



BMC News

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Founded 1963

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All official correspondence to the BMC should be addressed to the National Secretary at the above address. All matters so received will be addressed by the national committee at their next meeting. All other requests should be sent to the BMC Administrator Pat Fitzgerald and will be dealt with as soon as possible. Matters concerning specific areas of the club should be sent to the relevant person from the above list.

The BMC are always looking to expand its network of people and locations that host BMC races. If you feel that you can help or want to get involved then please contact the BMC Administrator Pat Fitzgerald.



Editor's Introduction

BY MATTHEW LONG

So do you notice anything different as you sit reading this magazine in your hands? Well, for one thing it should feel just that little bit weightier. BMC News has developed its aerobic capacity and expanded from 40 to a whopping 48 pages in this issue! We'll leave you to judge whether there's more mileage in us extending the VO2 max of our output as like you athletes, we are aware of the need for quality as well as quantity!

Just flick back and take another look at our front page for a couple of seconds. Pause for a moment and reflect that those montage images have hit the front cover because they represent everything that our club stands for. BMC PAST, PRESENT and FUTURE are what runs like lettering in a stick of Blackpool rock throughout our club. The graphics of Steve Cram and Wendy Sly remind us that without paying due homage to our past, we in effect have no marker, no reference point with which to gauge the standards of today. Pictures of Laura Muir and Charlie Grice, remind us that we are rooted in the present – the here and now and the summer season of 2015 is where we are all proverbially at. As a club which has evolved and changed with the times since our inception back in 1963, the appearance of both Jonny Davies and Katy Brown on the front page, gives all you young aspiring athletes in our ranks a nod to the years which lie ahead of us – for it is you who are the very future of our Club.

Our magazine goes Retro in Part One, with classics on Tim Hutchings and the aforementioned Cram and Sly, meaning you will find the summers of '84, '85 and '86 are colourfully revisited thanks to the diligence of David Cocksedge.

The marvellous Matt Fraser Moat and sensational Steve O'Brien then loudly applaud three of our annual award winners in Gordon Surtees and Gavin and Jo Pavey in Part Two. The Stars shine upon us in Part Three as Paul Hayes perfectly analyses the career of Guy Learmonth and the excellent David Lowes dissects the plans of Laura Muir. Additionally an insight into the running brains of both Charlie Grice and Sara Treacy are gained by Geoff James and Sally Straw who were deservedly part of last year's Commonwealth Games Coaching Group.

We come up to speed present matters in Part Four, which includes a scintillating report on the indoor circuit from Steve Green, along with a season's preview, top

tips for entering our races and thought provoking piece on age, from Chair Tim Brennan. Plus there is the obligatory 'must-have' double page fixtures spread provided by our treasurer Pat Fitzgerald. So go ahead, pull it out, find some blue tack and plaster it on your bedroom wall so that you go to bed and wake up thinking of the BMC!

David Lowes wears his Academy hat in tempting you to sign up for the 2015 edition of our famed training weekends in Part Five. This taster precedes two more 'future star' pieces from super Steve Green who spends time with both coach Adrian Webb and his group plus a second feature on Katy Brown, who is clearly one to watch for the future as is Jonny Davies, whose talent is unpicked, alongside that of coach Rob McKim, by new writer Chris Hepworth.

For the real students of the sport amongst you, we have a jam packed coach education section for you in Part Six with belting pieces from a range of well-respected coaches and athletes, including Peter Thompson, Steve O'Brien, Brendon Byrne and Luke Gunn. If that inspires you, then read secretary David Reader's call for you to apply for the prestigious Horwill Research scholarship.

Part Seven sees BMC News enter the home straight up on its toes, with a detailed report from Neville Taylor on the recent European indoors, followed by a review of coach Tony Elder's recent publication by the ubiquitous Lowes, before the prolific Alastair Aitken eases us over the finishing line as we pay tribute to the late, great, Jim Hogan. Enjoy the ride!

Matt Long

The Editor (centre) is flanked by Bud Baldaro (left) and Andy Young (right). Bud is a former BMC coach of the year whose coaching of Sara Treacy features on p. 22 of this issue and Andy was a fine BMC athlete in his day, whose coaching of Laura Muir is covered on p. 20. The trio are pictured at altitude in Font-Romeu in April 2015, where they were working with a group which included international athletes, some of whom were supported by the British Athletics Camp.



Chairman's Notes - April 2015

BY TIM BRENNAN BMC CHAIRMAN

Welcome to the spring 2015 edition of the BMC News. I am sure you will be looking forward to the track season. Our calendar will be as busy as ever and we expect to again stage around 500 races covering the whole country. You can read more about the coming season elsewhere in the magazine. The competition program is possible thanks to the long standing support of our kit sponsors Nike. We are also delighted, that this year we will once more receive support from British Athletics.

Indoor races

Our indoor season is a much smaller number of races, but is a growing and important part of what we do. This season we had three meetings and 36 races, in Glasgow, Sheffield, and London. We will continue to have a small program of indoor races going forward, leaving plenty of room for a winter season with cross country and road competitions. The highlight of the indoor season has to be the BMC 3000m record set by Laura Muir at the Emirates Arena Glasgow, her 8:51.75 bettering Natalie Harvey's 15 year old best. Congratulations to Laura.

BMC Awards and Coaching Seminar

Congratulations as well to all our 2014 BMC Award winners. Athlete of the year Jo Pavey, Coach of the year Gavin Pavey, and young athlete of the year Kyle Langford. We recently presented the awards at our BMC Coaching Seminar. During the 2014 season, Jo ran a BMC members 5000m record and of course was a hugely popular gold medal winner at the European Championships. Kyle ran the two fastest 800m times by

a BMC member, senior or junior, as well as being a finalist at the World Junior championships. BMC awards come from a free vote by the BMC committee with no set criteria, save being a paid up member. As well as results, more subjective criteria can apply and Jo and Kyle's commitment to BMC races, enthusiasm, and the gratitude they show to BMC volunteers also set them apart. In the committee's vote for the coach of the year, I think we reflect the wider endurance community in recognising the outstanding coaching provided by Gavin, in getting Jo to medal at the Commonwealths and European championships. The winner of the Life Time Coaching award was Gordon Surtees, who used the occasion to analyse the state of endurance today. Speaking eloquently with no notes for an hour he struck a chord with many of those present including myself.

The seminar, which was held with the great support of England Athletics, featured coaches speaking alongside their athletes. Steve Cram and Laura Weightman, Jo and Gavin Pavey, George Harrison and Kyle Langford. It was an excellent line up, illustrating the strong bond common to successful coach-athlete partnerships but also showing the wide variety of ways in which the relationship can work. There is more on the seminar elsewhere in the magazine.

Age Group Changes

British Athletics is consulting on age group changes which would alter the championship and league structure. BMC races would be less impacted as they are open and seeded on standard rather than age. However I would be very interested to hear members' views on the change, as it



Tim Brennan.

has a bearing on the retention of athletes in the sport. The BMC, with our aim of raising the standard of British Middle Distance Running is dependent on the talent that comes through from the age groups. An article in the 'BMC Present' section of these pages covers this.

Thanks

Many thanks to those of you who came forward with offers to help the BMC following my appeal in the last edition of this magazine. These offers are greatly appreciated and will be a big help. We would still appreciate further offers.

I hope the coming season brings you all you wish for.

Tim Brennan



Cover: (Clockwise from left top): Wendy Sly, Steve Cram, Laura Muir, Jonny Davies, Charlie Grice and Katy Brown.

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EDITORIAL CALL FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The BMC has a great team of writers which includes coaches, coach educators and sports journalists. This being said, like any great team we are always looking to expand our squad for the Winter 2015 edition. Do you think YOU have what it takes to be part of the team? Perhaps you are a young student who would like to build their CV by reviewing a major championship for us? Maybe you are a coach who wants to communicate a particular philosophy which you have developed but have never had the space to do so? Possibly at heart you are just a fan of the sport who would relish the chance to interview a superstar for our pages? Or could it be that you write athletics reports for your local newspaper and would simply like to take this a step further? You must be able to hit deadlines- the next of which will be October 1st for the Winter 2015 edition of our magazine. Please contact BMC News Editor Matt Long for a friendly chat on 07983864114 or email him at matt@mattlong.wanadoo.co.uk and send him some of your previous work for consideration.

Tim Hutchings interview

FORMER EDITOR OF BMC NEWS, **DAVID COCKSEGE**, ENJOYED THE RECENT COMPANY OF FORMER GB STAR AND RENOWNED COMMENTATOR **TIM HUTCHINGS**.

KEY STATISTICS:

Born 4 December, 1958; Crawley AC and British Milers' Club

Best track marks: 800m-1:50.8; 1500m-3:38.06; Mile-3:54.53; 3000m-7:43.03; 2 Miles-8:15.53; 5000m-13:11.50; 10,000m-28:07.57

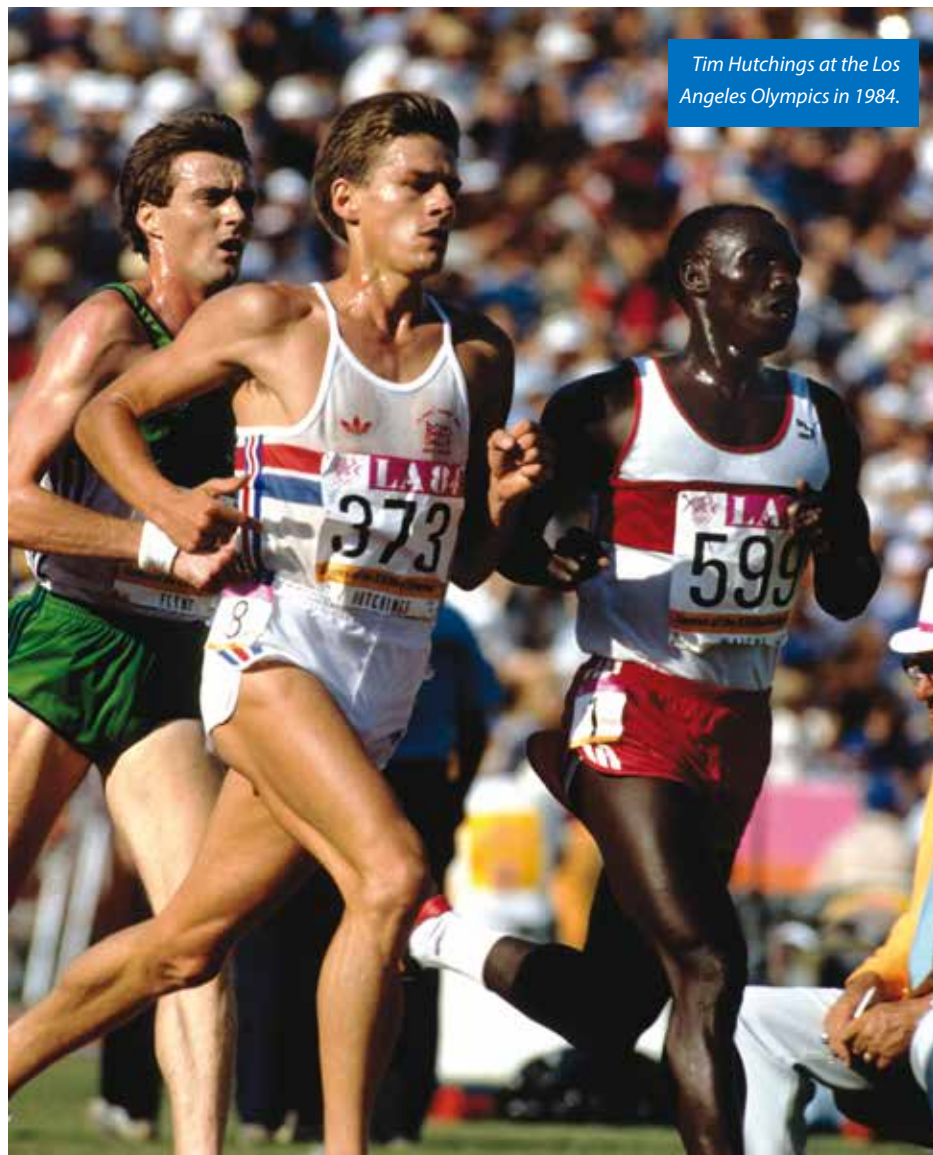
Tim was a bronze medallist in the 1986 European Championships and Commonwealth Games 5000m. He finished 4th in the 1984 Olympic 5000m and was a silver medallist in the IAAF World Cross Country Championship both in 1984 and 1989 and was a two-time winner of the 'National'. He is best known today as a much respected freelance television broadcaster, often for Eurosport but who also calls track meetings and road races all over the world including calling most of the Diamond League meetings on British TV. He is the Founder of the Brighton Marathon, held every April since 2010, and Chief Executive of his company, Grounded Events Ltd.

David Cocksedg (DC): How did you come to join the BMC?

Tim Hutchings (TH): In the summer of 1975 I got into distance running through my old school-friend, Neil Leach. Up to then I played rugby for the school and the county, but in those early days I was really very green about athletics and simply running races off my Rugby fitness. That summer I finished second in the 1975 English Schools' Intermediate Boys 1500m final to Eamonn Martin from Basildon in Essex and that, along with Neil, encouraged me to take this running lark more seriously.

Neil introduced me to Frank (Horwill), who was already coaching him. We would travel up from Sussex to Crystal Palace three times a week to train with Frank's squad, which numbered about 40-50 athletes. Other good lads from Sussex like Graham Jackson and Mark Hirsch were either already with him or soon joined, and through Frank's influence we all joined the BMC pretty early in our careers; it ensured good quality, regular racing opportunities.

I started running in BMC races in 1976. Back then, the club held outdoor track races throughout the year; something that does not happen these days. In the winter months, we could race variously over 1000m, 1200m, 2000m or 3000m – in fact a



portfolio of races we could pick and choose from, and you could find races when you needed them to judge your fitness. I realised that Neil was using me as a regular training partner to further his own career, but in fact the setup benefited both of us. In 1977 I ran 3:45.0 for 1500; but got injured just before the trials and failed to make the British team for the European Junior Championships that year, which was hugely disappointing.

DC: What do you recall about the Sunday training sessions at Crystal Palace in the 1970's?

TH: The Sunday session at Crystal Palace became famous: it was a full day of relentless training. Around 40 to 60 of us would assemble at 11 am, complete a massive 3 miles warm-up which sometimes

included running three times up that steep hill outside Crystal Palace Sports Centre; then go into the first track session, usually something monstrous like 24x400 or 48x200; we even did 96 x 100 once! We would break for a liquid lunch around 1 pm (two pints of coke and a packet of crisps for me usually) and then do conditioning work in the gym for an hour or so with Frank and his ever-reliable right-hand man, Ray Williams, supervising things. Then it was another session, either on the track or on the grass, which was usually a paarlauf relay in teams of two competing against each other for around 45 minutes. There was no gender discrimination: Frank would seed the teams by ability and the girls ran alongside the boys – I really think it toughened the girls because they were so determined to prove

they were not "the weaker sex".

We would finish with a game of volleyball or football which usually ended with a 'bundle': about ten of us would pile on top of Frank and 'scrag' him – tickling or small-punching him till he begged forgiveness for all the pain he'd put us through! It was very hard training, but always included a fun element. Then we'd finish up at 4pm, absolutely shattered and all make our way home; some came from miles away. At home it was all I could do to eat a massive meal and fall asleep – pretty much right through to Monday morning. Those were fabulous times and there was great camaraderie, as well as keen rivalry, among all of us in the squad.

DC: You were selected for the England team at the 1978 Commonwealth Games at the age of 19. How was that experience?

TH: I was like a kid in a sweet shop, but really still a little naive in my approach to things. In the Emsley Carr Mile at Crystal Palace that year, three of us British teenagers came through in one race: Graham Williamson (18), Steve Cram (aged 17) and I all ran inside 3:58.0, and off that race 'Crammy' and I were selected for the English team for the Games in Edmonton, Canada.

But I raced far too much that year, and if I have one criticism of Frank it was that he never sat down with each of us and meticulously planned a racing programme; how could he...there were about 50 of us! And because he coached so many people, you were pretty much left to yourself in terms of careful race planning; and I raced an insane amount: I think I ran something like fifteen 1500m or mile races alone that summer!

Anyway, in Edmonton I clocked a personal best of 3:40 in my heat and made the final as a fast loser; whilst Crammy didn't survive the heats. I then finished 10th in the final where Dave Moorcroft won a great race in 3:35. The whole trip was a great learning curve for me, and as my then girlfriend, 800m runner Paula Newnham, was also in the English team at those Games, I had a super time. Then I went up to Loughborough University that September.

DC: And how was the Loughborough experience for you?

TH: I graduated with a degree in PE and Sports Science in 1981. I picked up a series of injuries and illnesses during my three years there, and there was only one winter - I think it was 1979/80 - where I got myself into fantastic shape only to mess up my back doing weights in the spring.

That meant I had to miss a lot of the following summer. I reckon I would have run

around 3:36 and 13:15 in 1980 and possibly made the Moscow Olympics at 5000m if I had not got injured that year.

Frank went on record (in *BMC News*) stating that I spent far too much time at university drinking and womanising, which is a huge exaggeration! I slotted into George Gandy's conditioning programme at Loughborough, and on the whole it was very beneficial. People like Seb Coe and a host of others got extremely fit on George's workouts. It was a simple, basic set of weekly routines that ticked all the boxes; Weights on Monday & Friday, Circuits on Wednesday, Track or road reps on Tuesday and Thursday, and hill sprints on a Saturday. The long run on a Sunday was probably the easiest day!

DC: Fast forward to 1984, when you made the Olympic team for Los Angeles after placing second in the IAAF World Cross Country Championships.

TH: Yes, again I was in fantastic shape at the end of the winter, but again I got injured after running very well in the World Cross in March. My shins flared up, and I spent eight weeks with very little running. I gradually clawed my way back into shape, and through June and July I was getting fitter every week and squeezed in to the Olympic team, running a PB of 13:20 at Oslo in the process.

I went into the Los Angeles Games quite mentally fresh, prepared to race three rounds of the 5000 metres. It was a very tough schedule, with the final run in 28C heat. I came away with a PB of 13:11.50, broke Brendan Foster's Olympic record by 9 seconds, but got no medal (Moroccan Said Aouita won gold in 13.05). Fourth place in the Olympics is said to be the loneliest place in the world. But it was clear to me that if I could run 13:11 in my third race in just four days in very hot conditions, after a disrupted spring and never having used altitude, I was capable of running inside 13 minutes in a 'one-off' in cooler weather. Now, with the benefit of more knowledge all these years later, it's clear I could have gone well under 13 minutes that summer if I'd had the same racing opportunities that exist now.

DC: Thinking of the current state of our sport, what do you make of the recent doping scandal in Russian Track & Field?

TH: I have to say that I despise dopers. They are clearly amoral and equally clearly there are coaches and athletes in some nations who have no qualms about cheating in this way. They justify it by saying, or by being told, "We must do it. Everyone else is taking drugs, and we don't want to get left behind".

I can think of at least three European countries where doping among elite distance

runners has been rife in recent years; Spain, Italy and France – and that's just the tip of the iceberg. What I resent, is that these people have become wealthy through cheating, and I would hope that they struggle to look themselves in the mirror every morning and that one day, they'll be exposed properly. However I fear that as they have no moral compass, they just don't feel guilty about what they have done.

I am not particularly concerned about any medals I may have lost through losing to drug cheats; but I am very bitter about what doping has done and continues to do to our sport, which is being crushed by constant negative headlines. That's the fault of the media to a degree, but it's also another reason to despise drug cheats and to make the punitive measures far more telling. At some point, someone in power has got to make a stand and say "Enough is enough!" Can you imagine the message it would send out to other federations who at best, turn a blind eye, if this happened? We are at a critical threshold for our sport and if we don't get an iron fist in charge, then it will continue to just make noises, wring its hands in anguish - and lose popularity.

DC: Another controversial topic is athletes changing affiliation in the sport? What are your thoughts?

TH: That's another thing that annoys me intensely. It's become farcical, and I hope Seb and/or (Sergey) Bubka are able to do something about this whichever of them gets elected to the IAAF Presidency in August.

It should be a matter of great pride to represent your country. Pulling on a national vest should really mean something, but now we often see Kenyans and Ethiopian athletes wearing national vests that are nothing more than flags of convenience. When they are recruited on a retainer by their adopted country, but then allowed to continue to live as normal and to train full-time in their country of origin, which they fly back to after they have raced in the events they are contracted to appear in, and collect cash for doing so, that's when someone again, has to step up and again announce "Enough is enough!" If these wrongs are not righted, which cumulatively do so much damage to the credibility and so popularity of our sport, well...the sport might well be doomed; certainly it won't survived in the format that we all know and love. When the TV viewer who is one click away from watching something else, when the spectator in the stands in his heart of hearts doesn't feel comfortable with some bought-in athlete in their nation's vest, then we will lose that spectator. People are nationalistic, and



*Voice of reason? Hutchings
the commentator.*

they are proud of their nation and what it's achieved in its history. There is something desperate and superficial about buying talent, about buying in bodies so that a few medals can be accrued. It's an abuse of everything international championships are meant to stand for.

What is clear to me, is that while it will be legally challenging, the IAAF needs to shut this door, and quickly. They could introduce a rule pretty fast, which while not retrospectively applicable, could "start turning the tanker"; athletes who wish to change national allegiance should be required to show proof that they have lived more or less continuously in their new nation for a minimum of say two years before they are allowed to represent their adopted country in an international event; that would smoke them out and the introduction of this simple rule would kill off the "purchasing" of medals, which funnily enough, seems to only afflict track & field currently. We don't see this in other sports as much – now why could that be?

Britain is also guilty of this; in recent years our federation has brought in a few 'plastic Brits' who have adopted British nationality because they couldn't get into their national teams at home. They live for example in the USA but run for GB. It's simply not good for the sport.

DC: Lord Coe has hinted that he wants to change the format of the IAAF Diamond League to make it more 'viewer friendly'. What are your views on that?

TH: Yes, there are many details here that need urgent revision. Here's an example: TV viewers get totally confused, watching ten identically-built Africans racing in a 3000 steeplechase event, all wearing identical kit. It's as if the organisers have said, "OK, now how can we best confuse spectators and totally frustrate the TV viewers, while not forgetting that we want to make it nearly impossible for the TV commentators to ID anyone? Oh yes, let's line up a dozen guys and make them all wear identical yellow vests with black shorts!"

I can tell you, for a commentator, it can be a living nightmare trying to pick out individual athletes as they circle the track; and on top of this, most viewers just do not engage if they see an entire field of athletes from just one or two nations. A simple rule, allowing a maximum of three athletes from any one nation to compete in any one race, would sort this. Uncomfortable as some may find this comment, we need to have a mix of nationalities *and* a racial mix too – black and white runners from as many nations as possible, all racing in easily identifiable kit with large bibs. It's so screamingly obvious, it beggars belief that I'm having to make these

suggestions!

We want to make this sport appeal to a wide audience, not just a few thousand reading this, so we have to recognise that international TV viewers have no interest in watching what is in effect a Kenyan steeplechase championship masquerading as a Diamond League event. Casual viewers who might possibly find the sport interesting will quickly switch to other channels. Critics have bitched about this for years, and yet nothing has been done.

Dave Bedford for several years, to his credit, brow-beat the sportswear companies and eventually made sure that they gave their star athletes in the London Marathon some different coloured vests, so that they stood out more easily for viewers and spectators. I know that Seb (Coe) is very concerned about this aspect, and has several ideas to modernise and improve the presentation of the Diamond League to actively compete with other sports clamouring for TV attention. If he gets elected in August, let's hope he is able to implement these plans.

DC: As a man who has twice placed second in the World Cross Country Championship, how do you view the worldwide decline in interest in this event?

TH: Obviously, it saddens me enormously. It

is an event with a wonderfully rich history, and yet one with real relevance when you look at its strong markets in the USA and Europe in particular. Instead of respecting the sport, the IAAF have frequently encouraged it to become just another fast run over flat parkland, thus reducing the specificity of what is required to do well in the race. This has made it primarily the domain of good road runners and 5/10km trackmen, instead of an event in which those groups are welcome to delve, but in which they might just be found wanting because of its particular challenges. What they've done, is the equivalent of taking the barriers out of the steeplechase and replacing them with white lines – and then watched the middle distance runners dominate the real 'chasers. So the real cross country element of the challenge, has been diluted dramatically. In the past the IAAF also tinkered with the event by

promoting an under-distance 4 kilometres race, hoping to attract star milers like El Guerrouj or Morceli. That experiment was a nonsense, and of course it didn't work.

Real cross country running should be challenging in unique ways, with mud, obstacles to be jumped, water-features that should be negotiated, surface and gradient changes to be coped with, and these should be for the runners to negotiate on every lap. I would dearly love to take it as a sport, back to where it should be; I think it could have mass appeal, rather like road running has achieved.

As a result of this mismanagement, the East Africans have somewhat predictably dominated the world of cross country, and in direct contra-proportion, so has media and public interest declined over the years to the extent that the World Cross has become a bi-annual event, that is not even televised in many countries. Here in the UK this year, it's on BBC's red button...at

3am on a Saturday morning and Eurosport aren't covering it at all. To think this used to be a massive event for European nations and would have been covered live across Europe, not so many years ago. If that's not an indication of mismanagement, I don't know what is! To compound things, it's now farmed out to obscure parts of the world where there is little or no tradition or spectator interest, when of course it should go to high profile venues where there is some tradition and understanding of cross country racing.

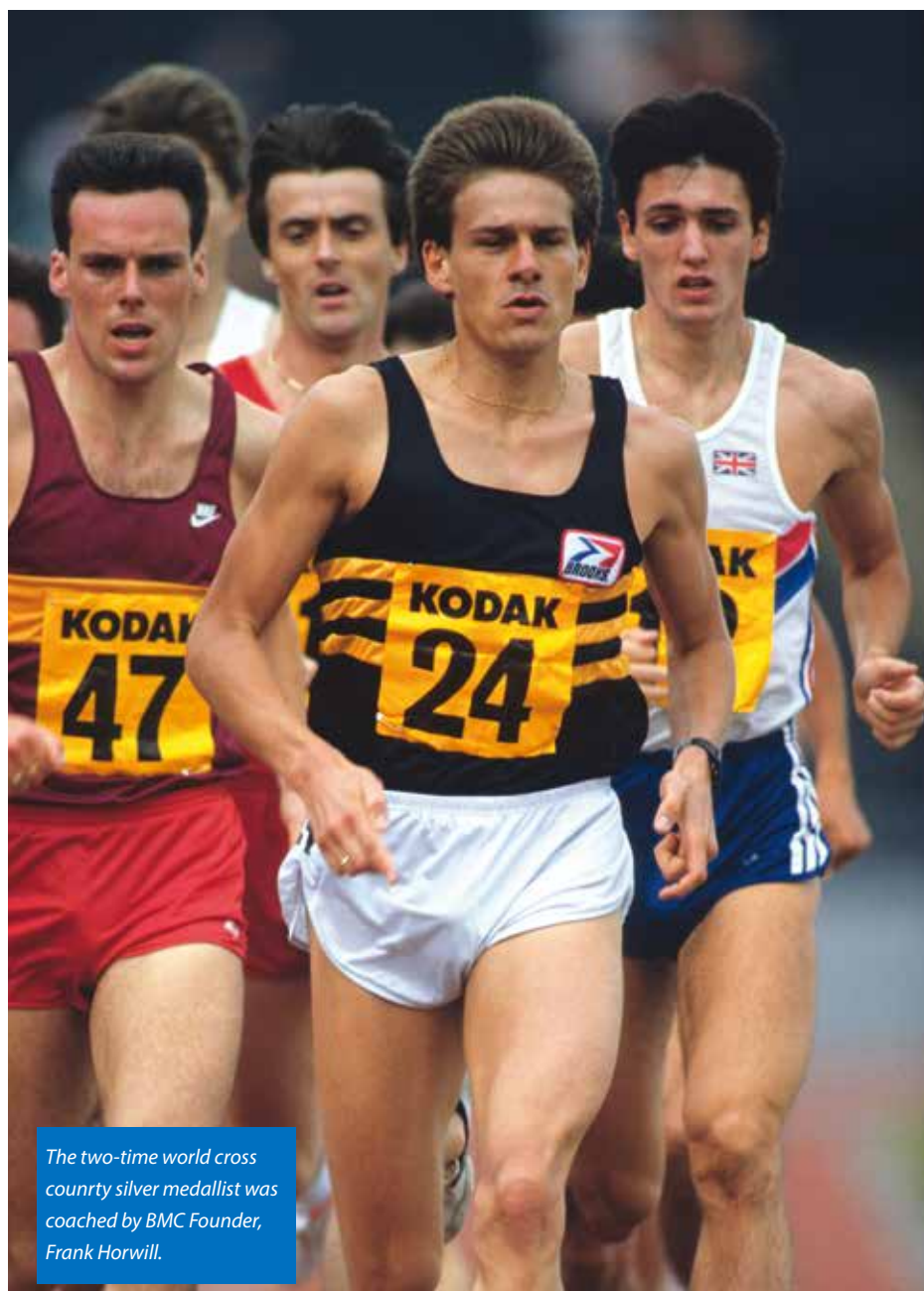
The sad thing is, it's not complicated. My own company, which stages the Brighton Marathon, could stage a very successful World Cross Country Championship right here in the Brighton area: we have a magnificent park in Stanmer Park, plenty of hotels and guest houses, easy road and rail access and an international airport (Gatwick) close by. It's actually a no-brainer, but my understanding is that to pitch for the event, you have to show several million dollars is available to stage the event and in a democratic and financially responsible nation like the UK, as opposed to the ridiculous nation-venues of recent years, so this is more or less impossible.

At international level, the great sport of Cross Country Running has been shoved off to one side and treated as an irrelevance. I fear the world cross country championships will disappear in around ten years.

DC: Finally, Tim, do you think women should at last get full parity with men in cross country? After all, they now race 10,000 metres on the track and marathons on the road.

TH: Yes of course, and I know that you have personally lobbied for this in the past. The current set-up makes no sense and it's frankly patronising to limit any womens' cross country championship to 8 kilometres when the men are racing over 12 km.

It's an anomaly in the way the sport has developed, and I am surprised that more women have not challenged it; demanding equal rights for themselves in terms of full parity. That said, I can see an argument for maybe changing the standard cross country championship distance to 10 kilometres - for both men and women. On a scenic and challenging course, that would provide the perfect TV sports window of two hours: the leading men racing for 29 to 31 minutes; and the best women for 33 to 35. Throw in other races, interviews, bits of other chit-chat....and you have it. It's a fact that with few exceptions, after two hours of watching any live sport, TV viewer interest drops off; so two hours is the ideal viewing window.



The two-time world cross country silver medallist was coached by BMC Founder, Frank Horwill.

Wendy Sly interview

OLYMPIC SILVER MEDALLIST **WENDY SLY**, IS A WOMAN WHO WAS BACK IN THE MEDIA SPOTLIGHT RECENTLY. **MATT LONG** FOUND OUT WHY.

Thirty one summers ago, on 10th August 1984 to be precise, the world tuned in to events in the Los Angeles Coliseum as the golden girl of US distance running prepared to take centre stage in her quest to become Olympic champion. Whilst an adoring popcorn munching and hot dog scoffing American public had wide eyes only for Mary Decker (nee Slaney) as the red vested heroine set off with her trademark front running over seven and a half laps of the track, more cultured observers of track and field pointed to the danger posed by the imposing blond figure of the Romanian Maricica Puica, who had already showed her potential on the global stage by bagging two world cross country titles.

As they went through the opening lap in a speedy 67s in what would become the most infamous race in the history of our sport, the presence of a slight 18 year old running in the red, white and blue of Great Britain, in closely tracking the home town favourite, seemed symbolic. Long before the gun had been fired in that steamy Los Angeles Coliseum, the inaugural womens 3000m had become a political football because of the appearance of a young woman from Orange Free State in South Africa. Having been formally excluded from international competition due to her country's oppressive apartheid policy, on the back of a concerted Daily Mail campaign to woo her over to our shores, Zola Budd was controversially granted British citizenship at breakneck speed, to allow her to pull on a Team GB vest at the 1984 Games. Protest and counter protest would follow Budd everywhere and the shadow of Los Angeles would eventually haunt her. With 800m of the Olympic final being reached in 2m15s, it looked as if the global media had been spot on in billing this clash as unequivocally Decker versus Budd, with the imposing yellow vested Puica seemingly being the only one capable of gate crashing America's party which would be in full swing following the four gold medals bagged by Carl Lewis.

As the pace slowed to a 69s on lap number 3, for the first time in the race we see a 24 year old from Hampton in London whose talents and prospects seemed to have been overlooked in the media circus which had come to surround Budd and all singing and dancing razzamatazz which golden girl and darling Decker brought to

her stage. Her presence in the lead group as the race enters its mid stages seems at first quiet and unassuming. Indeed the proverbial working of her way into the race is indicative of the year she has had. Wendy Sly was on the comeback trail. 31 years later she tells me, "The real battle I went through was in struggling to get fit and well for those Games. Let me tell you there were some dark days in those first six months of 1984". It's clear that her allusion was not only to battles of the body but battles of the mind in terms of her bumpy ride to that Los Angeles Coliseum. "People forget that I had to deal with the whole Zola Budd situation" she says diplomatically but firmly, with reference to the forgotten fact that she herself would unwittingly be drawn into a political football match which would not begin to be more fully resolved unto the late, great Nelson Mandela's release from imprisonment some six years after the Los Angeles Olympics.

After four laps of the Olympic track, Decker continues to hold the inside, with both Budd and Sly level with her but spread across the first two lanes of the track. It's as if Sly is subliminally telling the young pretender Budd, "Hey don't forget I'm the British number one". Sly, growing in

confidence is talking back to Steve Peter's 'Chimp on the Shoulder' and telling him that although she has missed some vital training that she is the reigning Commonwealth silver medallist and turned in a hugely impressive 8m37.06s (which still ranks her 6th on the UK all-time list today) in placing a fine fifth at the inaugural world championships in Helsinki a year before. The media may have dubbed this as 'Decker versus Budd' but Sly is a genuine contender in her own right. Doubts about comeback from injury have been superseded by more positive thoughts with three and a half circuits remaining. Wendy reflects that, "I was confident when I stood on that start line as I'd run 2:03 over 800m in a time trial a few days before so the speed was there. I said to myself 'The only person who can let you down is yourself Wendy' and focused on the job at hand".

As they enter the home straight with just over three laps remaining, the pressure exerted on Budd by both Decker, Sly and the ominous presence of Puica, has exposed the young woman's fragility of mind as well as body. She panics and attempts to move ahead of Decker, clipping her slightly in the process. Budd hasn't got the confidence



Wendy congratulates BMC Young Athlete of the Year, Kyle Langford.

to commit to driving harder to ensure her acceleration gives her a clear path and whilst Decker attempts to check her stride, at 4m57s of the race, the inevitable occurs and the BBC's David Coleman screams into his microphone the immortal words, "And Decker's down! Oh the world champion and one of the favourites is now flat out on the infield". The combination of the horror etched across Budd's face together with the adrenalin rush she suffers as a result of being spiked from behind in her unprotected bare feet gives her the very same surge she ironically needed to overtake the fallen Decker in the first place. From this point onwards the medals appear to be set to be fought out by Budd, Sly and the imposing Romanian, with Lynn Williams of Canada giving what looks like a forlorn chase.

With just over a lap remaining the adrenalin is wearing off and it's clear that Budd's bid for gold is over as Sly and Puica breeze past her while the chorus of home town boos for the beleaguered Budd continue to ring out from the Coliseum crowd. It has indeed come down to a two horse race but it's not the one the home crowd expected or wanted to see. With

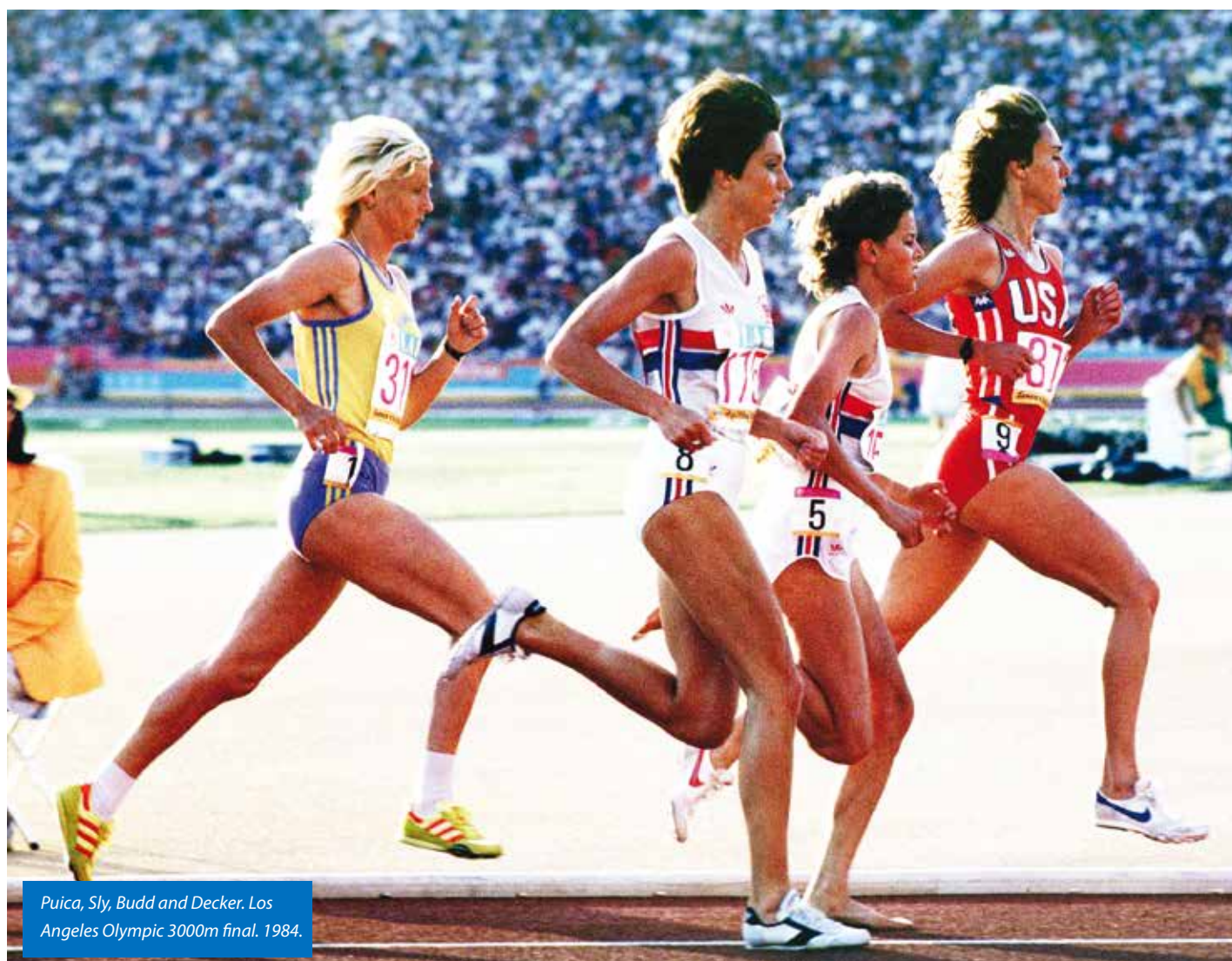
600 metres remaining, Sly nails her sails to the mast and goes for home – there is no turning back now. They pass the fallen Decker once more who is still prostrate, receiving treatment on the infield. The dogged Puica appears to grow in stature, her imposing presence on the shoulder of Sly, looking more ominous than ever. As they enter the back straight for the final time, commentator Coleman is startled that the fast fading Budd appears to be losing her grip on the bronze medal and with 250 metres to go, the blond Romanian brushes past the gutsy Sly, instantly staking her claim to the coveted gold medal. The gap grows ever wider down the final straight as the American crowd recover their sense of decorum somewhat to politely applaud this great athlete who crosses the line just over three seconds ahead of a jubilant Sly in silver (8:39.47). Budd's capitulation on the last lap has become the good fortune of the hard chasing Lynn Williams who has moved through to grab a podium spot with bronze.

Thirty one years later and Wendy is philosophical about that most infamous of races on the greatest stage on earth. "People

talk about the Budd versus Decker clash and the fall but I honestly don't think the result would have been that different anyway", she rightly asserts.

Attention turns quickly from past to present as I congratulate her on what many have perceived to be a somewhat belated MBE. She is clearly still on cloud 9 about her deserved recognition in this year's New Year's Honours list. "You are not allowed to tell anyone. It's a secret", she explains before continuing that, "I got very emotional about it all when telling my friends I'd received the honour. It was humbling at the time and I'm still overwhelmed by all the lovely messages which people have sent to congratulate me".

When I ask her to look back on a glittering career back in the 1980s and to try to pick out highlights she is adamant that, "It's the major championships which stand out when you look back on your career so I can never forget my Commonwealth Games silver back in 1982 and my European indoor bronze". I remind her that she was no slouch when it came to knocking out some decent times and with a laugh she agrees that, "Aside from the championships I'm proud that I set two British records in Oslo. I felt like I was



Puica, Sly, Budd and Decker. Los Angeles Olympic 3000m final. 1984.

breaking new ground and it was kind of special to be running into the 8m40 range for 3000m back in my early 20s in the same kind of races as the great Greta Waitz”.

Some of you may forget that she enjoyed considerable success Stateside on the roads. Was this something which gave her pleasure I ask before she concurs by telling me, “It’s satisfying to have knocked out some decent times on the roads and I enjoyed being in America”. She then concedes that part of her motivation was more material and born of necessity, not just love. She adds context by explaining that, “Running on the roads was always a means to an end for me. It gave me confidence but my target was always the summer track season. You have to remember that there was no money on the track for women at the time”. She is too modest to remind me that she bagged a global title on the tarmac so I remind her about her world 10k title won in San Diego a year before Los Angeles and she admits, “that was a little bit special!”

When asked about the role of the BMC in her own long term athletic development, she recalls with fond affection that, “I remember racing once in West London and was taken aback by how many people were there in the stadium”. She maintains that the reputation of the BMC for providing athletes with the opportunity for fast races is beyond reproach, agreeing that, “The one thing that the BMC has done time and again is that when you turn up to race you know you are getting a good opportunity for a fast time”. It is the ability of our club to evolve and respond to the changing demands of athletes which most impresses her and she continues that, “The way that the BMC has moved with the times over the last half a century or so is very good and its evident as you’ve still got so many people turning up to race and support”. She acknowledges that the BMC is underpinned by a solid ethos of commitment to volunteerism and points out that, “I am amazed by the sheer extent of volunteerism in our sport. I didn’t really appreciate this when I was an athlete but now I do as I am one of these people in certain capacities”.

Nowadays she is hugely busy, managing a variety of diverse roles within our sport. Together with former athletes Tom and James Mayo, she launched the SOS hydration energy drink which supports BMC races. She sits on the England Athletics board and has a role assisting with commercial rights, income generation, anti-doping and competition strategy. Additionally she has served as a team manager for the European and World XC championships for no less than nine years,



Wendy (wearing 25) shoulder to shoulder with a bare footed Budd. Wearing 23 is former European 3000m champion and 1988 Seoul Olympic silver medallist Yvonne Murray.

yet staggeringly, still finds time to act as a mentor and adviser to several athletes.

As our conversation enters the home straight, she is keen to pass on advice to those young athletes reading this piece who will be aspiring to follow in her fast footsteps. She urges you to spend time working on S and C to aid your development, reflecting that “I over-rotated slightly so whilst I did some core strength and stability work, the understanding we now have is much more sophisticated and I would have benefited from this!” She believes that sports science has moved on considerably since her day and says with a sigh, “If I had my time again I guess I would use altitude more technically than I did back in the 1980s”. With a giggle she adds, “It’s all hypothetical because the understanding wasn’t quite there back then”.

Whilst she understands the need to work on the foundational and fundamental aspects of running, jumping and throwing when you are starting out in the sport, she encourages you to work towards understanding what event group and ultimately event specialism may suit you. She points out that, “I was always going to be a 10,000m runner on the track but I ran out of time. I loved the 3000m and even in 1988 where I qualified for the 3000m and 10,000m, I was told there was no chance to double up, so I should have chosen the longer event. I would say that by the time you are in your mid 20s you should be thinking about specialising on your event as an endurance athlete, the only exception to this is perhaps the marathon. Developing speed when you are young is critical but by your mid-20s it’s time to focus!”.

She is full of praise for a real stalwart of our

club and praises her coach Neville Taylor. With affection she is adamant that, “As a junior I was just a good runner and Neville Taylor turned me into an Olympic silver medallist. We learned together going through the ups and downs as a team. That’s important that a coach who has a talented runner but maybe not the experience, learns as much as possible so the athlete can continue to perform well as they move up the ranks”. As well as Neville’s monumental contribution, she also credits the late Peter Coe for his guidance in the later part of her career.

In coming full circle to 10th August 1984, there is an image of a delighted young woman, sporting the number 175 on her red, white and blue Team GB vest, waving to coach Neville and husband Chris in the crowd as she crosses the finishing line. The inimitable David Coleman utters the words, “Wendy Sly looks up there to the big screen and she knows she’s got the silver medal”. She realised instantaneously what she had achieved and some would say she has belatedly been recognised for her feat in the heat of that Los Angeles Coliseum thirty one summers ago. It’s high time we erased the memory of the tangling of limbs of a South African and fallen American all those years ago and started remembering what Wendy Sly achieved in that wonderful summer of 1984 along with the likes of Sebastian Coe and Daley Thompson. The next time an attractive and personable woman offers you the chance to try an SOS hydration drink at one of our races, make sure you do a double take because that very woman may just be the owner of an Olympic silver medal.

Steve Cram. Oslo - 1985

THE 30 YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE BRITISH AND EUROPEAN MILE RECORD SET BY **STEVE CRAM**, IS CELEBRATED BY **MATT LONG**.

It's late evening in Oslo on the 27th July 1985. 13 athletes are spread across the Bislett track, seconds away from contesting what would, in less than four minutes time, become one of the greatest mile races in the history of track and field. Veteran commentator David Coleman, whispers into his microphone, "It's a really tense atmosphere and the 'Dream Mile' has been well named".

As the athletes go to their marks, lining up on the outside of the track are two men whose literal rubbing of shoulders is symbolic of the metaphoric rubbing of shoulders that they have done over the last two seasons in bidding for supremacy as the world's greatest 1500m runner/ miler. Wearing 91 on his vest, is a 28 year old originally from Hammersmith in London. Sebastian Newbold Coe's place in athletic immortality is already assured long before he has laced up his spikes on that warm July evening in the Norwegian capital. A year previously he had shocked the world in achieving the surreal feat of becoming the first (and still the only) man in history to regain an Olympic 1500m title when almost all had dismissed his injury and illness ravaged chances. The perennial 'comeback kid' was armed for the ensuing four minutes of fury knowing that he was the owner of world records over 800m, 1000m and critically the very mile, whose 1,609 metres were about to be contested.

Next to him and wearing the distinctive yellow vest of his Jarrow and Hebburn club, was a man four years his junior, who despite being outsmarted by Coe in that Los Angeles Olympic Coliseum a year previously, was himself the owner of three major titles, including becoming inaugural world champion over 1500m in Helsinki, two years previously (see picture). The Olympic silver medallist was the man in form, having smashed Steve Ovett's world record 11 days previously in a barnstorming race against the great Olympic 5000m champion, Said Aouita, in Nice, where the affable Geordie would become the first man in history to dip under 3.30 for the metric equivalent of the impending 4 laps (3.29.67).

Moments after the gun, the unfortunate Swiss national record holder, Pierre Deleze, suffers the same fate which was bestowed upon him at the aforementioned Olympics, as he is unceremoniously bundled to the ground as the field breaks sharply to take the first bend. As commentator Coleman bemoans the decision of the event organisers to go

with such a packed field, athletics fans the world over are salivating over the presence of the 1976 Montreal Olympic champion, John Walker- the American world silver medallist, Steve Scott, and the reigning European 5000m champion, Thomas Wessinghage, from Germany. For added spice there is the presence of the Somalian, Abdi Bile, who would go on to bag a world title two years after this memorable evening.

Down the back straight for the first time and as expected the American 800m talent, James Mays, has dutifully obliged with the pace making role ascribed to him and is being tracked by the workmanlike Australian Mike Hillardt. Coe leads the chasing pack with a relaxed Cram content to sit back further in the field but running wide to cover any potential early move.

The opening 440 yards is reached in a quick but not suicidal 56.01, with Cram instantaneously moving through to 3rd and ironically, Coe simultaneously dropping back to 5th, with the two appearing to proverbially 'swap seats' early doors.

The halfway point clocking of 1.53.82 signifies that at a shade outside of world record pace, Coe's 3.47.33s is under potential threat. Nobody cares about the record though. It's Coe versus Cram, or should I say Cram versus Coe? This is turning out to be Ali versus Frazier without the boxing gloves or Borg versus McEnroe without the tennis rackets.

Coe senses the possibility of his detachment and with his life lesson having

been learned in the Moscow Olympic 800m final, five years previously, is not about to repeat his most haunting tactical blunder ever again- he breezes effortlessly past the aforementioned Bile and solidly into 4th place.

600m to go and pacemaker Mays exits the stage, stepping aside to leave Hillardt to admirably press on with the remorseless pace. As they enter the home straight for the penultimate time, Coleman oozes to a captivated BBC audience, "Cram in 2nd place, Coe is stalking him in 3rd place". It is turning into the two-horse race that all expected, with the Spaniard Jose Luis Gonzalez giving chase in 4th.

Hillardt is all but spent at the bell, as Cram grabs the race by the scruff of the neck and moves into pole position. 2.53.14 is well outside of Coe's 2.51.9, recorded on his way to his triumph in Brussels in 1981- the world record is forgotten and the race in earnest has begun.

With 300m to go, Cram has nailed his sails to the mast and gone for broke in launching his traditional long run for home. At 6 feet 2 inches tall, he is no 'kicker' in the mould of an Ovett or the man who is hot on his heels – indeed Coe has turned him over in an England v USA match over 800m several weeks previously when the bigger man ill-advisedly attempted to outkick him down the home straight at the McVitie's Challenge. Cram is a 'winder' rather than a 'kicker' and both men know it.

With 200m to go, Coleman senses the



Steve Cram becomes world 1500m champion in 1983.



Friends Reunited. The Holy Trinity of Ovett, Coe and Cram back in Oslo in 2013.

desperation of the reigning Olympic champion and the invisible elastic band which separates him from the reigning world champion is in danger of snapping. His shout that "Cram is *testing* Coe", is followed seconds later by the sight of the new 1500m world record holder majestically up on his toes, running as effortlessly as if he were performing alactic 60m strides on his native track in the North East. The invisible elastic band is broken with a stunned Coe unable to inject the sting of any sprint finish that he is too far back to deliver. He has conceded the track and the ground which he so cleverly denied Cram a year before in Los Angeles.

With 70 metres to go, it's all over bar the shouting, and suddenly the clock becomes relevant once more. Coleman screams, "And the World champion, the European champion, the Commonwealth champion and the World record holder at 1500m, majestically comes striding away. *This time is it to break the world record? Yes it is!*"

A disinterested Coe (which incidentally still clocked a world class 3.49) cannot handle Cram's last lap of 53.2 and last 200m of 25.5 and has invited the persistent Spaniard Gonzalez to overtake him, with the winner Cram stopping the clock at a staggering 3.46.32, a whole second quicker than his adversary ran some four years previously.

The time, which is emblazoned on the 50th anniversary badge of the BMC and is printed on a tee shirt which you may own, lasted an impressive 8 years before being finally bettered by the great Noureddine Morceli.

At the recent BMC Symposium, Cram, now 54, told an enthralled audience with typical modesty, "World records are only borrowed for a while", before adding somewhat tongue in cheek, "I guess as far as it still standing as a British record you kind of think you own it after 30 odd years!" He agrees that "When I look back, it's staggering that it still stands today" but adds that he felt so good on the evening himself that, "I honestly thought back

then that I can run even faster than I did that night" – an observation which was echoed by the late, great Ron Pickering as a waving and autograph-signing Cram embarked on his obligatory lap of honour. One senses that part of him is disappointed it still stands with his remark that, "We've had lots of decent runners in the last 30 years or so. As and when it eventually does get broken, I hope it's at a big meet and is a great race. Of course it will be a sad moment in that instant but then I'll

start to think "Phew, thank goodness that's over with!"

Over the somewhat unconventional distance of 2000m, Cram would go on to take a 3rd world record in 19 days in that marvellous summer of 1985 and a Commonwealth 800 and 1500 double would follow in Edinburgh a year later, together with a fine defence of his European 1500m title in once again beating Coe to the punch in Stuttgart. After shaking Cram's hand and disappearing quietly into the night on 27th July 1985, Coe himself would lick his wounds, lap up the media stick that he was 'yesterday's man' and begin to hatch his latest inevitable comeback plan which would result in him taking a long overdue and much deserved major 800m title at those very European championships in 1986, where he once again rubbed shoulders with Cram and turned the tables on him after being disgracefully written off as a spent force for the umpteenth time in his illustrious career. 1986 would see both men winning a major title for the last time in their careers and to use a footballing analogy, it was perhaps fitting that a Chelsea fan and ardent Sunderland supporter would have to share a 1-all score draw in Stuttgart.

Frank's Fables

In this section, we keep the memory and spirit of our founder very much alive, with some anecdotes.

WE ARE GRATEFUL TO A VICE PRESIDENT OF OUR CLUB, **BILL BENNETT**, FOR PROVIDING THE FOLLOWING:

"Years ago, when I was one of the original National Committee Members, I invited Frank to come down to Kent and coach the club I initially founded, Deal Striders. He had friends in the area and duly accepted my invite. Not only did he arrive for a whole week-end of coaching but he brought Harry Wilson with him! 2 weeks later I opened my front door to collect the milk, and there on the doorstep was a large bottle of whisky with a short note saying "Enjoy your week-end Comrade" What a man and what an inspiration he was!"

WEB LOUDAT HAS KINDLY SENT IN THE FOLLOWING:

"I was living with Frank Horwill and Wayne Tarquini back in '79-'80 in Kelson House on the Isle of Dogs. During the Christmas Season a good friend, Marty West, flew from New Mexico to stay with us during the Christmas holidays. The morning she arrived we brought her along to Crystal Palace for our weekly triple session Sunday workout. Afterwards we headed to Frank's favourite restaurant, the Primavera in Golders Green. Frank must have been really hungry, as he was driving much faster than his usually "out of control too fast for London" speed. Marty was sitting next to me in the back seat. Her grip on my hand almost cut the circulation off, as I wasn't able to use it properly for hours afterward. Marty got very quiet the rest of the journey. When we got to the Primavera, Frank, Wayne and I climbed out of Frank's old Mini but Marty didn't move a muscle for over 20 minutes even with our offers of help. Even walking to the restaurant was taxing for Marty. Once Marty was seated in the restaurant, Frank asked her what she thought of London. All Marty could say was "I didn't really see much of London on the ride. Everything was flashing by so fast I couldn't make anything out. But, one thing is for sure; I've never felt so close to death in my life!!!" That was the last time we got Marty into a car while she was in London. We even had to get her to Heathrow using taxis buses, and the tube!"

Gordon Surtees Speech

IN THE FIRST OF A TWO-PART SERIES, **MATTHEW FRASER MOAT** REPORTS ON THE SPEECH GIVEN BY **GORDON SURTEES**, IN ACCEPTING THE LIFETIME SERVICES TO COACHING AWARD AT THE RECENT BMC SYMPOSIUM



Gordon Surtees being congratulated by Dr Norman Poole, President of the BMC, for winning the award for Outstanding Services to Coaching. Courtesy of Matt Fraser Moat.

Here we take a look at well-respected Gordon's forthright and controversial views on a range of issues, including coaching and athlete experience and attitude. Gordon then moves on to give an insight into his thoughts on the state of grassroots and league athletics in our sport before finishing with an assessment of the balance between the pursuit of fast times on the one hand and development of tactical awareness on the other.

BACK TO THE FUTURE:

"Back To The Future" – a funny title to use as I have not seen the movie. I assume it is about going back in time, or maybe about somebody like me who doesn't really know whether I am coming or going!

In either case, it reminds me of athletics, especially the older generation who, when they meet and converse, seem to disappear into the past where they relive the glory days. They think that age and long service gives them more knowledge than the current upstarts.

Nothing is further from the truth. Modern technology has changed both the world and our sport. The main difference between past and present is the speed and depth of information available at the touch of the screen.

I don't have a computer or a smart phone, so I don't have access to such information, so there is no way I can keep pace with the younger generation. Even the youngest athletes may have more knowledge than

me. However I believe that I, together with other older people, have something that the younger generation lack- that is *experience*.

Experience

Experience is knowing by doing- it increases our wisdom which is knowing how best to use the knowledge that we have. The younger generation may have more knowledge but some don't know how to make the best use of it.

I come from an era when an athlete had a coach and, when needed, a physio. The coach knew a little about most things, perhaps it was only basic knowledge, but it was enough to get started and build upon.

Using personal involvement, patience, experimenting, trial and error, making mistakes, rectifying them and doing things again and again, the coach would get it right. It took time but that is how they learnt their trade.

Modern technology saves both time and energy. It provides much more information but it comes at a price. For every action, there is a reaction – the benefits and advantages of modern living means that some are becoming lazy. Some of the modern generation are now becoming reliant on gadgetry, or on experts telling them what to do and how to do it, so they are not thinking as we used to. They are not learning a trade, or, at best, they are trying to learn a trade whilst keeping an open instruction manual next to them.

I left school at fourteen years of age to

work in a factory. In those days people served a five year apprenticeship. Today things are different- people can now go to university and the nature of industry has changed so we no longer have the tradesmen that we used to have.

I believe a similar situation exists in athletics, especially in the male endurance events. We have a major problem, which, together with the cause and the remedy can involve just one word- *attitude*.

Attitude

I believe that too many people involved in our male endurance events have the wrong attitude, and the only remedy is to encourage a further change of attitude from top to bottom, from the important people running the sport to the newcomers attracted by the Olympic legacy.

They are responsible for the future of the sport, they come in full of enthusiasm, but without previous involvement or experience, and there is a danger that, without anything to compare it with, they may accept the current situation with our male endurance events as being "the norm". It most certainly is not "the norm".

They may see some results which are better than others and feel that they are good results. Some may be, but the majority are not. Because our standards have slipped, the results look good and are accepted as being good even when they are not. It is my belief that "the norm" is the situation that existed in the UK twenty-five to thirty-five years ago.

If a long jumper gets the first stride wrong, the outcome is a disappointment. If we allow those responsible for the future of our sport to commence their journey through athletics with a misconception, if we don't ensure that they are all aware of the level to which they must aspire, they may have a future disappointment.

At the top end, the powers-that-be appear to be concentrating on the development of elitism, trying to develop future finalists and medallists in the major events. Rightly so, I support them in such endeavours, because as a nation we are judged by what we achieve at global level. Government funding may depend on such success. What I cannot fully support are the methods they sometimes employ. At the same time, the government want a healthier nation, more people becoming active, so bearing in mind where our funding may come from, we cooperate and put some resources into grassroots,

encouraging joggers to take part in fun runs, park runs and Run Britain, we are helping at grassroots level. I have different views.

Grassroots

Firstly, the important people running our sport are not important. *The only important people are the athletes.* Nobody else is important. What is important is the consequence of our work- it is the consequence of our work that is important. When I look at the current situation in our men's endurance events, take out a handful of athletes, and if that situation is the consequence of our work, then a lot of people, me included, have not been doing a very good job. Furthermore, a number of the important people, the athletes, need to change their attitude. They need to be reminded that it is not the position they are in, but the way they fill the position, that is important.

Joggers are not the grassroots of our sport, with or without encouragement they will take part in fun runs, raising money for charities, they have little interest in joining our ranks- they are not our grassroots.

In between the joggers and the elite is a vast area that seems in some way ignored, forgotten about and left to its own devices- that is the club structure, the part that contains the real grassroots of our sport, the part that future elite athletes will emerge from.

Just as important, the club structure contains the competition structure of our sport. However, at senior mens level in the endurance events, much of this is not fit for purpose.

At school level we have the greatest competition in the world, the ESAA Championships, and the hope is, if they are not already members, that these schools performers join our clubs and develop and mature as senior athletes. They are the future of our sport and we need them in our clubs.

What do we offer them? We offer a warm welcome, a friendly atmosphere, an opportunity to train with others, good advice and the chance to make lifelong friends. We also offer them a club structure where the majority of members cannot give one evening a year to attend the most important event of the club calendar, the AGM. We also provide a competition structure which at the lower age level is adequate but at senior mens level, most is not fit for purpose.

Leagues

A couple of years ago I attended a league match at lower division level, while the track athletes warmed up I watched the

field events and I saw an athlete I have admired for many years. In terms of club commitment and love of the sport he has few equals.

He was throwing the hammer and I recalled that he had won a gold medal in 1966. That did not make him a veteran, but an OAP! But he did not win that medal in a throwing event, he was a marathon runner! It made me look more closely at the field events, the throws and the jumps, and I realised that in some cases, with or without a good tail wind, I could spit further!

An old age pensioner in an event in which he had not learnt his skills and some other mediocre performances... Was this the standard of competition we envisaged for those schools performers when they had matured at senior level? Fortunately the track events began and I was able to see an event which had brought success and medals for this country at major games- the steeplechase.

In it I saw one individual stop and climb over twenty eight barriers and wade through seven water jumps and when he was finished he was given a bigger ovation than the winner. I wondered how such a great event had deteriorated to this level and I realised that the steeplechase was not a man's event. It was for sissies, it was a sissy event!

What other event in athletics did we give the Olympic champion the luxury of competing over schoolboy sized obstacles? In this country we often look through the wrong end of a telescope. What we should be asking is how could we, our governing body, or the IAAF, still expect school boys to negotiate Olympic size barriers? It is time for the steeplechase to be brought into line with the hurdles and throwing events where the resistance is graduated according to age levels. Only by a change of rules and specifications can we attract young athletes and allow them to develop naturally. Until we make such changes we will not restore the event to its former glory.

Next came the 1500m and as I checked the line-up I was most surprised to see somebody I never expected to see on the start line. It was our friend from the steeplechase. Irrespective of the circumstances or respect for their efforts, it is not the level of competition I want to see.

I resolved never again to attend such a low level meeting and that no athletes I coached would even travel to such an event. I then realised that that was the very attitude that was causing the problem, athletes and coaches were not supporting these meetings, and thus had a knock-on effect. Why this lack of support? Quite simply,

changing attitudes mean that many athletes have an obsession for fast times.

Fast Times

Athletes want fast times, it doesn't matter where they finish, as long as they get a decent time. Imagine, getting beaten, then looking at a stopwatch and saying "I'm happy with that"!

Why the need for fast times? If athletes want to go to a major games, they need a qualifying time. So they look for races to give the best opportunity, and this usually involves at some stage BMC races. With pacemakers and everybody wanting fast times, if athletes have ability and they fail in a BMC event there is something sadly wrong with their preparation.

Eventually some achieve a qualifying standard and gain selection where they move into a world totally different to the BMC races, no pacemakers, no consistent pace, it is about tactics, pace change, outwitting or being outwitted.

The BMC do not teach tactics, it is not in their remit. What we need is a balance of speed and tactical ability. The BMC provide the means to achieve the first, and it is for athletes to learn tactics in non pace assisted events such as league matches, and county and area championships.

Who wants to run in such low level events when fast times are almost certain in a BMC race a couple of days later? In the past such races were used to experiment, to learn things about themselves that were not possible in a steady paced controlled race.

The BMC operate more like a national middle distance club, catering for every event from 800m to 10,000m plus the 'chase. It is hoped that some day the governing body will fully appreciate BMC involvement and make a considerable financial contribution to enable them to continue their excellent work.

Athletes do not go to a major event to learn tactics, they go to implement them or to counteract the tactics of opponents.

Tactics

When Seb Coe won his 1500m gold medal in Moscow, the initial couple of laps were little better than schoolboy pace, but the third lap was nine seconds faster. Then Coe played his ace, a change of pace that nobody could match. He won that medal by a balance of speed, pace change and tactical ability. He had learnt his trade, but on that day on Moscow he was not a tradesman, he was a master craftsman.

All endurance athletes want to emulate Coe and our other medallists- they want to be on that same road to success and

glory. A good number of athletes actually set foot on that road but it is a road without signposts, they need to find their own way, to proceed in the right direction. Sadly some don't head towards the medals, they go the opposite way believing that fast times lead to glory.

If I was to stand in central London and asked who won the mens 5000m and 10,000m gold medals in 2012, I would expect most to give me the correct answer. Should I ask who won the men's 800m and 1500m in Moscow 1980 I would still expect a fair number to know. If I asked what times were achieved in winning those medals, few if any could provide the right answers. It shows that not only our medallists, but the general public know that it is medals that matter, not fast times, but we still have athletes with that obsession for fast times.

A smart young fellow, tall, erect and immaculately dressed walked into a bar, ordered a drink and walked across to join the only other customer, an old chap enjoying a pint. As he sat down, the old chap noticed he was wearing a regimental tie. "Army fellow, eh?" The young man swelled with pride: "Actually I am in the Guards, the smartest regiment in the country, we are also the quickest, 'left right, left right, left right, left right'". The old chap said "When I was in the army, I was in the Durham Light Infantry and we never bothered how smart we looked as we were too busy fighting. When we marched it was 'Left Right, Tinkle Tinkle, Left Right, Tinkle Tinkle'. 'What's all this tinkle stuff?' asked the young man. "Medals, lad, medals".

It does not matter how smart athletes look in their fancy gear, or what brand they

wear, fashions change overnight. It does not matter how fast you run, someone, somewhere is going to go faster, but if athletes win medals, providing they are won fairly, nobody can take those medals away. They show that athletes have been competitive, that they have done battle - that they have beaten opponents. We need to get back to that way of thinking".

Don't miss the winter 2015 issue of BMC News, where Matt Fraser Moat continues his presentation of Gordon's illuminating and provocative speech. We will be privileged to gain an insight into his philosophy of coaching; a consideration of the importance of cross country running for the development of aerobic and strength endurance plus his beliefs on how athletes and coaches can ultimately achieve satisfaction in our sport.



BMC Award Winners

BMC ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

Jo Pavey

Also nominated Lyndsey Sharp

BMC YOUNG ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

Kyle Langford

Also nominated Jessica Judd

BMC COACH OF YEAR

Gavin Pavey

Also nominated James Thie, Andy Carter, and Phil Townsend

LIFETIME SERVICES TO COACHING

Gordon Surtees

Also nominated David Lowes and Mike Down.

FRANK HORWILL AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICES TO THE BMC

David Cocksedge

Joined 1970. Was heavily involved with BMC in its earlier years as Secretary and BMC News Editor, Race organiser of popular BMC races at Crystal Palace, highly respected statistician and font of knowledge on the early history of BMC. Now a Vice President and researches 1970s and 1980s results and contributes regular articles for BMC News.

HORWILL RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIP

WINNER

Andy Shaw

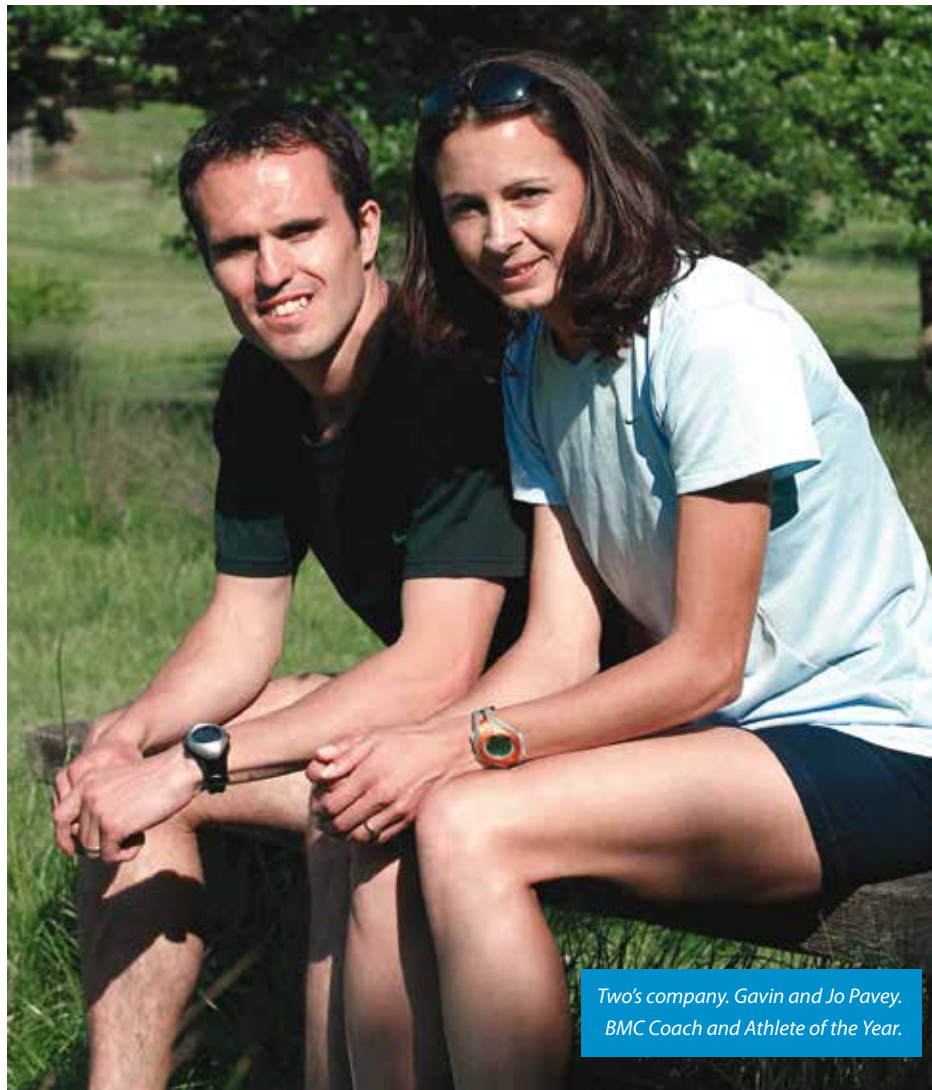
For research into Running Economy

Award winning David Cocksedge in BMC apparel next to sub 4 minute miler Ray Roseman.



Jo & Gavin Pavey interview

BMC COACH AND ATHLETE OF THE YEAR, **GAVIN AND JO PAVEY**, WERE INTERVIEWED BY BMC PRESIDENT **DR. NORMAN POOLE** AT THE RECENT SYMPOSIUM NEAR HEATHROW. **MATT LONG AND STEVE O'BRIEN** WERE THERE TO REPORT.



Two's company. Gavin and Jo Pavey.
BMC Coach and Athlete of the Year.

Early athletic development

As an under 15 athlete down in Exeter, Jo speaks of her first coach as being an "impeccable human being". Her first coach was described as having "overwhelming passion" and in some ways this manifested itself as over-enthusiasm on her part in terms of her often embarking on 6-7 mile road runs with her male counterparts which in her own words, "became more like a road race!" There is not a hint of criticism directed at Exeter Harrier's Tony White. She is very grateful to him for helping her during the early stages of her career and they still speak regularly. It is plain to see the respect she still holds for the man who coached her to the 1988 English Schools Under 15 1500m title and four AAA national titles between the ages of 14 to 16.

In reflecting on the fact that she was

injured between the ages of 17-22 years she explained that her intervals were all done on a hard cinder track which is far from ideal but it was the only facility available at that time. With reference to the shin and knee injuries which she incurred – "It took me until I was 23 years old to get back". Having qualified as a physiotherapy this really helped Jo to combat her injuries herself.

Husband and now coach, Gavin, stresses how the early years curtailed by injury saw Jo, "Almost lost to the sport." The 2014 European Gold medalist alludes to the fine line between harnessing enthusiasm and avoiding breaking down by saying that, "I guess it's a balance between not overtraining on the one hand but still giving youngsters the opportunity to have challenges on the other. It's a difficult

balance as they need to achieve a certain level of success as a youngster to provide the motivation to continue as a senior but there is a fine line between doing too much at a young age".

Long term athlete development

Gavin says pointedly, that, "Jo seemed destined to be the youngster who did well but disappeared out of trace never to be seen again". By her early twenties Jo says, "I was living the normal student life and was concentrating on qualifying as a physiotherapist but I always tried to get back to my running. Looking back I have fond memories".

Gavin interjects that they were intent on enjoying life and broadening their horizons in their twenties. "All our savings went into backpacking around the world". Jo trained hard during their travels with Gavin adding, "We hiked for hours on end and in many ways it prevented us both from over-training".

Gavin, continues that, "Jo would run for four to five weeks and then injury would again halt her progress." Despite recurrent set-backs this did not deter the young Jo Pavey from stubbornly trying to make it back. She repeated this process for six seasons without making it back until they went travelling.

Gavin recounts on one occasion Jo was doing a hard run around a milk factory whilst travelling in New Zealand and how Jo had dropped him with consummate ease! "That was when the penny dropped that this was going to be Jo's year," he laughs.

Her breakthrough came in making the British team for the world championships back in 1997, where she ran 4.07 for 1500m. With hindsight however she confirms that she, "was not recovering as well from training back in 1997".

More injury woes

After an operation on her knee after the 1997 season, Jo missed the '98 and '99 seasons. "I decided it was to be no more surgery after this point despite being advised I needed it", she adds painfully. By this stage she was focusing on Sydney 2000, adding "I'd do anything to get to an Olympic Games". At this point she started working with former GB international and Olympic fourth placer, Christina Boxer. Chris and Jo decided on the move to the 5000m due to the fact that she could cope with the training better and they could move the longer reps onto grass.



Towards Sydney 2000

Amazingly Jo's longest run in preparation for those Sydney Olympics was around 35 minutes in duration and she shares that she maintained her fragile fitness by effecting, "a lot of 15-20 minute tempo runs", with Gavin adding with a smile, "Tempo runs? It was more like eyeballs out for you!" As well as this sustained running she recalls the conducting of sessions such as 5 x 1k (with 3 min recoveries) to get her into shape. She was averaging between 35-40 miles per week during the Sydney Olympic year some 15 years ago.

Philosophy of training

Gavin says categorically that he does not feel he would be able to coach an athlete from long distance and whilst he has offered advice to others who have approached him in the sport he affirms, "I have to coach people who I can see visually". Significantly neither Pavey has never made a fetish of training volume with Gavin adding, "We never added up our mileages. Mileage is something that comes out of the other end. The focus is the training mix and hitting the quality sessions". Jo's mileage gradually increased to over 120 miles a week in 2007 on the back of two to three hard sessions per week. Jo doesn't follow a weekly schedule and instead a 10-12 day cycle. Gavin adds that, "Mileage does help with recovery and getting Jo through the rounds at the major championships". Often she will run around 40-60 minutes in a morning before a session later in the day. Gavin offers

his wisdom that, "We've spent 7 years of gradually increasing the lengths of runs by adding 5 minutes here or there". Indeed in 2003, Jo ran a 1500m PB despite in Gavin's words, "undertaking no specific 1500m work". Gavin is a fan of multi-paced training of the kind developed and advocated by our founder Frank Horwill, amongst others. Jo says that, "Naturally, I'm better suited to distances between 1500m and 5000m" although she does feel her 5000m PB of 14:39 is much better than her best mark for 1500m of 4:01. Tellingly, Gavin emphasizes that even now they are "never afraid to cut a training session short," to avoid any injury that would otherwise impact heavily on the training programme. In terms of periodization, Gavin feels that, "there is not a massive difference between Jo's winter work and that which she does during the summer. The emphasis shifts but all the elements are there throughout the year".

Rest and regeneration are an inherent part of their approach to training. Gavin asserts that, "We have a methodical system in place today which includes half an hour to an hour of therapy". Jo agrees in adding, "I listen to my body more nowadays compared to when I was younger. I now know what my muscles should feel like" and both athlete and coach admit to occasionally taking planned sessions out of the equation in terms of missing a day where necessary, in order to more fully recover.

Injury prevention is to the fore in her attention to detail in terms of switching between trainers, flats and spikes during the various component parts of a single session sometimes with Jo laughing that, "I was more injured when I was younger compared to now I'm much older".

It is clear that nutrition plays a huge role in terms of both recovery and injury prevention. "I have always eaten well," Jo says assertively, before adding that, "Lots of girls didn't last in the sport because they simply didn't eat appropriately - I have always eaten well". Jo regularly utilises energy drinks to recover from sessions and makes sure she eats between an hour and 90 minutes after a session.

As an athlete who has now competed at the very top level over three separate decades, Jo - with an endearing grin points to a daily regime of pre-bedtime stretching as key to her success and longevity. Gavin raises his eyes to the heavens with a knowing smile, acknowledging the sacrifices an athlete and surely their husband/coach have to make, in order to achieve success at the highest level. It becomes quite clear that flexibility is important to both athlete and coach and they don't just mean such flexibility of the muscular variety.

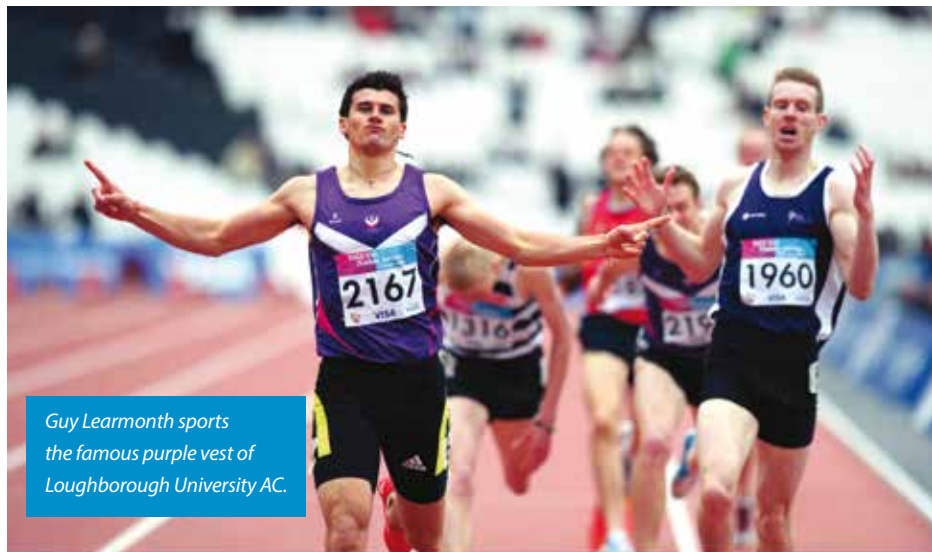
Jo concludes the interview by saying, "Being more busy has made me more analytical" and Gavin signs off by offering the sentiment that, "It's all about Rio 2016 next year. Since the age of 36, I've got slower and slower and she hasn't!"

Jo Pavey's Power of 10 entry lists no less than 18 appearances in our very own BMC races, stretching way back to an under 17 mile race in Bristol on 12 September 1990 which she won in 4:46.7. The number of appearances listed on Power of 10 is an underestimate of her involvement and participation in our club, according to Gavin. We look forward with anticipation to her next appearance in BMC competition before cheering on the 42 year old in Team GB kit in Rio next summer.



Guy Learmonth interview

COVENTRY BASED COACH AND BMC RACE ORGANISER, **PAUL HAYES**, SPENDS TIME TALKING TO BRITISH INDOOR 800M CHAMPION, **GUY LEARMONTH**.



Guy Learmonth sports the famous purple vest of Loughborough University AC.

'Give me the child until he is seven and I will show you the man', as the saying goes. In Guy Learmonth's case this would have shown us a budding International rugby player, like his brother Max. The seeds of an International athlete were already evident as Guy would run the half mile from home to his father Mark's work and back at the tender age of 4!. His failure to be selected for the U17 Scotland 6 Nations squad saw a switch to athletics with his new club, Lasswade AC, and a first National Indoor title over 400m.

This is part of Guy's philosophy that if life deals you a poor hand then you look for other avenues to reach your goal rather than just giving up and he credits his father Mark and coach, Henry Gray, with instilling this belief system within him. Scottish indoor records over 800m followed along with the breaking of the Scottish U20 indoor record 5 times in his first serious indoor season then 4 times the following year, taking it from 1.51.1 to 1.48.58.

8 weeks before the 2011 European Junior Championships, he developed a stress fracture before being involved in a serious car accident. So for that period all Guy's training was in the form of Aqua running, for the vital 6 weeks prior to the Championships. All was going swimmingly, so to speak, except that the next step in his athletics career had to be thought about.

Thoughts turned to University and a visit to Loughborough inspired Guy to want to make the move from the shores of Berwick on Tweed, training on the seafront and beach, to the hallowed grounds of the Leicestershire campus. With the help of

Jillian, a friend of his mum, and the forceful History teacher, Mr Dempsey, Guy worked the hardest he had ever done on school work to get the required grades to get to Loughborough.

At Loughborough, Guy now came under the guidance of famous middle distance coach, George Gandy. He credits George with helping him to mature and set goals. The knock backs of 2011, and a poor experience of altitude training in 2013, took time out of the expected progress that Guy wanted. It slowed development but only for a short time. The experience of the European Juniors in 2011 was invaluable. So all seemed set for a gradual climb of the international ladder, but failure to reach several Games, despite the qualifying times, only heightened the desire to rise to the occasion.

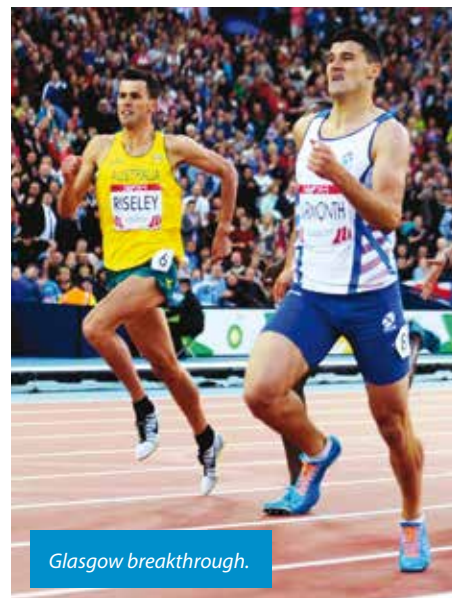
Most of Guy's personal best runs have come in major championships rather than one off paced races but these still form a vital part of his preparation. Using the BMC has proved worthwhile, something he feels that others countries lack for their athletes, but we must not take it for granted but use it as a way of preparing for the fast paced races of the Grand Prix and Diamond League meetings that Guy now has opportunities to run in. But ultimately he is a championship animal. Last year's Commonwealth Games are counted as the big break through. He sees his run in the semi finals in Glasgow as his best run so far. Each time he watches a rerun of that race, where he finished 3rd to Rudisha and Rotich by 0.02 seconds, and hearing Steve Cram's commentary, he has a shiver down his spine. He credits last season

as the one that changed his mentality towards training as he now sees it as a routine and not a chore.

The journey so far has shown Guy that athletics is a long journey, not an instant success so this is what must be planned for. Although the link with George Gandy had brought success, after he graduated, there was a need to move to a fresh approach which saw him link up with Rob Denmark as well as Henry Gray. Rob has brought in a range of support mechanisms to the partnership such as strength and conditioning, physiotherapy support and a program tailored more specifically to Guy and his needs.

Still based in Loughborough, there is the support of a close knit bunch of friends along with a new contract with a sports company and UKA backing. Now part of the program is regular spells in South Africa with Andre Olivier and Nijel Amos as training partners. Reaching the World Championships in Beijing is his priority first on the list, followed by Rio in 2016. Coupled with this is to be running times that put him in the world class bracket of sub 1.45.

So is Guy Learmonth the complete package? Not in his own words. There is still work to be done. He is growing in confidence. No one holds any fear for him having run two of the planets foremost 2 lap runners so close last summer. This past winter of indoor pb, British champion and European finalist are proof of his ability. So was the maxim correct? Did we see this in the young man we met at the start of this article? Only time will tell but I for one would not bet against Guy Learmonth achieving great things this summer and next.



Glasgow breakthrough.

Laura Muir interview

BRITISH INDOOR 1500M CHAMPION, **LAURA MUIR**, IS ON AN UPWARD CURVE AS **DAVID LOWES** FOUND OUT

After a 2014 that could be described by some as bittersweet, Laura Muir ended last season with a world-class 1500m performance courtesy of the IAAF Diamond League in Paris, clocking a huge PB and getting tantalisingly close to the sub-4 benchmark with 4:00.07s and finishing a stride ahead of her domestic rival, Laura Weightman. That performance saw her take the top spot in the UK rankings. That time was ably backed up with a 4:02.91 at the FBK Games in Hengelo and a 4:04.71 clocking at the IAAF Diamond League in Stockholm. The downside to her season of course, was her hiatus at the Commonwealth Games on home soil and at the European championships in Zurich. Nevertheless, she rallied well and finished her season on a high on the roads of Tyneside at the Great City Games where she took victory against a stellar field.

With the summer track campaign about to commence how has the 21-year-old's winter training gone? Muir says: "It's gone really well in terms of the endurance work I've undertaken. This pushed me towards doing the 3000m at the recent European indoor championships in Prague." After finishing in fourth place what was the Dundee Hawkhill athlete's view of her performance? The Scot explained: "Obviously, I was disappointed not to come away with a medal, but overall I'm really pleased. I pushed myself totally in the race and I really just had nothing left when I crossed the finish line. I took the Sunday off after the race and then went straight back into training."

As a British Milers' Club member, has it aided her own long-term athlete development? In being coached by the excellent Andy Young, she was keen to emphasise: "The BMC is a really good stepping-stone between domestic and international level meetings. A couple of years ago the events were ideal for me. I was finding it difficult to find races with a similar level of athlete at the time and so entering the races enabled me to line-up against a field of athletes who were of a comparative level of ability."

Muir continues in a similar vein saying: "I will never forget my very first BMC race which I think was a 1500m in Manchester at Sportcity and I got spiked! It really felt that I was stepping up a level and to be honest it was a bit of a shock to the system as I guess I'd had a sheltered sort of existence as an

athlete until then. The BMC kind of opened some doors for me and also gave me an appreciation of a whole different life out there in running terms."

Although still a comparative youngster herself, is there any advice that she would give to the young BMC members who may look at her as a role model? The Glasgow University student offers the following advice: "When you are in your teens and even into your early 20's you've got to be enjoying your running. Just be patient and keep working at it. It's only when you get older I think, that you begin to realise that athletes develop at different rates - some mature early and others much later. You can't really help that, but what you can try and do is to make sure that you don't get demoralised about it."

What are the aims for the forthcoming campaign? Muir has no doubts at all, "Obviously, qualification for the World

championships in Beijing is the big one for me. I want to try and make sure I get through the rounds and get more invaluable racing experience. I guess my summer will start in competitive terms around the end of May and I will hopefully work towards selection for those championships."

Coached by the aforementioned Andy Young since 2012, how does the relationship work? The veterinary student says: "I get one-to-one guidance from him and he gives up things to devote his time to me and his other athletes. I like the way he coaches the person and not just the athlete."

Doing her veterinary medicine degree at Glasgow University, Muir is keen to credit the institution and concludes: "It's great the way they have accommodated both my needs as an athlete and as a student. As well as the support from the University, I also am very grateful for the Winning Students Scholarship granted to me."



Laura Muir hits the tape at last year's Great North mile.

LAURA MUIR – STATISTICS

PBs 800m 2:00.67 (2014); 1500m 4:00.07 (2014); 3000m 8:49.73i (2015); 5000m 15:54.68 (2013).

PERFORMANCES

- 2015 European indoor 3000m 4th; British indoor 1500m gold.
- 2014 Commonwealth 1500m 11th; European 6th ht; British and European Trials 1500m silver; British indoor 800m gold; Great City Games 1 mile gold.
- 2013 IAAF World 800m 7th sf; European U23 1500m bronze; England U23 800m gold; European indoor 1500m 8th; British indoor 1500m gold; Scottish 4k Cross gold.
- 2012 World Junior 3000m 16th; Scottish 1500m gold; England U20 3000m silver; Scottish U20 Cross gold.
- 2011 European U20 Cross 31st; Scottish U20 4k Cross silver; Scottish Schools' Cross silver
- 2010 Scottish Schools' 1500m bronze; Scottish Schools' Cross 4th; Scottish U20 Cross 4th.

Charlie Grice interview

BMC ACADEMY SQUAD LEAD COACH, **GEOFF JAMES**, CATCHES UP WITH BRITISH INDOOR 1500M CHAMPION, **CHARLIE GRICE**.

Charlie is a likeable and intelligent young man, who with the guidance of his coach Jon Bigg, is demonstrating progression towards becoming a world class athlete. He has a hard act to follow in emerging from the shadow of another great athlete from Brighton - namely Steve Ovett. I recently put the following questions to him:

Geoff James (GJ): Why did you feel Athletics was for you?

Charlie Grice (CG): Since I was a young boy I have always been very competitive. I was good at football and played in the centre of midfield. At junior school my Dad suggested that I go to the Cross Country club after school once a week as the endurance would help my football. We just ran around the playing fields. My teacher entered me into the Brighton Schools Cross Country race which I won. I was then approached by a coach at Phoenix who asked if I would like to come along to the club. Athletics is such a pure sport and it is and I like the fact that there is no one else to blame but myself.

GJ: How has your winter gone?

CG: My winter training has gone really well. I have maintained a bigger volume of training than last year, which shows I am stronger. I just missed out on making the European cross country team in November, getting closer than I ever have before. I have been to Kenya twice, in November for a month and January for a month prior to the indoor season and am learning more and more each time I go about my body and where my current limits lie. My coach, Jon Bigg and I have increased my training slowly every year and this has shown with my PB improvement year on year. We have always had a long-term vision.

GJ: What are your thoughts about the recent European Indoor Championships in Prague?

CJ: The Championships were another great experience for me. I qualified comfortably in the heats in a tough qualification process which saw only the top 2 of each heat go through out of 5 heats with no fastest loser spots. I felt I recovered well for the final the next day however my decision-making in the final needs to improve and this is something I will be working on. I did not put myself in the right position coming into the last lap, I

hesitated in making my move and that cost me a medal. This is hard to do when you are running at PB pace and the indoor season is so short and it shows a good marker considering I had a stress response over Christmas and missed a few weeks of training.

GJ: How has the BMC added to your long term athlete development?

CJ: The BMC is a fantastic organization that puts on legitimate meets and helps out a lot of athletes who want to run fast times. In recent years I haven't done as many as I would have liked as I have been racing abroad.

GJ: What fond recollections do you have of any BMC races?

CG: I remember a few years ago travelling up to a Watford gold standard and we got stuck in awful traffic on the M25 and I arrived there only 20 minutes before my race. I was obviously annoyed and stressed and this got me really pumped up with adrenaline for the race. I actually ran alright! I loved going to a Watford race on a Wednesday night, when everyone was there cheering on, the gossip about who is going to run and the politics of who will be in the A race was always funny. I remember one time I got really mad that the organizers had overlooked putting me in the A race. It's great for younger athletes to run alongside well-known experienced athletes and get to know them.

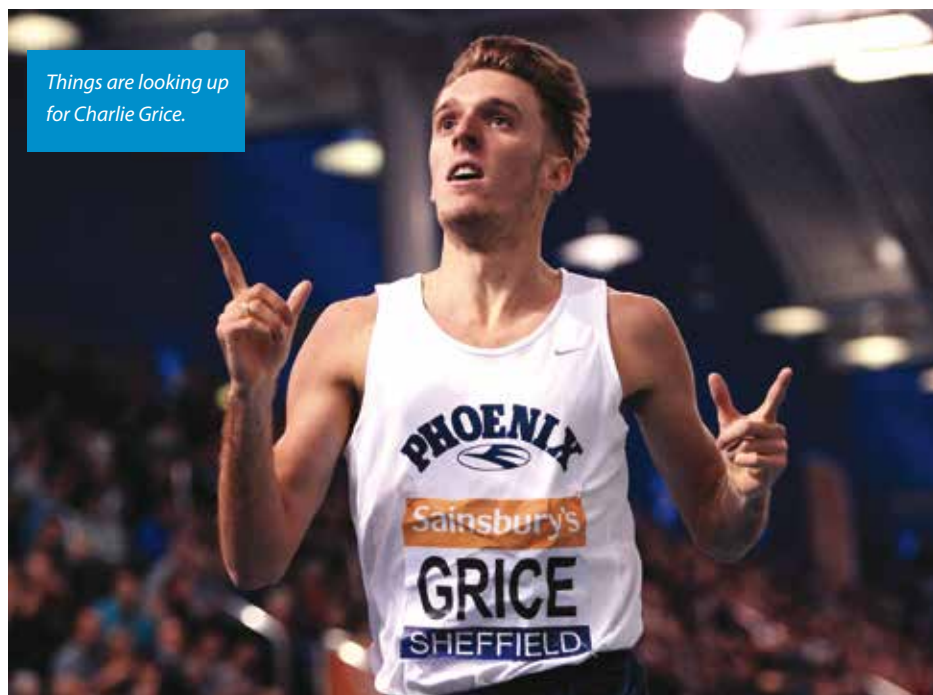
GJ: What advice would you give to aspiring young athletes who will see you as a role model?

CG: My advice to young athletes would be to keep playing lots of sports and find which one you are good at and most importantly you enjoy the most. With athletics, be prepared to ride a wave of success and disappointment. Find a good coach that puts the athletes interests first and always put the right foundations in early on – think long term!

GJ: How do you view the help and support that you have had from your coach and other who have supported you?

CG: Jon has had a massive impact on my development over the last 6 years. I would definitely not be where I am today if it wasn't for his knowledge and advice. Jon is really positive about everything and is in coaching for the right reasons. I am so glad the approach we have taken since day one has been about long-term development. We put in the foundations very early on which has allowed me to progress naturally over the years and we have avoided any big injuries so far (touch wood!). My club Phoenix has also always viewed the long-term approach and I have always been discouraged from doing too much training at a young age, in my case this would have been so easy to do. It is very important to listen to the wise words of your coach in order to avoid any serious injuries. I am also indebted to British Athletics, the Ron Pickering Fund and The London Marathon for all their support over the years with the trips to altitude in Kenya.

Things are looking up for Charlie Grice.



Sara Treacy interview

BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY ENDURANCE COACH, **SALLY STRAW**, SPENT TIME WITH IRISH INTERNATIONAL, **SARA TREACY**.



The Birchfield Harrier, Dunboyne AC and Birmingham University AC athlete was perhaps a surprise winner of the 3000m at the British Athletics Indoor Championship in February. Some have hailed this as Sara's "Breakthrough season", but that performance showed the Sara that we, at Birmingham University, have seen many times in terms of a fierce competitor who will fight all the way to the tape.

The Power of 10 Athlete "look up" does not portray the full picture; typically this modest athlete has not updated the statistics to include any results from her home land of Ireland. Her first International vest was won after winning the Irish National XC at the age of 16, qualifying for the World Cross Junior's in Japan in 2006, and again in 2008 in Edinburgh, where she placed 32nd. She also has run for Ireland in 6 European Cross Country Championships. She was part of the winning team when Ireland won Gold in 2012, and team bronze in 2014. Her best individual placing to date was in Bulgaria 2014 when she came 12th. Sara has also competed on the track at 1500m at the World Juniors in 2008, and twice at European U23s.

The youngest of four children explained that she joined in with her brothers and sister at the local athletics club when she was 7 or 8, where they trained on a grass Gaelic football pitch. Sara also played Gaelic football and basketball until she was 15, and hockey until she was 17/18. Her love of horses, introduced her to Tetrathlon

(run, swim, shoot and ride) in which she represented Ireland internationally. It's interesting to note that this talented athlete did not fully focus on athletics until she started at Birmingham University. Her supportive mum and dad were both athletes— mum having won silver three times at Irish nationals and representing Ireland three times at the World cross country championships. Mum was the Irish team physiotherapist at the Olympics in Atlanta, Seoul and Barcelona.

She was courted by the American universities such as Villanova and Providence with the offer of full scholarships. However, post World junior cross in Japan, she started to suffer with a hip/lower back injury which took her out of athletics for 8 months and during this time she made a decision to pursue a career in medicine, alongside her running. This led her to the University of Birmingham and the coach, Bud Baldaro. The combination of academic excellence, great coach and superb training facilities plus a supportive training group were the key factors.

In managing to combine studying and now the pressure of work as a junior doctor, with the demands of training, she cites structure and routine as being the key. She now sits down with Bud and they plan a two week schedule, taking into account her work commitments (such as the 5 x 12 ½ hour shifts that she routinely faces when she's on call).

When I ask her to rationale her recent successes, she cites the new combination of

work, life, and training balance, enhanced by a sustained period where she has been both injury and illness free. This was key in enabling her to complete a solid and consistent block of training. In addition, during her 7 years in Birmingham she has built a great team around her. As well as Baldaro, there is strength and conditioning coach, Rudi Farquharson, plus regular physio/ massage MOT's (she credits Sarah Connors), all underpinned by the work with University of Birmingham sports science department.

Her main goal this summer is to qualify for the World Championships in Beijing, in the 3000m steeplechase and to make the final. Sara only turned her focus onto the chase last season, as in previous years she felt she had not finished with the 1500m (still improving year on year as her PB of 4:16.29 last year at the Watford BMC Gold Standard race proved) plus with past injury problems, had not felt robust enough. Now she feels the time is right and last year reduced her personal best in the chase to 9:47 placing her fourth in the "All Irish rankings", narrowly missing the date for qualification for the Euro's and Commonwealth Games.

As always Sara says she will use the BMC race circuit over the 1500m and 3000m in her build up to the qualification for the chase. In the past she has enjoyed success and many PB's at BMC's in Watford, Sport City and Trafford. She remembers fondly lowering her PB by 14 seconds to 4:22.97 for 1500m at Sportcity back at the BMC Nike Grand Prix back in May 2008. Even as a teenager in Ireland, she would fly over to compete in the key BMC races.

In terms of offering advice to you aspiring athletes reading this, she says "I would say the most important thing is that you should enjoy your athletics, especially when things are going well. You have also got to realise that there will be ups and downs, it goes with the territory, but it is really important that even during the "downs" you try and find a small "up". They will always be there if you look hard enough."

After acknowledging the support she is now receiving from Athletics Ireland, Meath Athletics, Birchfield Harriers AC the University of Birmingham, where she mentors Sports Scholars, I ask Sara to crystal ball gaze about her ultimate sporting goal. "I would like to run a national 3000m chase record in the Olympic final". Look out Rio, Dr Treacy has you in her sights!

Indoor Grand Prix Review

STEPHEN GREEN REPORTS FROM AN EVENT WHICH HAS NOW BECOME THE CURTAIN RAISER FOR THE INDOOR SEASON.

BRITISH MILERS CLUB INDOOR GRAND PRIX, EIS, SHEFFIELD, 11th JAN, 2015.

Paul Pollock returned an Irish European Indoor qualifier in taking an exciting men's 3000m in Sheffield.

This meeting is now in its fourth year, and was also the selection meeting for England Athletics Central European tour team in January. The athletes responded and the entry was the biggest and best quality thus far by some margin. Pollock was always to the fore of the field and followed the pace set by Richard Weir after pacemaker Dan Jarvis's sterling job. Jake Shelley and the Irishman then swapped the lead with Pollock pulling inches ahead of Shelley at the tape. Pollock's 7:59.25 meeting record was a best by some ten seconds, with Shelley (7:59.57) also rewarded with a significant PB for his hard work. Weir also maintained his form to record a decent 8:06.44 in third. Luke Betts followed the early

pace to run away from the B 3000M field with a lifetime best of 8:29.01.

Rachael Bamford shook off the effects of travel running in the 1k cross-country relay in Edinburgh 24 hours earlier to win the 1500m in some style. Commonwealth games steeplechaser Bamford is a standout athlete for her commitment to racing regularly and often. Bamford was prepared to take on the pace early and always looked in control breaking the tape in 4:19.34. Gemma Hillier finished strongly in returning a significant PB of 4:20.92 in second.

As you can see in the 'BMC Future' section of the magazine, Katy Brown is an emerging talent over two laps; again underlining this with a narrow win over Rowena Cole. Cole gamely set out to dominate the race and pushed on from the gun. However the tall Cumbrian athlete just had enough to inch ahead of Cole in the last 20 metres to win with a meeting record of 2:04.22. Cole was



rewarded for her bravery with a superb 2:04.64 return. Jade Williams, was third in 2:06.13, having gone with the early pace, was close to her best.

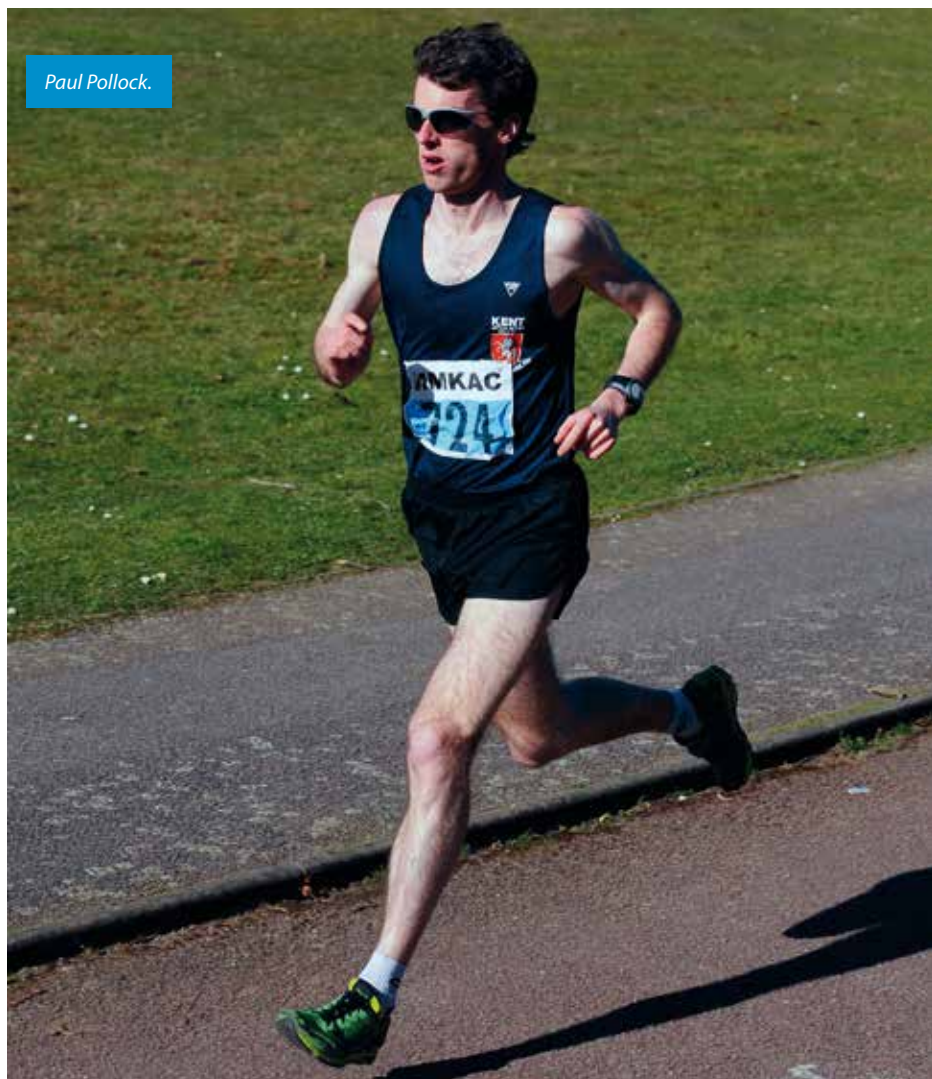
Paul Goodall, was also in meet record mood, with his 1:50.20 800m return ahead of a top class field. Jamie Webb of Liverpool Harriers was the early leader, opening up a 3m gap to Robert Needham. However the Norwich man overhauled both in the home straight to record a breakthrough win, with Needham returning 1:50.69.

Most significant from all the 800m races were the fast winning times without a pacemaker; this demonstrates that if athletes are prepared to race, the times will come.

Harry Harper and Ben Coldray fought out a close battle over 1500m. However Liverpool Harrier Harper just had enough speed to take victory in a useful 3:48.76. Adam Clarke, who also disputed the lead, and held down third place a couple of strides behind,

Archie Davis made the long journey from Brighton worthwhile in taking the B 1500m. His time of 3:56.82 represented a new U17 UK indoor age-best.

Several athletes went on to perform with distinction for England in the Indoor meetings in Bratislava, Vienna and Linz. Athletes such as Katy Brown also represented Scotland in an indoor international in January at the Emirates. The aforementioned Pollock gained selection for Ireland on the back of his run and subsequent indoor for the European indoors in Prague. Special mention goes to Gemma Hillier who took her opportunity to gain her first England selection in Vienna after recovery from cancer a couple of years earlier.



GRAND PRIX, BEST OF BRITISH AND OTHER ELITE RACES 2015

See www.britishmilersclub.com for Entries, Timetables, Seedings, Information and Results

DATE	VENUE	EVENTS	TIME	CONTACT	CONTACT DETAILS	STANDARD
Fri 1 May	Mary Peters Track, Belfast	Festival of Miles M & W	7.00pm	John Glover	Johnt.glover441@gmail.com	Special
Sat 16 May	Trafford	800/1500/5000/3000s/c M&W.	5.00pm	Steve Green	stevegreen2011@live.co.uk	Grand Prix
Sat 30 May	Sports City	800 Men	5.00pm	Mike Deegan	07887 781913	Grand Prix
Sat 30 May	Sports City	1500 Men	5.00pm	Jon Wild	07947 157785	Grand Prix
Sat 30 May	Sports City	800/1500 Women	5.00pm	John Davies	07967 651131	Grand Prix
Sat 30 May	Sports City	3000 U18 M & W inc in 5000s	5.00pm	Dave Norman	07868 783818	Grand Prix
Sat 30 May	Sports City	5000 M & W inc JW UK trials / 3000s/c M & W	5.00pm	Dave Norman	07868 783818	Grand Prix
Sun 14 Jun	City of London	Amba Hotel Road Miles. Total Prize Purse £9000 +		Richard Nerurkar	Richard.Nerurkar@run-fast.net	Special
Sat 27 Jun	Watford	800/1500/5000/3000s/c Men	5.30pm	Rupert Waters	rupert.waters@tiscali.co.uk	Grand Prix
Sat 27 Jun	Watford	800/1500/5000/3000s/c Women	5.30pm	Tim Brennan	01628 415748	Grand Prix
Wed 8 Jul	Perivale	City Mile M/W	7.45pm	Pat Fitzgerald	patfitzgerald@britishmilersclub.com	Special
Sat 18 Jul	Iffley Road, Oxford	800/5000 M&W /1500W/1 Mile Men	3.30pm	Hugo Fleming	hugo.fleming@ccc.ox.ac.uk	Grand Prix
Wed 19 Aug	Eltham	Wooderson 800 Men, 800 Challenge Women	8.00pm	David Reader	davidreader@britishmilersclub.com	Special
Sat 22 Aug	Solihull	800/1500/5000 M&W	4.00pm	Paul Hayes	hayespaul43@yahoo.co.uk	Grand Prix
Sat 5 Sep	Trafford	Festival of 10,000 races	1.00pm	Steve Green	stevegreen2011@live.co.uk	Special

GRAND PRIX SERIES ENTRIES

Entry to Grand Prix races will be guaranteed for paid up BMC members entering at least 14 days in advance of the meeting provided they have achieved the following qualifying times.

	800m	1500m	3000m	5000m	3K Chase
Men :	01:55.0	03:55.0	8:30	14:50	9:15
Women :	02:15.0	04:40.0	10:00	16:45	10:45

Members who have not achieved the senior qualifying standard in the year of competition should enter 7 or more days in advance and will be able to run if space is available.

Non members should enter as much in advance as possible and will be able to run if space is available after all members and invited athletes have been catered for.

Final seeding and entry acceptance will be between 7 and 2 days before the competition date.

PRIZES

A first prize of £1,000 applies at each of the Grand Prix events over 800m, 1500m, Mile, 5000m, and 3000m Steeplechase. The prize money is determined by finishing position and time.

Best of British - A prize of £200 is available for the first British finisher in each Grand Prix event who does not win a higher sum in the time related prizes.

For full details of the prizes available see www.britishmilersclub.com

PACEMAKERS

The BMC is looking for pacemakers for its 2015 race series. The BMC is able to pay fees for pacemakers.

Those interested should contact Tim Brennan at timbrennan@britishmilersclub.com or via the BMC website.

OVERSEAS ATHLETES

The BMC welcomes overseas entries in its Grand Prix races particularly those of an international standard.

Contact Tim Brennan at timbrennan@britishmilersclub.com or enter via the website.

INTERNATIONAL RACE OPPORTUNITIES

The BMC is invited by other race promoters to send representatives to overseas opportunities. Selection for these races will be based on performance in BMC events.

WE EXPECT FROM ATHLETES THAT THEY WILL:-

- Enter the races by the deadlines set.
- Be truthful about their current form and fitness.
- Turn up for races that they have been invited to or entered.
- Inform the organiser in good time if for any reason they cannot compete and the reason why they can't compete.
- Run at the pace stated for their race and not attempt to slow a race.
- Be prepared to take the initiative if a pacemaker is running too slowly.

PB CLASSICS, GOLD STANDARD, ACADEMY AND REGIONAL FIXTURES 2015

All entries should be made on our website www.britishmilersclub.com

BMC ACADEMY YOUNG ATHLETES PB CLASSICS (Age Groups U13, U15, U17 & U20)						
4 May	Millfield	800/ 1500 M&W 3000 Mixed	5.45pm	Steve Mosley	029 2241 1440	
9 May	Corby	800/ 1500/ 3000 M&W.	5.00pm	Pat Fitzgerald	patfitzgerald@britishmilersclub.com	
6 June	Milton Keynes	800/ 1500/ 3000/U17 1500s/c /U20 2000s/c	4.00pm	Jim Bennett	jim_bennett@btinternet.com	
18 July	Iffley Road, Oxford	Peter Coe & Frank Horwill Miles	3.30pm	David Lowes	07930 318651	
Fastest of U15 & U17 PB Classic 800m and 1500m in May to be invited to Frank Horwill & Peter Coe Mile races at Oxford 18 July . RACES FOR YOUNG ATHLETES ARE ALSO INCLUDED IN REGIONAL RACES						

OTHER BMC RACES

	DATE	VENUE	EVENTS	TIME	CONTACT	CONTACT DETAILS	STANDARD
APRIL	Fri 17	Glasgow	10,000	6.00pm	Norrie Hay	07545 762966	Regional
	Sun 26	Trafford	1500	11.50am	Steve Green	stevegreen2011@live.co.uk	Regional
	Sun 26	Alexander Stadium	600/800/1500	12.15pm	Paul Hayes	hayespaul43@yahoo.co.uk	Regional
	Tue 28	Exeter	800/1500	6.30pm	John Knowles	07850 812229	Regional
MAY	Fri 1	Mary Peters Stadium, Belfast	Night of Miles	7.00pm	John Glover	john.glover441@gmail.com	Regional
	Mon 4	Millfield	800/1500 M & W. 3000 Mixed	5.45pm	Steve Mosley	029 2241 1440	Regional
	Tues 5	Trafford	800/1500 Men	8.00pm	Steve Green	stevegreen2011@live.co.uk	Gold Standard
	Mon 11	Maiden Castle, Durham	800	7.30pm	David Lowes	07930 318651	Regional
	Wed 13	Brighton	800/1500/2000s/c	7.30pm	Paul Collicutt	paul@paulcollicutt.com	Regional
	Tue 19	Trafford	800/1500 Men	8.00pm	Steve Green	stevegreen2011@live.co.uk	Gold Standard
	Wed 20	Alexander Stadium	800/1500	7.30pm	Paul Hayes	hayespaul43@yahoo.co.uk	Regional
	Wed 20	Watford	M & W 800&1500. 3000w	7.30pm	Rupert Waters	rupert.waters@tiscali.co.uk	Gold Standard
	Tues 26	Exeter	W	8.00pm	John Knowles	07850 812229	Regional
	Wed 27	Eltham	800/1500/5000	8.00pm	David Reader	davidreader@britishmilersclub.com	Regional
JUNE	Mon 1	Durham	1500	7.30pm	David Lowes	07930 318651	Regional
	Wed 3	Watford	3000W	9.15pm	Rupert Waters	rupert.waters@tiscali.co.uk	Special
	Tues 9	Trafford	800/1500 Men	8.00pm	Steve Green	stevegreen2011@live.co.uk	Gold Standard
	Wed 17	Watford	800/1500	7.30pm	Rupert Waters	rupert.waters@tiscali.co.uk	Gold Standard
	Mon 22	Maiden Castle, Durham	800	7.30pm	David Lowes	07930 318651	Regional
	Tue 23	Tipton	800/1500	7.30pm	Paul Hayes	hayespaul43@yahoo.co.uk	Regional
	Wed 24	Eltham	800/1500/5000	8.00pm	David Reader	davidreader@britishmilersclub.com	Regional
	Tues 30	Trafford	800/1500 Men	8.00pm	Steve Green	stevegreen2011@live.co.uk	Gold Standard
	Tues 30	Exeter	800/1500	8.00pm	John Knowles	07850 812229	Regional
	Mon 6	Maiden Castle, Durham	1500	7.30pm	David Lowes	07930 318651	Regional
JULY	Wed 8	Barry	800/1500		Steve Mosley	029 2241 1440	Regional
	Wed 8	Perivale	800/1 Mile/3000 inc CITY MILE	7.45pm	Pat Fitzgerald	patfitzgerald@britishmilersclub.com	Regional
	Wed 15	Watford	800/1500	7.30pm	Rupert Waters	rupert.waters@tiscali.co.uk	Gold Standard
	Tue 21	Trafford	800/1500 Men	8.00pm	Steve Green	stevegreen2011@live.co.uk	Gold Standard
	Tue 21	Tipton	800/1500	7.30pm	Paul Hayes	hayespaul43@yahoo.co.uk	Regional
	Wed 22	Eltham	800/1500/5000	8.00pm	David Reader	davidreader@britishmilersclub.com	Regional
	Mon 27	Maiden Castle, Durham	800	7.30pm	David Lowes	07930 318651	Regional
	Tue 28	Exeter	800/3000	8.00pm	John Knowles	07850 812229	Regional
	Wed 29	Watford	800/1500	7.30pm	Rupert Waters	rupert.waters@tiscali.co.uk	Gold Standard
	Tues 11	Trafford	800/1500 Men	8.00pm	Steve Green	stevegreen2011@live.co.uk	Gold Standard
AUGUST	Wed 19	Eltham	800/1 Mile/5000 inc Wooderson 800s	7.00pm	David Reader	davidreader@britishmilersclub.com	Regional
	Tue 25	Trafford	800/1500 Men	8.00pm	Steve Green	stevegreen2011@live.co.uk	Gold Standard
	Tues 25	Exeter	800/1500	8.00pm	John Knowles	07850 812229	Regional
	Wed 26	Watford	800/1500	7.30pm	Rupert Waters	rupert.waters@tiscali.co.uk	Gold Standard
	Sat 29	Tipton	800/1500/3000/2000s/c	2.00pm	Paul Hayes	hayespaul43@yahoo.co.uk	Regional

Additional races may be arranged at other venues. Check website for more details

Entries - priority will be given to paid up members who have achieved meeting standard

Please enter at the latest 5 days before meeting. No entries on the day. (Text entries will not be accepted)

THE BEST OF BRITISH FROM THE BMC

www.britishmilersclub.com

BMC News Spring 2015 25

Statement

THE British Milers' Club is delighted to announce it's continued kit sponsorship from Nike and new funding from British Athletics for the 2015 Grand Prix programme.

Chairman Tim Brennan commented that the fantastic support of Nike continues to underpin our race program and confirmed a new deal with British Athletics which will complement the existing support from Nike, ensuring that the BMC can continue to provide runners with the opportunity to run personal bests and qualifying standards across a vast choice of meetings throughout the whole United Kingdom. Gareth Hosford, VP/GM Nike UK & Ireland commented, "The British Milers Club continues to be the heartbeat of British middle distance running and we are very proud to continue our long standing relationship with this organisation. Throughout the last 52 years the BMC has provided a platform for Britain's elite and has been a key development component for some of GB&I's finest athletes. Nike, in conjunction with the BMC and British Athletics, looks forward to continuing to contribute to the development of middle distance running in the UK&I with a hope of supporting and inspiring the Olympians of today and tomorrow."

"British Athletics is pleased to support the BMC with funding to assist with the

development of middle distance running in the UK," said Cherry Alexander, who is the Head of Competition & International Relations at British Athletics "The BMC provides an excellent foundation for middle distance runners, with excellent competition opportunities for athletes of all age groups. The success is clear to see from the number of current elite athletes that started out competing at BMC races and hopefully this will continue."

Brennan said the financial support from British Athletics together with the existing kit sponsorship from Nike is a welcome boost to the BMC Grand Prix.

It promises to be a very busy summer with the showpiece Grand Prix events and new regional venues at Barry Alexander Stadium and Tipton. There is also the return of Exeter as popular host of the South West meetings after the track was re-laid.

"The support of British Athletics is very welcome and I think reflects the on-going work that the BMC is doing to promote middle distance running in the country and in providing opportunities for established runners and rising young stars to achieve qualify standards," continued Brennan.

The Grand Prix season will again be at the heart of the competition season, providing valuable early season opportunities to attain the qualifying times, whether for World, European

U20s, World Youths or English Schools Championships.

The two GP meetings in Manchester, at Trafford on May 16th and Sport City on May 30th, will give runners an early chance to impress while the Watford GP meeting on June 27th will be a final chance to persuade the selectors after the national trials. The fourth GP meeting at Oxford on July 28th will again feature the mile for the men but for the women the distance will revert to the 1500m after a lack of interest in the classic distance. "It just seems that the women don't want to run the mile – only eight entered in 2014 – so we have decided to go back to the 1500," explained Brennan.

The final GP meeting of the summer will be at Solihull on August 22nd.

In addition to the Grand Prix events the BMC will again be providing good racing opportunities in the PB Classics and within regional competitions which this summer includes opportunities in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Glasgow will stage the first BMC meeting of the season with 10,000m races on April 17th. A Night of Miles will be held at the Mary Peters Track Belfast on Friday May 1st.

Finally the season will close with the 10,000m Track Festival at Trafford following its success last year when there was an astonishing 77 personal bests from the 93 finishers in six races.

10 Top Tips

TIM BRENNAN SIGNS OFF WITH HIS TOP 10 TIPS FOR ENTERING BMC RACES:

1. Our race entry system uses the power of ten database so all Personal and seasons best are visible to the race organiser and will be used by them for seeding.
2. If you put a target time a lot faster than your best, then in the comments it needs to be justified, why you think you will run significantly quicker than you have before.
3. There is no advantage to entering late and it risks the race filling up and entries closing early.
4. The closing date is there for a reason, you need to enter before it comes round.
5. As long as your season's bests are in Power of Ten the race organiser will see them, even if the performance comes after your entry.
6. It is worth pointing out if you have run a good time at a distance other than the one you are entering, as the race organiser may not automatically spot this.
7. At the start of the season last year's form counts a lot towards the final seeding, but as the season gets older this year's form carries more weight. The best thing is to have some sort of competitive form to point to in the current season before you enter a Grand Prix.
8. In the Grand Prix, 'B' race winners will be given an 'A' race place but in the next Grand Prix only.
9. We will account for attitude to racing in the seeding and try and reward people who contribute to the pace of the races after the pacemaker drops out.
10. We will occasionally make mistakes in the seeding and will listen to politely put and well-reasoned requests. You should consider if an often marginal difference between two races justifies the energy spent on the appeal.

... and as a bonus the top tip!

11. We do keep records of people who no show for races and those who drop out late. You may be banned from BMC races if you do not let us know in good time that you are not running.

Relative Age

IN A THOUGHT PROVOKING PIECE ON AGE, **TIM BRENNAN** ASSESSES WHY IT IS GOOD TO BE BORN IN SEPTEMBER!:

British Athletics is currently considering if it should move to age groups based on years starting in January rather than in September as now. Age groups would be U14, U16, U18, U20. This would align with international age groups and has merit for that reason. Probably schools would keep a September date in order to match the school year, meaning you would progress through school in age groups of U15 (year 8 & 9), U17 (year 10 & 11), and U19 (year 12 & 13).

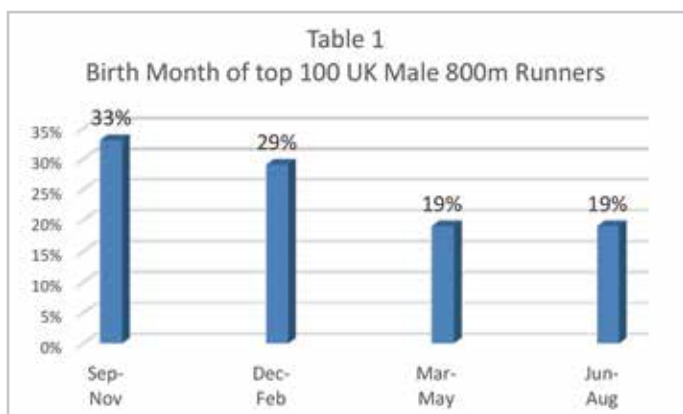
The driver for these changes is administrative but perhaps the question we should be looking at is: how do we retain talent in the sport to come through to the senior age group? Then the question

for British Athletics becomes: would the proposed changes be good or bad for retaining talent?

If you look at the senior age group you would expect that the best performing athletes might be born at any time of the year. Athletes have physically matured by this stage and the difference that maturity makes in the younger age groups should no longer matter. You would be just as likely to be in the ranking list if you were born in August as you would if you were born in September. If this was the case then ranking lists would show an even distribution of birth months across the year with 25% born in each quarter. As illustrated by table 1 which shows the top

hundred men's 800m rankings, this is not the case. In fact 62% of those ranked are born between September-February. It indicates that from those born in the other months of the year a sizeable number who might have matured into talented senior athletes have gone missing from the sport.

What is the narrative behind this? We need to look at the progress of an athlete born between March and August (The younger part of the year), through the age groups and speculate what is going on. Table 2 shows the distribution of births for athletes ranked in the top 100 of their respective age groups during the 2013 season in the men's 800m.



Chasing the pace at SportCity last summer. Courtesy of Adrian Royle.

PROGRESS THROUGH THE AGE GROUPS

Age	Story of an athlete from the younger half of the year (March to August)	Table Two Evidence
1st Year U13	The age group is heavily dominated by the second year U13s who have had up to 2 years (15%) more time to mature. The performance difference seems daunting and the younger athlete wonders if the sport is for them.	The youngest six months of the two year age group is virtually unrepresented in the rankings.
2nd Year U13	As a second year U13 born in the second half of the year you are still competing against athletes with much more maturity and may not be getting the success you seek.	38% of the top 100 ranking are second years born between September and December.
1st Year U15	You again struggle against older athletes.	Only 2% of the ranking list are first years with March to August Births.
2nd Year U15	Your birth month should start to matter less but the eldest athletes still dominate. If you are born in June to August, you may have already dropped out of the sport before realising your talent.	34% of those ranked are born September to December. 13% of the U15 ranking is first year September to December births as against 10% of the more mature second year June to August births who you would expect to perform better.
U17	By the U17 age group as children become mature the difference in performance between first and second years is not so significant. But the drop out of those born in the younger six months of each year has happened.	The best ranked quarters are for those born September to December, second years (21%) and first years (19%).
U20	In the U20 age group September to December births continue to dominate. Other factors for dropping out hit as second years leave home or start work.	56% of those ranked are first years.

N.B. For U20 to be consistent with the other age groups, I have included the youngest two years and not those who get a third year.

What can we conclude?

- We are losing a significant amount of the talent pool from those born March - August, roughly one in five. This is on top of all the other reasons irrespective of birth date for athletes dropping out.
- Coaches, and team managers, should be aware of the birthdays of athletes in their groups and not concentrate on those who may be performing better due to their greater chronological maturity. Other kinds of maturity exist – 'Physical' and 'Athletic' amongst them, but as illustrated birth month is significant and easy to understand.
- Clubs using September as the top of the age group and schools using January could be a good thing as it will share out the opportunities do to well across a wider range of birth months.
- If each year athletes are either at the top of the club age group or the schools age group it should mean that they get opportunities to win championship or qualify for teams more frequently, motivating them to remain in the sport.
- Competition providers could think about providing races based on a variety of age criteria during the year. For instance based on age on the day of competition.



Paul Goodall (8) edges out Anthony Whiteman (2) and Jamie Webb (5) in the mens 800m at Oxford last year.

BMC Academy and 2015 Preview

DIRECTOR AND COURSE LEADER **DAVID LOWES** WHETS YOUR APPETITE FOR NEXT WINTER'S BMC ACADEMY



Academy athletes eager and ready to go.

THE next BMC Residential and Educational Course is at our usual venue of Spinkhill, near Sheffield and this year it runs from Friday 23 to Sunday October 25. If you've never been to one, you're definitely missing out on an extraordinary experience! Athletes and coaches continue to come back time after time – and that is testament to the quality, friendliness and learning benefits of the courses.

So what are they all about? First and foremost it's about appropriate levels of hard work and putting in honest graft in selected groups and this tempered with thoughtful recovery periods and interjections of learning through interactive lectures and socialising. Quizzes and a games evening are all part of the activities and so it's not all hard physical work – although the brain may get taxed at certain times! Importantly, it's also about meeting new friends and that is high up on our agenda.

Athletes always do much more than their normal individual programmes – but they all survive and are instructed to rest or take it very easily for most of the following week. It has been proved continually that most athletes up their fitness levels around 10 days after a course due in part to the adaptation and careful monitoring of the experienced coaches and staff. The visiting coaches are encouraged to become involved and one thing that is always prevalent on a BMC course is that no-one comments that

a certain method is wrong – all we do is suggest that perhaps there is a better way of doing things!

With athletes regularly attending from all points of the UK and the Channel Islands, we have also had coaches and athletes from Iceland and Japan attending over the last three years – so we must be doing something right? We always strive to provide a guest speaker or star athlete to attend and over the last few years such luminaries as Steve Cram, Peter Elliott, Lisa Dobriskey, Emma Jackson, Alison Leonard, Becky Lynn and Anita Hinriksdottir have graced our courses.

Although it appears to be a long time to the 2015 autumn course, many have already pre-booked and with a limit on numbers, now is the time to start thinking about coming for the experience of a lifetime! A look at the photo-gallery gives a glimpse and a flavour of some of the expected activities including the famous early morning run, hill running, fartlek and the exercise challenge where some outstanding and impressive performances have been recorded!

So what's the next step? Turn over the page and see the Academy Course advert and put pen to paper to sign up or go to britishmilersclub.com. Don't forget to tell your club-mates and coaches too – we promise you not only the best course in the UK, we will ensure it's the most worthwhile too! See you in October.

Academy help

ARE you a female who is a qualified UKA coach and can also help organise the evening's entertainment at our renowned Residential Courses at Spinkhill in Derbyshire along with Course Director, David Lowes? If so, we need you!

An outgoing and friendly personality is a necessity with the ability to 'think on your feet' is also part of the job description. You will also be jointly responsible for the welfare of the female athletes on the course. You should ideally already be a BMC member and understand our ethos, although non-BMC members will also be considered. If you meet the criteria, contact David Lowes (coachlowes@aol.com or 0793 031 8651) for further details.

Help needed

AS the summer season gets under way, all BMC races rely on athletes giving something back to the sport in the form of reliable pace-making in regional and grand prix events. With the five series of events ready-to-go in the North-East of England in Durham City, help is urgently needed to make this season even better than the last two. With 177 and 178 PB's in 2013 and 2014 respectively, the pressure is on to reach the magical 200 mark.

Anyone who can offer any help with pace-making duties, please contact: David Lowes (coachlowes@aol.com or 0793 031 8651). All ability levels are needed ranging from the super-quick to those just trying to improve their current PB's. Pacemakers will be paid for their services and for those competing there is a £100 time-bonus for any BMC member who wins an 800m or 1500m (sub-1:49 and sub-3:42 men; sub-2:04 and sub-4:20 female).

The dates and distances are: May 11 (800m); June 1 (1500m); June 22 (800m); July 6 (1500m); July 27 (800m) all at Maiden Castle, Durham commencing at 7.30pm.



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Mount St Mary's, Spinkhill, Sheffield

Friday 23rd-Sunday 25th October 2015

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BOOK NOW OR BE DISAPPOINTED! (APPLICATIONS CLOSE SEPTEMBER 7th, 2015)

REGISTRATION & BOOKING FORM Mount St Mary's 23rd-25th October 2015

The British Milers' Club coaching courses are for the benefit of athletes and coaches and we try to ensure the following:

- ▶▶ All young people are as safe as possible. ▶▶ Provide information on further opportunities available.
- ▶▶ Provide top-class coaching and advice where required. ▶▶ Ensure that all BMC activities are open to all communities (equal opportunities).

First Name: _____

Surname: _____

Address: _____

Post Code: _____

Date of Birth/Age: _____

Gender: _____

Telephone/Mobile: _____

E-Mail: _____

Academy Member: Yes No _____

Membership Number: _____

Does your child suffer from any of the following?

☐ Asthma ☐ Skin Problems ☐ Diabetes ☐ Epilepsy

☐ Fainting ☐ Heart Problems ☐ Migraines ☐ Allergies

Other: _____

Is your child currently on medication or have any injuries?

☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please specify: _____

Do you consider your child to have a disability?

☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please specify: _____

What is your child's Ethnic origin?

☐ White ☐ Mixed Race ☐ Asian ☐ Black ☐ Chinese

☐ Other

Do you object to photographs of your child being taken for publicity purposes? (NSPCC guidelines)

☐ Yes ☐ No

Club: _____

Special Dietary requirements (please state): _____

Please state pb's (for squad allocation):

800m _____ 1500m _____ 3000m _____

For Coaches Only:

What is your current UKA coaching level? _____

Please enclose photocopy of licence.

Do you have a UKA CRB certificate? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please enclose photocopy of certificate.

(If no, please contact administrator (contact details at

For Parents: BMC courses involve vigorous, but beneficial athletic training, to a high standard. Please confirm that your child is physically fit and capable of participation in this training over the duration of the course. Please note a physio/masseur (if available) will only treat a person under the age of 18 if a chaperone present. Do you give permission for your child to be treated? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Emergency contact details

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Emergency Contact No: _____

Who is authorised to take and collect your child at this activity?: _____

I confirm that consent is given for my child to attend the BMC activity and I agree to the conditions laid out below". ☐ Yes ☐ No

Signed _____ Date _____

The BMC cannot be held responsible for any improper use of mobile phones including photography. Please note that inappropriate language or actions will not be tolerated.

*Information used in this form will be used to monitor and evaluate BMC activities. All information will remain confidential and no reference to individuals will be made in written or verbal reports. It is your right to decline your child to be excluded from this evaluation. I have read and understood the above information and agree for my child or myself to participate further in this study, if so requested.

www.britishmilersclub.com/academy

RUN 

BMC Academy in Pictures

Strength endurance work is a key component of Academy courses. Note: Icelandic 800m star Aníta Hinriksdóttir is to the fore wearing a long sleeved white top.



Above: Repetitious but never boring! Aerobic endurance intervals being effected at a recent Academy.



7am morning runs are part of the tradition on our courses. The collective performing of 'The Robot' gives you a wake up call to come and join the fun this winter.



Academy athletes are asked to step up to the plate with both circuits and strength and conditioning work an inherent part of the weekend package.



Fartlek running is always a favourite session on the vast grassed areas at Spinkhill on the final day and it is usually where the best male and female awards are decided which entitles the winners to a free course.

Adrian Webb interview

BMC RACE ORGANISER, **STEPHEN GREEN**, TALKS TO COACH **ADRIAN WEBB**, ABOUT HOW OUR CLUB IS AT THE HEART OF THE ETHOS OF THE WEBB FAMILY APPROACH TO ATHLETICS.

In 2008 a statue called 'The Dream' was unveiled in St Helen's. This represented the hopes and aspirations of a town proud of its mining and industrial past but keen to embrace the future. This statue could be an appropriate symbol for the aspirations of Adrian and Lynne Webb's Liverpool Harriers group with their proud roots in the Merseyside town.

Webb, a former 1:51 800 man, first started in coaching as many coaches do by bringing down his teenage son, Jamie Webb. He then formed a group which quickly expanded to include athletes such as Matt Shirling and Dan Jarvis. Initially the group were part of the St Helens club; with the squad moving to Liverpool Harriers in 2011.

Webb and his young group of athletes are regular competitors at BMC events, and have been readily available to help with pacing in many instances. It is this kind of selfless yet competitive spirit that is at the very heart of the BMC ethos.

Shirling won several English Schools and UK titles over 1500m, whilst moving through the age groups. In 2012, he broke Steve Cram's age 16 UK record with 3:44.11 at a Trafford Gold Standard meeting.

Shirling was seemingly on a course to break 3:40 for the metric mile, and the plaudits, and inevitable comparisons with the greats followed. However a hip injury curtailed his progress in 2014 after running an impressive 8:06 for 3k indoors. Adrian tells me, "It's been tough getting Matt back into a position where he can just put one foot after another following his hip operation, he's come back well to finish seventh at the National at Parliament Hill; which is testament to his tenacity at aged 19".

Attention then turns to another athlete on schedule - their son Jamie Webb, who had a breakthrough year over two laps in 2014, culminating with a 1:48.35s return plus wins in the BUCS and England U23 Championships. This year he recorded 1:49.24s and finished a close fourth in the UK indoor champs. Coach Adrian continues, "Jamie had worked hard for a while knocking on the door, the BMC indoors in 2014 was really a breakthrough race for him where he won in 1:51 and bits; since then he's been a consistent performer, but we're still looking for that big breakthrough".

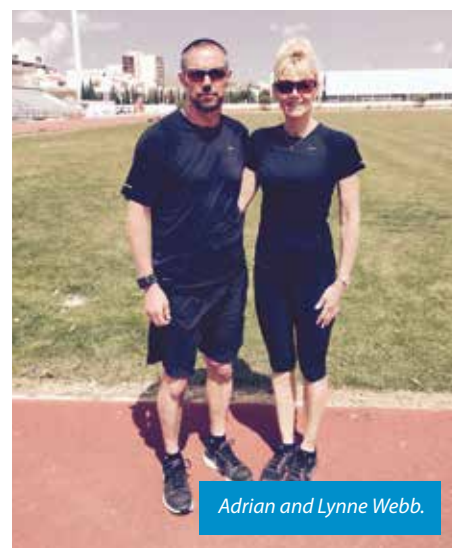
This year, the group has wintered well

with individual champion Dan Jarvis leading the squad to a stunning team win in the Northern Champs in January, with Shirling, plus Cameron Field and Liam Burthem completing the 'Fab Four'. The team went on to gain silver at Parliament Hill in February.

Adrian makes the point that, "As well as training together, the athletes in our group have come through the age-groups at the same time; there is also the factor that there is a wide range of social backgrounds within the training squad. They really get on well off the track, also as a club we've had success in relays which have helped build camaraderie and team spirit."

Webb senior's coaching philosophy is to have a good base of 60-70 miles per week plus circuits. There is the usual mix of track work, and longer sessions around Sherdley or Sefton Park. Most of the group have combined indoor track with cross-country this year to great effect. "The speed endurance that the indoors gives you helps the cross-country and vice versa, Dan Jarvis ran two 1500's before winning the Northern, without dropping his miles too much so he was pretty sharp in January", he emphasises.

The family success story continues with 16 year old Danielle Webb taking the Northern Junior 800m title in January to emulate her brother, who also won ten minutes later. Having a husband and wife team can often be fraught, but Webb is keen to pay tribute to how their partnership has aided the



Adrian and Lynne Webb.

squad's success. "If we get younger female athletes come into the group, they can start with Lynne and then move up, also there is a clear structure for young athletes enjoy the social aspect of a large squad", Adrian explains. The Liverpool Harriers girls' squad are also looking strong for the future having won several National relay titles at U15 and U13 level.

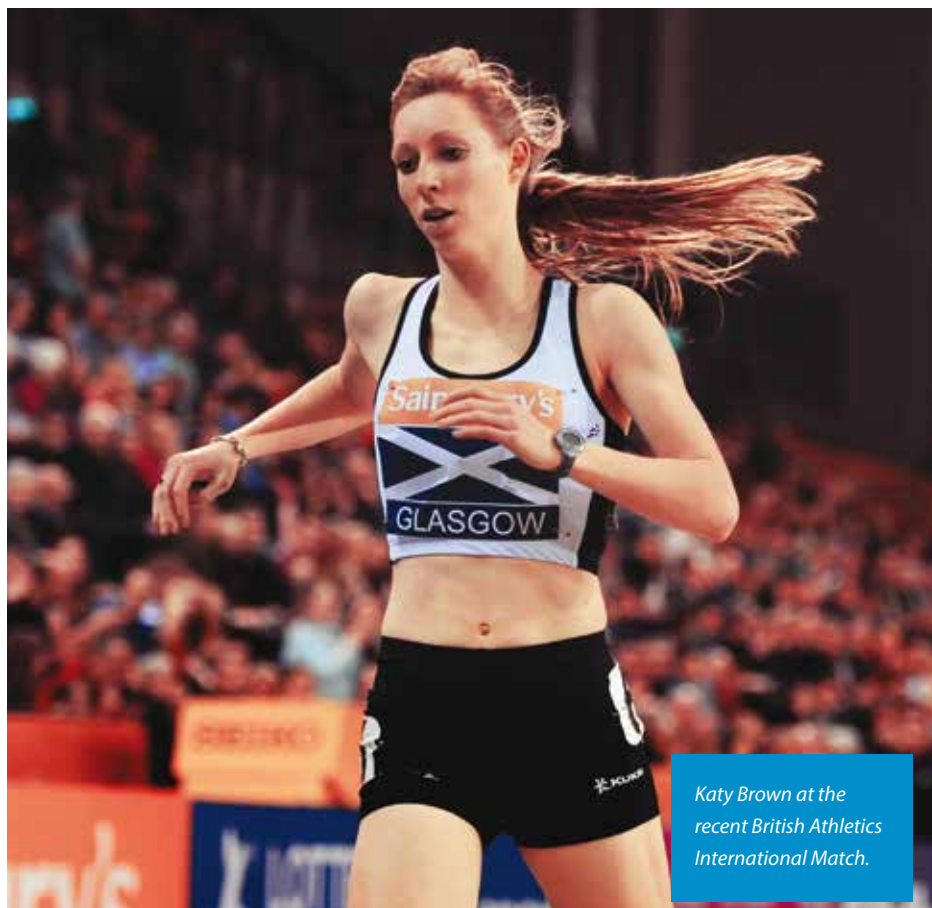
This summer of 2015 will be a watershed for this young group as athletes such as Shirling and Jarvis will leave for university, with Jamie Webb continuing his Chemistry studies in Manchester. The challenge will be for this successful partnership to continue developing their burgeoning talent pool which is at the very heart of the ethos of long term athlete development, which the BMC and seemingly, one of our most loyal family supporters have embraced.



The Webb training group ethos of long term athlete development is at the very heart of the BMC.

Katy Brown interview

SCOTTISH INTERNATIONAL 800M RUNNER, **KATY BROWN**, IS CLEARLY ONE TO WATCH FOR THE FUTURE, AS **STEPHEN GREEN** DISCOVERED.



Katy Brown at the recent British Athletics International Match.

The 20 year old Stewartry/University of Cumbria athlete has had a superb 12 months, recording 2:02.95 at the BMC Grand Prix in Trafford in July and 2:03.39 to take a bronze medal in the recent British indoor championships.

Stephen Green (SG): How did you get started in Athletics?

Katy Brown (KB): I started running as a 12 year old in Dumfries at St John's High School. I struggled when the cross country distances increased to over 3 miles. I then went to the local track and linked with Michael Love who has been my coach ever since.

SG: Describe the main elements of your training Programme?

KB: My training is mainly a mix of long runs between 40 and 60 minutes. I do two track sessions a week. Typically something like 6 x 400m with 1 minute recovery, or 8-10 x 200m with 90 seconds recovery. In the summer I would extend the recoveries. We also try and do a hill session once a week throughout the year – 10 x 30 seconds hill with short recovery would be a standard workout in winter.

Because of the weather, we get a lot of snow in Dumfries, the track work may turn into a hill session, for example leading up to the BMC indoors this year, I did mainly hills.

SG: You achieved a significant breakthrough in 2014, going from 2:08 to 2:02.95 at the Trafford BMC meeting in July. What do you attribute that improvement to?

KB: That was a great race for many reasons. I'd done a stint in the leisure centre as a lifeguard the evening before so I was worried about how I would go. I love racing at the Stretford track, as I won there in the two previous years at BMC races. It rained heavily at the start which I'm used to. It was great to be involved in a 2:00 flat race, and everything clicked. I got talking, also to the winner of the race Angie Schmitt – we struck up a friendship. I am heading out to Christchurch in April for a four week training stint.

I've been training for a while but I've also done other sports and been busy with lifeguarding. Perhaps the key aspect was to focus on athletics as my main interest and competing in local show-jumping events

(Brown is a keen horsewoman) have become less of a priority. I previously trained on my own so it's great to have a couple of training partners in Alice Bell and Manon Gillon who are leading junior sprinters, which has really brought my speed on.

SG: After a great indoor season, what are your reflections?

At the BMC Sheffield Open on 11th January, my coach thought I would run around 2:04 and Rowena Cole pushed the pace on really well so to run 2:04.22 and win was great. I was selected to run for Scotland at an Indoor International at the Emirates in January the back of that run – which was a great honour. (She finished 4th behind French winner, Renelle Lamote).

At the British championships back in February, I have to admit that I didn't run to win, and targeted a medal. I was probably a bit daunted by the form Jenny Meadows was in, and the quick early pace. Therefore I finished a little too much "full of running" but I was ecstatic to run close to my PB and get a bronze medal.

SG: So who inspires you in the sport?

KB: There are so many of my peers running well such as Laura Muir and Jess Judd that basically I can relate to what they do, which is inspirational for me. Also I really think athletes such as Jenny Meadows, who I've just mentioned, are great role models. Aside from other athletes, my mum has also helped me in so many ways in terms of getting to races, and helping me organise myself, which is especially important when you live in a fairly remote location.

SG: Do you have any plans to race over 1500m in the near future?

KB: My best is 4:34.28 set whilst winning the Scottish West District title in May last year. I think I can significantly improve that time. I'm not great over cross country, but think that I could run a decent 1500m. Perhaps a paced BMC race this year may be on the cards, however my main aim is over two laps.

SG: What are your aims for this summer's season?

KB: At the moment I'm working part time in a school (Brown graduated from the University of Cumbria last year) which gives me time to train. My main target is the European under 23 champs in Tallinn in July, which will be tough as there are several girls capable of running around 2:01.

Jonny Davies interview

THE EMERGING TALENT OF **JONATHAN DAVIES** AND GUIDANCE OF TOP COACH **ROB MCKIM**, ARE EXPLORED BY **CHRIS HEPWORTH**.

Reading AC's Jonathan Davies has continued his club's impressive distance running pedigree over recent years, winning numerous national titles as he's risen through the age groups. The 20-year-old has since carried his performances into the U23 and University levels taking Southern and National XC titles and BUCS XC silver at Brighton in January.

Davies has more recently suffered injury and illness setbacks which led to a disappointing end to 2014. However, he has already put these disappointments behind him in fine style, starting 2015 as he means to go on.

The combination of a chest infection and foot injury hampered Davies' preparation for the U23 European Cross Country Championships where he finished a disappointing 30th. Despite the performance, Davies and his coach, Rob McKim, were pleased with how he managed the knock backs, "It was a confidence booster to still be able to make the team after a far from perfect build up which is something which we can delve upon in the future. We knew that with a good period of uninterrupted training Jonny could be much more competitive", says England Athletics Area Coach Mentor, McKim.

Since then Davies has shown fine form, winning the U23 national XC championships, U20 IAAF Antrim International XC, and the Trafford 10km, as well as claiming silver at the aforementioned BUCS XC Championships. Davies is now keen to take his current form into the coming track season and gain a place in the GB European U23 team, "This year is a stepping stone to seek selection for Rio next year", said McKim. "We hope to see big improvements in his performance times and his physiological profile has improved significantly over the last couple of months."

With the aim of making the European team his main priority for the upcoming track season, Davies intends to use the BMC events which he enjoys so much to reach the 5000m qualifying standard. He says enthusiastically, "Most of my personal bests were set at BMC events. They provide a standard of racing which you cannot find elsewhere in the country, bringing the best together in all of the endurance events. I have had many great moments. Running 14.15 as a first year junior in 2012 was a

breakthrough performance as it was my first ever 5000m. More recently, the 3.44 I ran at Watford last year in the BMC Gold Standard meet was one of the largest jumps in personal bests I have made for several years."

Although Davies has an obvious track ability, his potential on the road was made abundantly clear recently when he ran an impressive 29:18 at the Trafford 10km on 8th March on his way to a one second victory over Ben Lindsay. Despite this, he still intends to focus on track and XC for the foreseeable future. He continues, "The idea of Trafford was as a bit of fun and to keep my motivation high towards the end of the XC season. It was nice to run as well as I did and prove that I can transition successfully onto the roads. After the race I chatted with my

coach and we both agreed that there was no need to rush into road running. I have been successful on the track and over XC and have plenty to give in both of these areas. For the time being I will run road races only where they will fit in and benefit these other disciplines."

The Birmingham University student puts his strong performances down to the great training and support that he receives at the University from his athlete mentor, Luke Gunn, and the renowned coach, Bud Baldaro, whose coaching team consists of Sally Straw, Matt Long and John and Bev Hartigan. He asserts that, "I honestly feel Birmingham is an amazing place to train. There is a great group there, and on scholarship I have access to a whole array of sports science services which have helped me develop as an athlete. I have matured and now have a greater understanding of



what I need to do to move onto the highest levels of performance in my sport. Simply by moving away from home, it puts additional responsibilities on your shoulders and questions your dedication to your sport. Right now I am more motivated than I ever have been to be successful."

Beyond the University support that has helped Davies develop as an athlete, he has been supported from the very start by his coach, Rob McKim, whom he considers to be the biggest influence in his athletics career. With affection, Jonny says, "He has been there from the first time I came down to Reading AC and has supported and guided me to where I am today. Our relationship has developed over the six years I have been running but he has always been the foundation which I have been able to rely on."

McKim was himself a promising athlete in his younger years, breaking the nine minute barrier for the 3km steeplechase at just 20-years-old, but eventually he quit running in his early 20s due to recurring leg injuries. Significantly, it is his injury experiences which he believes can be applied in his coaching to help guide and develop his athletes. He confides that, "My leg injuries were probably due to a combination of poor running mechanics including over pronating and too much pounding the roads at a young age on the road in London. I should have sought out a good coaching structure in London and later in Cambridge. So from my experience and perhaps stupidity at the time, I feel much wiser and better informed."

McKim clearly believes that the job of the coach is to unlock doors for his athletes. He offers the insight that, "I believe I am able to give my athletes some direction and suggestions for them to make informed decisions, to be patient and learn about their sport, bodies and the principles of training, gear and training terrain and so on". I hope I am able to open doors of opportunity for athletes – learn, know and grow are the way to go and have a good time."

Coach Rob maintains that Davies has a lot

*Reading AC's Jonny Davies
is guided by Rob McKim.*



of natural qualities which he has developed to help him train and race to the best of his ability. He makes the assessment that, "Jonny is pretty laid back and relaxed leading up to the race and in training. He has improved greatly on his mental race strength over the last couple of years; tends to know what to do and in the last couple of years has proved now he is better able to adapt to changing circumstances and is focused on the task ahead". His mentor believes that Davies has a burning desire for self-improvement and adds that his athlete is, "Prepared to put in the effort in training and racing and if he is fit and well then he is a tough nut to crack."

He is very supportive of his team mates and friendly on the circuit. I don't recall him ever complaining about how tough a session might be – he will get on with the task in hand. Although he had a blip last year with injuries that affected his 5000 metres, he has shown consistent improvement year on year. The challenge now is in transitioning Jonny to be a successful senior and see how he takes on the learning and how robust will he be in striving to go higher."

Watch this space, for much more in the future both from young Jonny Davies and esteemed coach Rob McKim – a real stalwart of the BMC.

Coach Education Notice:

England Athletics has announced that the new Athletics 365 App is now available for both Apple and Android tablets and phones. The 365 programme was a winner of the 2014 European Athletics Innovation Award. The Athletics 365 App contains Coach Support Cards, Games Cards and an extensive library of video clips and is an invaluable tool for clubs, coaches, athletes and parents. The App is split into four sections namely (1) What is Athletics 365?; (2) Coaching Athletics 365; (3) Athletics 365 for Athletes and Parents and (4) Athletics 365 for Clubs. For more details see www.athletics365.org



Growing Pains - Regaining the Spring in your Stride

PETER THOMPSON EXPLORES THE EFFECTS OF THE ADOLESCENT GROWTH SPURT ON BIOKINETIC ENERGY PRODUCTION AND MIDDLE DISTANCE PERFORMANCE.

If we look for the primary contributor to performance, it is how an athlete creates, manages, utilises and expresses energy. The energy for middle and long distance performance derives from two principal sources, metabolic, or bioenergetic, sources and elastic, or biokinetic sources. Endurance coaches have long concentrated on the metabolic development of their athletes but have, until relatively recently, not recognised and therefore paid less attention to the biokinetic contribution. Many still have too great a focus on training the metabolic energy systems of their athletes, ignoring biokinetic development, as an equal and powerful, metabolic energy-sparing contributor.

In this article we will focus on the effects of the adolescent growth spurt, AGS, on biokinetic energy production and middle distance performance. We know that biokinetic energy comes principally from the stored elastic energy of tendons and the fascia surrounding the muscles. Together, these structures are capable of providing an energy-return system, the efficiency of which is determined by the stiffness of the lower kinetic chain. We will come back to exactly what this 'stiffness' is but it crucially defines performance.

The dramatic improvement and achievements of athletes such as Paula Radcliffe and Mo Farah may be ascribed in large part to the appropriate development and increased contribution from their elastic capacities. This development of optimal stiffness has turbo-charged their $\dot{V}O_{2\max}$, $\text{time}\dot{V}O_{2\max}$, running economy and performance. What has not been really examined previously is, "What is the effect, or potential effect, of the adolescent growth spurt on stiffness and biokinetic energy production, how much does this reduce performance and what can we do to regain and develop this elastic capacity?"

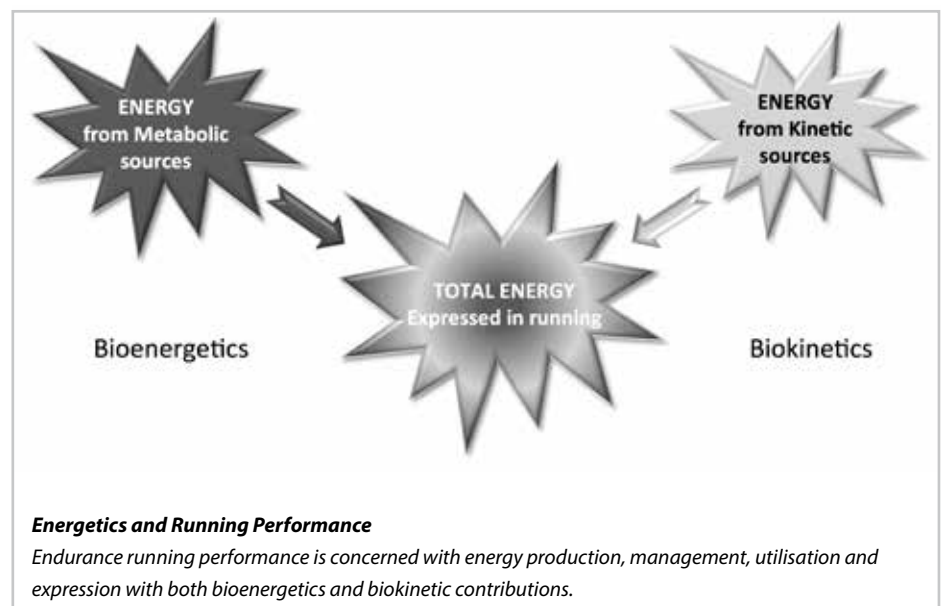
Growth and Maturation

Now, every single one of you reading this article knows that during puberty and adolescence the body normally goes through distinct stages including a considerable growth spurt. The adolescent growth spurt, AGS, varies by gender, with different timing of onset and rates of

growth. On average, girls between 10 and 16 will grow 8 inches and gain 38 lbs; boys between the ages of 12 and 16 will grow an average of 12 inches and gain close to 48 lbs. If we look at the averages again, the first sign of puberty in girls occurs at 10½ years of age, with breast development. The first period or menarche is at an average age of 12-13 years, and usually occurs about two years after puberty begins. This

the thigh and the forearms before the upper arms. And, for all parts of the body bones grow ahead of muscles, tendons and fascia. This has profound effects on coordination, skill and stiffness.

For both girls and boys there is tremendous individual variation in the timing of physical development. One standard deviation (68% of any population) away from the norm is + or - 2 years for



coincides with their peak in height velocity, the adolescent growth spurt, AGS.

With the menarche, the ovaries are mature and the legs have generally finished growing. Any increase in height after periods have begun, usually comes just from the torso, as the spine grows. Development continues and a child will have reached her final adult height about two years after menarche as, lastly, the bones of the pelvis widen and become smooth, in preparation for childbirth. Puberty generally begins later in boys, on average at 12 years of age and they undergo their AGS about 2-3 years later than girls.

The AGS usually begins in the distal areas, with an enlargement of the hands and feet and is later followed proximally, by growth in the legs and arms, then trunk and chest, boys, or hips, girls. This growth pattern even follows a distal to proximal progression within the limbs, with the shin bones lengthening before

the AGS and two standard deviations (embracing 95% of any population) is + or - 4 years. This means that we could have a boy or girl who is 14 by their birth age but physically be anywhere from 10 to 18 years of age. For 95% of the population, the AGS takes place in a range of 9 to 17 years of age for girls and 11 to 19 years of age for boys.

Adolescents who are away from the norm in their physical development are identified as 'early' or 'late' developers. In athletics, the power events of the throws, jumps, sprints and hurdles usually attract the early developers while cross-country and the longer running events, the late developer. The 800m and 1500m fall in between and we see both early and late developers performing well as children and through adolescence. Many times the early developers 'flatter to deceive' and fail to make the progress that their early performances indicate. Late developers, however, have the advantages of the androgynous body type of the pre-

pubescent child until mid to late teens but then the AGS will still affect performance.

Boys have a performance advantage through puberty since they gain height and muscle mass and testosterone stimulates greater production of haemoglobin, leading to an increased oxygen-carrying capacity. Girls gain height but also a relatively higher percentage of body fat.

The Impact of the AGS

But for both boys and girls running performance is impacted by the AGS through the well-known factors of loss of coordination and biomechanical efficiency, low energy levels, increased weight, decreased power to weight ratio, decreased functional VO₂ max and for girls the additional changing biomechanics, as the hips broaden. The rapid growth also impacts the body's ability to control stiffness as the athlete loses the skill of running, if they had it, and this includes the ability to adapt to the running speed or surface to create and utilise elastic energy.

At its simplest, running is based on propelling the body forward while the body tries to keep its centre of gravity level during the running cycle. During impact with the ground, the leg acts much like a spring, absorbing energy and releasing it later in the running cycle. The closer the 'stiffness' of the spring is to optimal, the quicker and stronger the elastic return and the less metabolic energy you will need to run at a certain speed, or the faster you can run for the same metabolic contribution.

To give you an example of this stiffness, think about what would happen if you were to run at an easy pace across a concrete parking lot at the beach and continue straight onto the sand. What would happen? Most probably, when you hit the sand your legs would be extended to a much greater degree at each joint than they were while running over the parking lot. In other words, your legs would be stiffer on the sand. The stiffness of the leg is a function of the lower kinetic chain involving the hip, knee, ankle and foot joints and the connective tissues, tendons and fascia. If you were to sprint maximally across the concrete on to the sand, you may well stumble and fall, as the legs do not have time to adjust to the new, soft and giving, surface.

Usually the body adapts and leg stiffness will relatively increase on softer surfaces and will decrease on harder surfaces. Incorrect stiffness produces negative results in either direction. If the lower kinetic chain is too stiff, then ground impact and reaction forces are increased and elastic energy is dissipated, lost, in

the impact. If the stiffness is not sufficient then the energy is dissipated, lost, into the squidgy spring with the consequence that the muscles will have to activate more, use more metabolic energy.

There has recently been a re-evaluation of the 'stretch-shortening cycle', SSC, and its role in biokinetic energy production. The old view of the elastic properties of the lower kinetic chain was to imagine an active SSC, with the muscle-tendon system acting as a rubber band. While loading and stretching it, energy would be stored (eccentric phase) in the muscle and this energy would be regained at shortening (concentric phase) for toe-off.

The current view is that the eccentric contraction phase of the muscle is not so important as the elastic properties of the tendon and muscle fascia. The muscle now needs to be emphasised as being in isometric mode all through our movement and drills. This is essentially the same rubber band analogy, except, there is a recognition that the muscle response and contribution is not as great as it was thought to be for creating power but is vital as a stabilizer and resistance. The rubber band is now the tendon and the muscle fascia and the most energy will be rapidly regained if the stiffness is optimal. The level of isometric stabilization by the muscles and positioning of the joints determines the stiffness of the system.

For all adolescents, boys and girls alike, there is a negative impact on stiffness during

the AGS from the changes to the hardware, the skeleton, muscles and connective tissues and nerves to the software, the brain's engram. But, girls have the added factor of diminished strength gains and increases in non-contributing body weight. For girls, the adaptations required during and after the AGS before they recapture their full biokinetic, elastic energy capacities generally takes much, much longer.

What can be done?

Many of the things that you're probably doing already can assist the passage through the AGS and also help in regaining elastic power but, now, you can perhaps see a different, or shift, in emphasis and different options.

Looking at research seems to tell us very little since most studies look at pre-adolescent compared to post adolescent subjects and performing jumping activities. Since the timing of the AGS is so individualised you would have to perform a longitudinal study over many years to obtain data on what is happening to stiffness during any given individual's AGS. The results of one study have indicated that young children have insufficient stiffness. Another "speculated that during adolescence, children acquire the ability to take greater advantage of elastic energy storage in the musculotendinous system when performing jumps." But let's look at what we know intuitively and from our new



Boys and girls have similar body shapes before puberty. Courtesy of Peter Thompson.

knowledge of the role of stiffness.

To be effective, the coach of adolescents must have some sense of the biological development of each of their athletes and take an individualized approach rather than a 'group' approach. Sessions can be introduced at an early age that develop awareness of correct, natural, neutral posture to be continued during the AGS. Without correct posture the kinetic chains are unlikely to ever be in a position to function optimally.

Novel and new coordination movements should be introduced along with the continued practice and re-learning of previous skills and coordination. Since all of these activities requiring learning and re-learning, fatigue should not be allowed to be a factor in the session. For a great resource for exercises for developing posture and optimal stiffness refer to Jay Dicharry's 2014 book, *'Run Like an Athlete - Unlocking Your Potential for Health, Speed and Injury Prevention'*.

Educate the athletes that frequency and variety in training is better than quantity. 'More' training rarely equals 'better' training. We know that stiffness in running is a function of speed of running, shoe softness, surface softness and terrain. In all these areas there should be variety and more, variety. Change the paces and never jog, either walk or run from easy to faster. Use different shoe models and brands and run on differing surfaces and terrains.

Outside of running, use multi-lateral movements and different, particularly glute-dominant, movement patterns in cross-training and through taking part in other sports, while not losing the athletes to these other sports! Strength needs to be developed to handle the new, increased body weight and this should be developed within functional body movements.

What else can you do through the AGS? - Encourage getting sufficient, uninterrupted sleep. Use an empathetic, process-oriented, non-comparison model of coaching. Motivate to maintain the physical activity when what was once easy becomes tough. Be honest, particularly on the possible time frames it will take to recover performance levels. Encourage patience and have patience. Respect the socio-mental development of athletes as well as their physical development. Be aware of the athlete's susceptibility to training injuries, especially during and immediately after the AGS.

It can take some athletes many years to recover prior-AGS performance levels and for others there is barely a change in the rate of their performance progression.

Mo Farah - a well-developed running economy in action.



When we see an athlete who loves the sport enough to continue and at age 25 finally surpasses her best from age 15, we know that perseverance has been rewarded and we have all seen this happen. While the AGS appears to rob athletes of their ability, a good young athlete will usually develop into a good adult athlete, particularly the late developers, provided they regain and further develop the natural 'spring' of their pre-adolescent youth.

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Note: Peter Thompson has been a BMC member coach since the early 70s, is a Vice President and is internationally respected. He lives and coaches in Eugene, Oregon (www.newintervaltraining.com).

Steve Cram and Laura Weightman interview

STAR ATHLETE **LAURA WEIGHTMAN** AND COACH **STEVE CRAM**, GAVE THEIR INSIGHT INTO LONG-TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT AT THE RECENT BMC SYMPOSIUM. **STEVE O'BRIEN** WAS THERE TO REPORT.

On an unseasonably warm day in March, as Mo Farah adds a new British and European half marathon record to his arsenal, Steve Cram takes centre stage with all the confidence of a multiple world record breaker and an accompanying medal haul in major championships that warrants his name among the demi-gods of British Athletics. He is clearly at home among the fellowship of the British Milers' Club. As the room settles, through the open doors of the conference room, I believe for one fleeting moment that I hear the distant strains of a Spitfire in the bright blue skies above but it is gone before I am able to connect the significance. To his left, his young charge - Laura Weightman, who looks a little bemused that attention should be focused on her personal journey from World Championship trials tragedy in 2013, where fate would have her unceremoniously crash out of qualifying for the World Championships in Moscow that summer with a tumble that saw injury momentarily pause her progress, through to multiple Diamond League appearances in 2014 - culminating in achieving a 1500m personal best [4.00.17] and second place in the British rankings, in a battle that saw her inched by .1 of a second to the line behind

Laura Muir over the 1500 Metre event in Paris last July. We all want to know what we can expect from Laura in 2015 and how her seasoned mentor intends to achieve it.

Cram kicks off the interview in typically time-served BBC presenter style but for one momentary pause where, almost apologetically, he underlines that he is not a qualified coach like those esteemed colleagues he addresses in the audience. It is an honesty that he revisits later on when he admits that the coach/athlete relationship has been a steep learning curve - one that simply would not have survived or, indeed, flourished had he simply spoon fed Laura with the same training sessions he himself had undertaken under the tutelage of Jimmy Hedley in that golden era of British middle distance running. It becomes crystal clear that he recognised very early on that while he has a wealth of experience that he is able to share with Laura, this does not automatically buy the Cram-Weightman team success. He is quick to echo the earlier emotive words of this year's British Milers' Club Lifetime Achievement Award winner, Gordon Surtees - "The only important person is the athlete".

Steve provides a rapid overview, presumably to make the most of our time

and avoid a bombardment of questions that could result in information overflow. He makes the key point that he is a great believer in keeping things simple but at the same time utilising the support offered to them by British Athletics and the English Institute of Sport. He also explains that he recognises the importance of drawing from the wealth of experience of other coaches that we have in this country and abroad. With what seems like a great deal of regret he tells the story of how he had attempted to work with the Morpeth Harrier's original coach in developing Laura from a talented junior into the senior ranks only to have his offerings of support to both, being dismissed by the former. Steve recounts the moment when Laura called him and relayed that "she'd sacked her coach." There is no tangible element of smugness in his words as it is very much a cautionary tale of how he believes that as coaches we're all better off working together - he is quick to add "I'm not quite sure how a junior athlete sacks her coach but there you have it. That's what happened." The words appear tinged with sadness.

"We agreed never to talk about money or what other athletes were doing." - Steve Cram C.B.E.

With the parameters of their relationship defined, they set about their journey towards fine tuning an athlete that Steve describes as already having displayed, "Inherent racing skills". One of the first decisions that had to be made was geographical. After much deliberation, Laura decided that Leeds Met (now Leeds Beckett) should be her training base. It offered the team around her that would give her the support that she required to excel and the social environment that meant that she would be able to continue the healthy social lifestyle required by juniors wishing to successfully transition into the senior ranks of international competition. Laura eagerly emphasises the importance of her training group that is predominantly male and the support she receives from her university based physiotherapist, Alison Rose, which proved invaluable during her first year at the university as she battled a knee injury that she has now fully overcome but resulted in very little mileage during that initial period



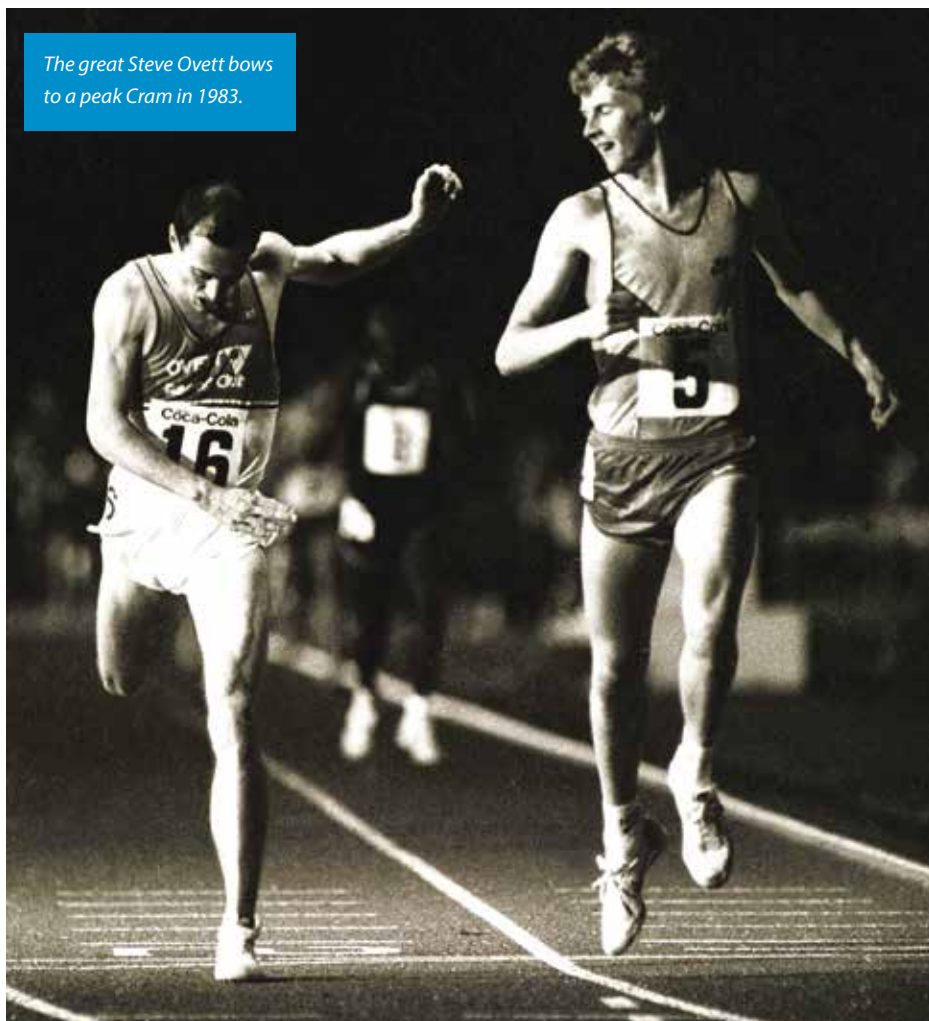
Laura Weightman
and Steve Cram.

in West Yorkshire. There is a strong emphasis on strength and conditioning, led by Andy Henderson at Leeds and Cram is keen to quash the rumours perpetuated in some quarters that S&C has become a modern day fad bordering on obsession. Explaining that while it was never referred to in the modern day vernacular, it was always at the core of his training with push ups and sit ups before bed and a set of "dumbbells welded up for me in the dockyards by Jimmy Hedley!"

The inaugural world 1500m champion continues, "I recognised a hunger in Laura that I saw in myself." Working off of little mileage, things were not always plain sailing. "There were bio-mechanical issues to address, Laura also suffers from asthma and even setting training sessions has been a challenge." It's hard not to read the minds of everyone in the room as we all wonder how can the jet-setting BBC anchor man balance coaching duties with his demanding career. Steve uses the word 'Malleable' when explaining how the relationship works. "I'll call Laura and ask 'I'll be passing through on my way to Manchester in the morning, can we fit a session in then?'" Laura's coach strongly believes in giving her ownership of her training but the coach/athlete relationship remains in a constant flux of communication; he uses the word "Symbiotic" with the beaming grin of a north-east lad who balanced his A levels with international competition in the late seventies and early eighties. "Laura is very good at interpreting the information given to her", he emphasizes.

Steve is at pains to point out the stubbornness of young athletes and is keen to highlight the mistakes that he, himself, made. He gingerly making the point that if he had adhered to his coach's advice more rigidly he might have avoided injury more often. With a swift nudge in the ribs from Laura, the 'Jarrow Arrow' adds tactfully "Of course - Laura always listens to everything I say." This endearing display of coach/athlete informality prompts a question from the floor asking why there appears to be little emphasis on cross country and indoor competition in Laura's winter season. Laura is eager to answer this for herself and points out that cross country has formed an important integral part of her winter training prior to Christmas but then had to give way to altitude training and mileage. She admits to now hitting up to eighty miles per week, which have been built steadily over the years from the modest beginnings since the Cram/Weightman partnership began before dropping off the miles during her initial period of altitude training and peaking again prior to coming home to sea level. Steve,

The great Steve Ovett bows to a peak Cram in 1983.



almost protectively, adds that the indoor season is not part of her focus at the moment as there is a trade-off between competition and improvement - adding that he felt that there would not have been significant benefit to Laura's training to justify it.

He explains that targeting Laura's 800m time is the focus for the upcoming season and that while Laura displays the times, the strength and the leg speed during training to suggest that there is a world class 800m lurking beneath the surface, that it is yet to translate into competition. He makes the point that by improving Laura's two lap time, this will impact positively on what has previously been her most successful event, the 1500m.

"I think it's important to have a plan but not be afraid to deviate from it", continues the Los Angeles Olympic silver medallist. His eyes tellingly light up when he refers to the three and three quarter lap distance. There is a little banter about how he almost achieved his full potential. Not bad for a guy who held the British 1500m record for nearly thirty years and continues to hold the British mile record for the last three decades, of which our editor, Matt Long, expands upon on pages 12-13. Steve briefly explains the process of identifying each season's target race and partitioning those

races that are developmental and those which they importantly aim to medal in and how important that it is to Laura in terms of keeping a healthy perspective on things. Yet again, Steve highlights the solid foundation that all else is built around - the athlete and her improvement. All else pales into insignificance.

Inevitably the question is asked, what of Laura's targets for this year? The answer is concise and really the only answer someone as ambitious and driven as Weightman could be expected to give.

"Next year." There is not a flicker in the young athlete's expression while delivering a potentially unsatisfying, ambiguous answer. The nods of approval around the room provide telling feedback. Cognate, both coach and athlete state Rio in harmony and it is plain to see that 2015 will be a carefully planned and executed stepping stone to their ultimate goal - The Olympics. No further speculation is entered into.

The need to carefully build on mileage and the use of altitude is yet again emphasised with a glimpse into the broadness of Cram's panoptical planning for Laura when he lets slip their future plans for her pre-Olympics acclimatisation camp to be based in Japan. Even this, he admits, will be tried and tested far in advance. Cram's

flight awaits, shortly after this interview is planned to end. It would appear that nothing will be left to chance - not even nutrition, which he light-heartedly alludes to when explaining that Brendan Foster advised him to not trust local cuisine when he was an aspiring junior but rather to, "Always pack a tub of jam butties!" One surmises from the hour spent in their company, that Cram has already provided a twenty-first century solution beyond co-commentator Foster's well-meaning advice for his promising young athlete.

As the session draws to a natural close, a light-hearted question is thrown from the crowd of enthralled listeners asking if Laura ever drops her coach during a training run. With a side glance at her coach and a toothy grin, Laura gives the response we all wanted to hear "He tries . . . but he ends up pulling a hamstring!"



Laura hopes to fly the flag in Rio at next summer's Olympics.

As coach and athlete leave the stage, above the sound of shuffling chairs and murmured discussion, a jet passes overhead, no doubt taking off from nearby Heathrow. A

metaphorical moment of clarity dawns upon me. While we undeniably exist in a modern era of flight - it has been made all the more possible by those Spitfires who shepherd it in.

BMC Horwill Scholarship

OUR SECRETARY, **DAVID READER**, ENCOURAGES YOU TO HIT THE DEADLINE FOR OUR 2015 **BMC HORWILL SCHOLARSHIP** APPLICATION:

The BMC is looking for individuals to help us progress middle-distance running by conducting a creative and innovative piece of research. We believe that one way in which we can support this aim is to offer a scholarship of up to £2000 to help at least one individual pursue a selected topic.

Why the Frank Horwill Scholarship?

The late Frank Horwill MBE was the founding member of the BMC in 1963. As well as working tirelessly for the Club, Frank became extremely well known for his work on research and collating research from around the world on middle-distance and endurance running. In order to safeguard his tradition, this scholarship has been established. Coaches, research students, or lecturers may be interested and are welcome to apply. The Scholarship is open to all BMC members, but we are also opening the application process to non-members so that we can cast the net far and wide.

How to apply?

The application process is a simple two stage exercise. The first step is to complete an application form which is available from the BMC website. This is to be submitted to the BMC by the closing date. The second stage will involve short-listing the best applications and then holding short interviews. After this we will inform the successful candidate of our decision and

support them to conduct the research in the months and years ahead. The findings will be widely distributed to all BMC members and if appropriate, beyond. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact David Reader at davidreader@britishmilersclub.com

The closing date for completed applications is 8th May, 2015.

BMC Horwill Scholarship roll-call of previous winners

Back in 2008, Frank Horwill himself spoke of the opportunity which the scholarship gave in terms of a platform for recipients to go on and join some of the great coaches, coach educators and researchers who have shaped endurance running, globally. He said, "It is hoped that this BMC project will continue in



Frank Horwill MBE, BMC Founder.
Courtesy of Peter Thompson.

its format and encourage others to join the ranks of Astrand, Gerschler, Costill, Daniels and Noakes."

PREVIOUS WINNERS:

2009: Dr Jon Oliver

That a simple field based measure, utilising heart rate and ground contact time, will be able to accurately monitor and predict endurance performance.

2010: Richard Taylor

Links between physical training, aspects of immunity and infectious symptoms throughout an annual training cycle in highly trained endurance athletes.

2012: Dr Martin Jones & Dr John Parker

Examining mindfulness and pain catastrophizing in competitive runners.

2013: Jamie French & Dr Matt Long

The potentiation effects of high intensity warm ups in a middle distance context.

2014: Andrew Shaw

The effect of downhill running on running economy in highly trained distance runners.

Running Physiology

THE 2013 WINNER OF THE FRANK HORWILL AWARD FOR SERVICES TO THE BMC, **BRENDON BYRNE**, EXPLORES AN IMPORTANT PHYSIOLOGICAL COMPONENT OF ENDURANCE RUNNING:

Running speed at maximum oxygen consumption (vV02Max) is not a new item but it is misunderstood and the point of this article is to answer the following questions:-

- What is vV02 Max?
- Why is it important?
- How do you establish what it is for an athlete?
- How do you incorporate into training?

V02Max has been an established term in physiology for a great number of years. It refers to the top rate of oxygen consumption in an individual. As any coach will know as a runners speed increases so does the amount of oxygen used. V02Max is usually expressed as millilitres of oxygen consumed per kilogram of bodyweight per minute. The higher the figure the better. A top runner could have a reading expressed as 75 ml/kg /min. V02Max obviously responds to endurance training and is a good indicator of endurance ability. Runners at the top end of races have a high V02Max.

The problem comes when you look at runners of similar training back grounds and performances. Exercise physiologists have noted that athletes with similar V02Max readings have very different race performances. Costill noted as far back as 1979 that there is a relatively poor correlation between V02Max and actual race performance. Therefore there must be other factors that come into play.

Running economy is also very important. It can be defined as the oxygen cost of running at a particular speed. A more efficient runner will run at a lower oxygen cost at a particular speed than a less efficient one. This can be assessed in the laboratory. Being able to run in a high quality way at a low % of V02Max prolongs endurance.

We now come to vV02max and this is a strong indicator of endurance performance since this takes into account running economy while V02Max does not. Training at vV02Max speed is one of the best ways to improve the physiological variables necessary for endurance for performance. These include vV02 max itself, running economy and velocity at lactate threshold. This is according to Owen Anderson in "Running Science". Researchers have shown that leg muscle power and strength improve when compared to running at lower speeds. After a period of time vV02 max itself would have to be reassessed of course as fitness

and racing performances improve. The concept of vV02Max was introduced by French researcher Veronique Billat at the University of Lille in 1999.

Why is this? Increased leg muscle strength improves economy because individual muscle cells are stronger and therefore fewer muscle fibres are needed to run at a particular speed and the energy cost of running at a particular speed is reduced. Running at vV02 max increases neuromuscular responsiveness and coordination more than running at slow speeds does. This is a very important point. Perhaps this may have an influence on those who advocate very high mileages for training.

Let's look for a moment at the opposite end of the spectrum. Some athletes have run 200 miles a week in training to achieve success. The American Gerry Lingren was known to have run up to fifty miles in a day as well 200 miles in a week. He will be best remembered by track fans with long memory for the epic three miles race at White city in 1965 where Ron Clark beat the thirteen minute barrier for three miles. His best run was a joint six mile world record he set with another American Billy Mills.

Dave Bedford was another who ran 200 miles a week. He will be best known in recent times as Director of the London Marathon. Bedford did set a world 10,000 metres record of 27 mins 30.8 secs back in 1973. He will also be remembered for winning the Southern Counties junior and senior cross country championships at Parliament on the same day! There is a suggestion that Gaston Roelants, the Olympic steeplechase champions in 1964 and world record holder in the event was also running great mileages. Incidentally he also won the International Cross Country (the fore runner of the current World Championships) on four occasions. That was also a time when England were very successful in the International Cross country. If Lydiard was suggesting that 100 miles week was the way to increase endurance for runners then these athletes though that doubling the distance was even better. It has been established now that more isn't necessarily better when it comes to mileages.

Let's now return to v V02 max as one of the most efficient ways to increase endurance performance. The question then arises as to how you work out what your vV02Max actually is. It can be established in the laboratory on a treadmill. This is

expensive and is not as functional as actually running on a track. A measuring wheel or GPS system could also be used. It can be done as follows as Owen Anderson has indicated. Firstly make sure that you are rested and then warm up properly. Then run as far as possible in six minutes. Divide the distance run by 360 (number of seconds in six minutes to give a very good estimate of your vV02 max.

If for example you cover 1600m in six minutes the vV02Max would be 1600/360 which would give a reading of 4.44 metres per second. This can then be converted to a more recognisable time for 400m which is 72 secs. The following chart gives a guide as to how the figures work.

6 minute run	vV02 max m/sec	400m speed
2000m	5.56	72 secs
1800m	5.00	80 secs
1728	4.80	83 secs
1600	4.44	90 secs

You work out the speed per 400 by dividing 400/metres per sec. For example if your metres per second speed is 5.00 then divide 400 by that and you get 80 seconds. The same principle for odd distances run as 1728 metres run in six minutes indicates in the table above.

Having worked out the figures that apply to an individual athlete how do you integrate them into a training programme? Running at vV02 max speed is very stressful and needs to be used carefully. According to Billat, the 'gold standard' session is 5 x 3 minutes at vV02 max speed with 3 minutes easy recovery. This would be very difficult to achieve!

The researchers have also evolved the 30 – 30 approach. This involves running for 30 seconds at the target speed and then jogging for 30 seconds. This can be repeated until the target speed cannot be maintained any more. At this point the session is stopped. This would work well with inexperienced athletes. Progress can be shown by the increasing number of 30 second runs that can be achieved at the target speed. It is up to the coach to introduce sessions using this method and it could include repetitions of 400m or even 800m. Progress can be assessed by the adaptation of the athlete to the sessions.

The sessions can be introduced into a programme that involves conventional sessions including steady recovery runs. The $\dot{V}O_2$ max sessions can be very demanding. The key point about training at $\dot{V}O_2$ max speed is that they work and it has been demonstrated that improvements in

performances result. The main criticism of this is that testing has been done on athletes of a moderate standard. It is not likely that international athletes are likely to be involved in a testing programme! Like any type of session it needs to be introduced into a programme carefully. Surely it is worth a try.

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Fine physiology allows Danny Ray to win the Peter Coe mile at Oxford last year.



Steeplechase Preparation

FOUR TIME NATIONAL STEEPLECHASE CHAMPION, **LUKE GUNN**, EXPLORES PHYSICAL PREPARATION FOR THE CHASE.

A 3000m Head of Athletics steeplechase consists of 28 hurdles and 7 water jumps. Before attempting this championship distance, many of you reading this will perhaps have attempted the 2000m event over 5 laps of 18 hurdles and 5 water jumps and some of you may have started your career over 1500m, which is comprised of 13 hurdles and correspondingly 3 water jumps.

For those of you who have not experienced the thrill of the chase, perhaps you are worried about incurring injury and are daunted by the prospect that you could get hurt in this most demanding of events?

An understanding of some key principles of loading will help you take the fear out of the chase and face the water jumps with confidence that you won't humiliate yourself in front of the crowds who inevitably flock towards the vicinity of the water in the hope of seeing some mishap at every club event you will have ever been to!

An understanding of loading is pivotal to physical preparation for the chase when

you step back and consider that boys have to cope with the water jump drop and resulting impact from their hips being at around 6 feet in the air, with girls dropping from hips being between 4-5 feet in the air. Taking the water jump out of the equation, even if you were to make a perfect clearance over the hurdles, there's still a significant drop and loading effect which your body has to cope with.

Mastering the chase involves a process of new skill acquisition and one of my guiding principles was that jumps which inevitably involve tendon loading should be performed when you are fresh rather than fatigued, to start off with. So the golden rule is to acquire the skill first and then train when under fatigue.

Physical preparation for the chase is all about developing elasticity, robustness and mobility. Many athletes tend to forget the principles of long term athlete development are about developing foundational and fundamental skills and

then progressing on to more event specific preparation. Unless you are blessed with boundless natural talent, it's hard to become a performance athlete at the chase overnight. To guide my own career and in the mentoring of athletes who I work with in my role as Head of Athletics at Birmingham University AC, I abide by the following model:

Walkovers/ Mobility> Light Plyo's/ Box Jumps> Depth Jumps/ Full Plyo's> Runovers/Strides> Turnarounds> Session (No water jump) > Session (Full Hurdles) > Time Trial> Race

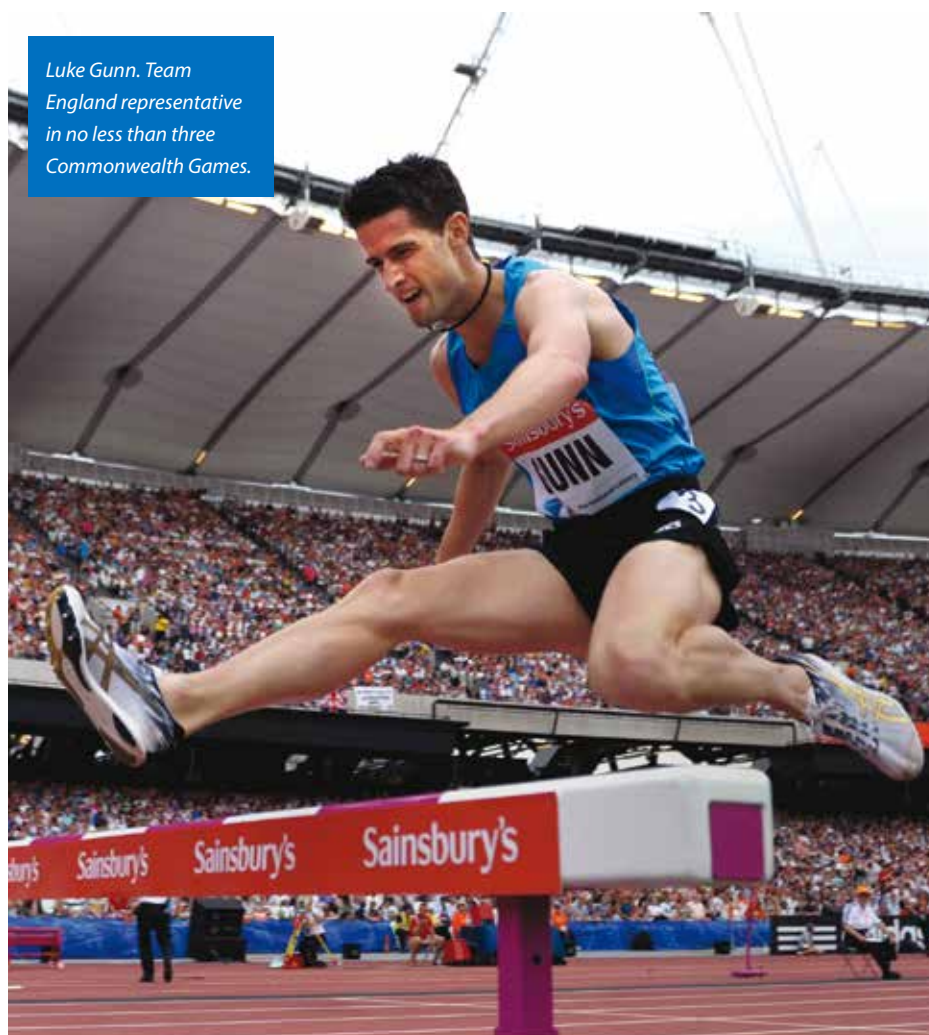
The key in the above model is to focus on general conditioning and physical preparation over a period of months, before progressing on to more event specific work such as runovers and strides. So calf raises, squats, lunges and bridges were all part of my regime in the early phases of my periodization cycle in preparing for the three Commonwealth Games which I took part in. I then progressed on to bunny hops, squat jumps, split squats and step drops. When progressing on to box drops, the golden rule of skill acquisition is to move from double leg to single leg landings. If you are a coach, I'd strongly recommend you count the number of ground contacts which your athlete makes and then monitor their progression as you work towards the demands of the race you are aiming for. The principle of progressive overload should also allow for height drop progressions to increase loading.

Once your athlete is able to hurdle efficiently, you should still continue to work on some general conditioning to limit the load on the athlete and this engrains good local, lower leg control. Technique can be engendered through the more event specific hurdle based sessions at a later phase in the periodization cycle.

Remember that progressive overload needs to be gradual and patient as key injuries commonly incurred by chasers include those in the area of the Achilles, lower back and hip flexors.

By following the principles inherent in the above model, you or your athlete stand a good chance of avoiding injury and developing the kind of elasticity and eccentric power, making you ready to face the chase!

Luke Gunn. Team England representative in no less than three Commonwealth Games.



The European Indoor championships

NATIONAL COACH MENTOR, **NEVILLE TAYLOR**, REFLECTS ON THE RECENT **EUROPEAN INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS**

The beautiful city of Prague hosted their first major championships for 37 years. The European Indoor Championships, was held in the O2 Arena (mainly used for ice hockey), between 6th-8th March. For me, the European championships of 1978, held in the homeland of the great Czechoslovakian Emil Zatopek, will always bring the memories flooding back of the superb Steve Overt, who of course kindly donated one of his gold medals to the BMC, winning the European 1500m title.

Prague 2015, saw Team GB consisting of no less than fourteen endurance athletes of whom nine reached their respective finals. Our medalists were of course Lee Emanuel, who took silver over 3000m, and Chris O'Hare, who bagged bronze in the metric mile.

Here we take an in-depth look at British interest from 800m to 3000m in more detail:

Womens 800m

Jenny Meadows went into the championships with the fastest time and was favoured to win a medal but sadly had a torrid experience due to a viral infection which struck her down earlier in the week.

Jenny's problems were clearly evident from her heat, in that although winning in 2:02.59, she was not 100%. In the semi-final, run at a steady opening 400m of 60.02s, Jenny found herself fading over the latter stages in finishing 3rd in 2:02.4. Lady luck appeared to be with her at that stage as she qualified for the final, following the disqualification of the Russian, Bazdyreta.

Agonizingly, Jenny felt unable to take her place in the final in what turned out to be a slow tactical race won by the Swiss athlete, Selina Buchel in 2:01.95 (with 400m being reached in 62.7s). Although very frustrating for the athlete who last won a BMC Grand Prix in Solihull last August, the one consolation is that the winters training appears to have gone well and a successful outdoor season is on the cards.

Fellow Brit, Shelayna Oskan-Clarke, appearing in her first major championship, was eliminated in the slowest heat with 2:05.08 after losing contact at a critical point between 500-600m. The athlete who last won a BMC gold standard race at

Watford in August last year, will no doubt gain from the experience.

Mens 800m

Guy Learmonth, who last won a BMC Gold Standard race at Watford two summers ago, came away from Prague with great credit gaining much experience and stature.

He won his heat and semi final with assurance and growing confidence. The final was typical championship race going through 400m in 54.82. The Dutchman Kupers hit the front injecting pace with a 200m in 25.63 and unfortunately Guy was caught out and never got back on the pace. The pre-race favourite, the vastly experienced Marcin Lewandowski of Poland won in 1:46.67, with Guy finishing 6th in 1:47.84.

Both James Bowness, 1:49.78s, and Mukhtar Mohammed, 1:49.75s, were disappointed with their performances, which meant elimination in the heats.

Womens 1500m

The overwhelming event favourite Sifan Hassan of Holland led this straight final of 10 runners from start to finish. Going through in 400m in 64s and 800m in 2:11.8s, set the Dutch athlete up with a winning time of 4:09.04s. Angelika Cichocka (Poland) gave

chase over the last 400m to take the silver medal in 4:10.53s.

In her first major championship Rosie Clarke finished 6th in 4.16.49. Having last won a BMC Gold Standard race at Watford last summer, she will have gained confidence and experience, learning about racing at international level.

Mens 1500m

Both British entrants, Chris O'Hare (3:41.83s) and Charlie Grice (3:48.98s) won their heats without any problems.

The main excitement in the first two heats of four was the audacious front running of Tesfaye (Germany) who went through 400m and 800m in 54.5s and 1.53.67s respectively and in the next, Ozbilen (Turkey) caught the bug with 54.3/1.51.23!

The final was run at a more conservative pace with 400m laps of 57.62s and 58s with the aforementioned Ozbilen leading the way. In a frantic final 200m Jakub Holusa, to the delight of the home crowd, won in 3:37.68s.

Chris O'Hare gained a well deserved bronze medal in 3:38.96s. He is growing, with his ability to change pace, into an outstanding championship performer.

On the other hand, Charlie Grice, who

Quick silver. Lee Emanuel at the European Indoor Championships.



features on p.21 of this magazine, got himself boxed in during an important part of the race and was unable to use his strong finish to the best effect. He did however run a PB of 3:39.43s for a commendable 5th place.

Womens 3000m

From the two heats, both Laura Muir (8:57.71s) and Emelia Gorecka (9:03.97s), progressed to the final. Disappointingly Kate Avery, who looked set to qualify, was unable to change pace at a vital stage and missed out in 9:05.14s.

The final was run at a very comfortable pace with the first kilometre being clocked in 3:00.73s and then time at 2000m was 5:58s. The race then came to life with the Dutch athlete Koster kicking in over the

last 1000m but the Russian winner Yelena Korobkina (8:47.6s), ran inside 2:49s over the last 5 laps to take the spoils.

Laura Muir typically gave everything but ran out of strength, missing a medal with a 4th place in a time of 8:52.44s. It appeared as though Emelia Gorecka, who last ran a BMC race at Watford in June 2014, found that two races in two days, at this level, both mentally and physical draining, especially with the change of pace.

Mens 3000m

The British entrants had mixed fortunes in their heat with both Lee Emanuel (7:52.39s) and Philip Hurst (7:52.57s), qualified for the final. Tom Lancashire, (11th in 8:10.74s), was below par never getting involved in the

second heat and did not qualify.

In the final, the following day, Turkey's Ali Kaya led through 1500m in 3:50s and a subsequent followed by a 3.48 broke Mo Farah's championship record with a storming 7:38.42s.

Our own Lee Emanuel was the only athlete to really give chase and the man who last ran in a BMC Grand Prix at Stretford in August 2013 was duly rewarded with silver medal and PB of 7:44.48s. This confirmed the talent that was spotted in his early days at home town Hastings. This performance bodes well for a return to his favored 1500m in the summer outdoor season. Philip Hurst, who competed in no less than 5 BMC races back in 2013 ran well to finish 9th just outside his PB in 7:51.94.

Book review

BMC ACADEMY CHAIRMAN AND COURSE DIRECTOR, **DAVID LOWES**, REVIEWS THE **AUTOBIOGRAPHY** OF BMC MEMBER NO.52, **TONY ELDER**.

IT'S BEEN AN EDUCATION

Tony Elder an autobiography

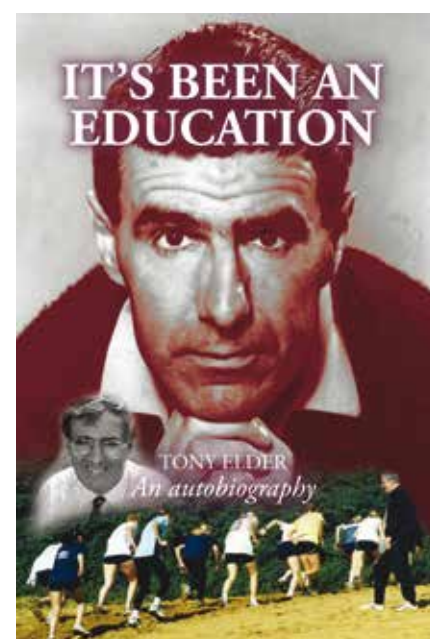
I first met Tony Elder, who joined the BMC in our inaugural year of 1963, on one of our renowned Residential Training Weekends – which one and when I'm not sure, which is somewhat of an embarrassment to yours truly! As Academy Chairman I can't even remember when I took charge of the helm ... probably 2003 or 2004 ... who knows! However, each to his own and the one thing that stands out is the author's meticulous attention to detail and this is shown clearly in his listings of all the athletes he has coached including internationals, national standard runners and of course the perennial club runners. No big deal you might think – don't be deceived though, he details all of their performances and PB's that leaves almost no stone unturned. Even more amazing is all of the courses he has attended, including such events as the Loughborough Summer Schools, Lilleshall WAAA Potential Camps and the numerous British Milers' Residential Courses. Again, you may think, so what? Well, even more amazing is the fact that he lists many of the coaches and athletes in attendance. What a memory!

The publication is a chunky 460 page book and well worth a read even though it's not an essential athletics educational publication. It's obviously non-fiction, but for those who do not know who Tony Elder is, it could quite easily slip into the fiction classification. For those that do know him, I'm sure, as I found out, you will unearth a

multitude of hidden facts that I never knew about the man. He was after all, a coaching colleague of the pragmatic and founder of the BMC, Frank Horwill, for more than 50 years. As an example, in my first England cross country international as a 19-year-old, I ran in the famous Cinque Mulini which I won! One of the English women running was the great Rita Ridley, who I was lucky to sit beside on the flight back from Milan. Little did I know that she was a Tony Elder coached athlete! I wish I had known these facts when meeting him twice yearly initially in my pre-Chairman days – you think you know someone, but after reading every page, you realise you know very little!

It's an engrossing tale, charting the life of a man from his early university days who could not quite make his mind up as to what profession route was best for him. The fact that he went down the teaching path points to many relevant learning curves that helped him to become a respected head master and middle distance coach and lecturer. It's perhaps not a warts-and-all story, but there is much to savour and many humorous anecdotes along the way.

There isn't a lot of athletics in the pages, and when there is, you have to wait until around 300 pages into the book to encounter a whole section devoted to athletics and his coaching exploits. This covers his early years in coaching and where he learned his craft from some well-known luminaries including Geoff Dyson and Denis Watts. There are several photos that



highlight some of the athletes he coached running on the sand hills at Camber, Merthyr Mawr and Winterton.

Having worked alongside Tony on many BMC Courses at Ardingly in West Sussex and at Meryth Mawr in South Wales, I can say without hesitation that he was a very astute and meticulous coach who had the respect of the athletes in his training group and also of the visiting coaches. This book charts a large proportion of his life both as an academic and in his hobby of coaching athletes to the highest level possible.

This autobiography is certainly an alternative different read to the usual athletics related fare, but if you like a good story, this will definitely satisfy your whims.

***It's been an education – Tony Elder an autobiography* is published by Brown Dog Books and is available from amazon.co.uk and Waterstones at £12.99 and also as an e-book.**

Jim Hogan

THE WELL RESPECTED JOURNALIST, **ALASTAIR AITKEN**, PAYS TRIBUTE TO A TRUE RUNNING LEGEND, IN PENNING **THE OBITUARY OF JIM HOGAN**.

It was sad to hear that a 'Great' character, Jim Hogan passed away on January the 10th this year.

Jim Hogan was born Limerick on 28th May 1933 and started running as a lad at his parents' farm in South West Ireland. That was before he actually came to England, where he raced a lot. With regard to running in Ireland back in those days, he would tell me, "Running was never heard of in those days". He continued "If you were seen running, people thought you were off your nut". That sort of sense of humour endeared Jim to so many that he ran with and trained with. People like Dave Bedford and Mike Beevor (also a BMC member). These men all went to see QPR together and, of course his love of horses and horse racing itself was legendary.

Jim could turn his hand to any manual job, including slab laying, designing gardens and being a grounds man. He had run in the 10,000m in the Olympics at Tokyo in 1964 and then proceeded to lead the marathon for some time, and this was at a time in his life when he was dealing with family worries.

As so many have said he would take anybody on and beat them on his day. I remember an Irish paper asking me to get a few quotes from him at Brighton, after the Inter-Counties cross country back in 1964. He was in the thick of it. He came fifth behind 'Great' cross-country runners Mike Turner, Mel Batty, Eddy Strong and the legendary Ron Hill and was one place ahead of Basil Heatley. He was the first runner to score who represented Middlesex, who placed an impressive second senior county on that very day.

I once confronted him with the question as to what he considered to be the stand out race of his career. He told me categorically, "It was the Southern three miles at Motspur Park in 1962 (13:27.6s). We got to the start and I said to Gerry North, "It is no good waiting around for these lads. We will cut it out for them. You take the first two laps. I went through the mile in 4:24.1s and then looked around and Gerry was not there. He was way back. The others were still sitting on me and nobody would take the pace. All of sudden, Bill Kirk came up and took the lead with a 71s lap. When I came into the straight with just over six laps to go, I went to the front and put in a 62s circuit and got a good lead". He continued with great attention to detail that, "Mel Batty came after me and did

a 59s lap, which knackered him! I never took my foot off the pedal and got to the bell 50 metres in front and ended up winning by a second. That gave me satisfaction, more than anything else, as there were some great runners in the race. It was the first and only time that I ran the second half of a three miles faster than the first half".

Most memorably, the Polytechnic Harrier won the European Championships Marathon in Budapest back in 1966 (2:20.04.6), which was of course the year when our very own football team last lifted the World Cup. He recalled in my presence, "The preparation for that race was fantastic. I was training at Chiswick and Richmond, and around that area there was a 15 mile course which was my main run. I never really ran the long distances for training, as I always felt it took too much out of one's legs. I would sooner run 15 miles at a faster pace. About 10 days before the marathon I did 75 minutes on that course, which took in Richmond Hill, Roehampton Hill and Kingston Hill, so I knew if anybody was going to beat me in Budapest they were really going to have to shift!".

Training methodology aside, with regards to the race itself, he recalled vividly that, 'Everything went well for me in the race. I was not even breathing hard at 25 miles, just cruising, as if I was out for an easy training run. The only thing that disappointed me was that it was not the Olympics, because I feel that on that day nobody would have beaten me. It was one of those days when everything was right for me".

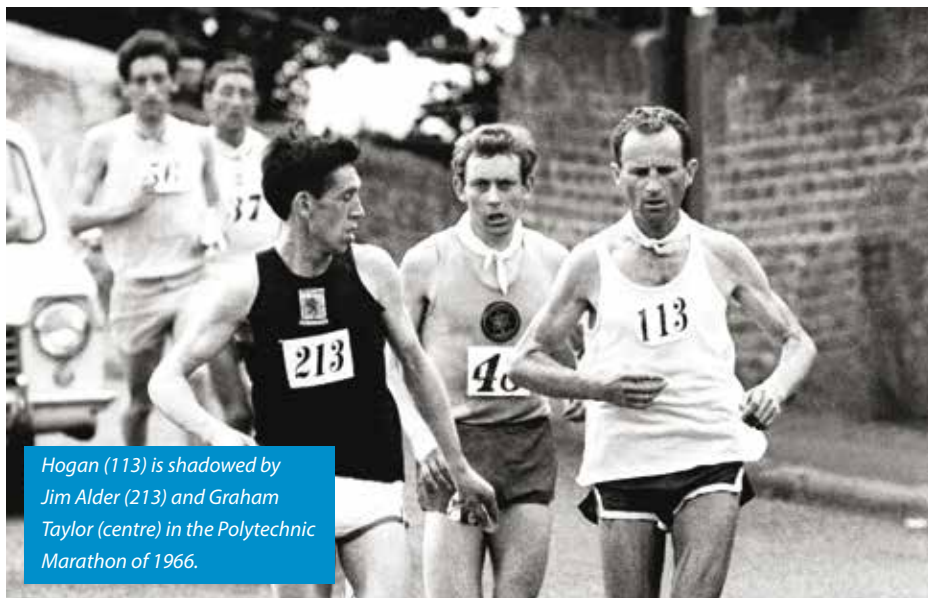


Jim Hogan has just become European marathon champion.

In addition to the monumental achievement alluded to above, keener students of our sport, may recall that Jim was runner-up to Graham Taylor (2:19.04s) in the Poly AAA's Marathon from Windsor to Chiswick which was also in achieved in the very same year of 1966, with Ron Hill, Bill Adcocks and Brian Kilby finishing just in arrears.

By his 50th birthday he was still a formidable talent, and proved his longevity in winning the World Veterans Cross Country and 5k track Championships in Puerto Rico.

A rare breed indeed who will be sorely missed.



Hogan (113) is shadowed by Jim Alder (213) and Graham Taylor (centre) in the Polytechnic Marathon of 1966.

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