



# BMC News

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# British Milers' Club

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 we are under starters orders for yet another cracking edition of BMC News!

As the gun fires, we start quickly and with purpose as our fine Chair Tim Brennan urges you to take note on the next page. We surge round the first bend with Kevin Fahey's fantastic look back at an historic and record breaking 2015 season in our 52nd year. As we break and head for the inside lane, we are afforded a glance of acknowledgement to our BMC Award winners in Part Two – back by popular demand, there's more thought provoking reflections from our Lifetime Services to Coaching Winner, Gordon Surtees, followed at a pace by

Secretary David Reader's insight into the work of our most recent Horwill Research scholarship Award Winner, Richard Blagrove.

We steady our early pace and settle into the pack in Part Three, as we glance back at the field of BMC of yesteryear. Former world record holder, Dave Moorcroft, tells us why he remains so passionate about our club, before a quizzical David Cocksedge introduces us to the likes of Harry Hayes, Herb Elliott and Percy Cerutti, before sharing a laugh with our Fabled Founder.

We approach the half way mark with our head up and eyes fixed firmly ahead as David Lowes tells us about the emerging talent at the recent BMC Academy weekend,

before we stride out with some belting interviews with Paul de-Camps, Molly Long and Harriet Knowles-Jones.

We maintain our searing pace in Part Five as we begin to see stars in the form of Shelayna Oskan-Clarke, Lynsey Sharp and Kyle Langford, who give us a fly on the wall insight into their summer experiences in the Bird's Nest of Beijing.

Our brand spanking new BMC International section, is indicative of Part Six's willingness to break away from the pack and to show our class as Simon Taylor takes time out to explore the wonderful contribution of the Irish Milers Club to our sport.

Our world championship report by Mark Gallagher, sees us round the top bend with an analysis of British interest in all events in Beijing related 800m-5000m in Part Seven. We then make the long run for home with a jam packed coach education section where a diverse range of issues such as tactics, altitude, rest and recovery and steeplechase are all given attention before we remember the late, great Ron Clarke, through the eyes of Alastair Aitken, as well as paying our respects to one of our own dearly departed members.

Give your legs a rest and let your eyes do the work! Read on!

Photo © Matthew Fraser Moat



Editor Matt Long is shown a clean pair of heels by Linford Christie and BMC Commentator Peter Scott at the Anniversary Games.



**Cover:** (Clockwise from left bottom): Bobby Clay, Kyle Langford, Alex George, Harriet Knowles-Jones, Molly Long and Shelayna Oskan-Clarke in centre.

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# Chairman's Notes - Autumn 2015

BY TIM BRENNAN BMC CHAIRMAN

## 2015 Season

Welcome to the autumn edition of the BMC News. Our summer race programme was as popular as ever and we considered it a great success. I hope all of you got everything you wanted out of the races as well.

We reckon that the Sport City Grand Prix in May was our biggest ever meeting with 385 finishers and then one week later our Milton Keynes PB Classic came within one finisher of beating that. As well as big numbers the meetings were of a high quality with many international championship qualifications for UK and overseas athletes. At Oxford, Shelayna Oskan-Clarke and Jenny Meadows clinched their World Championship qualifications with sub 2:01 performances. From the Grand Prix races series we had twelve European under 23, seventeen European under 20 and eleven World Youth, qualifications.

At Watford we had a great meeting which I think everyone enjoyed. As well as an extremely high standard meeting we introduced a few innovations with track-side interviews and bringing the spectators onto the track to cheer the final few 5000m races. It made for a great atmosphere and is something we would like to do more of. You have to bear with us on that one, as the priority is always going to be making sure the meetings are organised with the right seedings, pacemakers, officials and so on. That is a huge undertaking when you have 48 busy meetings to look after. Only after these essentials are sorted can we turn our

attention to the meeting presentation.

With a successful season behind us, thanks must go to our long term kit sponsors Nike and to British Athletics who provided support this year.

## The 'C' in BMC stands for Club

I think that sometimes people may forget that the BMC is a club and not a governing body or a commercial organisation. The motivation of all the race organisers when they give up large amounts of their time, is to provide the best possible meetings for the membership and in return we expect some contribution and loyalty from you.

The minimum level of contribution is that you pay your subs and keep membership active. Some of the meetings we organise fill up and priority goes to paid up members. An expectation that because you have run quickly you will automatically get into BMC races is not correct, nor should you expect that the cost of you competing should be subsidised by those who do keep up with their subs.

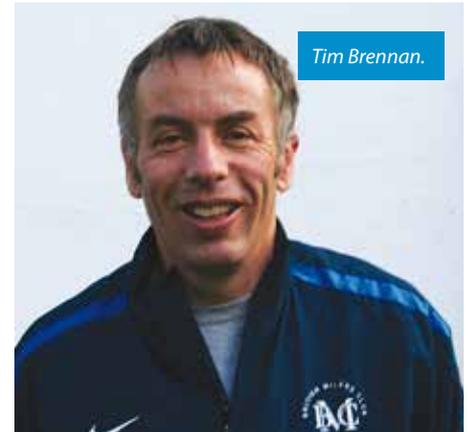
Members should also think before taking to social media to criticise their club. We are not perfect, well-argued and politely put feedback is always welcome. Really though an email or call to me or one of the other committee would be more in keeping with the sense of common cause that membership of the BMC should entail. It is quite debilitating when you are in the middle of organising a meeting to find that some of the people who you are organising it for have taken to social media to criticise the club. To miss-quote John F Kennedy 'ask not what your club can do for you, ask what you can do for your club.'

Last but not least when you are at meetings politeness towards BMC officials is a must and aggressiveness is a big no no.

We have previously published codes of conduct for athletes entering our meetings. Going forward you will now see these conditions in the email you get on acceptance. As a club you would not describe these conditions as a contract, as we all part of one organisation. We hope that they simply set an expectation that everyone acts in a way compatible with membership of Britain's biggest and best athletic club.

## Championship Qualification

We believe that one of the main aims of the British Milers Club is to help people



Tim Brennan.

Photo supplied by Tim Brennan

achieve championship qualifications, be they School, National or International ones. Our season planning is geared up round that with our races on the dates that fit with qualification cut-offs. In fast paced races the qualifying times can be achieved and not left to the trials races which are frequently more tactical as finishing position is vital. Of course it is then up to the selectors to pick the people who have both the time and the right place in the qualification race. Personally I do not like the current policy of the selectors that restricts team selection on criteria of their assessment of medal potential. There has to be an element of if you have done the time and got the place in the trial, then you deserve a chance to prove your worth in the championship. In the senior international championship a policy that does not select older athletes runs the risk of driving people out of the sport as it limits the level they can aspire to. I was once asked by a senior UKA figure new to the sport, what motivated athletes to stay in the sport through their 20s and 30s. For many it is the dream of appearing at a major championship that keeps people training on cold winter nights. For the good of the whole sport you want people staying in the sport as long as possible, raising the national standard, and forcing younger athletes coming through to achieve performances in excess of their own.

## Looking ahead

There is plenty of activity for the BMC in the months ahead. In this magazine you will find details of our coaching seminar and of the indoor race programme. Then looking forward to the 2016 season we have the dates for our Grand Prix meetings agreed, they are also published in this magazine. All the Best

Tim Brennan  
Chairman



Harry Earl on his way to victory in the 'C' 5000m at Sport City.

Photo © Adrian Royle

## KEVIN FAHEY AND TIM BRENNAN EXPLAIN WHY THE 2015 GRAND PRIX SEASON HAS BEEN A BIG HIT:

Among the glut of qualifying standards achieved during the 2015 season none more than Shelayna Oskan-Clarke's illustrates the value of the British Milers' Club Grand Prix Series.

Having finished runner-up in the British Championships, the 25-year-old Windsor Slough Eton & Hounslow athlete had to run inside the UKA qualifying standard of 2mins 01.00secs twice to confirm her place on the plane for the World Championships in Beijing.

She arrived at Iffley Road having done that once four days earlier in Luzern with 2:00.90 but to ensure that the selectors would have no doubts about her quality she had to do it again.

With the pacemaker taking her and Jenny Meadows through the bell in 58.1secs the pair traded blows on the second circuit before Oskan-Clarke edged ahead in the finishing straight.

Victory secured Oskan-Clarke her ticket to Beijing where she repaid the faith of the selectors handsomely by twice beating her personal best – and dipping under two minutes for the first time – with 1:58.86 in the semi-finals and then 1:58.99 for a brilliant fifth in the final.

It was a great example of a rising British star using the BMC Grand Prix Series to further their ambition and realise their potential and club officials can take great pride and satisfaction in having helped Oskan-Clarke on her way – and she was also delighted to collect a £500 bonus from the BMC for breaking 2mins 01secs!

Of course she wasn't the only athlete to tap into the Grand Prix set-up.

There were a total of 44 qualifying times set in the first four Grand Prix events with an astonishing 24 at Sport City and 13 in Watford plus five in the opening GP in Trafford.

Of those qualifying standards there were two for the World Championships in Beijing – Oskan-Clarke and Meadows - 12 for the European U23 Championships, 17 for the European U20s, 11 for the World Youths and two for the Commonwealth Youth Games.

Of those, Gloucester AC's 19-year-old Alex George used the GP series to sharpen his speed over 1500m, clocking a personal best in Watford, before going on to lift the 5000m title with a blistering kick at the European U20s in Sweden.

Likewise 18-year-old Invicta East Kent athlete, Bobby Clay, claimed her first Grand Prix A race victory at Sport City with a big PB of 4:12.20 before going on to win gold over the same distance in Sweden with Amy Griffiths, who also ran a PB in

Manchester that night, claiming a silver medal behind Clay.

That same evening, 18-year-old Edinburgh runner Josh Kerr, clocked a PB of 3:44.12 to win the B 1500m and used that confidence to win gold at the Europeans six weeks later.

Shaftesbury Barnet Harrier, Kyle Langford, didn't run a GP this season but used a Gold Standard meeting for an early season sharpener on route to winning the 800m in Sweden.

From the European Under 23s in Estonia 22-year-old Rhona Auckland, who won bronze in the 10,000m in Tallinn, ran a PB of 15:51.01 (she has since bettered that) to finish third in the 5000m.

One of the most eye-catching performances of the series came from 17-year-old Alex Yee. At Watford he sprinted to victory in the 5000m B race in a personal best time of 14:09.8, which put him third on the UK All-Time Under 18 lists – behind Cornwall legend Jon Richards (13:59.66 in 1981) and a certain Mo Farah (14:05.72 in 2000). In addition it was inside the European U20 qualification standard but earned him a place in the England team to run the 3000m at the Commonwealth Youth Games in Samoa where he finished an excellent third behind two formidable Kenyans.

That Watford meeting also saw Kenya's Nancy Chepkwemoi win the 1500m in a time of 4:03.09, which was a Watford BMC record and put the 21-year-old Kenyan into the World's top 20. Also in the women's 3000m steeplechase there was a Watford BMC record for Juliet Checkwoi as the 25-year-old

from Uganda clocked 9:48.01 on her debut at the event – and visibly improved her water jump technique with every lap!

Kiwi Angela Petty dominated the women's 800m to win in 2:00.62 which was inside the New Zealand qualifying standard of 2:01.00 for not only the World Championships in Beijing but also the Olympics in Rio next year.

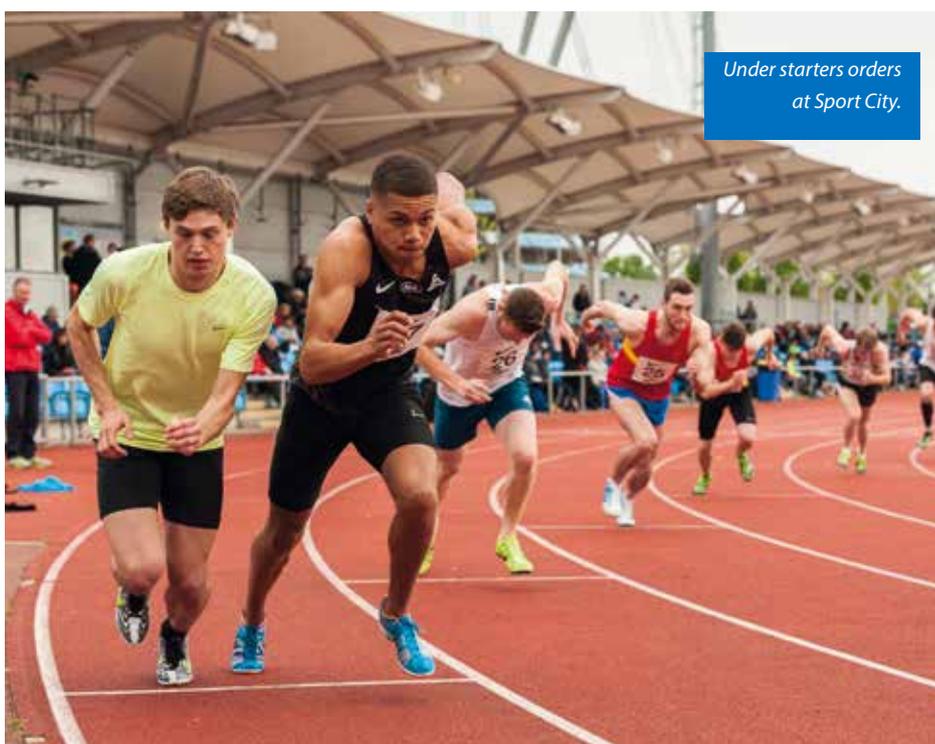
Watford was also the evening when the ageless Anthony Whiteman picking up the Best of British £200 bonus for the fastest men's 800m of the evening by winning the B race in 1:48.97. It was the fifth successive year that the 43-year-old has broken 1mins 50secs.

The BMC organisers borrowed a policy used in the Highgate Night of 10,000m, where spectators were allowed onto the track up to lane 4 to cheer on all the runners, for the final three 5000m races, a move that was overwhelmingly applauded by the runners.

So was it a coincidence that of the 59 finishers in those three races – the women's A and the men's A and B – there were 32 personal bests and 16 season's bests?

And that perfectly illustrates the success of the Grand Prix series. As well as offering the elite athletes the opportunity to achieve qualifying standards for the majority of club runner it is the ideal chance to run a personal best that draws them to the series and the many other meeting staged by the club.

The statistics prove the point. Over 128 races staged in the five Grand Prix meetings a total of 616 personal bests were set by 1,441 finishers.



Under starters orders  
at Sport City.

Photo © Adrian Royle



Making a splash. Sara Treacy, Iona Lake and Juliet Chekwel chasing hard at the Watford GP.

### Our Biggest Ever Season -5000 Finishers!

2015 saw the most ever finishers in a season for the BMC, with the 5000 mark being broken for the first time.

An unbelievable 5544 performances were recorded in our races, exceeding the previous high of 4820 in 2012. When Ciara Mageean headed off the challenge of Madeleine Murray and Jessica Judd to take the victory in the women's 'A' race over 1500m in Solihull in August, her fine clocking of 4:07.31 meant that she staggeringly became the 5000th finisher in BMC race this season- a performance which BMC had treasurer and stalwart Pat Fitzgerald shaking his head in disbelief. "I think it is the first time we had over 5000 finishers in BMC races in a season!", Pat said with justifiable pride. In September, Mageean bettered her Solihull clocking with a fine 4:06.49 with a 5th placing at the IAAF World Challenge Meeting in Rieti, Italy, this evidencing the ability of the BMC to assist athletes in making the step up from domestic to international class.

587 races were held, which was also a record. These came from 48 meetings,

exactly the same number as last year.

This means we are fitting more races into the same number of meetings. Our races are more popular than ever but we are approaching maximum capacity.

### A great season for Women's 1500m performances

2015 saw a great standard of 1500m racing amongst the women. Let's remind you that:

- Nancy Chepkwemoi topped the rankings with the fastest time ever in a BMC women's only race with 4:03.09. This sits second in the BMC all-time rankings, behind Lisa Dobriskey's record of 4:00.64 achieved in a mixed race at Stretford in 2008.
- 5 athletes bettered 4:10 with Jessica Judd and Melissa Courtney achieving the landmark for the first time.
- For the first time the average winning time of the Grand Prix series was sub 4:10.
- Ciara Mageean's time just bettered her previous BMC best of 4:07.45 from 2011 in Birmingham. This remains the BMC U20 record.

- All time 20 women have broken 4:10 in BMC races with a total of 33 performances between them.
- The most sub 4:10 performance in BMC races by a single athlete is 5 by Charlene Thomas, achieved from 2007 to 2015. Lisa Dobriskey and Sonia O'Sullivan both have 4 times.
- Sonia O'Sullivan's 4 times were achieved in two meetings as in each she ran the women's race followed by a lower order men's race. These were:
  - Solihull 2002, 4:05.94 for 9th in the 'men's G' and 4:09.06 for 1st in the women's A.
  - Watford 2000, 4:06.39 for 8th in the 'men's F' and 4:08.08 for 1st in the women's A.
- 20 Grand Prix performances were faster than 4:15, the most ever in a season
- In the 3 Grand Prix meetings before European U20 and U23 qualification closed, 6 qualifications were achieved:
  - U20 – Rosie Johnson, Bobby Clay, Amy Griffiths, Kathryn Gillespie
  - U23 – Jessica Judd and Melissa Courtney.

### BMC Ranking 2015

Rank	Perf	Name			DOB	Club	Pos	Venue	Date
1	4:03.09	Nancy Chepkwemoi	U23	W	08.10.93		1rA	Watford	27 Jun 15
2	4:07.31	Ciara Mageean		W	12.03.92	University College Dublin	1	Solihull	22 Aug 15
3	4:08.92	Charlene Thomas		W	06.05.82	Wakefield	1rA	Oxford	18 Jul 15
4	4:09.56	Jessica Judd	U23	W	07.01.95	Chelmsford	2rA	Watford	27 Jun 15
5	4:09.74	Melissa Courtney	U23	W	30.08.93	Shaftesbury Barnet	3rA	Watford	27 Jun 15

EARLIER THIS YEAR THE BMC CELEBRATED ITS 7,000th MEMBER IN **POPPY WARDLEY**. **MATT LONG** CAUGHT UP WITH BOTH HER AND COACH **DAVID MILLS**:

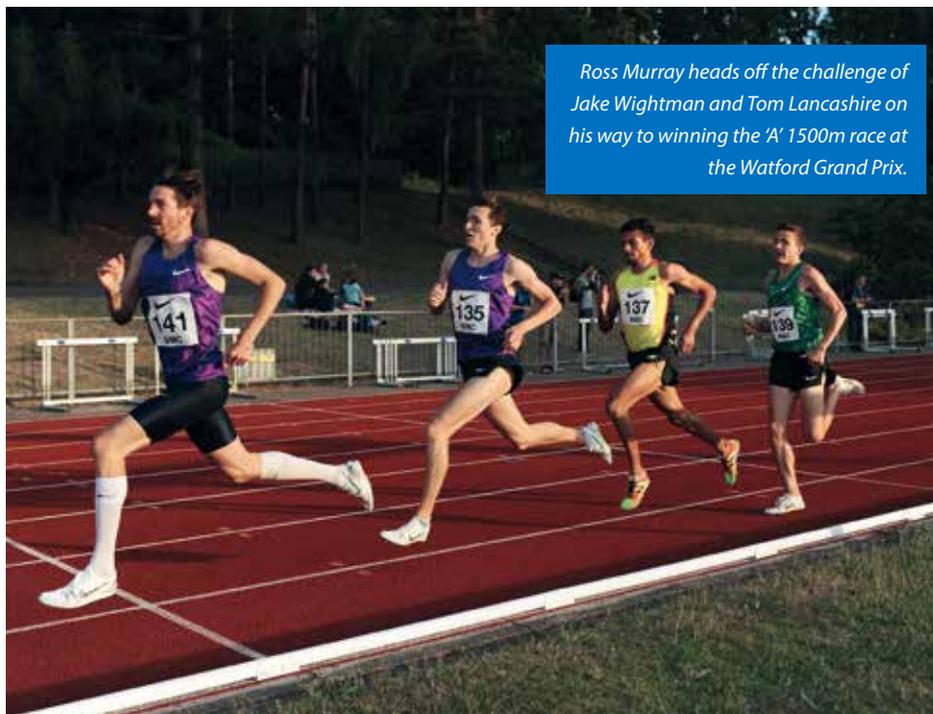
Fourteen year old Poppy Wardley, who hails from the Reigate Priory Club in Surrey, first competed in BMC Regional races in Brighton and Eltham back in the summer of 2014. She recalls her debut at Brighton in that, "It was inspiring to be exposed to such a high level of running and I left with a new PB and a new determination to improve my own racing". After a successful season last year, Poppy has now progressed on to hold healthy PB's of 2:27.2 and 4:55.91 for 800m and 1500m respectively. Poppy is full of praise for our club in enthusing that, "The BMC is such an inspiring organisation, with an outstanding system for both experienced and aspiring athletes; I was so pleased when I reached the qualifying time to be a member as it opened up so many opportunities for new races to enter, surrounded by amazing runners".

Level 2 Coach David Mills, who has a squad of nine young athletes is adamant that the BMC can play an invaluable role in terms of aiding long term athlete development, adding that, "Achieving an entry standard time for BMC is an inspirational moment for a young middle distance athlete and can play an important part in their training and goal setting programme.

With the access membership gives to BMC races and training programmes, and with the knowledge you are part of a middle distance running community where striving for continual improvement is a core value, the young athletes who join are provided with assistance in their long term

development".

Well done to both athlete and coach and we hope to be bringing you news of our 8,000th member in the not too distant future as the BMC goes from strength to strength in terms of both performance and inclusiveness.



MEMBERS ARE REMINDED THAT THE FOLLOWING RACE ENTRY TERMS APPLY TO BMC RACES:

The British Milers Club is a voluntary organisation aiming to improve the standards of British middle distance running.

We aim to put on athlete friendly meetings and create the conditions in which athletes have the best possible chance of achieving fast times.

To do this it is our aim that:

- All races are seeded appropriately.
- All races are paced appropriately (The pacemaker will be asked to run at the pace stated irrespective of whether the field follow them).
- All meetings run to time.
- Results are produced quickly, completely and accurately.
- Athletes are treated with courtesy and understanding.
- Race venues are chosen for their suitability for fast times.

We will always strive to achieve the above but our success is dependent on the goodwill of athletes and officials, and sometimes on events outside our control. The BMC does

not attempt to provide opportunities for slow tactical races. Athletes seeking this kind of race to prepare themselves for a championship should look elsewhere.

We expect that athletes will do the following:

- Enter the races by the deadlines set.
- Be truthful about their season and personal best times.
- Be truthful about their current form.
- Turn up for races that they have entered.
- Enter only one race per meeting unless intending to run more than one.
- 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.

We expect of all athletes, coaches and parents who attend our meetings that they will be polite and considerate to the volunteers organising the meeting.



Photo © Tessa Wardley

#### 2016 GRAND PRIX FIXTURES

14th May	Sport City
28th May	Watford
9th July	Solihull
23rd July	Oxford
20th August	Trafford

TO CONCLUDE OUR TWO-PART SERIES, **MATTHEW FRASER MOAT** REPORTS ON THE SPEECH GIVEN BY **GORDON SURTEES**, WHEN HE ACCEPTED THE LIFETIME SERVICES TO COACHING AWARD AT THIS YEAR'S BMC SYMPOSIUM:

Last April, we explored well-respected Gordon's forthright and controversial views on a range of issues including experience and attitude in our sport. We then moved on to take a look at his views on the state of athletics at grassroots level including the league structures. We concluded the first of this two-part series by gaining his fascinating insight into the debate between the value of running fast times versus the necessity of learning tactical prowess.

In this piece, we move on to explore Gordon's views on centres of excellence; the value of cross country running; his self-reflections about what his philosophy of coaching, before culminating in a philosophical consideration of what satisfaction has meant both to him and how we might challenge ourselves as coaches, athletes or officials in our sport to seek some for ourselves.

### Coaching

"A good coach is someone whose athletes almost fulfilled their potential. Looking back to my early days of coaching, I was lucky to be given a junior international match where I shared the coaching duties with a top sprints coach, who asked me a question and gave me the answer before I could think, 'What is a good coach?'

It was apparently someone like him, who had taken a youngster all the way to a major championship and did it again and again and again. He made me realise what

I needed to do if I was merely going to be a reasonable coach. Today I realise how difficult it is for coaches to fulfil that criteria.

Coaches can take an athlete to a certain level and somebody may say that the athlete should be on a centre of excellence under their specialist coach. Sometimes inducements are offered, and I have been told it is almost a case of "leave your coach, relocate, or no funding". Little thought is given as to how the athlete attained the level that attracted attention or how could the athlete and coach be helped to make further progress.

I think Centres of Excellence can be good, especially for some events, they may even be good for some endurance athletes, but not for all. Athletes go in hoping to become a big gun but some depart looking more like cannon fodder for those who may have emerged as big guns. In those cases they would have been better served to have been left in their own environment, with their own coach. Sometimes I wonder if Centres of Excellence were established for the benefit of all athletes or whether they are for the convenience of 'the system'.

Athletes today have so much information available, they know where they want to go and they want to get there quickly, it is almost like everybody is on a jet-ski, tearing along, eyes fixed ahead. There were no jet-skis in my day, we went down to the local lake and hired a rowing boat. No matter

how hard we worked, progress was slow, most of the time we did not know where we were heading, we moved forward whilst facing the opposite way. We had our own 'back to the future'. We moved into the unknown, into the future, whilst looking at the past. That is what we need to do, switch off the engines of those jet-skis, and look back to see what we can learn from the history of our endurance events.

We may come across the golden era when Great Britain and Northern Ireland ruled the endurance world, we may find that Seb Coe did not train with his arch rival Steve Ovett, and that Ovett did not train with the up and coming Steve Cram. I don't recall 'Crammie' training with Peter Elliott or Elliott going up to Scotland to work out with Tom McKean! They were the products of groups scattered around the country, working with training partners with their coach, using local environment. They only came together for competition.

I do not think that if we had put all that talent at one location under one coach that we would have enjoyed the massive success we experienced. Today some seem to have different ideas.

### Cross Country

While looking back we may come across some other names, Pirie, Ibbotson, Bedford, Foster, McLeod, Moorcroft, Hill, Jones, Spedding, Alder and Adcocks, plus of course Coe, Ovett, Cram and Elliott. Whether they were 800m or marathon runners, each of them was a very good cross country runner.

They realised the value of winter work and competition, both on the country and road. This was the very foundation of success in the endurance events. They also realised that success depends on being racing fit and the only way to get to that state was to race and to do so regularly, against good class opposition. It was how they learnt their trade, especially in the formative years.

These days I do not feel some athletes race often enough to get racing fit, either in the winter or the summer. Some actually go to major events having achieved a qualifying standard but not having learnt their trade or even got racing fit. This in effect means that they don't have a plan B or even a plan A, they go for the trip.

Cross country is the foundation for endurance events. But have we sent our strongest teams to the world cross country in China this year, or for that matter even a full team? Imagine saying to Roy Hodgson that he could go to Rio but only

Photo supplied by Gordon Surtees

Gordon Surtees pictured with the world record medal donated to the BMC by Steve Ovett.



play eight or nine players in each match? The problem does not always lie with the governing body. Two years ago the world cross country was held in Poland and again we did not send our strongest men's team because some of our better endurance runners did not seek selection. This was because they would be out of the country, either warm weather or altitude training. They were preparing for some lesser race which may yield a qualifying standard for summer selection. What they were saying was we do not want selection for the World XC because it would interfere with our training!

Some were not considered as medal potential at the main event in August. The lesser race they were building up to was in late April or May yet somehow their preparations could not include the world cross country in March? For every action there is a reaction. Perhaps the reluctance of athletes has resulted in the seeming lack of interest in cross country by the powers that be?

Athletes should bear in mind that, if they are out of the country for long spells, how can they get in the regular racing they need to get racing fit?

This current attitude towards racing has a knock on effect that affects the quality of races. Recent statistics in the last six years showed an increase of 38% in the last six years of finishers in the National XC. With respect to those who competed, this was not really progress, but a case of 'never mind the quality, feel the width'.

The same situation exists in road races where good club standard athletes are winning events in which years ago only international class athletes would have made the podium.

Some marathon runners expect selection on the limited experience of having run one marathon. How many of our top marathon runners today have actually won a marathon or ran in something other than a big city event, or even competed in the expected climatic conditions and time of year that major championships are held. Tradesmen? Some of them are not even apprentices!

With a greater knowledge and understanding of sports science, and more experts attached to our sport, why is this happening? In some ways it is like highly qualified degree holders not fully understanding what is required in manual jobs where sweat is involved.

When I reflect on my own career, I realise that not only have I failed to adapt to modern living, but also to changes within our sport. In some ways I have been like Frank Sinatra, I did it *My Way*.

### **My Way**

I did not set out to be different but through practical application I found that some things advocated by experts were not correct or were not compatible with the athletes I coached or with the environment we used.

I tried sports science by attending a high level coaching course, and after an athlete had completed a hard run, I was asked to take his pulse. That was the day I found I could not count that quick, I messed it up. Working with an athlete locally, I told him I would take his pulse after every run and base his training schedules on heart rates. His first session was 12 x 400m with a short recovery jog. He completed his first rep and began his jog. I ran after him and could not catch him! End of scientific involvement, we decided to stay with what was working for us. If it works, why change it just because others were doing something different. From that day I have never taken a pulse rate or based a schedule on the use of heart rates.

Along came periodisation with more cycles than a bike shop. We were already aiming to peak twice a year, for the National cross country and the AAA championships. They were the selection races in those days. Why change to do the same thing only calling it something different?

When core stability became the vogue I did not see as greatly different to how I have looked after my body for many years. That method was pelvic girdle work, a strengthening of the mid section. Together with balance and posture it was close enough not to warrant a change.

Mental state is as important as the physical so I attended a class on psychology. This guy began his mumbo-jumbo, he was preparing us for the greatest final we would ever compete in. We were on a high, milking the situation, we had just won our heat and were jogging a lap of applause to the crowd. I interrupted him and said that athletes don't do a lap of honour for merely winning a heat. He was an expert but if he was to influence me I had to be confident he knew something about the sport he was relating to. It was obvious he didn't and he had never coached an athlete. Yet he was telling me what to do and how to do it.

It made me look at other experts, some were good but others had never coached an athlete and were probably improving their reputations and CVs more than they were helping athletes and coaches.

I looked at new training methods which emerged from time to time, most were not new ideas but variations on a theme. No matter what we use or what it is called it is not greatly different to what we used in the

past, that we discovered by trial and error. It was based on commonsense, if we wanted endurance we used over-distance work, for speed we used under-distance, anything else we messed about with the length and speed of repetitions or the length of recoveries.

We looked at the demands of the different events and what qualities the athlete possessed and merged them. We looked at races, the opposition and possible tactics and prepared accordingly. We tried not only to get racing fit but also produce the big result on the day it mattered.

While in Chile for the world junior championships I learnt a valuable lesson. While the team enjoyed a siesta I went for a walk in the heat of the day to locate areas where our endurance athletes could train safely. On my way out of the hotel I stopped in the foyer, opened up the fridge freezer that had been placed at our disposal, and took out a tin of my favourite drink and off I went. I hadn't gone far when I was accosted by a beggar, a young woman with a small child. Out of character I dug deep into my pockets to find that I had left my money in the hotel, so I gave her the only thing I had, my unopened tin of pineapple juice. I still treasure the look on her face. She did more for me than I had done for her, she made me feel good, a feeling of self satisfaction.

### **Satisfaction**

What I had given that woman, I had not bought or earned, it was a freebie from the hotel, I was just the delivery boy. To get a true feeling of self-satisfaction requires a personal contribution. When we analyse things at the end of our careers, or the season, or after races or training sessions we should consider the level of self-satisfaction. Only in that way can we know whether or not we were fully committed to everything we did. Only total commitment will bring success.

Self satisfaction is what we should all aim for, even those top people running our sport. They should listen to their own experts, and accept that success is not possible without core stability, the strengthening of our mid-section.

The mid-section of our sport is the section of the sport between the joggers and the elite, the club structure that contains the most important element of the sport, the competitive structure.

I believe that I learnt my trade. My challenge to you, the people responsible for the future of the sport, is to go forth and learn yours. Seek self satisfaction, and never lose sight of the two most important factors of success, racing fitness and pace change.

OUR SECRETARY, **DAVID READER**, GATHERED THE THOUGHTS OF 2015 FRANK HORWILL RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIP WINNER, **RICHARD BLAGROVE**:

## *Effect of a resistance-training programme on performance and injury risk factors in young middle-distance runners*

### Overview

Middle- and long-distance runners often associate lifting weights with increases in muscle mass and excessive soreness that compromises performance. There is however a growing body of scientific research showing that resistance training can improve endurance running performance, without any increase in body weight, compared to a training programme that involves running alone.

Resistance training for young athletes has also been a controversial topic in the past, but many investigations have shown that this is a safe and effective form of exercise that can improve fast running performance and the general robustness of an athlete.

There is a high prevalence of chronic overuse-type injuries in endurance runners, which is primarily due to the high volumes of repetitive loading they experience during training. Poor movement control, muscular

imbalances and a lack of conditioning in tissues vulnerable to injury are all associated with injury risk in endurance runners. Many of these risk factors are modifiable with effective exercise interventions, including resistance training, which has been shown to reduce the incidence of overuse type injuries in adult athletes.

There is currently a lack of research that has looked at the effects of an appropriate and sports-specific resistance training programme on markers of endurance running performance and injury risk, specifically in young athletes. Therefore the aim of this research project will be to investigate the impact of a resistance training intervention, added to the training programme of a group of 15-18 year old middle-distance runners, compared to a routine of running alone.

The results of this study will provide insight into whether incorporating regular and basic resistance training sessions is beneficial for a young athlete's performance and risk factors linked to common injuries.

Following initial physiology and biomechanical testing of participants, the resistance training programme will last 10 weeks and involve two weekly sessions added to the normal training schedule of the runners. The resistance training sessions will include a range of basic bodyweight and

free weights exercises designed to improve muscular strength and movement control through similar co-ordinated patterns of movement to the running stride. The exercises prescribed will be simple, easy to learn and involve minimal equipment. Upon completion of the training programme, participants will be re-assessed and their results compared to a group of matched control runners who have been following a running-only training regimen.

If the resistance training intervention is shown to be beneficial, coaches working with young middle-distance athletes can prescribe these exercises around running-based sessions with the confidence they add considerable value to the development of their young runners.

**If you are interested in participating in this research study please contact Richard Blagrove at [richard.blagrove@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:richard.blagrove@stmarys.ac.uk) or telephone 07961 875568.**



© Richard Blagrove

## Biography

Richard is Programme Director for the BSc Strength and Conditioning Science at St Mary's University, Board Director for the UK Strength and Conditioning Association and a Senior Strength and Conditioning Coach with The St Mary's Clinic.

In addition to his academic and research responsibilities, Richard has provided strength and conditioning coaching support to many of the elite endurance runners based at St Mary's University over the last six years. This has included provision of support for two runners who competed at the Olympic Games in 2012 plus other medallists at recent major championships.

Richard has a background in middle distance running winning several regional titles and competing to a national standard from 1997-2003. During this period he was also a member of the British Milers Club and regularly received training advice through letters sent to him by Frank Horwill. He is still an avid follower of the sport and runs recreationally in his spare time.

Richard has recently published a book entitled '*Strength and Conditioning for Endurance Running*' that aims to provide coaches and runners with information on how to enhance performance and lower injury risk. It is available through The Crowood Press, priced £21.99. Any profit made from sales will be donated to charity.



## BMC AWARDS WINNERS 2015

### BMC ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

#### SHELAYNA OSKAN-CLARKE

Also nominated :- Dale Clutterbuck, Charlie Grice, Laura Muir.

### BMC YOUNG ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

#### BOBBY CLAY

Also nominated :- Alex George, Kyle Langford, Molly Long, Markim Lonsdale.

### BMC COACH OF THE YEAR

#### AARON THOMAS

Also nominated :- Bill Foster, George Gandy, Joyce Hogg, David Lowes, Peter Mullervy, Geoff Wightman.

### LIFETIME SERVICES TO COACHING

#### ALEX & ROSEMARY STANTON

Also nominated :- Mike Down, George Gandy, David Lowes.

### FRANK HORWILL AWARD FOR

#### OUTSTANDING SERVICES TO THE BMC

#### JOHN KNOWLES

Joined in 2005 as a coach and, apart from his coaching activities, has been heavily involved with the BMC virtually since joining. He developed the now popular regional races at Exeter which provides very meaningful competition for the South West regions middle distance runners. He is a regular member of our Grand Prix organising team and current member of our national committee.

### HORWILL RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIP

#### WINNER

#### RICHARD BLAGROVE

For researching :- Effect of a resistance training programme on performance and injury risk factors in adolescent distance runners.



[www.britishmilersclub.com](http://www.britishmilersclub.com)

# 2016 BMC Horwill Research Scholarship

- Are you interested in research?
- Do you know of someone who is involved in exercise research?
- Can you help progress middle-distance running?

## Background

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. The scholarship has been in place now since 2008 and we are currently funding active research.

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.

## 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.

## How do I apply?

Application forms and more information can be downloaded from the BMC website. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact David Reader at [davidreader@britishmilersclub.com](mailto:davidreader@britishmilersclub.com)

The closing date for completed applications is 1st May, 2016.



Frank Horwill is honoured for his services to the BMC by double Olympic 1500m champion, Lord Coe.

## FORMER WORLD 5000M RECORD HOLDER, **DAVE MOORCROFT**, SHARES HIS THOUGHTS WITH **MATT LONG**:

It's the evening of 7th July 1982 and there are 600m remaining of the men's 5000m at the Bislett Games in Oslo. The late, great commentator, Ron Pickering, is bellowing into his microphone, "All the athletes have lined the track to cheer him on. There's no more popular athlete on the British team than David Moorcroft," as the man in the blue Coventry vest comes round the bend, nearing completion of his penultimate circuit. Into the last lap and Moorcroft continues his remorseless pace and with just 250 metres to go, Pickering becomes more animated. "He really is pouring it on. Absolutely pouring it on," shouts the proverbial 'voice of athletics'. With 80 metres remaining, the commentary reaches a crescendo- "He is coming on and on and on...". With half the length of the home straight remaining it's as if Pickering wakes up to the fact that this phenomenal piece of front running could register in the record books - "And he could be on for that world record!". As an exhausted Moorcroft crosses the line with arms aloft before collapsing into the arms of two officials, Pickering's excited voice explodes, "He's inside. He must get it. He's well inside. He's smashed it wide open! He's taken the biggest bite out of it that we've ever seen in modern times".

On that July evening, David Moorcroft broke the 5000m world record by a staggering 5.79 seconds to obliterate the mark set by the great Henry Rono. His astonishing finishing time of 13:00.41 stood for three years until broken by the phenomenal 1984 Olympic champion, Said Aouita. Moorcroft remains the last non-African to set a world record over 12 and a half laps of the track. Significantly, it took an athlete of the class of Mo Farah to wipe it from the British record books as recently as 2010.

Thirty three years later, he is keen to start our discussion about matters present. He is enthused about his role in working for the Join In Project, which is an Olympic legacy project, backed by government funding. He oozes passion as he tells me, "Join In was created to maximise the period between the end of the Olympic Games and the beginning of the Paralympic Games in 2012". The man who served as Chief Executive of UK Athletics between 1997 and 2007 continues that, "It's about promoting volunteering in community sport and this year we are working with the BBC on the 'Big Help Out' building up to their Sports Personality of the Year programme. We want to encourage 10,000 more people into



Former world record holder at 5000m, Dave Moorcroft.

volunteering in sport in their community". He says poignantly, "It's worth remembering that volunteers created our sport and the clubs, competitions and pretty much every athlete we have ever produced".

The man who has been a member of Coventry Godiva Harriers since 1964 and who is currently the club's President, challenges you to think about those who have given up their time in our sport to help you. "If you are an athlete with membership within the BMC, whether you realise it or not, you are being helped by volunteers. Those fortunate enough to go on to represent Team GB will owe their success to volunteers within our sport. Volunteers are all too often overlooked

in our sport because the type of people who volunteer are not doing it for status or profile and that's why they sometimes get forgotten".

Moorcroft studied PE and Sports Science at the esteemed Loughborough University and has continued his lifelong work in our sport in co-founding his company PointFourOne (a nod towards the decimals of his world record effort all those years ago), with Rob Borthwick, back in 2007. It's clearly a partnership which he still enjoys as he tells me, "Rob and I were lucky enough to work together for Canadian TV for the London 2012 Olympics and Rob is continuing to work on the London 2017 IAAF World Championships team".

Whilst his most famous night on that Bislett track in Norway's capital back in 1982, came over 5000m, its worth remembering that Moorcroft took gold over 1500m at the Commonwealth Games in Edmonton in 1978, together with a bronze at the European championships over same distance in Prague that year. Inevitably, the transition from 1500m to 5000m is a topic which he is keen to explore. "It's one of the biggest transitions to make in athletic terms", he tells me. "Athletes that make the transition from 100m to 200m or even 5000m to 10,000m are only doubling in distance when you think about it. When you try and make the move up from 1500m to 5000m, you have got to remember that you are more than trebling the distance". The man who made his GB international debut back in 1973, says with honesty, "I guess I learned the hard way about how not to do it. You have got to think like a 5000m runner and for me, if I'm honest, I have to say that I never completely left the 1500m behind. I blame the BMC!", he says in jest, "all I ever wanted to be was a miler and I idolised the likes of Roger Bannister, Kip Keino and Jim Ryan".

Moorcroft took gold in the 1982 Commonwealth Games in Brisbane over 5000m and bronze at European championships in Athens in the same year of his world record triumph but says with sincerity that he never really saw himself as a fully-fledged 5k runner. "I suppose that although I never really left my love of the 1500m behind, I was in many ways able to maintain my connection to speed. In truth, I never did quite get my head round the idea

of running 12 and a half laps continuously in circles. Steve Cram tried the 5000m but always had the mindset of a 1500m runner and Steve Ovett dabbled with the 5000m in winning the Commonwealth title in 1986. This being said Mo thinks like a 5000m and 10,000m runner but has also managed to still produce amazingly fast 1500m times". At this point, he offers you aspiring BMC athletes a pearl of wisdom in that, "You neglect speed at your peril. It's at the heart of every distance you compete at. You have got to develop both endurance and the ability to run fast in a relaxed state and to be able to kick at the end".

Attention then turns to the philosophy of coaching which guided him to his considerable successes during the late 70s and early 80s. He is keen to make reference to his coach John Anderson and to draw the parallels with our own late, great co-founder, Frank Horwill. With some degree of emotion he says, "Frank was ahead of the game in so many different ways. He took a huge amount of time to get to know me and pick his words in order to encourage me. He was a transformational figure with regards to middle distance running. Likewise, John was a great motivator and thinker. He understood the place of speed and like Frank, wasn't afraid to challenge conventional wisdom. When I was a young athlete, I guess we tended to run slow in the harsh winters due to convenience rather than science. The problem was that you could often spend all summer trying to catch up on speed. For me, John Anderson was a genius - a great coach, educator and motivator. He took time to understand

the science of middle and long distance running. In very simple terms there were parts to our training. Firstly, building our core aerobic, cardiovascular response, secondly, running very fast on the track over distances from 300m to 1000m, and thirdly, building block sessions in terms of say fartlek or 30x200m". Clearly keen to continue to credit volunteer coaches in our sport, he says with insight, "When you look at the likes of John Anderson, Peter Coe, Jimmy Hedley and Harry Wilson, they were all so different, yet at the same time were remarkably intuitive and insightful".

In returning to his own illustrious track career, I point out to him that his best ever times for 800m through to 3000m came in same year as his Oslo world record in 82. He agrees that there are lessons which BMC athletes can learn from this. He recalls vividly that, "In 1981, I won the European Cup and my calves were operated on later that year. Significantly my 1982 season was characterised by a lack of injury. I was fastest in the national road relays in April so knew I was on form". This being said he is keen to point out the difference between producing a one off PB performance compared to the demands of championship racing over heats and a final. With typical self-deprecation he says, "I wasn't as naturally strong as say a Mo Farah and found putting hard and fast back to back races difficult".

I encourage the three time Olympian to reflect back on the fact that he competed more frequently than some as a youngster, hoping to get some sense of whether he has any regrets about this. He responds categorically in saying, "At the end of the day you get what you get and you relish what you did. Looking back, I might have been cleverer as to when and where I raced I guess. This being said, the Coventry Godiva club is legendary for its approach to both road and cross country running. I wanted to do it and I'm a firm believer that the Harrier heritage builds the kind of resilience you need. John (Anderson) wanted me to become as fast as I could over 1500m but felt the longer distance might be more suited to me partly because I loved the road and country so much. For me, it's running at its best and generally more of a shared experience than track running". He reminds me, "Don't forget that Mo Farah served his apprenticeship on all surfaces but I guess you've got to be conscious to try and avoid injury". Moorcroft was somewhat unlucky with regard to both illness and injury and this cost him in 'only' reaching the Moscow Olympic 5000m semi-final in 1980 and his 14th place at the Los Angeles Games four

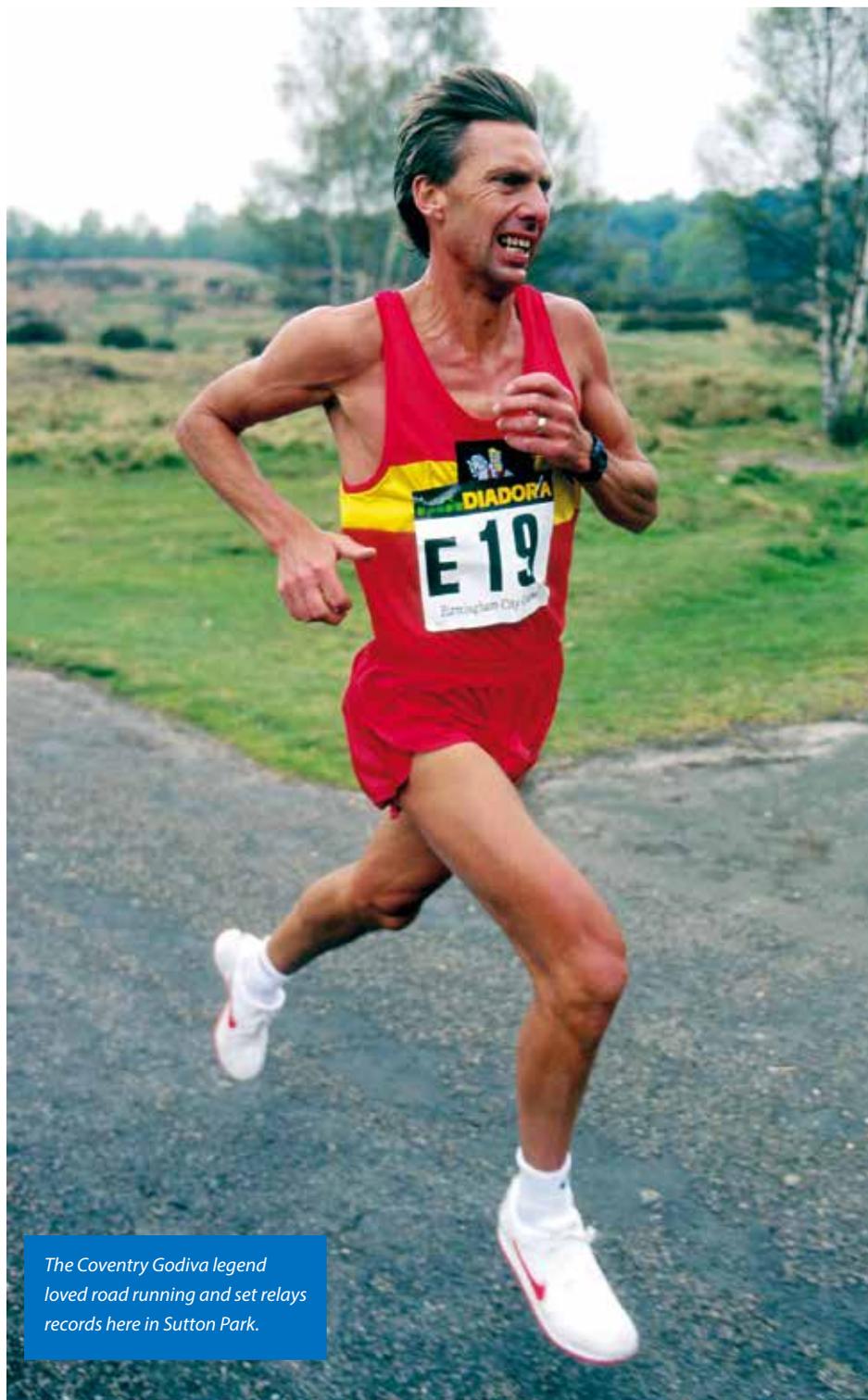
*Moorcroft credits the BMC in contributing to the 'golden age' of middle distance running in the 1980s.*



years later was in light of a groin injury. This being said it's not something which Moorcroft has seemingly ever wished to dwell on or indeed make excuses for.

Still a member of the BMC to this very day, he has fond recollections of some BMC races. "I was 16 when I joined the BMC. I remember just being absolutely thrilled to get the qualifying standard. When the white vest with the letters 'BMC' on it dropped through the door, it was absolutely fantastic. I distinctively remember turning out at the Pilkington glass sports day for a BMC race and it was the first time that Frank Horwill acknowledged me and reminded me of my pace making obligations". With a chuckle, he adds, "I think I got £5 from Frank in a BMC race at Loughborough over 1500m. I remember Paul Williams was in the race and we shared the pace. When I look back, running the BMC must have cost Frank a fortune. He invested both his intellectual and emotional ability plus his money". He is adamant that what the BMC did for him and others, directly translated into a phenomenal period of middle distance success for Team GB in the late 70s and early 80s. "If you look back at the records from between about 1978 and 1986, pretty much every Commonwealth, World and Olympic 1500m title was won by a Brit. In this sense all of us benefitted from the work of the BMC, whether we were members or not. We had some of the best in the world such as Montreal Olympic champion, John Walker, coming over to race us on home soil. We didn't need to apologise for being British middle distance runners when we turned out to race".

Now in its 52nd year, Moorcroft believes the BMC is here to stay and our club has a role for the future. He asserts that, "We get talented middle distance and endurance athletes in Britain. I love the BMC and find the events uplifting. The BMC has a continued role in retaining these athletes who perform well at English schools level and encouraging them to stay in the sport. The BMC is all about encouraging athletes to be the best that they can be in using every ounce of their reserve. We all know that the BMC is a centre of excellence in terms of events and personal bests but it offers more than this in terms of giving athletes a sense of purpose and intrinsic motivation. If you are an athlete and you can't make it at the highest level and you think 'Why bother?' then the BMC exists to challenge you. I mean just look at the likes of Jo Pavey, who has totally embraced the BMC adventure. You



*The Coventry Godiva legend loved road running and set relays records here in Sutton Park.*

look at the likes of Lisa Dobriskey, Hannah England and Jenny Meadows who've all medalled on the global stage too." For those of you who are competitively active, he encourages you to make the very best of your talent over the next few years, stating that, "I never met one person later in life who gave it their best shot as an athlete who regretted it...I have met plenty who didn't honestly give it their best shot and who have lived to regret it".

I sign off by asking him whether he is an optimist or a pessimist, with regards to our nation's future middle distance and endurance prospects on the global stage.

He responds with typical vigour, "You have got to be an optimist. John Anderson believed in me before I believed in myself. As an athletics community, we simply need to believe in our runners. Mo would have been written off by many after the Beijing Olympics in 2008. At the end of the day, people believed in him and he believed in himself and look what happened".

As I bid my farewells, this interview about matters of BMC past, leaves me with that warm feeling inside that one of Britain's finest ever athletes in David Moorcroft, represents everything that is great about matters of BMC present and future.

Among the roster of founder members of the British Milers' Club was a man named 'Henry Hayes'. According to founder Frank Horwill, MBE (1927-2012), he was a generous man who offered his services to the club as an accountant and a financier, and was also someone prepared to make generous donations to the club from time to time. But though Frank listed him as one of the founders who assembled at the business office of Alf Wilkins in London in July 1963 for the club's inaugural committee meeting, no one can remember ever meeting him!

So just who was Henry, or Harry Hayes, initially listed as the BMC's first honorary treasurer? Brian Boulton, a founder member who penned some of the club's early accounts, formed a theory: Mister Hayes was a fiction; an invention of Frank's to mask donations that he himself put into club funds whenever he felt that the organisation needed a financial boost. Those of us who knew Frank well will agree that this was typical of the man. But just where did the name originate?

Matthew Fraser Moat came up with a plausible answer whilst perusing some e-mail correspondence about the 1970 British movie, 'The Games'. This was from a book by Australian writer Hugh Atkinson and was directed by Michael Winner. It concerned four men from four corners of the world training for a future Olympic Marathon, to be held in Rome, Italy. Playing the runners were Ryan O'Neal as Scott Reynolds from the USA; Charles Aznavour as Pavel Vendek, an army officer from *Czechoslovakia*; Athol Compton as Sunny Pintubi, an Aborigine from Australia; and Michael Crawford as Harry Hayes, a cheery milkman from England.

Yes, that's right - Harry Hayes, a man who discovers his own exceptional talent as a distance runner, aided by the eccentric and somewhat bombastic Bill Oliver (played by Stanley Baker), a maverick coach ostracised and disliked by senior British athletics officials - now does that sound familiar to you?!

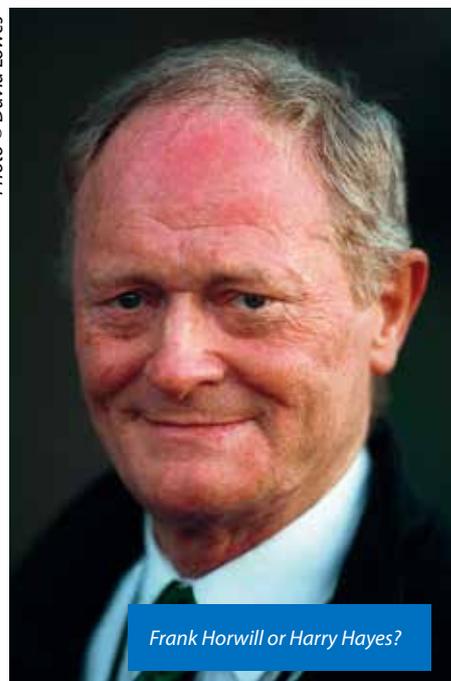
Other famous people among the cast of THE GAMES included Sam Elliott (as 'Richie Robinson') and 1960 Olympic Decathlon Champion Rafer Johnson, who played a TV commentator, talking his viewers through the gripping 26 miles battle between the four men which forms the climax to the film. Interestingly, the movie soundtrack also featured a song by the then unknown Sir Elton John: From

Denver to LA.

It has to be said that Crawford, a true ectomorph, was the only actor of the four men who looked slim enough to resemble a distance runner, and he reportedly spent the 1968/1969 English winter training assiduously with members of Belgrave Harriers on Wimbledon Common to get fit for the role. It was even rumoured that Crawford (who of course later became famous for the comic TV part of 'Frank Spencer'), was eventually so well-conditioned after five months of regular training that he ran a mile in 4 minutes 20 seconds in a special time-trial at either Wimbledon Park Track or Battersea Park Track. Mysteriously, however, no one among my contacts was able to establish exactly when and where he managed that feat. If he was expertly paced by members of Belgrave Harriers, as local newspapers dutifully reported, then they have kept pretty quiet about it. My best guess is that this was an inspired piece of hype generated by the film company's publicity department to grease the launch of the movie in 1970.

It has to be said that Matthew Fraser Moat came up with a splendid theory regarding the mysterious Harry Hayes, except for one crucial fact: the dates do not match. The BMC was founded in July, 1963 at least six years before the movie was made. On the theory that Frank may have read the book, and filched the name from there, I did some more research - and discovered that Atkinson's novel was not published until 1968 - all of five years

Photo © David Lowes



after the BMC came into existence.

There is simply no way that our Frank could have known in advance that a character named 'Harry Hayes' was going to appear in a book and film about Olympic marathon runners; and in any case, his mysterious financier (and nom de plume) was 'Henry Hayes'; though the names 'Harry' and 'Henry' are interchangeable - the younger son of Diana, Princess of Wales (1961-1997) is usually referred to as 'Prince Harry' for example, although he was in fact Christened 'Henry'.

I suspect that somewhere up there, Frank is having a chuckle to himself as we scramble about in the Land of the Living, trying to sort this one out....

## BMC QUIZ

1. Which two world record holders for the mile were rejected for military service?
2. Who was the first man to clock inside 8 minutes for the 3,000 metres steeplechase event?
3. Where were the IAAF World Championships held in 1999?
4. Who was the first BMC member to win a BMC-organised mile race inside four minutes?
5. Who was the first man to run sub four minute miles on successive days?
6. Who is the world's fastest loser at 1500 metres?
7. How many times did Seb Coe and Steve Ovett race each other over the mile distance?
8. Which famous British distance runner once said that the Decathlon consisted of "Nine Mickey Mouse events and a slow 1500 metres race...?"
9. Why was Sin Kim Dan's time of 1:59.1 for the Women's 800 metres at Jakarta in November 1963 never ratified as a world record?
10. Which man has won the most Olympic gold medals in distance running?

# FRANK'S FABLES

In this section, we fondly recollect the life and times of our enigmatic and charismatic founder, Frank Horwill, MBE. We are grateful to the esteemed coach **Lindsay Dunn** for his reflections on the following:

"I once stayed at Frank's place the day before what was a BMC mile at Crawley - the Upjohn mile. We drove down on the day in Frank's open top car. One of the other competitors also in the mile asked for a lift back to the centre of London as we were passing near the main line station he needed to get to. Frank obliged but on the way back there was a massive hold up and the traffic into London was almost at a standstill. We were on a two lane road which would undoubtedly have double white lines in the middle nowadays. Not to be deterred Frank merely drove down the middle for about 3 miles all the while just chatting with one arm resting on the window ledge. I don't think I said a word as I was rigid in my seat but we eventually reached a roundabout and slowed right down. The other runner who was in the back then said to Frank

'Thanks Frank, I know my way from here' and jumped out of the car, nowhere near his station (and far away from home). Frank was silent at first and then 100 yards later shook his head and said, "Never be any good that boy, no backbone whatsoever!"

**Steve Connell** recalls with affection:

"I took Frank to the World Championships in Osaka in 2007. He was having a lot of trouble walking, an unfortunate ailment to have when attending Worlds and Olympics, which require more walking from fans than running from participants! We even had to take him to the hospital one night, so he was not in good shape. Then the next morning when I was still sleeping at about 9 am I received a knock on my hotel room door. I suspected it was Frank pulling a prank. Frank to the day he died was trying to get me back for a good one I had pulled on him in Sydney. So I went to the door in a split second and opened it: No one. He could not possibly have gone back to his room that quickly, I thought, so I ran around the corner to the elevator (the lift!), but he was nowhere to be found. It was so quiet you could hear a pin drop. As lame as he was, the old guy had somehow simply vanished into thin air. I went back

to my room and found him later in his. Eventually, though not immediately, he admitted that indeed it was he who had knocked on my door and run that day!"

Our very own **David Cocksedge** came up with the following memory: "David Bedford celebrated his 40th birthday with a large gathering at a venue in North London on 30 December, 1989. Frank and I were among the guests who spent an

enjoyable evening bowling - Dave had secured every lane in the entire venue for us. Later, as we dined at an Indian restaurant in Harrow, Dave stood up and made a speech. At one point, he said, 'When I was 17, I was going to ask Frank Horwill to coach me. But I changed my mind, and went to train with Bob Parker instead.'

Frank, sitting next to me at the back of the room, said in a very loud voice: 'Thank God for that!' Laughter all round!"



*Fabled Frank in coaching mode with young BMC athletes.*

Photo © David Lowes

## BMC QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1) Sydney Wooderson in 1939 and Jim Ryun in 1970. (Because of poor eyesight, Wooderson failed his medical for front-line service in World War 2, and served as a fireman during the Blitz instead. Ryun was rejected for military service in Vietnam because of poor hearing and balance)
- 2) Moses Kiptanui (Kenya) ran 7:59.18 at Zurich on 16 August, 1995
- 3) Seville, Spain.
- 4) Bill McKim won the BMC City Mile at Motspur Park on 22 July 1964 in 3:59.4
- 5) Alan Simpson ran a mile in 3:59.8 at White City Stadium, London, on 20 August, 1966 and then won at Whitdean Stadium in Brighton the next day in 3:58.8
- 6) Bernard Lagat (a Kenyan at the time) ran 3:26.34 at Brussels on 24 August 2001 in losing to Hicham El Gherrouj (MAR) who won a very tight race in 3:26.12
- 7) None. Though Coe and Ovett broke the world mile record five times between them, they never raced each other over the Imperial distance
- 8) Ian Stewart, at Montreal in 1976 in a snub aimed at Daley Thompson, who was dating Ian's sister Mary at the time. Steve Ovett famously repeated the comment in 1977 and has incorrectly been described as the first person to say it. (Reportedly, Thompson was not amused)
- 9) Because her country of North Korea was not affiliated to the IAAF at that time
- 10) Paavo Nurmi (Finland, 1897-1973), who won nine Olympic gold medals (plus three silvers) in 1920, 1924 and 1928. He was banned for professionalism by the IAAF in 1932

THE GREAT **HERB ELLIOTT'S** 1958 SEASON IS UNPICKED BY **DAVID COCKSEGE**, WITH **MATT LONG** AND **GEOFF JAMES** LOOKING AT COACH PERCY CERUTTY'S PHILOSOPHY WHICH UNDERPINNED THE AUSTRALIAN'S APPROACH:

The name of Herb Elliott may be unknown to younger members, who should nevertheless be assured that he was one of the all-time greats of the 1500 metres and mile distances. Though Herbert Elliott, (born in Perth, Western Australia, on 25 February 1938) was Olympic 1500m champion in 1960 at Rome - where he became the last man to win the Olympic title in world record time (3:35.6) - perhaps his best season was in 1958, when he burst onto the European scene and carried all before him. One of the most dominant middle distance runners of all time, notably Elliott was unbeaten over both 1500m and the mile between 1957 and 1961.

From his first 'sub four' in January that year, Elliott went on to win Commonwealth Games titles in Cardiff, Wales, at both 880 yards and one mile, and set world records at 1500 metres and one mile in Gothenburg and Dublin as listed below.

After his Olympic triumph, Elliott spent a year studying at Cambridge University in 1960/61, and then retired from the sport at the seemingly ridiculously young age of 23. Sadly he decided to continue his studies into 1962, and not defend his Commonwealth Games titles in his birthplace city, where Peter Snell of New Zealand won both those events at Perth. (Well, if you have won an Olympic gold medal in world record time, and won Commonwealth titles previously, where is the motivation?)

Elliott was coached by the equally legendary Percy Wells Cerutti (1895-1975). Cerutti was no stranger to overcoming adversity and bad health saw him suffer a nervous breakdown which he would use to turn his life around. As an athlete he would go on to win the Victoria State Marathon at an age where he would be considered of 'masters' status nowadays.

As well as the aforementioned Elliott, Cerutti guided the likes of Les Perry and Don Macmillan to national titles as well as inspiring double Olympian Albie Thomas to a three mile world record of 13m10.6s in 1958. Notably, he worked in addition with Dave Power, who was an Empire Games gold medallist both over six miles and the marathon in 1958 and who would go on to win bronze at the Rome Olympics two years later.

Cerutti was based in his beloved Portsea, Victoria, where he developed a philosophy of coaching based on Spartan and Stoic principles. His belief that athletes should be encouraged to

align themselves with nature through utilising beaches and sand dunes is well documented. In his classic text *Middle distance running* (1964) he emphasised hill running to develop what we now term 'strength endurance', because, "the hill itself provides a resistance against which the body must thrust", with an athlete coming to learn, "unconsciously to put out a harder effort to run faster times under stress". Cerutti was a huge believer that the benefits of such resistance work were psychological as well as physiological. He went so far as to say that, "Flat-out hill running, on roads or grass, help more than any other type of training, as they teach the 'habit' part of our mentality to deliver full effort irrespective of pain and fatigue". He went further still, with specific

regards to sand dune training, persuasively arguing the case that, "no form of training is better designed to test the resources of an athlete to the uttermost". Indeed his athlete, the aforementioned Dave Power, would grow accustomed to running up to 12 miles on the sand of the beaches of New South Wales.

The 'Stotan' regime engendered by Cerutti, was clearly underpinned by an holistic integration of the physiological and psychological. As well as studying psychology, poetry and mysticism were among the passions of this eccentric coach who clashed endlessly with officialdom to the point where he had to be ejected from the stadium for 'over-exuberance' during Herb Elliott's final lap at the Rome Olympics, thus missing the finest hour of

Apart from the two occasions noted below, all of these were winning performances by Elliott:

- 23 January, Melbourne, AUS - 880 yards in 1:51.8
- 25 January, Melbourne - Mile in 3:59.9
- 30 January, Melbourne - Mile in 3:58.7
- 15 February, Perth - Mile in 3:59.6
- 22 February, Perth - 880 yards in 1:49.5
- 2 March, Melbourne - 1500 metres in 3:51.8
- 9 March, Toowoomba, Queensland - 1000m in 2:21.0
- 15 March, Brisbane - Mile in 4:08.8
- 17 March, Brisbane - 880 yards in 1:49.4
- 6 April, Geraldton, WA - 880 yards in 1:53.6 & 1,320 yards in 3:04.0
- 10 May, Honolulu, USA - 880 yards in 1:53.2
- 16 May, Los Angeles - Mile in 3:57.8 (US soil record)
- 31 May Modesto - Mile in 4:02.7
- 6 June, Compton - Mile in 3:58.1
- 20 June, Bakersfield (AAU Championships) - Mile in 4:01.4 (heat)
- 21 June, Bakersfield - Mile in 3:57.9 (final)
- 11 July, London (White City, AAA Championships), GBR - 880 yards in 1:52.1 (heat)
- 12 July, London (WC) - 880 yards in 1:49.0 (3rd)
- 19 July, Cardiff - 880 yards in 1:52.3 (heat) Commonwealth G
- 22 July, Cardiff - 880 yards in 1:49.3 (50.5 second lap!)
- 24 July, Cardiff - Mile in 4:07.1 (heat)
- 26 July, Cardiff - Mile in 3:59.0 (final)
- 4 August, London (WC) - 880 yards in 1:47.3 (Australian Record)
- 4 August, Watford - 880 yards in 1:50.7
- 6 August, Dublin, IRE - Mile in 3:54.5 (World Record)
- 7 August, Dublin - 2 Miles in 8:37.6 (3rd)
- 25 August, Stockholm, SWE - 1500 metres in 3:41.7 (Australian Record)
- 28 August, Gothenburg - 1500 metres in 3:36.0 (World Record)
- 29 August, Malmo - Mile in 3:58.0
- 3 September, London (WC) - Mile in 3:55.4 (UK all-comers Record; at the time this was the second fastest mile yet run)
- 5 September, Oslo, NOR - 1500 metres in 3:37.4 (Second fastest ever run at this time)

Note: The Commonwealth Games track events were not held over metric distances until 1970 at Edinburgh, Scotland

his star athlete in taking the Olympic title! One of Cerutti's athletes would say, "You came to Portsea with the object of running more quickly- you left with an education of life".

Cerutti was quite simply decades ahead of his time in terms of engendering a focus on what we would now term 'biomechanics'. In holding the belief that the coach should try to manipulate the running style of an athlete, much of his thinking was underpinned by the observation of how horses and other animals 'trotted', 'cantered', 'galloped' and so on. He would bemoan the fact that in his opinion, "the art of true human perambulation has been largely lost". He expressed the conviction that, "Homo Sapiens (man) having lost mostly the ability – through separation from

natural and primitive living- to move as an 'animal' requires re-education as to movement, posture and relaxation". He was ahead of the game in realising that good biomechanical form and running economy were dependent on what we would now term 'core strength and stability', making the point that, "I hold that the body cannot be held in the correct position unless the abdominals are more than ordinarily powerful", hence his commitment to inculcating extra conditioning work as part of a periodised programme of training. He focussed his attention on the carriage of the hands, shoulders and elbow drive and was perceptive in arguing the case that, "When all the upper-body and arms movements are correct the legs will function properly. It cannot be otherwise

in practice. When the upper-body and arms are not functioning correctly, no matter what the athlete attempts, his legs will come under some form of tension, even some rigidity, which carries the feet to move incorrectly, as we see so often". This point is again way ahead of its time and would sit well with the contemporary UKA technical template on endurance, which stresses that rhythm guides optimal speed and efficiency.

Exactly a quarter of a century after the passing of his mentor, 62 year old Herb Elliott carried the Olympic flame into the stadium and lit the cauldron amid wild adulation at the opening of the Sydney Games in 2000 and surely his coach would have been looking down with pride and animation up amongst the Gods of athletics.

*Herb Elliott is pictured just in front and to the left of John Walker (back row on the left) in this gathering of former world mile record holders 21 years ago.*



# BMC ACADEMY REPORT

## 'WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH':

THE RECENT RESIDENTIAL CAMP WAS ANOTHER SUCCESS AND AS **DAVID LOWES** WRITES, IT WAS AN INSPIRATION FOR ALL WHO ATTENDED

One thing seems to be a given these days, courtesy of electronic media, and that is many are tarring most athletes with the same brush! The common denominator is that the general consensus is that many of today's generation of athletes are not working hard enough or have poor attitudes and that they are not doing the appropriate workload.

As Academy lead for the last 12 years, I can say without any doubt that these comments are unfounded ...at least on a BMC Academy Residential Camp! If you are not convinced, come along to the annual training, learning and fun weekend at Spinkhill, near Sheffield. Okay, not everyone is a world-beater who attends, but athletics is much more than that –it's all about getting the best out of you. Over the three-day course it is evident and without any trepidation that everyone gives every task their best shot and that is for every ability and age.

Of course, these camps include much more work than the athletes are used to on a day-to-day basis, but no-one ever complains and that is a testament to their determination to succeed, if only for personal satisfaction. At the BMC we tailor the sessions to be more of a taster than an outright lung-bursting, leg sapping workout, although that does



*Bobby Clay is mobbed by an adoring crowd at the recent BMC Academy.*

Photo © David Lowes

happen! We try to provide a learning curve that both athletes and coaches can use in their regular club sessions on a week-to-week basis. The proof in why the BMC Camps are hugely successful is evident in the athletes and coaches who return year after year with the same enthusiasm and who go away and spread the word that Spinkhill in an October

half-term is the place to be! This year's event from October 23-25 was certainly no exception.

Without delving into too much detail, I thought this year I would let the photographs do the talking and as you will see much hard work was done along with learning and a whole lot of fun. In keeping with those three things, the exuberance, doggedness and enjoyment were always apparent even though there are always one or two who struggle from time-to-time.

The traditional early morning runs at 7.30am were completed around the magnificent grassed areas of the Mount St Mary's facility at a very steady and controlled pace – the runs are earmarked as a wake-up run and they certainly meet those criteria. The main session of the day on the Saturday saw athletes split into three groups with workouts divided between Paarlauf, uphill and downhill running and repetition work.

The final day, Sunday, saw the traditional mass Fartlek session on a rolling course and that for me is a highlight of the weekend –tired bodies getting the best out of themselves. If there is one thing that gives the athletes confidence, then this is it – running well when perhaps they think that they didn't have the necessary energy levels.

*Moving through the gears during the traditional final day fartlek.*



Photo © David Lowes

The hard work is not all about running though and drills were given much attention with the athletes and coaches being allowed to demonstrate some of the techniques that they use. The technical points were discussed and why and when to do certain exercises.

Sunday morning gives the athletes a chance to show off their strength qualities with the press-up, tricep dip and step-up challenge -each exercise done over a one-minute period. The results didn't disappoint, with some huge scores and some not so good, but it's all about improving and the athletes were left in no doubt as to their next targets.

The two talks revolved around the benefits of Paarlauf running with Matt Long giving an in-depth and interactive presentation. Yours truly gave the athletes plenty of food for thought into the many aspects that can make a runner improve – and there was a big list outside of running!

The usual BMC quiz is always a popular feature that not only gets the athletes and coaches thinking, but is also a way where athletes can get to know one another on the opening evening. Another highlight - and this is something that has been resurrected from the past, is the 'Your Shout' workshop. Six groups are given a subject, such as: "What are the Pro's and Con's of having



*'Speed play': The mass fartlek on Sunday morning.*

a Coach?" They are given 15-20 minutes to discuss and present their findings on a flipchart sheet and given three minutes to tell the audience what they think. This year an eight-strong panel of judges (coaches) scored each group based on age and experience. Prizes were given in the form of some welcome chocolate to boost their energy levels - if only for a short time!

Running aside, one of the highlights

this year was the array of star guests that we had on offer. With the likes of Steve Cram, Peter Elliott, Lisa Dobriskey, Susan Scott, Alison Leonard and Becky Lynn just some of our exalted invited stars from previous years. This year I invited a younger element this year in the form of 17-year-old World Youth 1500m 5th placer James Gormey; 21-year-old 2013 European 1500m Junior champion Jake Wightman



*Our athletes always find that Spinkhill has its ups and downs.*

and 18-year-old current European 1500m Junior champion Bobby Clay. All three were inspirational, telling the engrossed audience how they have reached their current status and how they plan to go even further. Look out for their interviews in the Spring issue of BMC News!

With athletes coming from as far afield as Northumberland, Devon, Kent and Cumbria,

the courses continue to provide a catalyst for hard work, enthusiasm and a confidence boost and that includes coaches too. As I have said many times previously and will continue to do so - if you missed the course, you missed out big-time - why would you not want to come? Look out on the BMC website for details of next year's course coming soon.

*The Academy is sure to leave you jumping for joy.*



Photo © David Lowes

## WHAT THEY SAID

### Collated coaches' feedback on the benefits of the camp:

"The BMC residential course is an opportunity for me to improve as a coach and spend quality time with my athletes. As well as the informative lectures I also learn from spending time with other coaches, the weekend always gives me a lift and I return to my club full of ideas and energy."

Michael Solomon

Endurance coach Rossendale Harriers

- "Team building - the weekend brings my group together and they return a close team which is important for many reasons. They are less likely to drop out if they have made close bonds with team-mates".
- "This one weekend delivers my coaching education, experience progression and is educational for the young athletes. This course just once a year is more than enough to keep me moving forward".
- "Intense training weekend that delivers physiological and psychological benefits".
- "Inspirational interviews with international athletes".
- "Young athletes of all abilities get to mix with athletes from all over the country".
- "There are informative lectures for athletes and coaches".
- "The venue is easily accessible".
- "A fantastic running facility - wish I had it at my club!"

### The Athletes:

"The BMC is without question one of the best weekends in my calendar. Okay, so the morning runs aren't exactly my favourite part. But as we are reminded every year, there are two 7 o'clocks in the day.

The camp gives you the opportunity to make new friends and meet some inspirational athletes and coaches, but not only that, through all the laughs and tears, hard work and determination, we've made memories and friendships that will last a lifetime. It's amazing how in the three days we somehow become more than just a 'team' - we become a family".

*Sarah Longshaw, U17 athlete*

"It was a good experience, meeting new people and learning new things really benefitted how I now think about my training and racing. I will attend again as I had a lot of fun!"

*Olivia Worth, U17 athlete*

## HELP NEEDED!

The BMC Academy which delivers a three-day Residential Course each Autumn half-term is looking for additional help. We need some male coaches and in particular female coaches who can help in the organisation and running of an already well-organised and smooth-running course.

The female candidate will be expected to be the liaison person for that gender on the weekend of the course. If you think you have an enthusiastic personality and are a people-person, then you may be the candidate we are looking for. Above all, the roles involve reliability, the ability to think on your feet and have good organisational skills.

Along with the Academy staff, it is a voluntary role with travel remunerated along with a free place on the course. For more information, contact Academy Chair, David Lowes at [coachlowes@aol.com](mailto:coachlowes@aol.com)

## STEVE GREEN SPENDS TIME WITH PAUL DE-CAMPS- THE COACH OF EUROPEAN JUNIOR 5000M CHAMPION, ALEX GEORGE:

*On Saturday July 18th 2015, Gloucester's Alex George stood on the start line with 27 other young athletes at the European Junior Championships in Eskilstuna, Sweden. 14 minutes and 34 seconds later he stood as the 5000m champion of Europe having defeated Euro Cross winner Yemaneberhan Crippa (Italy) and Simon Debongnies of Germany after a stirring race. George had led into the final lap before being overtaken with 250m to go, however he then showed true guts to rally in winning by just two tenths in 14:34.42.*

### Steve Green: Describe how your coaching relationship began?

**Paul De-Camps:** Alex and his brother Tom, came to my attention in 2011. They were both originally footballers who dabbled in a bit of athletics. I first saw Alex at Cheltenham doing the steeplechase at an open meeting. Both brothers were running around seven minutes for the 2k chase and 4.30ish for the 1500m.

My first job was to sort out their technique, which in the case of Alex, was already quite good. They came to a training stint in Portugal whilst still working with Kerry Newall, who did a great job. We stepped up their training then.

In 2012 he ran was just outside four minutes for 1500m and made the English Schools. By the end of 2013, we had our first winter training and we saw another improvement, although they were doing around mid-30's in terms of weekly mileage.

### Steve: What are the main elements of your group's training programme?

**Paul:** We tend to do a session where they do a distance with a bit tagged on the end. We

work on a total distance of 7-8k. Something like 1000m; 45 secs recovery and then 6 x 200m with 5 mins between sets.

We have a small, but tightly knit group with Andrew and Richard de-Camps who are 1:54 and 1:56 men over 800m. Plus we have Alex's brother Thomas, who has run 6:16 for the 2k chase.

Alex has been based at Arkansas University since 2014, where alongside sessions he runs between 50 and 60 miles a week. In the summer when effecting repetition based sessions, we extend the recoveries considerably, such as 6 x 400m with 8 mins recovery. They may go through 300m in say 43 secs and the last 100m or so quicker, which is similar to what may happen in a race.

When we decided to go for the 5k we made the reps a bit longer but didn't change too much from this philosophy.

### Steve: What would you consider to be Alex's breakthrough race?

**Paul:** In 2013, he won the London mini marathon. He's progressed and since then he got a GB international vest in the Edinburgh cross country in 2014 where he was first counter in eighth, beating some athletes such as Matt Shirling and that's when we could see he had some potential.

### Steve: So what precipitated the move to 5000m this summer?

**Paul:** Alex has had a few great runs over the country he was 38th in the World Cross, this year and was first Brit home so he is stronger over distances. We didn't switch to 5k as we always intended on him running the 1500m for the Europeans. This being said, he ran

a 5k indoors in the USA (14:16.20) and did the qualifying time at this first attempt at the distance. At the end of May, we went to race a BMC 1500m at Sport City, where we felt he could he could get the qualifying time, but unfortunately he fell with 200m to go, whilst I believe he was on the way to a 3:42 clocking. So basically, we decided not to chase 1500m qualifying times around Europe, or elsewhere, as this may have had an adverse effect on his season. So our Plan B was to run the 5000m. Alex won the U20 trials (14:18.75) at Bedford and then it was onto the Europeans- based on his indoor performances.

### Steve: Describe the experience that led to that fantastic gold at the Europeans?

**Paul:** I prefer the winning philosophy and a lot of our training is around racing and simulating winning races. Times are secondary - although BMC races are invaluable to athletes where it comes to running quick times. Alex was well prepared plus his experience in America has enhanced his competition preparation skills. He has a great quality which is patience and we work a lot on concentration during training and racing.

His 1500m speed was an asset in that type of race where the early pace and winning time was relatively slow. Alex is relatively short in stature, and will always get pushed around in a middle distance race so in some ways he was better suited to the 5000m which resulted in a win.

### Steve: What are Alex's greatest attributes as an athlete?

**Paul:** Alex is a very patient person and this extends into his athletics. In training you don't have to tell him anything twice. He's very focused and immersed in the sport which is also a great asset. These factors plus the ability to work hard and the fact he gets on very well with his peers, make him easy to coach.

### Steve: What are your future plans, together for 2015/2016?

**Paul:** For the future we are looking to stay at 1500m and get his time down around 3:40 (Alex's current best is 3:44.14 (set at the BMC Watford in June).

In the short term he is now back at Arkansas. We would hope that if he runs well he may get selected for the Euro Cross on the basis of his form in the States. Once he's developed his speed and endurance we'll look at moving back to the 5000m.



Alex George becomes continental king.

MIDLAND AREA COACH MENTOR FOR ENDURANCE, **GEOFF JAMES**, CATCHES UP WITH BOTH **MOLLY LONG** AND COACH **JOHN KNOWLES**:

The Bristol and West area has produced some great athletes and coaches over the past years. Here we look at the next generation of athlete and coach coming to the fore in this area and making an impact both nationally and internationally. Hailing from Truro in Cornwall, young 18 year old Molly Long finished 4th over 800m in this summer's European junior championships in Eskilstuna in Sweden. Her PB of 2:03.32 set at the BMC Grand Prix in May, ranks her as the number one under 20 in the country at this event. Since 2010 she has competed in a staggering 30 listed BMC races winning no less than 11 of them. Her coach, John Knowles, is senior coach at the esteemed Truro School and I have the pleasure of telling you how their partnership is progressing.

I am keen to explore when Molly first realised she had some talent in an athletic sense. She tells me, "When I was 13, I qualified for the English schools in Birmingham after getting through the rounds (county and regional). It was here where my coach, John Knowles asked if I wanted to join his training group. So it was then that I realised I had potential otherwise I wouldn't have been approached by John. As I began to do some training and race I improved my PB drastically which showed that there was talent there which I could work with". Molly has finished 3rd in her U15 800m at those English schools championships in a time of 2:16.85 and would run a full 6 seconds quicker in the 2010 season.

I press her as to whether in her early years she felt that there was a potential conflict between her pursuit of athletics with her continued participation in other sports. She says with some degree of honesty, "During my early years I was a keen swimmer. I swam for my county at national level, which required a lot of training and time in the pool. When I started to train with John I was also swimming which proved not only challenging but tiring. I had been swimming since the age of six competitively. When I turned 15 I was starting my GCSE's at school and so couldn't keep up all the training along with my studying so I had to choose between my athletics and swimming. I settled on athletics because I enjoyed it more, it was more sociable and meant I could be outside more which was great as a stress relief from studying. I also could see myself progressing further".



Molly Long.

Attention then turns to her involvement with more formalised athletics in the context of a club environment. Molly says with enthusiasm, "My athletic club Bristol & West was introduced to me by my coach John. I was an unattached athlete for several years until 16 which was when I started to race in the BMC grand prix and gold standard races. John decided that it would be a good idea to get involved with a club as it would open more doors in terms of races and also provide more enjoyment for me as an athlete.

Bristol & West was the obvious choice as it was in the south west. I was born in Bristol and John was a member along with one other in the group and also it was able to give me the support I needed.

To be honest I trained because I enjoyed doing it and took every race in my stride. It wasn't until the English schools in 2013 when John said I could make the English schools team, that I thought I could do well, it took someone to have faith in me before I thought I was any good. After winning

my first ever national title in 2013 at the English schools and then going on to win the SIAB that same season was when I thought I could do really well". (She won the 800m in 2:07.07 as an U17 athlete).

I then bring in coach John Knowles and am keen to know what got him started in the business of coaching. He shares with me, "I got into coaching when my own daughter Katie started to show interest in athletics. I decided that as a former middle distance athlete I could give her my own experience. I was also asked to coach athletics at Truro School in 2003, where Katie was an attending student. Katie went on to represent GB Juniors & England herself and this encouraged other students to join in the school athletic club". I ask him whether he is equally comfortable coaching both male and female athletes and he responds categorically that, "I have always coached co gender athletes and had reasonable success with both genders. I do not think a coach should just coach female or male athletes. It is having a co gender

mix within the group that creates a balance of abilities and also helps with encouraging talented female athletes to improve their own performances by training with male athletes”.

When pressing him on his early work together with Molly, it’s clear both coach and athlete share fond memories. “I first saw Molly compete for Cornwall Schools as a bottom year Junior Girl in the 800m at the English Schools Track & Field Championships in Birmingham 2010”, he remembers. “From recollection Molly ran the first lap in about 65sec and ultimately died with 150m to go, however Molly still ran 2.16, finishing 3rd, just missing out on the final. I saw then that Molly had good natural speed, but lacked fitness and speed endurance. Like most young athletes learning about the event is crucial. Molly just ran!” In terms of a more formalised routine of training, John points out that, “Later that summer Molly joined the ‘Team JK’ training group and I recall that she struggled to run the 10mins warm up. I thought then I have to build her base fitness before anything else. I encouraged Molly that winter to participate in cross country to help her fitness and bodily strength. This was not what Molly really wanted to do. However she soon learned of the benefit of running and competing in cross country events”. It’s clear that John is keen to emphasise the subcultural elements of group training which he feels benefited Molly. He continues that, “The benefit of training within a team environment and having a structured and balance training schedule soon proved advantageous to Molly along with a competition plan with what ‘we’ (Molly, her parents and myself) believed were achievable goals. Molly herself is keen to credit the support of her parents, adding that, “My parents have played a huge part in my success, without whom I would have been able to make training sessions, get the correct diet in order to stay healthy or even be able to compete. They travel up and down the country almost every weekend to get me to competitions. They have also helped me financially by providing me with everything I need. Not only that but they are there when things don’t always go the way I wanted them too and being an athlete that happens a lot in training and in races”.

I ask Molly what she thinks about the methodology of her mentor and she is full of understandable praise in assessing that, “He is a fantastic coach and we have a great working relationship. He always goes through the sessions we do and

makes sure I know why we are doing them. Everything in terms of racing is always a joint decision and nothing is ever decided without the other. I always have complete faith that the work he sets is for my benefit even if it feels strange at the time!”

More specifically Molly feels that it is the emphasis which John places on core strength and stability work which has benefitted her running. She points out that, “I do core work during the winter. Strength work is a big part of my winter and early spring so many of sessions during this time are focused on my strength”. In terms of her approach to periodising training, Molly tends to focus far more on the grass than the track over the winter months and this has enabled her to avoid a recurrence of some ankle injuries which she attributes to the large volume of swimming she did when she was younger. She is keen as ever to look to the future and excited about the approach she is taking this winter. She discloses that, “This winter is including a lot of hard work to improve fitness, strength and performance as well as avoiding injury. In terms of competitions it will be very limited, I will most likely compete for the university in cross races and for my club in road relays but nothing too demanding”.

Molly, who won both the BMC ‘A’ 800m races at the PB Classic at Street and the BMC Regional at Exeter this summer, is keen to credit the role of the BMC in her long term athlete development and is full of praise for our club. She states that, “The BMC have played a massive role in my development over the years. Without the BMC I would not have had access to high quality races on a regular basis, where I learn huge amounts and therefore improve my performance. The BMC races are always the core of my track season, if the BMC wasn’t around the number of races which such a great field would be few and I personally would not have reached the level I am at now. The range of levels from regional to Grand Prix means you always have somewhere to go therefore you can continue to improve”.

In terms of her future, Molly modestly tells me that, “I have been at university since September which has obviously been a big step, so we will have to see how things pan out. I am hoping to progress further in the sport to a higher level over the next few years and compete in more major championships as I move up to senior level. Event wise, 800m is still the most likely distance, however, I am open to changing event but it will definitely been

one of the middle distance events”. John is more forthright in asserting the ability of his athlete whilst acknowledging that the transition to University life is a complicated one for both athlete and coach to manage. He asserts that, “I have no doubt at this time that Molly is a classic 800m runner with huge ability to compete at senior level and become in the near future one of the main female athletes competing for Great Britain at major games. Molly is under no illusion that to be able to compete at the highest level she needs to remain injury free, continue to work hard and balance all the training require; to achieve this high standard with her studies at Cardiff University where she is studying dentistry. I like to think British Athletics will support her and myself in the process. This is Molly’s first year at university and that itself will come with its own little issues. I am under no illusion that lifestyle balance is important to success. I believe Molly will remain focused and determined to achieve her own personal targets and continue to succeed in her event”.

Molly knows that she must run close to 2:00 or under to gain selection for the type of major championships which are tantalisingly within her future grasp and it’s clear that the allure of a 2017 world championships on home soil is a massive incentive to continue her steady progression into the senior international ranks. Coach John mentions both the European U23 Athletic Championships in Bydgoszcz, Poland, also in 2017 but is keen to look ahead to the next Commonwealth Games which take place of course in 2018 on Australia’s Gold Coast. John reassures me that Molly has got both the talent and temperament to achieve these long term goals, reminding me that, “She is very much focused young lady with durability to maintain a work hard regime along with her personal life and academia. Molly knows how to look after herself nutritionally on a daily basis and above all she has a very strong family network around her”.

As I bid my final farewells to both budding athlete and proven coach, I reflect on my long held conviction that, the secrets of success is steady progression over many years and a solid working relationship between athlete and coach. I am convinced that no athlete, nowadays, is able to stand on the start line in a major championship and not be supported by a strong team around them, the anchor being their coach. Both Molly and John are on that journey together, and I can only see, success in the future, for them both.

**HARRIET KNOWLES-JONES** IS AN ATHLETE WITH AN INCREASING PORTFOLIO OF TITLES AND SHE TOOK TIME OUT TO SPEAK TO **DAVID LOWES** ABOUT HER PROGRESS AND TRAINING.

Athletes of the highest calibre including Jessica Ennis-Hill and Katarina Johnson-Thompson have a few traits in common with Harriet Knowles-Jones. The obvious comparison is their double-barrelled surnames and the more astute will know that they hail from the North of England. However, the common denominator is that the two heptathlon exponents are world-class - something that the ambitious youngster aspires to be once she advances to the senior ranks.

The Warrington AC 17-year-old started training when she was a fledgling eight-year-old. She says: "I had always wanted to do athletics because both of my parents had competed at international level." Her mother Jayne (nee Spark) with PBs of 4:13.62, 9:06.7 and 16:12.1 donned the GB vest at steeplechase and at middle distance while her dad Martin excelled at fell running and long distance. It is no wonder then that her parents' enthusiasm for athletics has definitely rubbed off on the budding star.

The sessions with her previous coach Russell Tart and the group of girls she trained with were always great fun and training only began to get more serious as she improved and became more competitive. Jones explains: "With both my parents being runners, I obviously have some good genes! Running came fairly naturally, but it took me a few years before I started to get really competitive. The first few years of training I was still very young and so I just turned up to the club sessions because they were fun."

Jones' favourite surface is cross-country but she still loves to compete and train on the track and roads. She says: "Maybe it was because I was better over cross country when I was younger, my track has come on a lot over the past few years and as the competitions get bigger, I enjoy them more and more."

So was there a race that made her realise that she could succeed? The youngster reflects: "I think my first Northern cross-country win in the U13 age group up in Sunderland was a big surprise. I was definitely not the favourite going into it and was hoping for a top-10 placing - races like that can give you so much confidence. After that I finished third at the National cross-country, having come 50th the previous year."

When asked what her breakthrough race was, she is in no doubt and reveals: "Achieving my first GB vest in the Edinburgh cross-country and then finishing in fifth place was a real step forward. After finishing fourth at the World Youth Championships in

Columbia this year made me realise I could compete with people on an international stage and keep calm and focused to perform in an event much bigger than I was used to. I was especially pleased with my race in South America because it came after a tough start to the season and struggling with an iron deficiency."

Having won a clutch of titles on all surfaces, which one has given her the most satisfaction so far? Again, the youngster is quick to answer and says: "The English Schools' 3000m win in 2014 and also the National cross-country victory this year. I was one of the favourites going into both of these races and it is a great feeling when you live up to expectations. I really enjoyed running these competitions because I was able to run as fast as I could, no tactics, those sorts of races are fun when it works!"

When prompted about how the BMC has helped with her development and how the races have given her opportunities to run fast times against the best girls in the UK she is just as quick to answer: "If it wasn't for the BMC races it would be very difficult for any athlete to get qualifying times for major competitions. I got my qualifying time for the World Youth Championships at Watford. These races have allowed me to experience a different type of race, because everyone in your race runs at a similar pace and it helps you get used to running in a pack."

This year's National cross-country champion admits that her favourite winter session is hill work. She adds: "They're always going to be tough. However, during the summer I enjoy a 1000m, 600m, 400m session because it is a good indicator of how you are running before racing." When asked what her least favourite sessions are she shows the integrity and resolve needed to be a top athlete and says without hesitation: "I don't have any least favourite sessions, but I struggle to enjoy sessions when I'm feeling rubbish! Those sessions happened much too often this season when I was low on iron."

Finishing her season in style over the metric mile at the final BMC Grand Prix in Solihull with a PB of 4:18.38, the future looks bright for the under-20 runner. Previously, Jones was in an all-girls training group and was the eldest in the group. She explains: "I was running a lot of efforts from the front and on my own. Although I loved working with Russel (Tart), I am so grateful for all the time and effort he put in to coach me and my Warrington team mates, we both felt that I had to move on to the next level and I had to make some changes and challenge



#### STATSFILE

Name: Harriet Knowles-Jones

Born: April 3, 1998

Club: Warrington AC

Coach: Paul Roden

#### PB's

800m 2:09.40 (2014)

1500m 4:18.38 (2015)

3000m 9:23.76 (2014)

myself more in sessions. It was a very difficult decision to make, but after chatting with Paul Roden and meeting his training group, I felt reassured that it was the right thing to do. I now train in a mixed group and have some great training partners who push me very hard in sessions. Paul has really helped me to develop my speed this season and I had a much stronger finish in my 1500m races and was able to run them more tactically. This all helped me enormously in Colombia for the World Youths. Working with Paul has been great and I can't thank him enough for everything he has done over the past two seasons."

With short-term goals of qualifying again for this season's Edinburgh international cross country and the European cross-country team, Jones also has the long-term uppermost in her mind. She says: "I'm aiming to make a GB senior team on both track and cross-country and make an impact in an international competition."

Outside of athletics, Jones is hoping to study medicine, which she realises will be difficult to balance with her training and

workload. She elucidates: "I am hoping to study close to home, where I have a very supportive family, in particularly my mum who has always been my main supporter of my running. My mum makes my running possible, she takes me to training, she rarely misses a race, she gets just as nervous and just as excited. Mum is the best at making me positive when I've not had the best race or had a bad session."

Although Cali in Colombia, where she finished a fine 4th over 1500m in this summer's World Youth championships, is the furthest she has travelled thus far she adds: "It was a completely different racing experience. My favourite place I've visited though is Brussels for the Loto Cross - it is just before Christmas and the centre of the city was beautifully decorated."

#### View from the coach:

Paul Roden says: "My initial aim was to implement my training structure gradually without the potential risk of injuries and in addition I also introduced strength and conditioning into the training programme that would improve overall conditioning and also help in injury prevention. The aim of the winter was to build on the endurance base, adapt to the changes in the training regime and moving into the summer was to improve basic speed with more focus on 800m and 1500m. This will be the continued focus over the next couple of years."

He explains that his philosophy "is to develop my athletes through the age-groups to reach their potential as senior athletes. Harriet has clearly great potential to build on her current training regime and build on the volume if necessary and the overall quality and intensity of her training. Additionally, we will continue to develop the strength and conditioning elements supported by regular physiotherapy and medical support where necessary".

He maintains that Harriet has developed considerable tactical awareness this past season. He continues that, "As a younger athlete Harriet has been very much an accomplished front runner, however as she moves through the juniors and into the senior ranks race tactics to handle heats and finals will be paramount. The World Youths was certainly an example where sensible race tactics in the final resulted in a great performance. She can certainly be very critical of her own performance in training and races and part of my job as a coach is to balance this, not every session will be a great session and certainly the difficulties around her performances this year being influenced by low iron levels has certainly made things difficult on occasion. The summer was

#### Winter training week

The training programme is over a two-week cycle to accommodate specific pace targets in winter and summer.

Monday	Road circuit 3k-5k pace session such as: 3-4x1200m with 2min rec
Tuesday	Strength and conditioning circuits
Wednesday	Tempo or 300m/400m reps such as: 8-10x400m with 60sec rec
Thursday	Easy run for 35min-45min
Friday	Rest
Saturday	Grass circuits either flat or hilly circuit, 6k-8k volume such as: 3x7min with 2min rec
Sunday	Long run up to a maximum of 70min

#### Summer training week

Monday	Track session: pace specific including 1500m pace - 2x2x800m, 3min between efforts, 10min between sets
Tuesday	Steady run of 35-45min
Wednesday	Track session: 10min tempo, 7x300m, 100m rec - 50sec jog
Thursday	Steady run of 35-45min
Friday	Rest
Saturday	Track or grass session: 4x1k with 90sec rec
Sunday	Steady run - maximum of 60min

*Note: The above sessions are specific for Harriet's development and you should not try simply to replicate them but rather discuss with your coach what underlying principles you can gain from them before you both come up with your own athlete-centred training schedule which suits your needs.*

significantly impacted by her iron levels and that influenced greatly the aims of the summer and her racing plans".

Paul acknowledges that it's not all been plain sailing and that there have been setbacks along the way. He recalls that, "After a great run in the London Mini Marathon in early May I saw a notable deterioration in the quality of training and a disappointing performance at Loughborough over 3000m. At this stage training was reduced and initially the explanation was assumed to be the intensity of revision and exams. However, it was decided as a precautionary measure, to organise blood tests which surprisingly showed low haemoglobin and ferritin levels. At this point, training was reduced, iron intake was increased and there were adjustments to her diet and unfortunately there was a need to change her racing plans. After three weeks the quality of training was starting to improve and it was decided to see if the qualification for the World Youths could

be achieved".

He is genuinely appreciative of the role of our club in facilitating the development of his athlete, adding that, "The BMC offered great opportunities to try and achieve the qualifying times. The BMC race at Milton Keynes turned out to be a solo run but the qualifying time was achieved at Watford which was the last opportunity before the selection date. Due to the short period before travelling to Colombia, the focus had to be on training and fortunately a now healthy Harriet had a great performance in the final, finishing 4th in a PB". He remains confident that, "Next season, with hopefully no health issues or interruptions to training, her 800m and 1500m potential looks promising".

**David Lowes is the BMC Academy Chairman and Course Director, a Level 4 Endurance Coach and a freelance athletics writer and photographer.**

#### ACHIEVEMENTS

- 2015 World Youth 1500m 4th; England U20 3000m 3rd; National Cross U20 1st
- 2014 England U20 3000m 1st; English Schools' 3000m 1st; SIAB Schools' 3000m 1st; UK School Games 3000m 1st; National Cross U17 3rd; Inter-Counties Cross U17 1st; English Schools' Cross 1st; SIAB Schools' Cross 1st
- 2013 English Schools' 1500m 2nd; SIAB Schools' 1500m 2nd; UK School Games 1500m 2nd; England U17 3000m 1st; English Schools' Cross 2nd; SIAB Schools' Cross 2nd; National Cross U17 2nd; Inter-Counties Cross U17 1st
- 2012 English Schools' 1500m 1500m 6th; English Schools' Cross 4th; SIAB Schools' Cross 5th; National Cross U17 11th; Inter-Counties Cross U17 17th
- 2011 National Cross U15 3rd; Inter-Counties Cross U15 7th; English Schools' Cross 17th

**STEPHEN GREEN** PROFILIES 2015 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP 800M 5TH PLACER, **SHELAYNA OSKAN-CLARKE**.

Whilst share prices on the Chinese stock market fell sharply during August, many British athletes saw their value rise in terms of success during the World Championships.

For many British middle distance followers, Shelayna Oskan-Clarke's 800m semi-final win in 1:58.86, before moving on to take fifth in the final (also breaking the 1:59 barrier for a second time), provided 'the moment' in the Birds Nest Stadium.

Shelayna's story, although a long journey to international success at the age of 25, is not really one that would be described as the traditional 'media-favoured' story of triumph over adversity. As she candidly admits she had been working for years towards this breakthrough together with expert coach Ayo Falola.

When Oskan-Clarke started in athletics, she was originally under the guidance of PE teacher, Lisa Jimmison, at Baylis Court School in Slough. She was a talented hockey player, reaching county standard in representing Berkshire, before totally focusing on athletics at around the age of 15. Her first athletics club coach was Rodger Hughes at Windsor Slough and Eton.

She remarks on her early athletics experiences, that, "I mainly concentrated on the 400m during my junior career. However, I wasn't good enough at the distance to make the top grade, despite winning gold at the English Schools in 2008". Additionally, Oskan-Clarke placed fifth in the Commonwealth Youth Games, over one lap.

A 2:06.29 run over two laps the following year at the BMC Nike Grand Prix at Watford, hinted at her potential. In 2010 she moved to Falola's group based at Lee Valley. She recalls vividly, "When I started working with Ayo we decided to go back to the 800m". At the time, Falola was working with a number of talented athletes such as sub

2:00 International athlete Marilyn Okoro, and later 1500m runner Matt Mcloughlin. "The coaching relationship started to pay dividends almost immediately," she reflects.

The team kept competitive outings mainly over one lap for the next two seasons, the result being an impressive 53.20 in 2011, which is still a PB. Her outings over 800m were limited, with her best return a 2:07.71 indoors in 2012. In the meantime, Shelayna completed her studies, graduating from Brunel University with a degree in Sports Science.

The Windsor athlete and her coach decided to concentrate more fully on the two lap distance in 2013. She brought her best down to 2:03.52 in a BMC Gold Standard race in Watford, before lowering this further to 2:01.94 in the Diamond League in Doha in 2014.

She describes the training that she does with Falola as being typical of the work that many athletes undergo on a twice daily basis: "We do a lot of longer track repetitions in the winter, such as mile runs, or 600m sessions. One aspect of training I really enjoy is the hill reps which vary between 30 and 75 secs, which have really developed my speed endurance". As a basic rule, in the summer, the recoveries are extended and the hill reps become shorter and more intense, Oskan-Clarke describes a summer typical session as 6 x 300m with 5 mins recovery as one of her personal favourites.

Her international breakthrough came in the winter of 2015 with selection for the European Indoors in Prague, after finishing second to Jenny Meadows at the trials. However, the experience proved a chastening one, as she bowed out at the heat stage, in third place, with a modest 2:05.08 return. "I didn't run well at the European indoors, at that level it's all about

being in the right place and taking your opportunities; you can't hesitate or ponder. That's where I let my standards slip in Prague," she recalls candidly.

It was perhaps this very experience, which strengthened Oskan-Clarke's resolve going into the summer. She continued working on her endurance, with 60 minute runs in her local Windsor hills, being a key element of her training, whilst continuing her part-time work as a personal trainer.

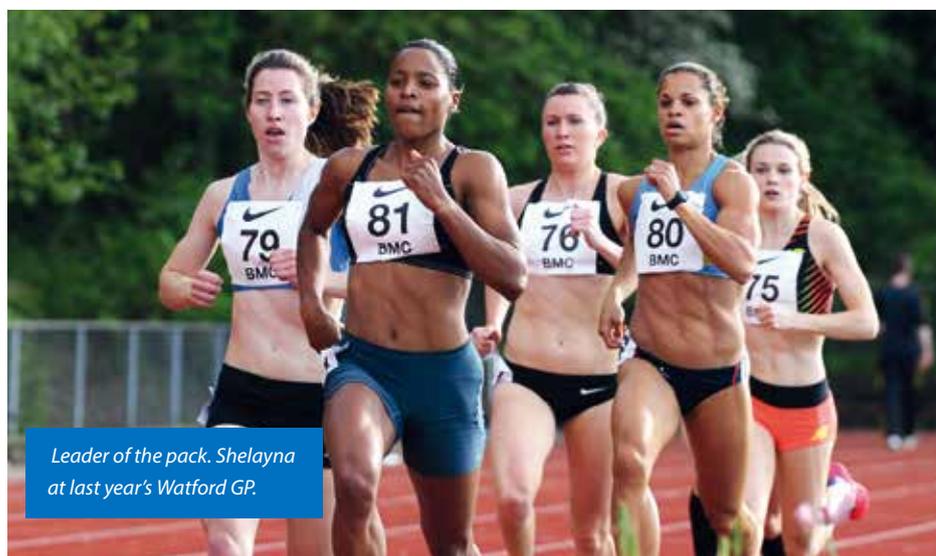
An early season double running a best of 2:01.27 followed by a 54.14 400m an hour later, in Oordegem, Belgium, in May, hinted at superb early season shape, whilst still keeping under the radar.

Second place at the British championships and trials in July, behind Lynsey Sharp, was followed by running under the qualifying standard thrice, including beating Jenny Meadows in a classic encounter (2:00.92) at the Oxford BMC GP. These performances ensured the flight tickets to Beijing were in the post. She is keen to credit the role the BMC has in her development, adding that, "BMC races have been really useful for me, as before Beijing I wasn't getting International invites. We know that most of the top girls such as Lynsey (Sharp) may run, or Jenny (Meadows) and the pacing is spot on, plus we don't have to travel abroad to get a fast race, or try new tactics."

Fast forward to the Birds-Nest in late August, proudly wearing her British vest, Oskan-Clarke revelled in the championship cauldron. Her heat was held in the unforgiving Beijing morning sun and she qualified third with 2:01.72. Though impressive getting through the first challenge had been, she had a revelation in store for British fans, on the evening 27th of August 2015. She remembers, "I felt good warming up, and decided I was going to react to the other athletes such as Lamote and Lyakhova. I knew I would be as strong as the others in the home straight, she recalls. To have any chance I had to commit, not hesitate, and stay with the leaders from 300m out. Once into the straight, the gaps just opened for me and I was able to take the win."

The result was the rare but welcome sight of a British distance runner winning a race at the World Champs with a breakthrough PB of 1:58.86. It also placed the Windsor starlet 9th on the UK all-time list, ahead of luminaries such as Shireen Bailey and Christina Boxer.

Oskan-Clarke refused to rest on her laurels, when she lined up in lane three for the World final two days later. She used



Leader of the pack. Shelayna at last year's Watford GP.

similar positive tactics to finish an excellent fifth place, just a tenth slower than her semi, with 1:58.99. The run was such that she finished less than a second behind winner, Marina Arzamasova of Belarus (1:58.04) who edged out Melissa Bishop and Eunice Sum in a thrilling finish. "I was really pleased with to place fifth in a World final, at the first time of asking" she says, before adding with characteristic understatement, "I was initially disappointed to get pipped for fourth by Arafat on the line. A lot of people say I've come from nowhere but I've been working for a long time for this. It's just my transition from good junior to successful senior wasn't as immediate as others."

2015 has been a memorable year for Oskan-Clarke, where she has broken into the circle of high expectation when she puts on a British Vest. However this burden, a heavy one to carry for many an athlete, holds no fear for Shelayna, who points out that, "I have never felt I need to prove anything to other people or meet their expectations. I just want to work hard, and get the best out of my ability".

Discussion of the immediate future coming into the Olympic Year of 2016, is where we get further insight into the drive behind this personable young woman. "Ayo and myself will sit down and plan our training and racing programme after my break. I'd used up all my physical and emotional energy by the time the season has finished hence a couple of below par races in Europe," she says. "Next year is really important, but also is a very crowded calendar, with the Rio Olympics, the European Champs, plus the World Indoors," she adds, before continuing that, "In terms of goal setting I try not to put limits on what I can do, or set times, I may improve by 0.1 of a second, or two seconds, what is most important is to work hard and get the best out of myself. The women's 800m is so competitive in the UK (Lynsey Sharp set a Scottish record of 1:57.71 late season) so you have to keep on improving just to make the team, which is how it should be," says the Windsor runner.

As I bid my farewells I cannot help but reflect that whilst conducting this interview with an articulate young athlete, words such as 'lucky' and 'hope' do not enter into the discussion. This pragmatism, plus the ability to work hard, and self-belief are atypical characteristics of people but a prerequisite for anyone who wishes to be successful in any field of life. Perhaps, this is the reason why, despite the passage of time, Shelayna Oskan-Clarke was always destined to breakthrough into the consciousness of British Athletics fans.

*Things are looking up for Shelayna Oskan-Clarke.*



## PAUL HAYES SPENT TIME WITH LYNSEY SHARP, AFTER HER WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS AND SUMMER SEASON

One of the first BMC Conferences I attended included a talk by the late Dave Sunderland, who of course was a previous Editor of this very magazine. I had known Dave through county schools athletics for a number of years prior to this, growing to respect his forthright views and background knowledge of the sport we partake in. He was also willing to offer help and advice when asked for. 'Failure to prepare is preparing to fail' - This was the standout phrase from that talk for me, and one that I try to use as I seek to help my coaching group achieve their goals each year. The link here is that Dave was also one of the key figures in the development of Lynsey Sharp from enthusiastic youngster to seasoned GB international and championship medal winner.

It can be no surprise, given her family background that Lynsey has reached the high levels that she has. Father Cameron, was at the forefront of British sprinting in his prime, mother Carol was a top class 800m runner while sister Carly was a promising high jumper, clearing 1.70m as a 13 year old. Athletics was not the only interest as Lynsey was encouraged to do lots of sports and musical activities, only allowing her to join Edinburgh AC as a 9 year old. By then, the surrounding area was a second home, having used the long jump pit as a play area while mum Carol trained, pretending to be Olympic athletes with starting blocks. This early enjoyment was nurtured into a later passion, in becoming a real Olympic athlete.

As time progressed, Lynsey came under the tutorage of a number of coaches at Edinburgh and elsewhere. Club stalwarts, John and Anne Scott began the process, passing on to Liz McColgan before moving to Dave Sunderland. Under his guiding hand, she experienced international competition for the first time, in him being "a fantastic coach and motivator," before his untimely passing early last year. Lynsey is now guided by Terrance Mahon and Rana Reider. This group of people saw her development through to medalling at the European U23 championships in 2011 before stepping onto the biggest stage of all with her selection for London 2012.

While having already been to a championships the year before, and racing the European championships in the run up to the Olympics, the Games in London was still a major eye opener and steep learning curve in the growth of Lynsey as a serious international athlete. With much controversy surrounding her selection for

London, she felt a great deal of additional pressure in addition to it being a home Games. She was very much being thrown in at the deep end and so she felt greatly underprepared for stepping onto the biggest stage of all. However, she now maintains that it was a fantastic learning experience which was to pay dividends in the coming seasons.

In planning her training and competitive year, Lynsey has been using the months as we head towards Christmas, to get herself back into shape in readiness for further hard training. This will include lots of gym and strengthening work. The main block of work then takes place in the first 4 months of the new year with the focus on strength endurance but, as Peter Coe emphasised three decades ago, never neglecting the speed elements. As the track season progresses, the work becomes more race specific up to, and including, the major games of the summer. Even in the period where competition looms, Lynsey maintains

a degree of endurance work although she would classify herself as a relatively low mileage athlete, with a preference for focus on quality over quantity. This will involve high lactate work as part of race preparation. Although now established on the international stage, she feels there are many areas still to be improved, with last winter being her first full one in a long time, so it is all about building on this base for the future. There is an important mental element to her work as well. She maintains that in the days close to a race, there is little more physical work that you can do and it is down to the right mental frame of mind, with your "head in the right place even if you are not feeling great physically".

In planning her year, Lynsey and her team develop a program to replicate what she will have to do once at a major championships. So this year the race plan included a hard session on Monday, a BMC race at Trafford on the Tuesday and a further hard session on the Thursday.



*Sharp shooter. Lynsey takes the British title this summer.*

The aim at Trafford was to race the race rather than rely on pacemakers. This is also an important factor in races as championships are not usually flat out affairs but tactical. So here it is important for Lynsey to trial a variety of tactics prior to the championships. Running regularly in the Diamond Leagues has been another helping factor as racing the top athletes in her event has given her the confidence to take these girls on and not be overawed. A key element of fitness indication is a 600m time trial. This was the session on the Thursday, after the Trafford BMC race, in which she ran a solo PB. The week thus had the dual effect of showing what shape she was in and giving her a lot of confidence that she was ready to go through the rounds of a championship.

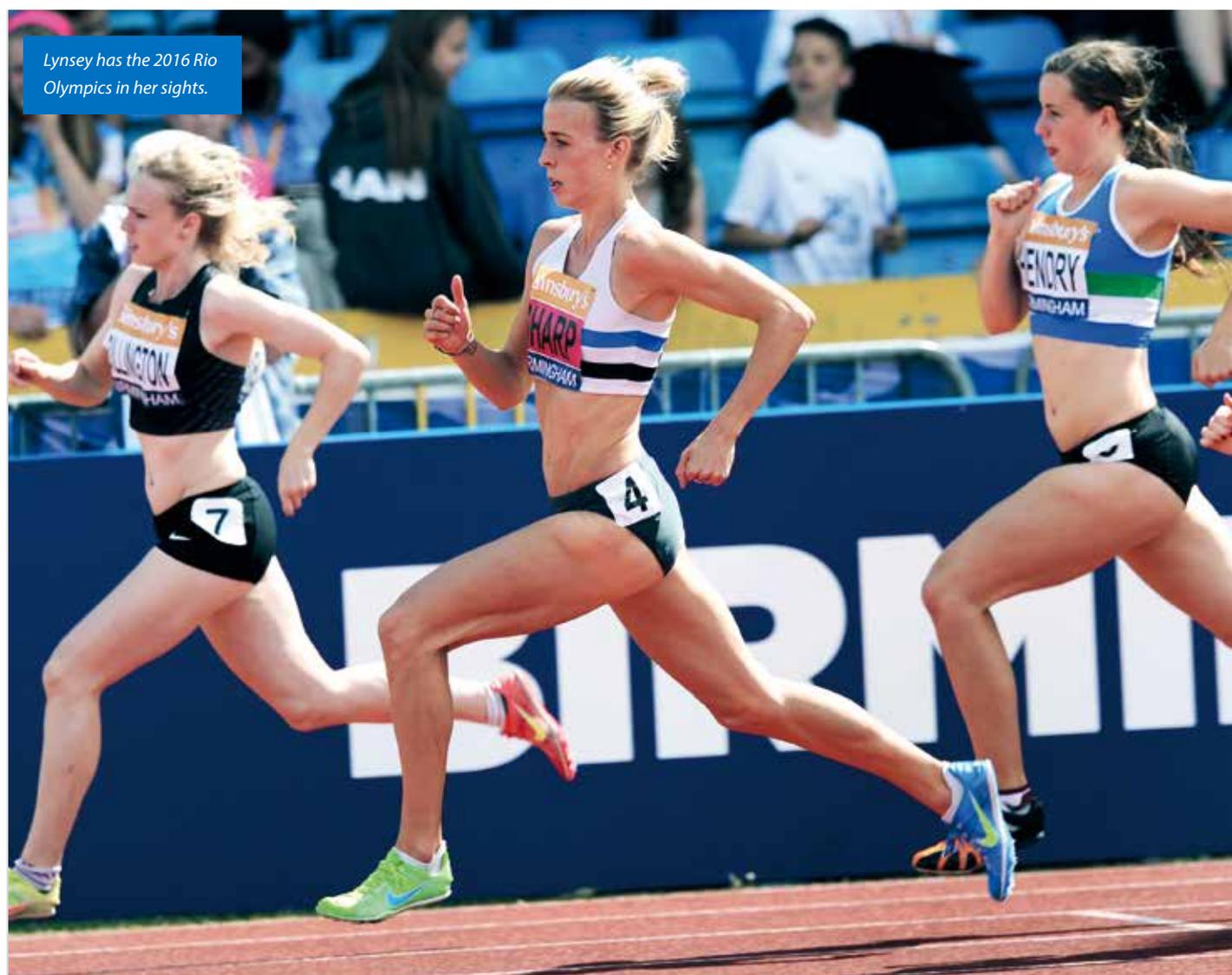
In the final period prior to a major championships, Lynsey has a well-developed routine as she moves from holding camp into the athletes' village. As she says, the hard work has been done by this point. This year, for instance, she did only 3 sessions in the camp prior to moving to Beijing. The focus in these three sessions

was the speed honing with some gym work, tempo and steady running mixed in between. Once in the village with other athletes, she works with Michael Johnston, the British Athletics S/C recovery specialist, on a program specific to her which includes the use of ice, physio and music. She acknowledges that it has taken a number of years to get this to the state of preparing her so she is in the best place to succeed at the highest level.

As she prepares to try and gain selection for her second Olympics in Rio next year, she looks back on the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow as a career highlight to date. Not for nothing is it known as the 'Friendly Games', with a great party atmosphere. She reflects that, "With all the injury problems in the couple of years leading up to this point, it made the silver medal an even greater pleasure to achieve". By her own very high standards, exit in the semi-finals left her understandably disappointed with her performance in Beijing. She was glad to bounce back in style in the Zurich and Berlin Diamond League races, the latter of

which saw her record a belting new PB of 1:57.71, which places her third on the UK all-time list for 800m. It was a semi-final tactical error on her part that kept her out of the world final and it is something she plans not to repeat in the future. The disappointment of that moment is what will fuel her training through the coming winter. Come Rio, we are likely to see a focussed, determined Lynsey Sharp. She tells me, "Once in the final, I know I can nail it".

In the build up to Rio, Lynsey and her team will be subtly tweaking her program, with the main aim being to stay injury free and build on the progress of 2015. She firmly believes that she has the ability to push her times down even further to the 1.56 region, but with the women's 800m being very strong at the moment, she is a realist in acknowledging that it will not just be times but tactics that will win major medals. She will leave no stone unturned in reaching for global success in Rio – to paraphrase the words of her late mentor Dave Sunderland - she is not failing to prepare and is not prepared to fail.



Lynsey has the 2016 Rio Olympics in her sights.

**MATT FRASER MOAT** WAS HOT ON THE HEELS OF **KYLE LANGFORD** RECENTLY:

Picture the scene. The venue was Abingdon, the fixture was the McCain Young Athletes Southern League - Western Division, the date 22nd May 2011. We've all attended such meetings. A 15 year old blond boy took to the track for his first ever race outside of school meetings. He finished 3rd in a time of 54.8 seconds.

Who would have thought that just four years later, this young lad, still a junior, would line up in London's Olympic Stadium against the 800m world record holder David Rudisha? Who would have thought that in that race, this young lad would set a time just one hundredth of a second slower than Steve Ovett ever did as a junior? This is the story of Kyle Langford.

Thanks to *Power of 10*, we can all track his progress. Kyle's first ever 800m was in race 14 at Watford on 10th August 2011. He won

it by over four seconds in a time of 2:02.90. That winter he ran in the Southern road relays, and about half a dozen cross-country races, and so in February 2012 he ran 1:57.62 indoors. In May 2012 he ran 1:54.79 at Watford and then became the Hertfordshire county champion, aged just 16.

Just one year after starting running, Kyle ran in his first BMC Grand Prix. It was at Watford on 9th June 2012 and Kyle was seeded in the 'G' race. He then ran 1:51.31, finishing 2nd. In 2013 and 2014 he was of course seeded in the 'A' races and ran 1:49.02 and 1:47.41, again both times finishing second.

We jump forward to 2015, which promised to be a big season for Kyle. Could he continue the form he had shown in 2014 where he reached the final in the world junior championships?

In 2015, Kyle raced sparingly, a couple of park runs, a relay leg in the Southern 12 stage, a couple of 400s, an 800m in a BMC Gold Standard meeting and then he was ready. In his first big race of the season he ran 1:16:69 for 3rd in the 600m at the Golden Spike meeting in May, and then raced the Diamond League in Birmingham where he was the first British finisher. After that, he had eight races in three championships, namely the England Athletics U20 Championships, Sainsbury's British Championships and the European Junior Championships. Eight races, eight victories and three gold medals. Just one week after winning his third gold, on 25th July 2015, he lined up in the Olympic Stadium and ran a lifetime best of 1:45.78

It was not really surprising that, after such a successful season, he should then lose his form slightly, finishing a disappointing 7th in his heat at the World Championships in Beijing. We spoke to Kyle in October 2015.



*'Just like that!' Kyle becomes British number 1 at 800m.*

**BMC: Kyle, your rise in the sport has been very fast, running as a junior in this year's IAAF world championships in just your fifth season. Tell us about how you got started in the sport?**

**Kyle:** I never used to want to run! I did cross country once every year when I was younger in school. My dad would always say "Come on Kyle, you should try it out, you would be great", I used to reply "Who would want to just run about, it's not my thing" and so for a long time he would ask me and ask me. Then when I was 15, I did my first ever school race and I demanded to do the 200m or I wouldn't run! I ended up running the 200m where I came 3rd then was asked to join my local club who, when I showed up, didn't really show any interest and I remember asking my mum not to let me go back again.

**BMC: Was anyone guiding you in your first season? Or were you just having fun?**

**Kyle:** I never used to train, I just did a few races for the school before I trained with George.

**BMC: How did you meet your current coach George Harrison?**

**Kyle:** My sister was running with George and at the time I had tried out for a club where I felt very unwelcome. So a few months later I started doing sessions here and there with George but not really taking it too seriously. Then one session George pulled me to the side after I had warmed up and said "Kyle you have to train properly with me, or not at all".

The Shaftesbury Barnet athlete has run in no less than 8 BMC races in recent years.



From that point on I started training more and more.

**BMC: What sort of training did George set for you in 2015?**

**Kyle:** Well I started my 2015 season a couple of weeks before I went to Kenya in October 2014- a new experience for me. I was adding runs through the week and light gym sessions because I would only be doing three sessions a week (track, hills and grass) which would equate to around 15 miles a week. So the extra 3 recovery runs which started at 25 minutes and ended up at 40-50 minutes which was really helping my strength.

I would say that the most important sessions, more than anything else, are the short recoveries that George sets me in sessions. George, Tom Bedford (my manager) and I think that training is not for getting me to run fast in races but it's so that I can get through heats, semis and finals, and that the times will come themselves. I feel in 2015 we focused on getting through a hard, gritty winter, giving me with a better endurance base to work off of.

**BMC: How do you plan your racing programme?**

**Kyle:** Every year is different, depending on what I want to peak for. So usually I try to

peak for my main championships. I like to get a fast race out early to try and get the times I need for championships but it is easier said than done sometimes because races can clash and you have to make decisions on what races you chose to do.

**BMC: You seem to do a lot of 600m races, is that by accident or design?**

**Kyle:** I think it's an accident but I find they can be a good confidence boost and a bench mark for the start and the end of the season. I know if I can run 1:16 for 600m, I'm in 1:45 shape for the 800m.

**BMC: What was it like winning your first senior domestic title in Birmingham? Did you expect to win that day?**

**Kyle:** It was an amazing learning curve and winning was a great confidence boost heading into the Euro Juniors. So at the start of the season I was going out expecting to win, even the session before the British Championships I was confident that I could win. When I was in the warm up area I started to doubt that I would win, asking myself "Am I being overconfident?" I was thinking that every other runner is thinking that they could win. But I kept my mental strength and even though the race was a slow first lap, it was still going to be a battle

of the racers and the kickers.

**BMC: Tell us about your 1:45.78 in the Olympic Stadium, placing you 3rd on the 800m UK All Time U20 list?**

**Kyle:** I knew I was capable of running 1:45 at The London Anniversary Games and it was really the only race I was in which had been run in sub 1:46 and when the opportunity arose I took the chance. As I was warming up I was not feeling great. I had recently flown back from Sweden feeling slightly ill but I kept confident. I felt like I didn't race the race as well as I should have run. I did a 54 second first lap and finished in a 51 second last lap. I just felt like my body wasn't moving swiftly, it didn't feel like it was in sync but I still came out with a massive personal best but there is 100% loads more in tank ready to be used!

**BMC: Finally, tell us about your experiences in Beijing in August?**

**Kyle:** All I really need to say is that it was a massive learning curve and an amazing experience. I really think this will help me move forward for much bigger and better things in the future of my career. The race itself was the worst race of the year in my opinion but I learnt a massive amount from it, so I will cherish the trip.

## SIMON TAYLOR CATCHES UP WITH MICHAEL MCGOVERN OF THE ACCALIMED IRISH MILERS CLUB:

The roots of the Irish Milers Club (IMC) can be traced back across the Irish Sea, to a windy night in Watford, in 2000, where upwards of 50 Irish athletes were taking part in the BMC Grand Prix. BMC founder, Frank Horwill, was in his customary trackside position, barking out encouragement to athletes in his usual inimitable style, and beside him was a new face, from Ireland, one Brendan Hackett.

Being similarly driven, outspoken and passionate about his sport, Brendan found a kindred spirit in Frank, who duly opined that the time had come to set up the Irish Milers Club. Hackett needed no persuading and headed back to Ireland to set up the IMC, with, as current IMC Chair Michael McGovern puts it "fire in his belly and Irish Milers on his mind".

Thus in 2001, having overcome various challenges and cut through several layers of red tape laid by the powers-that-be, not dissimilar to the trials and tribulations faced in the early days of the BMC by Horwill and his supporters, the Irish Milers Club became a reality. Hackett, ably supported by such similarly driven and committed individuals as Liam Moggan, Br John Dooley, John O'Connor and Paul Cummins, made it the IMC's mission to raise the overall standard of middle distance running in Ireland and help the country regain its status as a producer of top class middle distance runners.

### IMC Meets

The set-up of the Meets are very much based on the BMC's blueprint. The IMC meets are organised in conjunction with Athletic Clubs who share the IMC's passion for organising top-class meets featuring fast-paced and competitive races. The IMC meets are now regarded by athletes and coaches alike as the very best in the nation.

The success of this strategy is illustrated by the fact the trend of Irish athletes venturing across the Irish Sea to compete on British tracks, which was part of the inspiration for establishing the IMC in the first place, is being reversed. The advent of low-cost air travel has made Ireland much more accessible and, whilst many Irish middle-distance runners still venture across to BMC Grands Prix, British athletes are now heading in the opposite direction in increasing numbers to compete.

There are now many BMC athletes who are not just regulars but who thrive at IMC Meet. Prominent amongst these is Alexandra Bell who has come over three

times in the past two years. From these three races she has run two PBs and a seasons best with her last race being a stunning personal best of 2:01.82. Other prominent BMC athletes who competed this year were Tom Lancashire, Jack Hallas, Cameron Ross Boyek, Richard Weir, Guy Smyth, James Bowness, Zak Curran and many more.

### BMC and IMC

The relationship between the two clubs has grown since the IMC establishment. THE IMC enjoys a strong relationship with BMC Chairman Tim Brennan, Pat Fitzgerald and more recently Stephen Green.

THE IMC v BMC Mile is a new development and one designed to further enhance the relationship as well as to give the opportunity to athletes to represent their respective Milers Clubs.

Run in conjunction with the famous Morton Games at Santry stadium on July 24<sup>th</sup> the inaugural IMC v BMC mile pitted four Irish milers against four from the BMC and is destined to become an annual challenge. The winners were the team with the best aggregate time, and on this occasion the IMC prevailed by a margin of less than six seconds, with 17 year old Kevin Mulcaire taking individual honours in a Personal Best 4:04.12, earmarking him as definitely a name to look out for.

### Qualifying Standards and Youngsters

"We've been concentrating on qualifying standards for our young athletes," says Michael, "to the degree that 11 standards for Under-23's, World and European Youths and European Youth Olympics have been achieved in IMC meets in 2015." He enthuses that, "There is a plethora of talented youngsters beginning to emerge".

A case in point is Bohermeen AC starlet Kevin McGrath, who struck gold over 1500m in this summer's European Youth Olympics in Tblisi. Coached by Joe Ryan, 16 year-old McGrath has already clocked an impressive 3:50.33 for the metric mile this summer (at the BMC Watford Grand Prix in June), but was happy to follow a slow, tactical pace in the Georgian capital before unleashing a ferocious kick over the last 200m to win by the thickness of a vest in 4:01.11. McGrath is the second Irish athlete to take this title in the last four years, following Ruairi Finnegan's success in 2011. Louise Shanahan is yet another youngster who took the EYOF 800m title



BMC Chair Tim Brennan (left) with Michael McGovern.

in 2013.

"Then there is Kevin Mulcaire," says Michael. Still only 17, Mulcaire broke John Treacy's 40-year old National Junior 5000m record when clocking 14:02.30 at the Trafford BMC Grand Prix in May, 2.3 seconds inside the previous standard. "Kevin, coached by Pat Hogan, got his 5000m qualifying standard at the IMC/Greystones meet earlier in May and went on to finish 4<sup>th</sup> in the European Junior Championship before coming back to represent the IMC and win the recent IMC v BMC mile."

### Progress

Alongside improvement at the sharp end, Michael is just as proud of the recent strides being made in terms of depth. "We are so pleased with a number of areas," he says, "Entries to our meets this summer have hit historically high levels, and for the first time we had to have an 'F' race in the men's 800m, which was won in sub 2 minutes". He continues that, "In this year's IMC/La Cheile the 800m A race saw eight of the nine athletes ran under 1:50, including five Irish athletes, led by Karl Griffin, who won in 1:48.05." says Michael, "If you add Mark English, a regular at IMC meets in his early career, it is clear Irish 800m running is in good shape."

Amongst the women, 23-year old Ciara Mageean, from Portaferry in Northern Ireland, continues to impress, breaking the Northern Ireland record in the Mile, to go with the IMC home record of 2:02.31 over 800m which she set in the Belfast meet in 2011.



Photo © Niall O'Connell

*A sea of green: The IMC has goes from strength to strength.*

## 2016 and beyond

Thanks to the support from main sponsors New Balance, the future of the Irish Milers Club looks rosy. "The addition of New Balance has been terrific," says Michael, "and we are discussing ideas with them to add some new features to keep developing our meets, into next year and beyond."

He is clearly optimistic about both the immediate and long term future, pointing out that, "We had a hugely successful 2015 Belfast Meet organised in conjunction with local club Beechmount Harriers". In 2016 and with the support of Athletics Northern Ireland a full International Meet is now set for May 21, 2016. Branded 'The Belfast International', it will be held in the superb surroundings of the Mary Peters Track, which now has the added bonus of a super-fast Mondo track.

This type of collaboration and innovation will attract more home based athletes and indeed more top quality runners from further and further afield and the heightened level of competition bodes well for the future of the sport in Ireland.



## What they said on IMC Meets...

### The athletes:

Alexandra Bell:

"I don't think I tell you enough but thank you once again for making these opportunities possible for me! Without you I couldn't have achieved all I've done this season!"

Kieran Kelly:

"Top meets this year, well done guys and thanks for putting them on and putting in the heavy work involved. From a wet day in Greystones in early May to a full house in Santry last night".

Maria McCambridge:

"I just wanted to thank you for putting on such a great night of athletics. So well organised and a really good atmosphere".

Jimmy Mac:

"My first year at the IMC meets and the professionalism is very impressive, everyone treated with the utmost respect, hats off to you all, your races were a big help to me this year".

### The coaches:

Ken Nason:

"Thanks for a great meet last night. It was my first time at an imc event as a coach. I had two athletes. Conor Walter in the 800 and luke horgan in the 1500. Both ran PBs on the night".

John Dooley:

"Congrats to the IMC on another thrilling afternoon's athletics - excellent organisation & informative & lively commentary brought the best out of a huge number of talented athletes. We headed home on a 'high' and will return for more!"

BORN AGAIN ATHLETE AND SERIAL BLOGGER, **MARK GALLAGHER**, COVERS A VERY EXCITING 9 DAYS OF COMPETITION FROM THE SUMMER'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS:

The Beijing Bird's Nest is possibly one of the last great sporting follies of our time, having sat largely empty since the 2008 Olympics. August saw the reawakening of this immense, imposing yet awe-inspiring behemoth as the 15th World Athletics Championships brought the sport's greatest together. The mandate for stadium construction was to be inspiring and to be able to withstand an earthquake and after recent negative publicity, this could be the mandate for Athletics itself. It is testimony to the BMC that 13 athletes who are either members of, or who have used the BMC for their development, were amongst the athletes competing for Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the middle distance contingent being an intriguing blend of youth and experience.

### Women's 800m

Shelayna Oskan-Clarke finally arrived on the world stage. Keeping herself out of trouble in a heat with a few scuffles, she eased through to the semis in 3rd in 2:01.72. Better came in the semis, where some strong inside running saw a victory and first sub 2

in 1:58.86. Arzamasoza outspurred her rivals in the final, but a strong performance saw Shelayna claim 5th in 1:58.99. Lynsey Sharp struggled in the semis after a comfortable heat qualification in 1:58.98. Fading in the last 100 despite being in a perfect position at 200 to go, a disappointing last in 1:59.33 had Lynsey reflecting that although she was in good shape it just hadn't come together. Jenny Meadows qualified for semis as a fastest loser in 2:00.07 but her road ended there after falling from 2nd at the bell to 7th in 2:00.53. Jenny confessed she actually felt underwhelmed by the occasion.

### Men's 800m

'Overwhelmed' seemed to be Kyle Langford's issue. His usual composed race was gone and a physical first lap saw him 7th at the bell, moving up to 4th on the back straight before fading to 7th in 1:49.78. A clearly disappointed Kyle complained of nothing in the legs, problems with the food, but later admitted having learned a lot. It was great to see Michael Rimmer back, but unfortunately this road was to end in the heats. Moving

through on the inside after getting slightly boxed he finished 4th behind Rudisha in 1:48.70, not enough to make the next stages, and possibly too much too soon after 8 months out.

### Women's 1500m

Differing fortunes for the two Lauras in the 1500m, with Laura Weightman being withdrawn from the semis on medical advice after suffering concussion following a heavy fall after qualification from her heat in 4:06.13. Laura Muir, fresh from her Monaco sub 4, showed great maturity in each round, the first a comfortable 2nd in 4:05.53 and a great tactical race in the semis seeing third behind Dibaba in 4:07.95. In a strong final field, Dibaba's last 800m in 1.57 led her to gold but Laura finished strongly to take 5th in a time of 4:11:48. Laura delighted with her season, looking forward to "off season" cake.

### Men's 1500m

The heats saw both Charlie Grice and Chris O'Hare progress, Charlie through in 4th in a group finish in 3:43.21 and Chris recovering

Mo Farah at the double yet again.



from a bump going into the last lap to finish strongly in 3:38.43. The semis didn't go to plan for Chris, in a perfect position with 100m to go the legs seemed to go by 50 out and he finished, in his words, "like a donkey" in 7th in 3:44.36. Chris has vowed to work harder to show youngsters that heartbreak makes us stronger. Charlie cruised through, his 4th in 3:35.58 being perfectly executed. He kept himself in touching distance throughout the final, but the pace of Kiprof and his compatriots over the last lap proved too much for much of the field. A 9th place finish in a strong field in 3:36.21 showed great promise.

## Women's 5000m

Returning to the big stage after horrific injuries, Steph Twell took the pace on midway through her heat, a wise decision as she qualified as a fastest loser in 7th in 15:34.72. The final split into 2 races with an amazing Ethiopian 1-2-3 being a highlight of the championships. Steph ran solidly to finish second European in a time of 15:26.24 in 12th place, conceding there are lessons to learn but she would go use this as motivation.

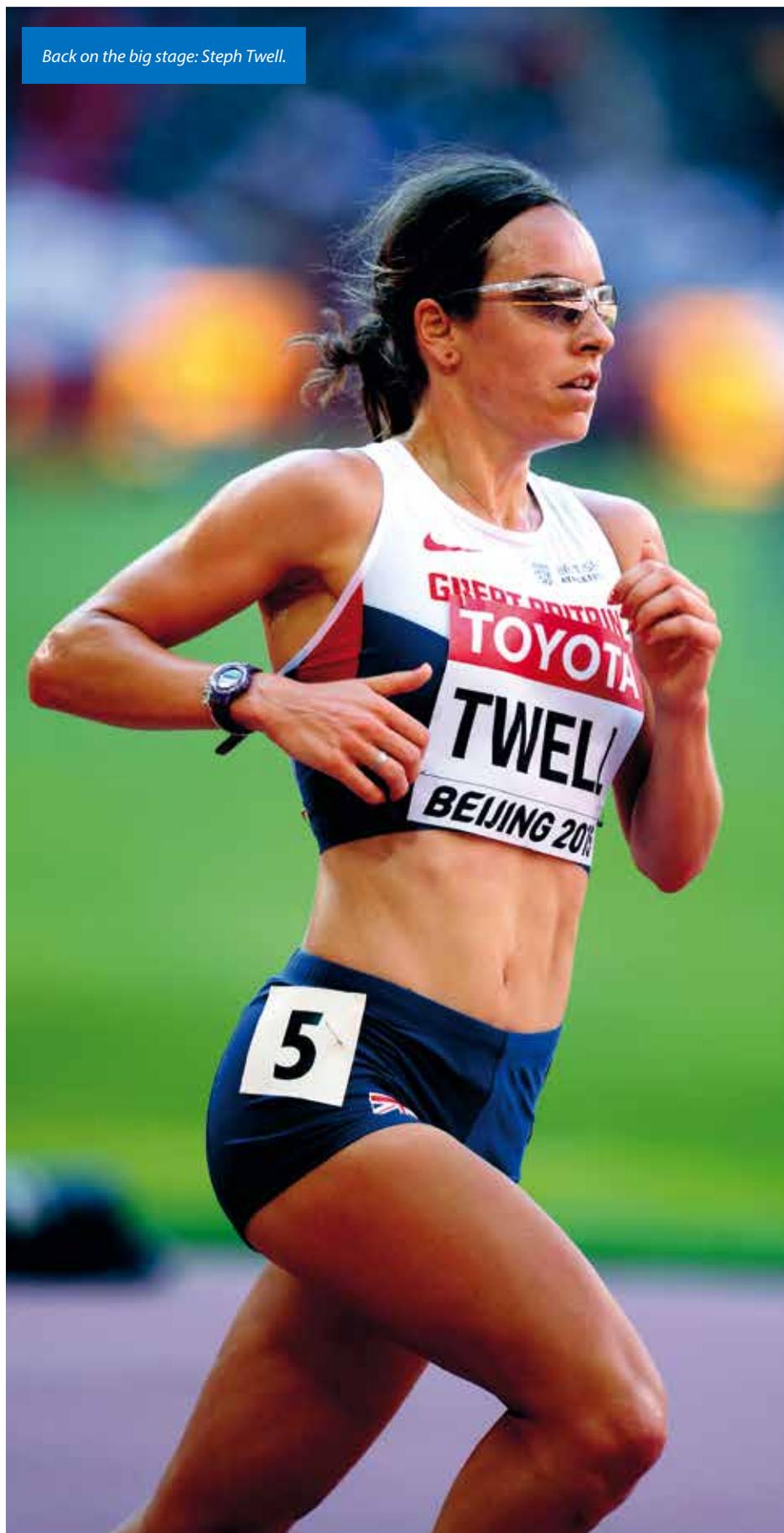
## Men's 5000m

Tom Farrell came through his heat in 4th in 13:45 after a composed performance, racing the last 2k in 5:05. He took on the pace in the final before absorbed by the pack as the speed picked up. Initial disappointment at his finish in 15th in 14:08.87 was replaced with optimism of what has been, and can be, achieved. The gold was won in style by Mo Farah. After his victory in the 10,000m eyes

were on Mo to do the 'treble-double'. There was a scare in the heat as Mo almost went down with 200 to go, but he found his focus to go through in 13:19.44. The final saw Mo go for a wee wander 8 lanes out for a drink

of water before he imposed himself on the race. A gutsy break by Caleb Ndiku wasn't enough as Mo kicked supremely at 100 to go to win convincingly and start the debate. The greatest British athlete of all time?

Back on the big stage: Steph Twell.



Charlie Grice

# BMC IN PICTURES

Photo © Adrian Royle



Striding out at Sport City in May.



Feeling the pain at the Sport City GP.

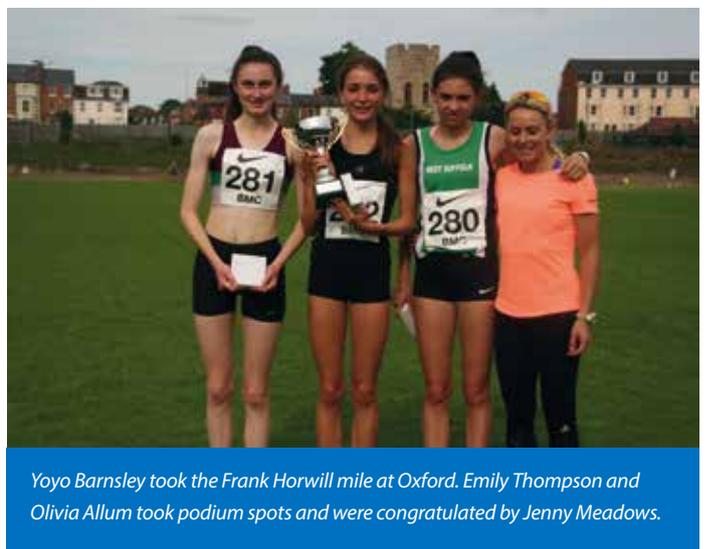
Photo © Adrian Royle



Dale Clutterbuck (9) has impressed this season.



Jessica Judd grabs second at this year's Watford GP.



Yoyo Barnsley took the Frank Horwill mile at Oxford. Emily Thompson and Olivia Allum took podium spots and were congratulated by Jenny Meadows.

Photo © Tim Brennan

**CARLSSON THOMAS** EXPLORES THE ISSUE OF TACTICS IN MIDDLE DISTANCE RACING:

In championship settings, middle-distance races often become slow and tactical. The key to success against evenly matched opponents lies in a well-timed sprint from an unobstructed position. Acquiring a good position in time for the sprint, without wasting too much energy in the early stages of the race can be difficult, when every opponent has the same objective. Most athletes have the opportunity to participate in just a few truly tactical races per season, so experience accumulates slowly.

Coaches can help athletes prepare for championship races by forming a race plan, but preparation is only one part of the equation. Race strategy and race tactics are two different things. Strategies are made *before* the race, tactics *during* the race. Even the best strategic plans will be insufficient when the race is under way, because opponents' actions are unpredictable. Athletes therefore have to complement and adjust their race strategy by making tactical decisions during the race, based on how they feel and what they observe.

There are four tactical elements that an athlete should observe as the race develops: (1) the current pace, (2) pace history, i.e. how fast the earlier stages of the race were (3) the athlete's own position and (4) the positions of key opponents. Athletes should preferably also consider a fifth element: (5) the abilities of specific opponents.

In this article I will examine two tactical scenarios, one from the 1500m and one from the 800m, to illustrate middle-distance tactics.

## 1500m

The 1500m athletes shown in Figure 1 have just passed the 1000m mark. The pace often increases at this stage of the race, when many athletes actively look for a better position. Athletes have been marked with traffic-light colors in Figure 1 with regard to their position for the sprint: greens are free to go at any time, yellows have to wait and reds are boxed into their present positions until the group splits up.

In the early stages of the race athletes in red and yellow positions usually have few tactical options but more room usually becomes available for them as the sprint stage approaches. The pace increases and gaps open up in the middle of the group as some athletes move outward. Let's look in detail on the tactical options available for athlete B on the 1000m-1100m straight.

Most of the green runners have moved half a step outward as they compete for positions on the outside. Athlete A, positioned in front of B, decides to follow them, as shown by the arrow in Figure 1. Should athlete B do the same, or should he or she instead utilize the free space on the inside and take a position just behind the race leaders C and D?

There's a case to be made for either alternative, and all five tactical elements can factor into B's decision. If B follows the outside runners through the 1100m-1200m bend, he or she will probably be in a green position on the back straight, ready to overtake others as the sprint begins. However, he or she will have to run a longer distance in the bend, so he or she might have to expend a lot of energy before the sprint even begins. The pace is already fast and it might increase further in the bend.

So perhaps it would be better to stay inside in the 1100m-1200m bend and then attack on the back straight. The question is, will B be able to break out of his or her boxed red position when the sprint begins, or will he or she be stuck behind a wall of opponents with nowhere to go? If he or she remembers that the pace was moderately fast in the early stages of the race, there's a good chance that the group quickly breaks apart when the sprint begins

because some opponents will already be tired. This might give inside athletes enough room to break out of the box without any trouble.

But there are two more tactical elements to consider. Who are the favorites and where are they positioned? If race leaders C and D are favorites, then it is likely that they will be faster than most other green athletes in the sprint. B has every chance to sprint effectively from lane 1 if he or she can get to a position behind favorites.

On the other hand, if C and D are underdogs in this race, then athlete B should try to move towards the green positions quite early. The underdogs will probably be beaten in the sprint, and anyone stuck behind them when their strength fades will struggle to break out of the box as athletes in green and yellow positions dominate the sprint.

It is of course more or less impossible for athlete B to think through these complicated tactical scenarios in a state of fatigue and urgency with the tactical situation constantly shifting. But all opponents face the same challenge. He or she may be able to outthink them and obtain an advantage just by picking up on one or two tactical cues at the right time.

## 800m

The 800m athletes shown in Figure 2 have just passed the 100m mark. After a staggered start in separate lanes, athletes are now free to move inside. This time I have marked each athlete with their lane number. Let's look at the tactical options available for different athletes as they exit the bend.

When the start is even athletes who start in the outside lanes can freely look for a good position on the straight. They can accelerate a bit to find a position closer to the front or move in behind a specifically chosen opponent, a race favorite perhaps. They can even sometimes try to deliberately box a specific opponent.

In a tactical 800m race athletes that are boxed in the start usually remain in the box at least to the 500m mark, often longer. Athletes who are a step behind their opponents after the first bend, especially inside starters such as athlete 2 in Figure 2, will immediately get boxed when opponents move in from the outside lanes. If athlete 2 wants to avoid the box he or she must quickly accelerate up to the shoulder of athlete 1 before the outside starters close in. Having one opponent on your inside is a good guarantee that you won't end up in a red position.

Athletes who start in lanes 1-4 should preferably run the first bend a little bit faster than their opponents on the outside. This gives them more time and better opportunity to choose a good position on the back straight. 800m starts are an interesting cat-and-mouse game. Inside starters have the upper hand in the first bend, because they can see how fast the outside athletes start. The advantage shifts over to outside starters on the straight because they can limit inside starters' freedom of movement.

Many athletes starting in the outside lanes move inward as

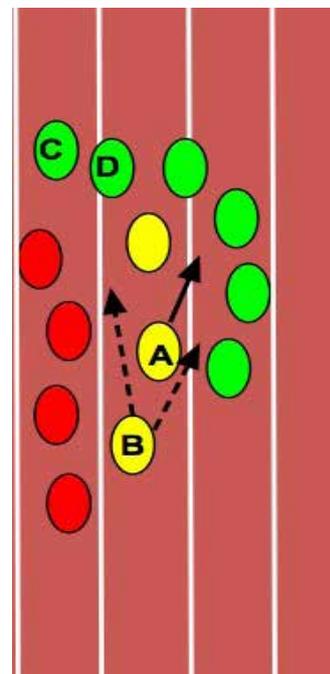


Figure 1: 1500m runners at 1000m point in race.

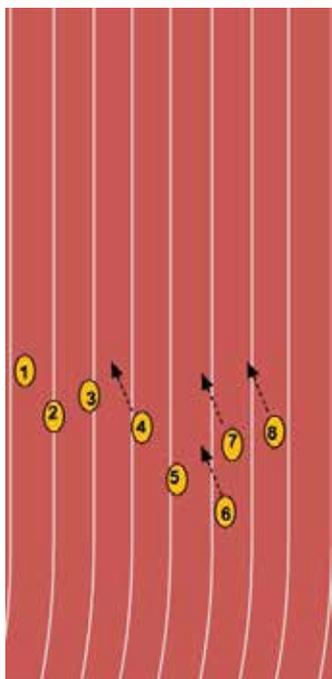


Figure 2: 800m runners just after the 100m breaking point in the race.

soon as they come out on the 100m-200m straight. No distance is saved by moving in early, but tactical leeway can be lost. In Figure 2 athletes 6-8 start moving inward immediately after the bend, as indicated by the arrows. This can be harmful to athlete 5, who might get boxed if he or she simply moves inward with the others.

It's important to remember that no rule requires athletes to immediately move towards the inside lanes on the straight. Athlete 5 is fully entitled to keep running straight out in lane 5. This can be a very useful tactical maneuver which helps athlete 5 to preserve his or her freedom of movement and avoid the box. Some caution may be required to avoid a

collision with the athletes 6-8 as they move inward, but after that athlete 5 should still have time to utilize the tactical advantages of an outside position.

The challenge of 800m start tactics is not fatigue but high speed. 800m races always start fast, so it can be difficult to perform tactical maneuvers which require further acceleration. It is also hard to know whether a race will be a slow one or a fast one until the leader sets the pace at the 200m mark. Athletes should prepare for tactical 800m races by studying lane assignments and thinking through different scenarios. Which opponents are likely to start fastest? Where do the race favorites start? Behind which opponents should I not be boxed? It's easier to make quick tactical adjustments in the first 200m with a clear general strategy in place.

## Conclusion

Coaches can prepare a strategy, give tactical hints and analyze tactical decisions afterwards, but athletes ultimately have to make their own tactics during the race. There are no golden rules of middle-distance tactics which would always be applicable. Every race provides new and unique tactical challenges. Performance levels vary from one day to another, and even the objective is different in qualifying heats when compared to a final. All of this means that middle-distance athletes should devote some of their leisure time to study race tactics. A good way to do this is to watch race videos from international championships, follow the tactical decisions a given athlete makes and see how they affected the outcome.

*Note: I have published tactical analysis of recent races and a guide to 1500m tactics on my webpage [thcson.com](http://thcson.com).*

Blanket finish: Ben Greenwood (31) takes the 'D' 800m at the Watford GP.



**LIZ EGAN**, THE AUTHOR OF THE POPULAR 'NOTES FROM HIGHER GROUNDS' TAKES A LOOK AT ALTITUDE TRAINING VENUES FOR MIDDLE DISTANCE ATHLETES:



*Former world 1500m silver medallist  
Hannah England in Iten, Kenya.*

British Athletics have been arranging trips to altitude in recent years, and as Chris Hepworth explores in the next article, earlier this year a joint University of Birmingham/ St Mary's University trip to Font Romeu, demonstrated the appetite for athletes at all levels to train at altitude.

The majority of Britain's most successful 800m and 1500m athletes have been among those to utilise Iten's high altitude (2,380 m) and hilly terrain to build winter strength and Font Romeu's more moderate altitude (1,850 m) for competition-specific preparation. This being said, there are a range of suitable venues in the US, with Mt Laguna (CA) a favoured destination for Melbourne Track Club athletes, and with the upcoming Olympic Games in Rio on their minds, Park City (UT) is one of the destinations on the radar of British athletes. As 'Notes From Higher Grounds' argues, for many, the choice of where to train at altitude can be just as important as any scientific considerations surrounding training camp planning.

#### **Does it work?**

Despite its popularity, there is some debate in the scientific research as to whether training at altitude affords athletes an advantage when racing at sea level. The anecdotal evidence in support of training at altitude is, however, unequivocal, and few

athletes at world class level don't train at altitude at least for some part of the year.

In terms of basic physiology, the benefits of altitude training relate to the haematological responses to the reduced oxygen pressure. Production and secretion of erythropoietin, the hormone responsible for the regulation of haemoglobin and red blood cell production, increases when low blood oxygen levels are detected by the kidneys. Much of the benefit comes from living/sleeping at altitude, not just during training. In terms of so-called 'responders' and 'non-responders', recent evidence suggests that you may not respond if your iron levels are low, you are ill, or there are other underlying conditions.

#### **Factors to consider**

Some things that middle distance athletes might want to consider when planning altitude training trips:

1. The duration and timing of the training camp.
2. The altitude.
3. The ease with which high quality sessions can be maintained, particularly prior to or during the competitive season. Access to a track and/or fast, flat surfaces, and the ability to 'live high; train low' are important.
4. The ease with which you can get to races at sea-level, if relevant.

5. The return to sea-level in relation to upcoming competitions, including any jet-lag incurred on return, and any heat or humidity acclimatisation that may be required. Humidity is typically lower at altitude, irrespective of the temperature, and adequate acclimatisation will be required upon return to sea level.

**Liz specifically highlights the following locations for consideration:**

#### **Where to train**

**Font Romeu, FRA** (1,850 m)

**Visit:** May to September

**Pros:** Track, gym and cross-training options within the town; good choice of self-catered accommodation; cheap flights from many UK cities; moderate altitude; 'live-high; train-low' potential.

**Cons:** Most of the trails in the town are hilly and rough underfoot; short drive required to get to flat trails; snow possible as late as April.

**Mammoth Lakes, USA** (2,400 m)

**Visit:** May to September

**Pros:** Synthetic track, smooth road running options and a good variety of trails close to the town; excellent 'live-high; train-low' potential; good gym facilities and injury treatment support.

**Cons:** High cost of living; long way to travel unless racing in California.

**San Luis Potosí, MEX** (1,860 m)

**Visit:** Year-round

**Pros:** Track, some trails, a well-equipped gym, and injury and rehab support at all-inclusive La Loma altitude training centre; suitable weather year round.

**Cons:** Long and expensive flights from UK; limited choice of trails within the city.

**St. Moritz, CHE** (1,856 m)

**Visit:** May to September

**Pros:** Excellent variety of flat and hilly trails; free access to track, gym and pool facilities and some cross-training options; beautiful location; excellent choice of self-catering accommodation; moderate altitude; all facilities within walking distance of accommodation.

**Cons:** High cost of living; snow possible up until April or May.

**Potchefstroom, RSA** (1,350 m)

**Visit:** October to March

**Pros:** Excellent facilities; low cost of living; great weather.

**Cons:** Altitude a little low to induce altitude training response (though it doubles as a warm-weather training venue during the Northern Hemisphere winter); flights from UK can be expensive.

## MATT LONG REVIEWS 'NOTES FROM HIGHER GROUNDS':

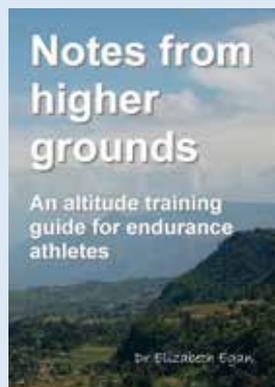
**Kukimbia Huru Publishing.**  
**www.altitudetrainingcomps.com**

This is a book for 'dreamers'. For those of you that dream about training free like the Africans or for those who daydream about being the next Mo Farah or Paula Radcliffe, covering mile after mile over mountain trails.

It's a book for athletes written by one of our own - an endurance athlete in Liz Egan, who has not only a background in sports science but also has worked in assisting performance athletes to achieve their goals.

No less than fifteen of the world's most popular altitude training destinations are featured, from the old colonial mining town of San Luis Potosi in Mexico's central plateau, to the breathtaking St. Moritz, situated around Lej da San Murezzan in the glacial valley of the upper Engadin.

First and foremost, the work is a fantastic travel guide with notes on air, bus and car journeys where appropriate being provided along with vital information about visa requirements. The



pictorial representation of the specific venues is excellent along with useful maps which proverbially bring the place to life before one decides whether or not to consider making the journey. This is contextualised by well researched geographical and historical information about the respective locations along with special features about areas of interest within the vicinity of specific locations. Perhaps most helpfully

is the 'Author's Verdict' which appears within the review of each location, where not only running, but variables such as cost, convenience, safety and cultural experience are rated on a five star scale.

An intimate and informed account of the world of possibilities for altitude training, produced by a talented young woman, who brings her athletic prowess, mentoring ability and sports science academic underpinnings all to play in this superb account which she alone, researched, wrote, designed and published.

## CHRIS HEPWORTH SPENT TIME WITH JAMES BREWER, IN UNPICKING THE BENEFITS OF ALTITUDE TRAINING:

As Liz has alluded to in the previous piece, ever since the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, at an elevation of 2300m, the benefits of altitude on training and performance have become a key factor in competitive sport. The varying altitude performances across the different disciplines introduced the widespread effects of altitude to the mainstream athletics world. This has since led to professional athletes flocking to purpose built training venues around the world as a regular part of their training.

The success of British athletes such as Paula Radcliffe and Mo Farah who spend a large amount of time training at altitude, has helped lead to an increase in the British Athletics use of altitude training. British Athletics and London Marathon altitude camps have become an important fixture in the training programmes for the majority of Britain's leading endurance athletes, providing them with the opportunity to train at altitude three to four times a year.

The location and cost of Font Romeu makes it a very convenient altitude training venue for the British team, only a two hour

flight away from Britain. At last Easter's British Athletics training camp, incorporating St Mary's University and University of Birmingham training camps, in Font Romeu, we spoke to British Athletics Altitude Camp Organiser and World Championship 1500m semi-finalist, James Brewer. For the last two years Brewer has been organising British Athletics camps to Font Romeu, Iten and Park City, Utah. The Easter Camp in Font Romeu is timed to start soon after the snow has thawed and is used as preparation for the track season. "It fits in quite well with people's other commitments, they can come away over Easter a bit better", explains Brewer. "We've had Laura Muir on her first altitude camp, she's studying to be a vet so it's the only one she's ever really been able to link in with so that's been great. And it does fit in well with preparing for the outdoor season. Get a good aerobic base in, up here, go back down to sea level, sharpen up and then people are ready to go."

Brewer is a strong believer in the benefits of altitude training and says that it definitely helped him get into the shape which saw

him win European U23 silver and reach the World Championships semi-final in 2009. "You can see how fit people get from it. I think it's a really great place to train, whether it be here or Kenya. It's just a bit more focused environment really and not a lot else to do up in the mountains so people do focus down on what they're doing and make sure they're eating right and recovering, so I think that's a big part of it. That's why I love Kenya, there is nothing else to do, so you just have to train hard and look after yourself. A lot of people have got good results out of it. I suppose Charlie Grice is one that's really bought into it and has gone on pretty much every camp that he's been offered and has run really well off it, so it's definitely having a good impact."

Kenya has had a wealth of athletics success in recent years, most notably in this year's World Championships, finishing top of the medal table for the first time, with seven gold medals and a total of 16 medals. This success has often been put down to, in part, the fact that Kenyan athletes are born, live and train at altitude. However,

Brewer believes that although altitude is one contributing factor to Kenya's performances, the large base of runners all situated in Iten training together in big groups is also a big factor for the country's athletic prowess. He therefore believes that replicating this is what could help improve British athletes' performances. "That's what British Athletics and London Marathon have tried to do with the altitude camps, is just get groups out running and training hard together. It's the same thing really with St Mary's and Birmingham. If you just get a decent size group of runners training consistently and you'll get some really good results out of it. I do think if you could take 500 people and get them running regularly week in week out you'll get, if not a world champion, someone that's competing really well at a world level. For me I think it's the numbers".

In order to get the best out of altitude training athletes need to ensure that they allow their body to adjust to the altitude. It has been shown that there is a high risk of increasing the stress hormone, cortisol, when training at altitude, which can indicate over-training. Therefore, the first week of altitude training should be very low intensity running, which given that research suggests there's a training benefit just by being at a high elevation, will have long term positive benefits to the altitude training and performance thereafter. In order to make sure that over-training is avoided British Athletics put an emphasis on in-depth physiological monitoring of the athletes. "You definitely have to listen to your body", Brewer continues. "The first time you come up to altitude you really struggle, especially somewhere as high as Kenya and then you go back again and again and gradually you start feeling better and better and that period of time at the beginning of

the camp where you have to adapt gets a bit shorter and you get a bit longer quality training time out there". Physiological monitoring of athlete responses to the environment is inherent in what the British Athletics Camps do. Brewer maintains that, "We check up on them every morning. We checking their joint range, their oxygen saturation of the blood, their perceived scores of fatigue, muscle soreness and body weight and just tracking all those so we can say OK maybe you've gone a bit hard these last few days, let's just reign it in". He believes that considerable progress has been made in the last few years in that, "We're getting to the point now where we can see from the

numbers that we're coming back with where someone may be suffering a little bit more, in the early days it was a bit more, you look back and you can say obviously you could see those trends. Now we're getting to the point where we can see what's happening and we can take action, a bit more proactive rather than reactive. It's taken a few years to get there, but I think we're doing pretty well now and everyone seems to be having pretty positive responses to it all."

In summary, Brewer believes that an athlete can compete at the top level without altitude training, but the altitude training camps provide the 'one percent' that can make the all important difference.



*James Wilkinson has the Great Rift Valley as his backdrop.*

## **BRENDAN BYRNE** TAKES A LOOK AT THE PERTINENT ISSUE OF REST AND RECOVERY FOR THE MIDDLE DISTANCE ATHLETE:

We all know that to be a successful runner you need to train hard. It also helps if you have talent, a good coach, a good environment and a helpful doctor and physiotherapist. The tricky bit is what happens when things go wrong? How much training is too much? What do you do when performances drop off? Rest and recovery are often neglected areas in middle distance coaching.

Coach Alberto Salazar, himself a former world class marathoner, when talking about his own career said, "To be a world class runner you have to train hard, but you must

allow your body a chance to recover". Over-training can be defined as performing an amount or intensity of training for which the body cannot adapt satisfactorily and which might harm rather than help overall fitness.

With reference to his General Adaptation Syndrome, Hans Selye maintains that, "Stress is the non-specific response of the body to any demand made on it. It is not merely nervous tension. Stress is not something to be avoided".

Training is about subjecting the body to an amount of physical stress. During a period of rest the body recovers and reaches

a higher of fitness. This is the notion of 'adaptation' as the following graph shows:

As the familiar graph shows, if the training load is too high then the body cannot and adapt and increased fitness is not the result

However, a different perspective was suggested by late Harry Wilson (coach to 1980 Moscow Olympic 800m champion Steve Ovett amongst others) was once reputed to have said, "A rest day a week? Why that is fifty two lost days training a year!" He may have had a point, so it's a question of balance in terms of assessing how both coach and athlete know when

over training occurs.

The following can be used as a checklist to assess what may be symptomatic when overtraining occurs:

#### Physical signs

- Elevated resting pulse/heart rate
- Frequent minor infections
- Increased susceptibility to colds and flu
- Increase in minor injuries
- Chronic muscle soreness or joint pain
- Exhaustion
- Lethargy
- Weight loss
- Loss of appetite
- Insatiable thirst or dehydration
- Intolerance to exercise
- Decreased performance
- "Heavy legs"
- Swollen lymph glands

#### Psychological signs

- Fatigued, tired, drained, lack of energy
- Apathy or no motivation
- Reduced ability to concentrate
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Headaches
- Insomnia
- Inability to relax
- Twitchy, fidgety or jittery.
- Loss of libido

This by no means a definitive list and it is outside the scope of this article to consider all of them. As Tim Noakes says in *Lore of Running* "There is no proper blood test that will predict over training". However,

athletes and coaches should be aware of haemoglobin and ferritin levels as a result of blood testing. Another noteworthy maxim from Noakes is that, "It is tragic that the athlete with the most talent who performs best on the least amount of training is the most likely to be successful." He is making a strong point that smart training should take precedence over a huge volume of running. To put it another way there is an optimum amount of training for success.

The advice is that if you suffer from some of the above symptoms for a number of weeks then it would be good to have a period of rest for numerous days. Let's have a look at one of the symptoms that is fairly easily investigated - the resting pulse rate. As long ago as the 1960s, one of the top athletes of the time was Gordon Pirie. He was a former BMC member and a sub four minute miler. He was brought up on interval training. Interval training was given a scientific basis by the Germans Gershler and Reindell. They maintained that during repetitions of for example 200m the pulse rate would rise to say 200 beats to minute. During the recovery period of say one minute the pulse would return to 120 beats per minute. Then the next repetition could begin. When the pulse was elevated and wouldn't return to 120 bpm then it was time to stop the session. Interval training in the 1950s and 1960s was used by outstanding coaches such as Mihaly Igloi and Franz Stampfl.

Pirie took his resting pulse rate at the same time each morning. If it was five beats above normal then it was time to have an easy training day. If it was ten beats above

normal then it was time for a complete rest. This isn't fool proof of course but it was and is still useful. It is worth bearing in mind that the vast majority of athletes don't have access to a huge amount of physiological testing. That advice about resting pulse rate is still valid today. An elevated pulse rate may be a sign of increased stress or an impending infection. Gordon Pirie incidentally throughout a long career won the National Cross Country by over a minute (he won the event three times) and set a world 5000m record of 13 mins 36.8 secs. and a world 3000m record of 7 mins 52.7 secs. Additionally he won an Olympic silver medal over 5,000m in 1956 at Melbourne.

It is important to stress that every athlete is an individual with their own strengths and weaknesses; these are very important points for coaches to consider, particularly if the coach is dealing with a group. There are a number of things that help adaptation and recovery. Making training too monotonous is bad. For coaches vary the training venues if possible. For the athlete it is important to maintain a training diary and not only record the session but also the response to the session. Mood state tests have been suggested.

Here are a few pointers that may help. Alternate days or periods of hard training with easy days are recommended. The cool down after a session or race certainly aids recovery, unless the athlete is being interviewed on TV immediately after a race of course!

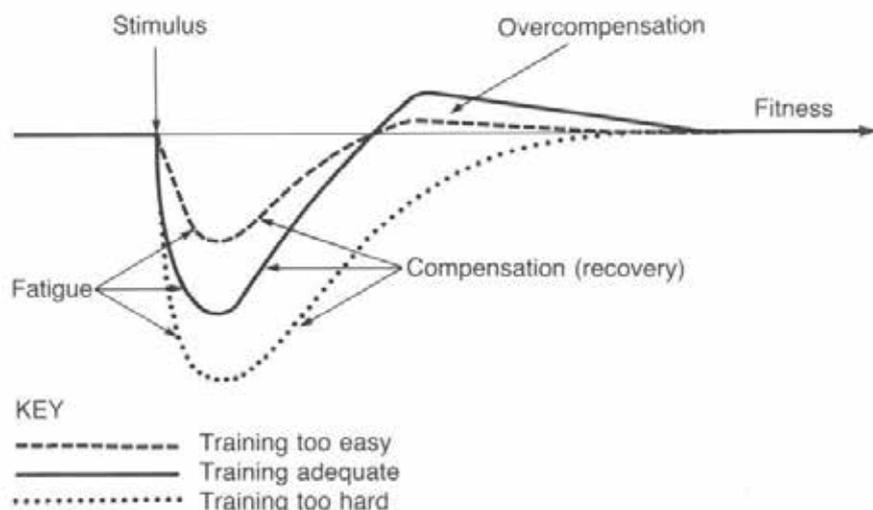
In previous decades, there was a saying that "Sleep is for wimps". This is certainly not the case, sleep is very important and disturbed or interrupted sleep is a sign of over training. Proper nutrition and hydration play their part. Some recommend a snack of a chocolate/milk drink for immediate recovery after a hard session.

In addition compression socks have also been considered useful but the scant research suggests that they are more useful during running rather than after to aid circulation and recovery. Other methods to aid recovery for runners include the use of ultra sound, massage assisted stretches, myofascial release and yoga. It is not the scope of this article to consider the merits of all of these methods. What might help athletes to recover in a practical way is the use of rollers in self massage. This is at least a practicable and cheap method.

#### References and further reading

- 'Lore of Running' by Tim Noakes Human Kinetics 4th Edition. 2003
- 'Stress Without Distress' by Hans Selye. Corgi. 1974

Figure one: Graph used by Matveyev in 1965. The super compensation graph appears in *Sports Training principles* by Frank Dick, 5th edition (2007: 322) and he attributes the graph to Yakovlev:



Different training loads have different effects on the athlete's recovery

FORMER INTERNATIONAL, **BASHIR HUSSAIN**, ASKS WHETHER THE STEEPLECHASE IS THE FORGOTTEN EVENT OF BRITISH MIDDLE DISTANCE MEN AND GATHERS THE THOUGHTS OF **STELLA BANDU** ON LONG TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT AND THE CHASE IN THE UK:

Looking at the Power of 10 rankings for steeplechase, it would appear that the event is not looking good for large parts of the UK – both in terms of quantity and quality as target times would appear in my opinion to be well below comparative rankings for 1500m and 3000/5000m. With all-time Top 10 middle distance records often being impacted upon in junior age groups, the steeplechase is an event that has felt minimal impact as records are very much from yester year, particularly with the men's event. Understandably, the women's event is still developing and hence there is more recent activity in the all-time lists, particularly, for example, from Racheal Bamford, who took up the event in the last 18 months moving to a recent 6-26 UK Best over 2000m s/chase. With 5 additions in the top 30 since the millennium, this shows poor reading in comparison to the 19 additions in the 1500m in the same age group.

At junior level we are, in my opinion, clearly improving over 1500m but it would appear not in the steeplechase.

With opportunities at European level, it's my belief that medals are going begging year on year with many athletes who I believe are capable of cresting podium positions. While drills are there to develop robust and agile athletes, few would appear to be testing their strength and agility over the 'sticks'. It's my conviction that there are clear opportunities for titles and finalist opportunities, not to mention the potential of gaining funding or an international vest.

Let's explore some of the reasons which may explain the predicament which we find ourselves in.

#### **Possible reasons for the poor development of male steeplechasers.**

In the under 15 & under 17 age groups, the intimidating wooden barriers are often perceived to represent a much greater challenge to growing adolescents. Hence it is imperative that any athlete is building fundamental movement skills and mobility to limit chances of injury for all events. However while coaching athletes to such good practice, coaches and athletes should perhaps reflect that the odd outing over the chase is worthwhile as over distance work, especially in the pre-competition season.

Poor turn outs at Area & National league events are problematic in my opinion. Events are often too long at 3k for those wishing to try out the event, with risks compounded over 7 laps of barriers. I

maintain that a 3 lap event may well be more athlete-centred and appropriate for developmental purposes, especially if team managers are requesting athletes to double up in events which often occurs, rightly or wrongly. This request has been suggested to some area leagues, but has yet to be taken on board by all.

It may be that at area league level u17 boys could clear lower barriers to encourage more athletes to participate. Level 3 steeplechase event group coach, Stella Bandu, has made many excellent introductions and transitions to support young athletes beginning their steeplechase career. As part of a development initiative, Kent based Stella has introduced a range of initiatives to encourage young athletes and their coaches to consider steeplechase in their long term plans. Stella enthuses that, "Steeplechase "format" races are an introduction to competition – with a reduced total distance (approx 800-1000m) and number of barriers (4 plus 2 water jumps). The format can be varied in order to suit". Respected coach Stella continues that, "A popular approach is to use the mile start and have a barrier mid back and home straight so there is no hurdling on the bends. Barriers are at the lower (women's) height for all athletes". A bonus is being able to have mixed sex and age groups racing together. The principles of adaptation and long term athlete development are at the heart of her work. She urges reason and says that, "After all we have lighter throwing implements and lower hurdles for young athletes yet we expect 15-16 year olds to race to Olympic specifications. It is important to remember to fit the event to the athlete –then fit the athlete to the event."

Training sessions have been progressed over last summer and a filled water jump has been utilised by Stella and the athletes place between April and July this year. The aim is to teach the basics, develop skills and introduce training ideas such as practicing the water jump in a group. It is clear that the training ethos engendered by Stella is an open house. Athletes of all standards and coaches can either join in with the sessions led by Stella or they are able to do their own session. Stella rightly maintains that, "The result is a very enjoyable collaborative coaching environment "Coaches regularly drop in to learn about the event, refresh their knowledge and share ideas. They take what they learned back to their own tracks and start coaching Steeplechase

themselves. Result!"

Stella's vision of using the principle of adaptation to engender long term athlete development is in line with my conviction that middle distance athletes need to be strong, agile and robust to withstand heats and finals at championships. Steeplechasers need exactly the same skill set and so I would urge more junior athletes to take the opportunity to sample the most exciting of events in the spring of 2016 prior to their main competitive phase.

In looking across the Atlantic, I believe that Evan Jager (USA) showed that with 3:32 1500m speed, a sub 8-00 minute performance is a realistic target based on his recent Diamond league form. While most of our recent top UK chasers have languished on 3:45 performances over 1500m, we need probably our chasers to be running sub 3:40 over the metric mile in order to challenge for positions in major championship finals. At junior level the metric mile targets could be closer to 3:45-3:50 to challenge the best Europeans.

Coaches and aspiring athletes with an intent on trying the chase, should certainly visit the following websites for further coach education support:

<http://biomech.byu.edu/Presentations/Steeplechase/Hurdling.aspx>

<http://www.steeplechics.com/>

<http://www.simonvroemen.nl/nieuws.php?nid=198>

The sites above provide substantial support for chasing. It's my conviction as both a coach and coach educator that the following six key exercises will enhance strength and conditioning, to make for a smoother transition for your next chase:



*One for the future: Doug Musson at Watford.*

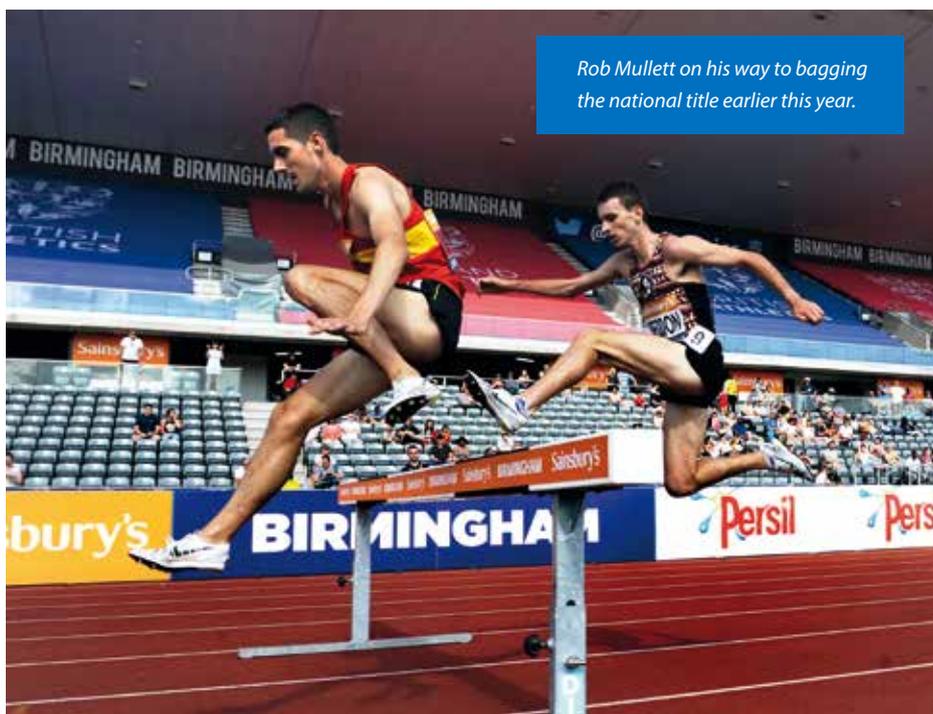
1. Hopping drills. Progressing from grass to firmer surfaces with full foot landings – coordination and power.
2. Pistol single leg squats from a chair – to build strength and power.
3. Hurdle position on both legs with heel on bum/buttock & an upright posture – to develop mobility in order to mimic 'flow' over the barriers.
4. Eccentric calf loading – in order to strengthen both Achilles and lower leg muscles – This can lead to firmer landings with improved eccentric strength.
5. Single leg bridges and side bridges – strengthening and engaging both glutes and hamstrings.
6. Front on chin ups or clapping press-ups – these develop a stable trunk core.

With reference to the article by three times Commonwealth Games representative, Luke Gunn, which appeared in the Spring 2015 edition of this very magazine, it's my conviction that at some stage hurdle clearances should take place at least once per week for three or more minutes as recently covered in previous article. Beginners should progress the drills until comfortable on both legs, especially with timing and transitioning over hurdles at faster than race pace. For most training sessions, the barriers should be adapted – for example hurdle height could be minus several notches for beginners) as they gradually become familiarised with

movement patterns. Full height hurdles can and should be resumed periodically and closer to the competition phase. I like to remind athletes that during extended training phases, residual fatigue may affect their ability to clear hurdle heights comfortably. If you are competing over the chase and are well rested, on race day you should be fresher and hence able to manage the extra height of the wooden barriers more easily, largely as a result of tapering. I'll sign off by saying that whilst Rio may

be a little soon for most youngsters reading this article, 2020 is fast approaching and there's nothing wrong in having inspired dreams of improving Mark Rowland's UK Best of 8:07.96, achieved when he took the bronze medal way back in 1988 at the Seoul Olympics.

**Stella Bandu can be contacted via telephone: 07960371958; Email StellaAAC@aol.com or via her Facebook page COACH STELLA.**



*Rob Mullett on his way to bagging the national title earlier this year.*

ENGLAND ATHLETICS STEEPLECHASE CO-ORDINATOR FOR THE SOUTH AND MIDLANDS, **ROB McKIM**, ADDS HIS THOUGHTS TO THE DEBATE ABOVE:

I agree with Bashir's observation that an issue with Under 17s men is they face the full height barriers from their first introduction to the event at this age group. The event can be quite daunting for those who wish to participate in the event but perhaps the lack the strength/mobility and agility to hurdle the full height barriers (let alone the waterjump). Those of us in the BMC and more widely in the the sport, want a greater proportion of young athletes to participate in a safe and enjoyable way. We encourage coaches to consider using the step on /step touch approach for these athletes whilst continuing to work on their athletes' hurdle drills, skills and other factors. This approach allows the athletes to 'grow' into the event. Reigning British silver medallist, Zak Seddon, is in my opinion, an example of a young athlete who started in this way.

As Bashir has alluded to above, more material on the steeplechase can be found

from U coach and other sources. The first from our sadly missed Dave Sunderland, who Lynsey Sharp pays tribute to elsewhere in this magazine, who was an advocate for the event. <http://ucoach.com/video/dave-sunderland-on-the-steeplechase-part-1/> (there are 3 parts).

As the England Athletics steeplechase coordinator for the south and BMC member, I have a short introduction to the steeplechase for coaches looking to develop their practical knowledge and skills. It's available at

<http://ucoach.com/share/view/Rob-McKim-Steeplechase-for-Junior-Athletes/from-filter/>

I am also putting together an England Athletics led steeplechase workshop with some leading coaches at Lee Valley on Sunday 29 November from 11.30am-4pm. With the support of Bahir, Stella and Brian Hopkins, there will be a range of free sessions covering hurdle/barrier

drills and skills, fitness components and examples for progressing in the chase. The sessions will be mainly practical and will cover mainly 'what to coach' content for the steeplechase through a given year and allow coaches to take the learning back to their clubs. This workshop is being developed in response to those coaches who would welcome more steeplechase workshop opportunities. Coaches, particularly those on the England Athletics Local and National Coach Development programmes and their athletes aged from 13 are especially welcome. The workshop also builds on the England Athletics Technical Regional workshops which took place around England on 7 & 8 November. The Lee Valley steeplechase workshop is advertised on the England Athletics coach education site, local EA news and other sources. Feel free to contact me at [rmckim@englandathletics.org](mailto:rmckim@englandathletics.org) or on my mobile: 07717 773385.

**ALASTAIR AITKEN** PLAYS TRIBUTE TO THE LATE, GREAT LEGEND, **RON CLARKE** (21/2/37-17/6/15)

Born in Melbourne, Victoria, Ron Clarke first started his career as an accountant. A diverse life would see him become a Company Secretary and he finally retired from his working life as no less than the Mayor of Gold Coast Australia. In being nos tranger to travel, in the interim he was Managing Director of Cannons health Club in the City of London.

Despite those important posts and as well as being a happily married family man, his world wide fame came through his illustrious running career. Although he broke a staggering seventeen world records, there was disappointment amongst many of his fellow countrymen and sporting press, when he arrived back home from major championships with no gold medals. With the benefit of hindsight, I would argue that that was short sighted, if you consider he achieved four Commonwealth silvers and an Olympic bronze medal, over the space of eight years – more than most athletes can dream of in a lifetime.

Ron was impressive and aesthetically pleasing to watch, as physically he was tall, sun tanned, with a long stride. I had the pleasue of interviewing him, at length, in both 1965 & again in 1970. On both occasions I found him to be the most outstanding courteous 'gentleman' I had ever met in my 52 years of interviewing athletes. It was a real privilege.

It was his brother Jack, who played Australian Rules football for Victoria State, who realised that although Ron was a good cricketer that he should put down the bat and ball and take to athletics. "As you are the Victoria junior champion you should be a runner not a cricketer", brother Jack declared. When we spoke Ron himself told me earnestly, "Alastair, I feel I might easily have made my name as a cricketer instead of as an athlete. It was quite on the cards."

Fate had other ideas as Ron ran for Melbourne High School Old Boys but then moved to the Glenhuntly Club, as there was a stronger interest in distance running there.

If you take a look at You Tube, you will see that in 1956 he was the young man, aged just 19 years of age, who lit the Olympic flame at the Melbourne Gmes and then, reputedly and with typical moesty took a bus home.

After he achieved his last silver medal, coming second in the Commonwealth Games 10,000m in Edinburgh in 1970, I asked him which race in his career would stand out as the most satisfying for him? His reply intrigued me. "The 10,000m at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics", he told me categorically. He reflected that, "I think I ran

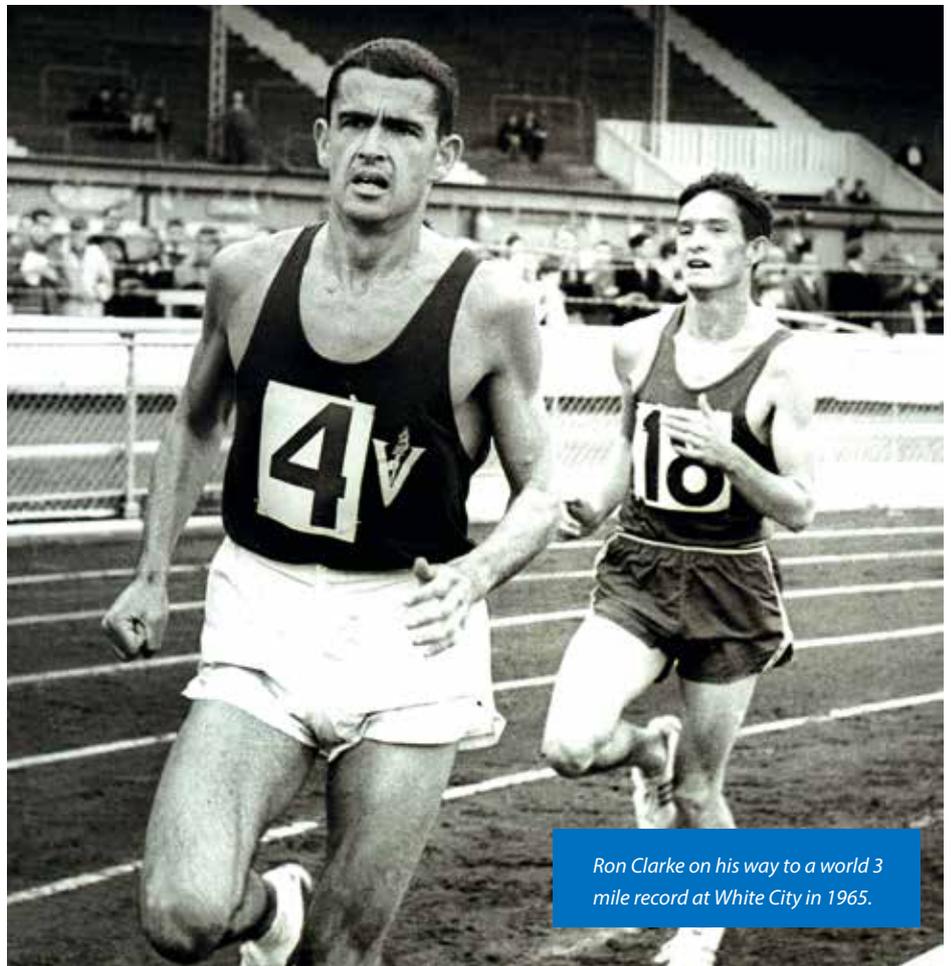
that race as well as my fitness allowed and that is really the aim of an athlete. For my state of fitness I ran 40 seconds faster than I had done three weeks earlier, and I had broken everybody. I got more absorbed in the real tactical battle than in any other race, before or since". Clarke, Mohamed Gammoudi and eventual winner Billy Mills had ben locked together in the final laps till 50m to go, as they sprinted to the line with Mills seemingly unbelievably managing to go clear in taking old in 28:24.4, with Clarke having to settle for bronze in 28:25.8, behind Gammoudi, with the Ethiopian Mammo Wolde in fourth. Incredibly, all four men were inside the existing Olympic record. Clarke continued to explain to me that, "In Tokyo, I think that the move that won the race was when Billy Mills got knocked behind back. Straight away he 'hit the trail' on us. To my mind, anyone who comes off the bend with two blokes in front of him has a tremendous advantage".

When I got him to reflect back on the subsequent Mexico Olympics hedl in 1968 he was hojest with me in telling that, "What would have given me the greatest satisfaction, I think, would have been the 1968 Olympic 10K race. If it had been held at sea-level, because I was fitter than I had

been in 1964. My fittest period, my 'peak' was between 1965 and 1968 inclusive". Like many others, Clarke suffered very seriously in the altitude of Mexico City in those very Olympics.

I personally will never forget my good fortune in being at the race when Ron Clarke became the first man to run Under 13 minutes for 3 miles. It was of course on cinders. It was at the illustrious White City Stadium on the 10th of July 1965. Ron recalled with affection that, "The only time I admit to thinking about a time was when I heard the bell and everybody started shouting at me from the inside of the track: 'The Record!', 'The Record!' Then with the time at 11:51.4 at the bell I realised I could crack the 13 minute barrier!" which he duly did in 12:52.4 with his compatriot Gerry Lindgren a distance second, almost 12 seconds in arrears.

Clarke is survived by his wife Helen and sons Marcus and Nicolas with his daughter Monique tragically dying of breast cancer back in 2009. From the multitude of tributes paid, one from 1972 Olympic marathon champion Frank Shoter stands out. "Ron Clarke was my idol. I grew up seeing him in the dark blue singlet with the V on it – to me that was the symbol of running". He indeed was the symbol of running and will continue to be so for generations to come.



*Ron Clarke on his way to a world 3 mile record at White City in 1965.*

LETTER IN MEMORY OF **REBECCA LONG** (MEMBER 4213) FROM HER PARENTS:

We write with very deeply heavy and broken hearts to tell you our darling beautiful daughter, our roaring, running Rebecca as Highgate Harriers once described her, died on 8 May 2014, aged just 32.

Out on a run, she slipped into the frigid cold, evil waters of Lake Michigan and drowned. Ironically she was an experienced diver and swam well. She was in the water only a few minutes and four people saw and heard her call for help but could do nothing

until the emergency services arrived, too late.

We often heard the whole stadium shouting for Becky as she was fondly called by her family, coach Jack Bayliss, and friends.

Her best times were 400m 56secs, 800m 2.10 and 1 Mile 4.53.

Rebecca was the kindest girl you could ever meet, so loyal and so beautiful.

We received so many messages of condolences from the athletics world and

friends around the world we realised we were not grieving alone.

Rebecca was a BMC member since 2004 and valued all you did for her. We would appreciate a mention in your magazine in case any of her friends had not heard the tragic news.

If you wish to contact us email:-  
jeannielong5@outlook.com

Rebecca's very broken hearted parents.  
JEANNIE & GERARD LONG



## NOTICES

### BMC AGM

You are invited to BMC AGM which will be held on Sunday 6 December 2015 2pm at Holiday Inn, 61 Homer Road, Solihull, B91 3QD.

Agenda will include approval of Chairman's, Financial, Competition, Academy and Coaching Reports, Election of officers for 2016 and consider amendments to Joining Standards from 1 Jan 2016.

Members wishing to attend should contact secretary David Reader mr.david.reader@gmail.com .

We are always looking for additional support to develop and sustain our activities. Should you wish to be involved in BMC activities you can contact our Chairman Tim Brennan to discuss. Email [timbrennan@britishmilersclub.com](mailto:timbrennan@britishmilersclub.com) or ring 07966 309931.

### 2016 SUBSCRIPTIONS

Annual subscriptions for 2016 of £25 (Overseas members £30) are due on the 1 January. Please pay promptly to ensure you receive your membership card for you

to benefit from special low members rates for races and courses. Please send to British Milers' Club, Pat Fitzgerald, 47 Station Road, Cowley, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 3AB.

### INDOOR RACES 2016

- 3 January Glasgow (Emirates) 600, 3000 M & W
  - 10 January Sheffield 800,1500, M&W, 3000,M
  - 3 February Lee Valley 800 M&W
- Entries now open. See website for more information.

### BMC INDOOR MEETING – SUNDAY 10TH JANUARY, EIS, SHEFFIELD

The BMC indoor meeting celebrates its fifth year in partnership with England Athletics on the 10th January 2016. The meeting has produced its share of standout performances, including a sub 8.00 3k clocking for Paul Pollock ahead of Jake Shelley in the 3k in 2015.

The meeting is also given further kudos as the selection meeting for the England

Athletics 2016 European Tour. The winner will be given automatic consideration for selection for the England Team which includes meetings in Bratislava and Vienna.

Andrew Day of England Athletics said, "We are delighted to continue our partnership with the BMC, this event represents a chance for athletes to run fast times indoors, and represent England." Meet Organiser Stephen Green said, "The BMC is committed to increasing opportunities for our athletes and this is part of our growing indoor programme, which has been encouraged by our chairman Tim Brennan."

The meeting starts at 1.30pm entry details - [www.britishmilersclub.com](http://www.britishmilersclub.com)

### COACHING SYMPOSIUM and AWARDS DINNER

12/13 March Birmingham.  
Dinner on evening of 12th following Inter Counties X Country followed by Coaching Symposium on 13th.

# SO



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