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"The public doesn't understand how unforgiving this event is. You have to stand at the starting line and see those ten hurdles to realize that just hitting one of those can knock you out of a race that you've spent four years working toward."

PERDITA FELICIEN
HURDLER, 100-METRE WORLD CHAMPION

Vital statistics: 23 years old, 5' 5", 135 pounds, personal best of 12.53 seconds (.32 seconds shy of the world record, 12.21). Owns more than 60 pairs of track shoes. **Mentor:** Her first coach, Miss Arthurs, talked her into coming out for track in grade four at Glen Grove Public School in Pickering, Ont. **Hero:** Her mother, Cathy Moe, came from St. Lucia in the late 1970s and raised Perdita, three other daughters, and a son while working as a health-care provider in a retirement home. **Archrival:** American Gail Devers, the most decorated hurdler of the past 15 years. **Training partner:** American Jenny Adams, sixth-place finisher at the world championships last summer, trained with Felicien in Champaign, Illinois, this year. **Soundtrack:** Missy Elliott. **Favourite food:** Sushi rolls. **Education:** B.Sc. in kinesiology from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. **Injuries:** "My knees are covered in scars from falls on the track. That's the price that hurdlers have to pay for their falls – and they do fall." **Golden dream:** A repeat of last year's victory at the Worlds in Paris has golden agers waving their canes at her mom's work.

Photographed by Sandy Nicholson in Champaign, Illinois