Sports Editor
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Sanya Richards-Ross, the former University of Texas Longhorns track star from Jamaica, is now a U.S. Olympian after capturing the gold medal in the women's 400 meters at Olympic Stadium in London, England.

Amid a series of freakish injuries in 2010, and a third place finish at the Beijing Games, Richards-Ross put that past behind her. At last year's world championships, she finished seventh. Disappointment, tears and a bronze medal are all in the past. For on this trip to the Olympics, she closed the deal.

Four years later, Sanya Richards-Ross won the 400-meter gold that she had always thought she would. Despite nearly banging elbows with runners on both sides of her- and with the defending champion making up ground on the outside, Richards-Ross was stronger, this time over the last 100 meters.

"I just kept saying, "You can do this, you can do this," Richards-Ross said. "I just dug really deep and I'm very happy with the outcome. This is something that I dreamed of for a very long time."

Defending champion Christine Ohuruogu of Britain finished second in 49.70 and American DeeDee Trotter, decked out in red, white and blue glitter on her face, won the bronze in 49.72.

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At the end of the race, Richards-Ross wrapped herself in an American flag and went to the stands to embrace her husband, Jacksonville Jaguars defensive back Aaron Ross, who took time off from NFL training camp to travel to London to see her compete in the Olympics.

“You finally did it, you finally did it, babe,” Aaron told his wife. “Enjoy the moment.”

Aaron and Sanya both met as student-athletes at the University of Texas in Austin. Aaron has two Super Bowl rings, won when he played for the New York Giants. And now Sanya has an individual gold to go with two others she won in previous Olympic relays, with more possible in this year’s relays.

Noted as the world’s top runner at this distance for much of the last four years, Richards-Ross has nonetheless been waiting impatiently for another shot at the individual gold medal.

Richards-Ross has been through a lot over the past four to five years. Health issues took its toll in Beijing, and she’s spent the past five years fighting an autoimmune disease called Behcet’s syndrome, but after a visit to a different doctor, she thinks she’s been misdiagnosed.

Fighting her illness, which causes fatigue, sores around her mouth and splochy skin, with a new treatment, the five-time U.S. champion arrived in London feeling as good as she has in years.

She sang the lyrics to the U.S. national anthem and smiled! “She worked so hard,” Aaron Ross said. “All the emotions going through her mind, her family’s mind, everybody that’s seen the struggles. It just a great moment right now.”