



# BMC News

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH MILERS' CLUB  
VOLUME 14 ISSUE 1 – SPRING 2017

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# Belief Makes Champions

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Founded 1963

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

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



# EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

It's 3rd September 2005 and a shy 12 year old has just crossed the finishing line at Grangemouth, on a cold and windy day in Scotland. Nobody has even noticed the school girl wearing a Dunfermline and West Fife AC club vest. Why would they? She has just clocked a mediocre 5m33s for 1500m and is understandably in a hurry to get off the track after finishing the entire length of the home straight behind the winner that day – Samantha Blair of City of Edinburgh. Her mates probably had a laugh behind her back in the school playground the Monday after the race, wondering why she bothered with sport, as her teenage years of parties, music and fashion offered a seductive and beckoning hand. Wonder what she's doing now? Wonder if she made anything of her life as she would be just turning 24 by now....Curious? Tell you what, just close this magazine and take another look at the front cover and you will see BMC Member 6361 looking right at you. You see – **Belief**

## Makes Champions.

Think of this magazine as a bit like a BMC 3000m race! You circle our club seven and a bit times through different sections before breasting the finishing tape. You're under starters' orders as our Chair, Tim Brennan, asks you to take note as you step up to the white line, making sure those toes don't infringe.

Be careful not to trip up on the opening lap as you look back over your shoulder at the illustrious careers of Jack Buckner and Jane Furniss-Shields. We then give you a signal to wave at our Fabled Founder Frank, before past issues of BMC News are spelt out in black and white for you.

After a gentle opening circuit, our BMC Young Athlete of the Year, George Mills, injects some pace into the proceedings on Lap 2 before an educated scholarship pairing of Andy Shaw and Russ Best move to the front of the field, their being tracked closely by Lifetime Services to Coaching

winner, David Lowes.

Make sure you keep your concentration and don't get star-struck on Lap 3, as the pace soars with Charlie Grice and Laura Muir striding into the lead.

You hit the half way point bang on target pace with BMC Present 'splits' being yelled to you from the infield before you pick your head up and look to the second half of the race with the inspirational Jenny Meadows.

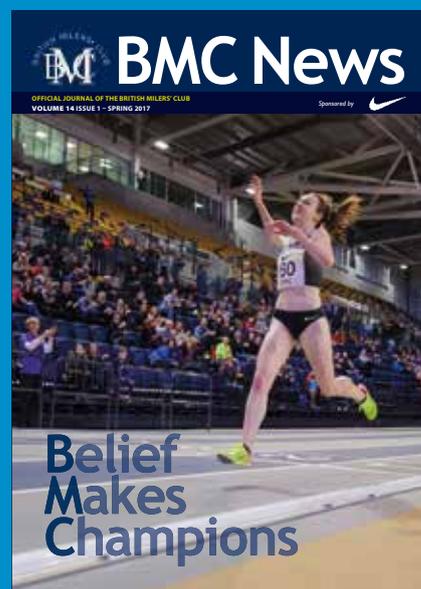
Our penultimate lap will prove one very tough Knut to crack for you before you are allowed a little 'Rabbit' with the ultimate pace maker himself- James Mays.

With the bell ringing in your ears, you will listen to the tones of an excellent coach who is no ordinary Jo before you move on to another award winner who we unashamedly Bigg up. Don't worry about fatigue because John Skevington's athlete centred approach and Chris Mulvaney's attention to your strength and conditioning will see you hit the home straight neck and neck with Brendon Byrne before you cross the line with only the late, great Derek Ibbotson, rightly ahead of you.

Matt Long. BMC News Editor.



Steve Cram puts his shirt on this Editor at his Kielder Forest training camp! Photo courtesy of Matt Long.



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# CHAIRMAN'S NOTES - SPRING 2017

Welcome to the Spring 2017 BMC News.

## Indoor Season

The highlight of the BMC indoor season was without doubt the British Indoor 5000m record of 14:49.12 set by Laura Muir in the Glasgow Miler Meeting in January. (See pages 19-20). This was also a BMC record indoor or out, beating both the best members time (Jo Pavey 15:11.52) and the all-comers record (Sara Moreira 15:08.33). As we know now this was just a prelude to further British indoor records, culminating in a double European indoor championship victory for our 2016 BMC athlete of the year. Congratulations to Laura and her coach, Andy Young, on these outstanding and well-deserved successes, and here's to more of the same in the Summer.

## Great Scots

In winning the European indoor 3000m, Laura led home fellow Scots Steph Twell, and Eilish McColgan, the latter of whom took bronze. With Lynsey Sharp leading last



year's 2016 800m rankings there is a Scottish dominance of the women's rankings. The situation is similar for the men with Andrew Butchart's great 5000m performances, Chris O'Hare at 1500m and the Hawkins brothers plus Tsegai Tewelde in the marathons. Something seems to be going very right with Scottish endurance running.

## BMC Futures

We have been working hard through the winter months to ensure that the BMC can move forward and go from strength to strength. We are ambitious to develop and improve what we do. You will find in this magazine information about coach mentoring. This came from an article in Athletics weekly on the lack of support for developing athletes below funding. It was written by BMC member Emily Dudgeon. You will see in our BMC PRESENT SECTION that Emily has now proposed a BMC mentoring scheme which we will pilot with female 800m and 1500m runners. It would be great if this helped keep more female athletes in the sport. Looking at BMC

results we have twice as many girls as boys competing in the youngest age groups, but by the time one gets to the senior age group that ratio is reversed.

We are also working on improving our coach offering and as part of this will hold coaching corners before some of our Grand Prix meetings (keep abreast on our Facebook page). BMC coaches will also now get free admission to the meetings.

These initiatives need funding. To try and make subs collection as convenient as possible we have introduced an online payment facility. We have also been working hard on sponsorship of the club and have several discussions active.

## Coming Season

We look forward to a great 2017 season. Once again we have a comprehensive program of BMC meetings. With the World Championships coming to London it is going to be a significant season for athletics. I trust it will be a memorable one personally for you as well.

I hope you enjoy the magazine.

Tim Brennan  
BMC Chairman



Eyes down at Watford.  
Photo courtesy of David Lowes.

## JACK BUCKNER IS JOINED BY STEPHEN GREEN AS THEY CAST THEIR MINDS BACK TO THE SUMMERS OF 1986 AND 1987:

**Stuttgart, August 31st 2016, and GB athletes were basking in the glory of their most successful European Championships, where they finished third behind the old superpowers of East Germany and the Soviet Union. We had in the previous week witnessed the 'Three Spitfires coming out of the Sun' moment, as Coe, McKean and Cram swept the 800m.**

Now in the 5000m, as the crowd clapped rhythmically, we had the new sceptre of British athletes controlling the race. Jack Buckner resisted the charge of the legendary Italian triumvirate of Mei, Antibo, and Cova plus the withering surge of Tim Hutchings, to score a stunning victory in 13:10.15 (still a championship best).

It was a coming of age for an athlete who has been a very good junior winning the AAA title and English Schools titles at 1500m, under Coach Geoff Miller, whilst attending Worksop College. A 3:45 1500m had marked him out as a young athlete of some potential.

It was only a short distance away to the middle distance 'mecca' of Loughborough where the young Jack headed to in 1981. Among his luminaries were Kirsty Wade and of course the aforementioned Coe and Hutchings.

He increased his training to twice a day, including the traditional diet of long road reps, track sessions such as 4 x 600m (5 mins rec) and 10-12 x 400m (1 mins rec). This alongside hill sessions on Beacon Hill with 1:46 800m runner Chris McGeorge, and 3:33 metric miler Graham Williamson, added to Jack's strength and confidence. This was evidenced with a breakthrough 3:53.44 mile in Cork in the summer, plus a 3:37 1500m. His progress was curtailed by a stress fracture of the hip in 1983. The Charnwood man continued his rise with a stunning 3:51.57 mile, plus a 7:45 3000m in Loughborough ahead of Hutchings (in the year that his fellow alumni finished 4th in the LA Olympics).

In 1985 Jack stood on the precipice of an international breakthrough after running 13:21 for 5000m early in the season. An indication at his future potential over the longer distances occurred with a 28:13 10k clocking at a televised road race at Battersea Park in April. He, however, sprained his ankle on one of his regular long runs in Loughborough's Outwoods. Looking back he reflects on this and subsequent injury issues that punctuated his career, telling me, "We didn't have the medical support and back-up that athletes have today. My

running style was very much on my toes, which though effective left me susceptible to injury; so I think I was out of action longer than I should have been."

If 1985 was a relative disappointment, Jack more than compensated in the following year, as he and George Gandy made the decision to make a concerted attempt to make the move to 12 and a half laps. A significant win over 3000m at the Bislett Games in an eye catching PB of 7:40.43 convinced him he could challenge for the Commonwealth title.

Charnwood's finest went to the 1986 Edinburgh Commonwealth Games in buoyant mood, after finishing second in the trials to Hutchings. On the day, a majestic Steve Ovett was in form and moved ten metres clear on the last lap from Buckner (13:25.87) and Hutchings, with his customary and now famous wave to the crowd.

Following the relative disappointment of Edinburgh, his form improved and a superb 5th in Zurich in a new best of 13:16.46

convinced Buckner and George Gandy they could make waves in Stuttgart. Now 55, he reflects that, "We talked the race through and my aim was to crank up the pace with around 1k to go. In the end I didn't have to make any decisions as first the Italians set a very fast tempo of 63/64 laps, then Tim Hutchings attacked the race, which was very brave." So at what point did he feel he could win? He continues with characteristic understatement, "I felt very strong and went at the bell; Mei came past with 250m me to go. I could tell he was struggling, so I waited until the straight and surged past- I felt really good that day."

Jack Buckner was now European champion, and if not yet a household name along with Coe, Ovett and Cram, he was most certainly a leading light in the sport. With some justification, he entered the World Championship year with renewed vigour. He remembers vividly his run at the 1987 Weltklasse - "I ran 5000m in Zurich and recorded 13:10 and bits, and literally it felt like



*A Jack who held the Aces.  
Photo courtesy of Jack Buckner.*

I was jogging, I'm convinced I was capable of running close to 13 minutes that night."

At that year's World Championships in Rome, a gladiatorial contest beckoned where he would meet reigning Olympic Champion and World Record holder Said Aouita, the Castro brothers and the Italian trio who he had faced down in Stuttgart. Could European gold be translated to a track medal on the global stage? In the event he finished with a fine bronze, as Aouita continued his dominance of the eighties distance scene, sprinting ahead of Domingos Castro (Portugal). Ever the perfectionist, however Jack (13:27.74) wasn't satisfied. Ruefully he says, "I think if I could have done one thing differently in my career, it would have been the way I ran that final. George Gandy and I had talked the race through and I decided that I would go with around a mile to run. In the event I decided to sit in at that point, although I ran a 51 second last lap, Aouita had gone, and the race played into his hands".

The above being said it's well worth reflecting on the fact that this was the last medal won by a GB endurance athlete on the global stage until Mo Farah performed his 2012 double and perhaps the passing three decades has meant Jack can put his run into its rightful context in terms of the achievement which it undoubtedly was. Later that year, he emphasised the form he was in with a 4:53.06 return over 2000m in Lausanne behind the legendary Peter Elliot, who had taken 800m silver at those same Rome world championships.

Determined to upgrade the colour of his medal, Jack increased his weekly mileage to 100 plus. However fate intervened and he was struck down by a bout of glandular fever in 1988 and managed 6th at the Seoul Olympics as John Ngugi's powerful surges decimated the field.

Further honours followed in 1989 with a fourth place in the World Cup and 2nd at the European team championships over 5k. At the Commonwealth Games 5000m in Auckland the following year, he was caught up the melee which saw the aforementioned Ngugi fall early in the race then surge into the lead, with Australia's Andrew Lloyd scoring a stunning victory at the death.

Sadly his return to form was hindered by a stress fracture in 1991, with his best return a 7:44 3000m in Koblenz. Fast forward to 1992 and he appeared back to his best, returning 13:10.47 in Rome, with Rob Denmark and Ian Hamer breaking new ground.

At the Barcelona Olympics in 1992, he finished fifth in his heat, however this time he was not disappointed in his final international race. "It was a great experience to be a part of, especially as my brother Tom

ran in the steeplechase, in the event my run was a good as I could have expected after missing most of 1991 with injury," he reflects.

If Jack had a series of highs and lows in his stellar athletic career, his life following athletics has been no less intriguing. Having retired from the sport he took a global marketing role with Adidas for several years which took him to Portland, Oregon, and involved working with the basketball star Kobe Bryant, among others. He then moved with his family in 2001 to New Zealand to run an Apple Orchard. With the shake of the head, the time spent down under is described as, "A nightmare Channel 4 documentary where anything that could have gone wrong, went very wrong!" He sold the orchard in 2003 and returned to work on more firmer ground for UK athletics. One of his achievements was work which led to the setting up of England Athletics, and other national home countries bodies.

For the last three years or so, Jack has been Chief Executive of British Triathlon based in Loughborough with partner and ex Olympian, Alison Wyeth. He has been closely involved in the system that has overseen the success of the Brownlee brothers, and a burgeoning group of young talent such as Alex Yee and Ben Dijkstra, who have also shone in athletics.

Ever keen to credit the work of others he finishes our exchange with praise for the current job the BMC are doing in providing opportunities for athletes to get top class competition at home and guidance for our young members. His son Eliot returned a 1500m PB of 3:51.03 at one of our races Watford back in 2012. So what pearls of wisdom can he himself pass on? He keeps it simple by saying, "Learn from a good coach, be patient and don't do too much. Speed endurance is the key, and sessions should be geared to this as much as possible."



Jack Buckner has just become European 5000m champion in 1986.

## TWO TIME OLYMPIAN **JANE SHIELDS** LOOKS BACK ON AN ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER WITH **COLIN SCRIMGEOUR**:

Readers of a certain age will affectionately recall the fantastic career of 1980s star Jane Furniss (now Shields). The Yorkshire woman begins our catch up in her own words:

"I joined Sheffield United Harriers when I was 13, after doing cross country at school in my hockey boots and PE skirt. I only ever wanted to do cross-country and 800m and didn't really try any other events. My parents were not involved in sport but they were a great support ferrying me around until I could drive.

I remember watching the 1976 Olympics and thought to myself that I would like to compete at the middle-distance events. Athletes such as Paula Fudge, Ann Ford and Joyce Smith were among the women that paved the way in this country in the late 70s and early 80s, along with Christine Benning and Christina Boxer, certainly I aspired to achieve what they were doing.

My first coach (Trevor Biggin, who recently passed away) used to take myself and his daughter to Crystal Palace each month to train with Frank Horwill's group, when we were around 16 years old. We had both been bronze medallists at 800m and 1500m respectively at the WAAA's and were keen to progress. I can look back now and realise how forward thinking Trevor was with his coaching. We used to leave Sheffield at 6am and then we did double training sessions at Crystal Palace with dozens of other athletes. I also remember going to watch a BMC race at Stretford- around 1976- to watch the Russian middle distance women race. I remember Tatyana Kazankina was an Olympic champion and she was racing.

I competed in several English Schools, cross-country and track and field – my best position was 4<sup>th</sup> at Guildford in 1976. I went to the Schools International cross country in Coatbridge where I became friends with a team-mate -Bernadette Madigan (from Bracknell AC) and her father, Jim. I also ran for England in the Home Countries international cross country in Mullingar when I was 16. When I was about 18 our training group started to drift away and I asked Jim Madigan if he would send me a training schedule which I then followed precisely. By the age of 20 I was making good progress and finished 4<sup>th</sup> in the 1981 national cross country championships at Carlisle (I had finished 169<sup>th</sup> the previous year) and made it to my first senior World Cross Country championships (Madrid) where I was 22<sup>nd</sup> and second English woman home.

I started to make a breakthrough on

the track when I finished 3<sup>rd</sup> in the UK champs in Cwmbran (1981) and whilst I was disappointed not to get selected for the 1982 European Championships, in a quest for international selection I ran several sub 8.50's for 3000m and made the team for the first ever World Championships in Helsinki in 1983. I made the final and finished 7<sup>th</sup> after having run 2 pbs. (I actually broke the British record but was not the first Briton back! – Wendy Sly finished 5<sup>th</sup>).

After the LA Olympics in 1984 I felt that I needed some new input and not long afterwards I started training under the guidance of Alan Storey. I remember he said to me that you only do 4 sessions per week. I thought that didn't sound right but of course the rest of the week was mileage! I had a successful few years under Alan's guidance. I made the 1988 Olympic Team (10,000m) and in total ran in six World Cross Country championships, two Commonwealth Games (1986 and 1990) and the European cross (in Alnwick 1995)".

### A typical weeks training?

Sunday	90 minutes run off road on edge of Peak District (or 60 minutes in the morning and 20 minutes in the afternoon with some fast strides, depending on time of year)
Monday	(am) – 30 minutes easy (pm) – 45-60 minutes
Tuesday	(am) – 30 minutes easy (pm) – 2 sets of 5 x 800ms with 30 seconds rest

Wednesday	(am) – 30 minutes easy (pm) – 60-75 minutes
Thursday	(am) – 30 minutes easy (pm) – 15 minute sustained effort then eg. 9 x 300ms with 30 seconds rest
Friday	(am) – 45 minutes
Saturday	(am) – 45-60 minutes fartlek/hills in Graves Park, Sheffield

Note: I often did longer interval sessions on grass. I also cycled to work and back (approx. 10 miles per day) on Sheffield's hills.

### Colin: Did you do any Strength & Conditioning program?

**Jane:** I used to do my own routine - sit ups, press ups and so on but I think in the 1980s S&C was quite a new concept for distance runners and if I could turn the clock back now I would definitely have incorporated some gym sessions into my routine.

### Colin: What was your favourite session?

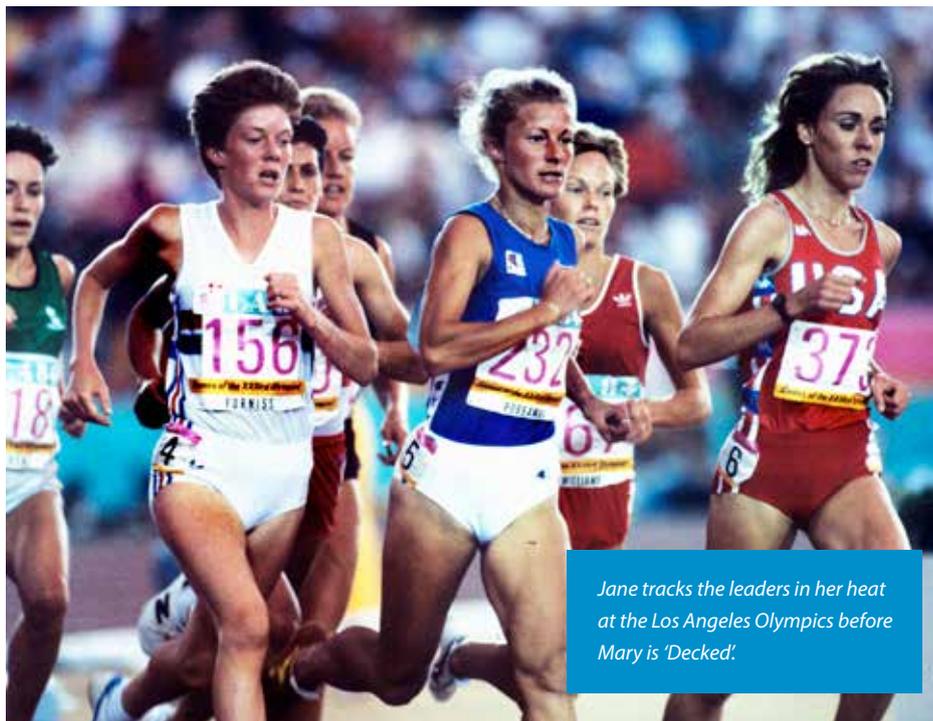
**Jane:** My morning runs, I used to love getting up early especially in the winter and hitting the road.

### Colin: What was your biggest achievement?

**Jane:** Making two Olympic (1984, 1988) & Commonwealth Games (1986, 1990) and being at the first ever World T&F Championships in Helsinki, 1983.

Finishing 5<sup>th</sup> in the World XC in New York (Meadowlands) in 1984.

My two wins in the National Cross Country Championships. (Back in the 1980s the



*Jane tracks the leaders in her heat at the Los Angeles Olympics before Mary is 'Decked'.*

nationals was *the* race you had to peak for as it was the selection for the World Cross).

My two IAAF medals for first team at the World Cross (1986) and second team at the World Cross (1984).

I was also very proud to have been an England Cross-Country Team Manager in the mid 1990's (for junior women) and also for the GB teams at the World Cross Country championships in Turin in 1997.

**Colin: How was the 1983 inaugural world championships in Helsinki for you?**

**Jane:** I loved every minute in Helsinki. When I walked out on to the track for the 3000m final, Carl Lewis was doing his long jump and the crowd were electric. It was the first time I had been in such a stadium that was full to capacity. I was nearly crying I was so nervous.

**Colin: And how did this compare to your two Olympic experiences- Los Angeles in 1984 and Seoul in 1988?**

**Jane:** Lost Angeles was amazing. There had been a lot of media attention on Zola Budd due to her being from the apartheid regime in South Africa and controversially being allowed to compete for Team GB and I had not escaped from the questions. I went out to the holding camp in San Diego to acclimatise and fine-tune my training. The Olympic Village at UCLA was madness. You saw all these famous athletes in the food hall

and at the training track. I was devastated to miss the final of the 3000m by one-tenth of a second but I gave everything in the heat. I think I've been a Quiz Question - "Who was the third Briton in the women's 3000m in the LA Olympics"?! Four years later, Seoul was a very different experience. We were at the holding camp in Chiba (Japan) which was superb, a complete luxury. I found the Olympic village quite relaxing, unlike LA. I ran a PB in my 10,000m heat after having to lead it out for 5K but I did not proceed to the final.

**Colin: It hasn't escaped notice that you won in 84 & 88 international Cross Country in Zornatza- Spain. Any recollections?**

**Jane:** I did quite a few races in northern Spain. I did win at San Sebastian twice and also in Amorebieta. Alan Warner used to take teams out there and they looked after us really well. I loved going there. In fact we've been back to visit that area of Spain on holiday as it is really beautiful.

**Colin: And you applied your considerable talents on the roads as well?**

**Jane:** In 1985 I went to try the road racing circuit in the USA. We based ourselves in Boulder, Colorado and I travelled all over the USA. This was a fantastic experience.

**Colin: Looking back at your own career, what advice would you give to any**

**athlete, if you could go back?**

**Jane:** I would say enjoy your running and don't let training become a chore. It's important to have a balanced schedule and life-style. There's so much information now on the importance of nutrition, supplements, sleep and healthy life-styles. Athletes who train hard are on a very fine line, often balancing between injury and illness. I always feel it's better to be slightly undertrained and feeling fresh than over-trained and feeling tired. I would also advise including a strength & conditioning programme as it's important to keep strong in the core.

**Colin: Does the British Milers' Club have a role to play?**

**Jane:** Yes. Keep doing the BMC races – they are a great way to measure your fitness and younger athletes nearly always come away with PBs.

**Colin: To what extent do you value cross country in terms of it's integration into a training program for the endurance athlete?**

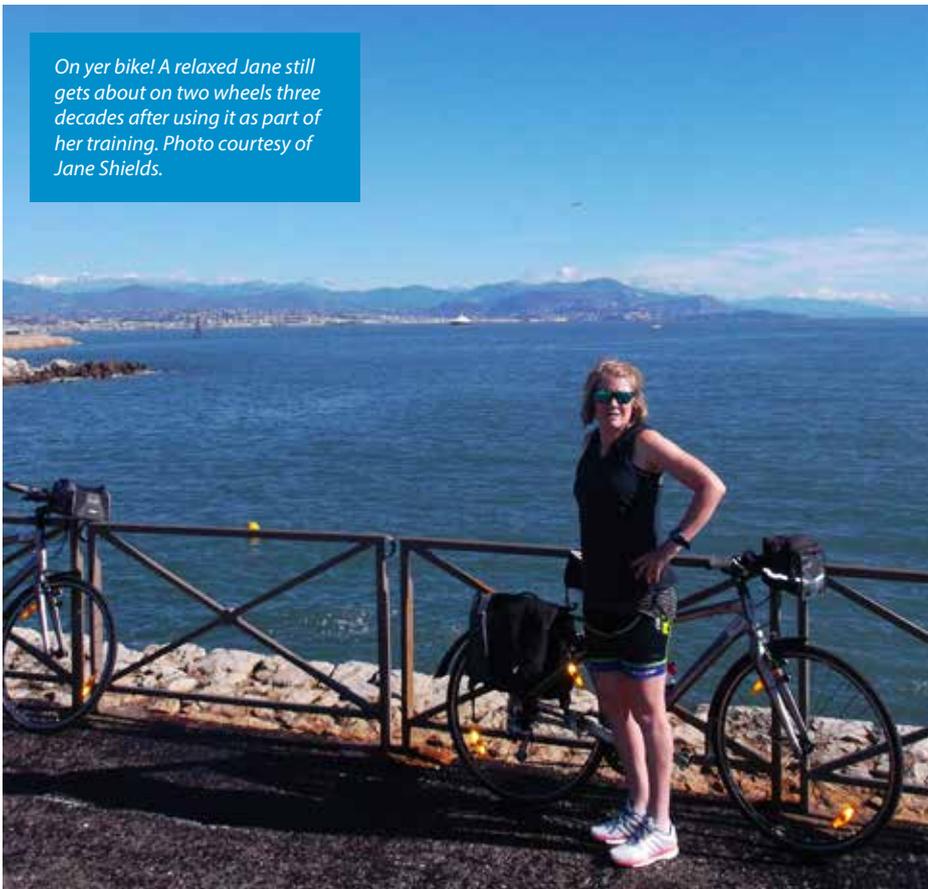
**Jane:** Cross country was definitely the bread and butter of my training programme. I think every middle and long distance athlete should include a cross country programme into their schedule. Cross country is key for strength and stamina and is also character building – 'When the going gets tough, the tough get going', is the saying which comes to mind.

Jane, whose talented son Jonathan ran a respectable 3:54 in a BMC Gold Standard race in Stretford last June, wraps up our chat in her own words:

"I am very proud to have been part of the forefront of women's athletics in this country in the early to late 1980s. Competition was fantastically healthy and some great life-long friendships were made. I can honestly say that athletics has defined my life and made me into the person I am today. I am still involved to a certain extent and I am going to races and bumping into many old friends, both athletes and officials. How wonderful is that! Nowadays I keep as fit as I can by doing a lot of road biking. I joined a cycle club 6 years ago and we do long rides in the Peak District. I have also done some time-trialling events (road) which are quite scary when you are trying to ride as fast as you can on a busy road!"

**Colin Scrimgeour was an endurance athlete with Edinburgh Southern Harriers and currently coaches an under 20s group, which includes Scottish 2017 National under 17 cross country champion, Freddie Carcas.**

*On yer bike! A relaxed Jane still gets about on two wheels three decades after using it as part of her training. Photo courtesy of Jane Shields.*



# FRANK'S FABLES

**PHIL KISSI**, WHO COACHED AT LAST WINTER'S BMC ACADEMY, SHARES FOND MEMORIES OF OUR FOUNDING FATHER, **FRANK HORWILL** - COACH, MENTOR AND FRIEND:

My first meeting with Frank Horwill was back in 1974. I was a young teenager running for my local school and county team against one of Frank's star athletes, Wayne Tarquini. He was an unknown quantity to a naïve novice like me whose only training had taken place in the school playground and whose kit consisted of Woolworths plimsolls, a pair of borrowed football shorts and a school jumper with more holes in it than a dartboard! I learned a short while later that Wayne was a big star, one of the top 800 metres youth runners in the country. Awestruck, I stared at Wayne's jumper which was festooned with athletics badges on the front and gold lettering on the back that said "Whizz Kid from outer Space". At this point all I wanted to do was run and hide in the bushes, but how could I do that with my PE teacher standing next to me?! I clearly remember the Tulse Hill and Stockwell boys frantically betting large sums of pocket money on who would win the race. Noticing what was happening, I personally traded my last hard-earned biscuit funds in favour of my opponent, Wayne Tarquini, winning the race. We lined up, the gun went off and Wayne shot off like a gazelle – Pure Horwill Magic! I didn't see Wayne again over the two and a half mile course. When I eventually finished the race, I spotted Wayne sprinting up and down a hill in the midst of training session with Frank. Two years later Frank Horwill became my coach, mentor and friend and this relationship lasted for thirty two years.

Frank spoke so eloquently you could be forgiven for thinking that he had been educated at Eton. His athletics knowledge and experience put him decades ahead of his time. In 1963 Frank said "Phil, the state of British middle distance is poor. My vision for the British Milers' is to raise the standard across Britain of both athletes and coaches". In the early years Frank faced a lot of opposition from the established institutions, athletics writers and clubs because of his vision and it was a matter of survival at that time. I know that Frank also used approximately £27,000 of his personal funds to fulfill his dreams. Looking back on his contribution, as founder of the British Milers' Club (BMC), we can see the results in the plethora of champions, as well as excellent coaches, hard working committee members and even harder-working officials who ran the regions, as well as major

sponsors such as Nike.

My experience with Frank was that he was an incredibly generous man. In the 1970's he would open the boot of his car and issue kits to less financially fortunate athletes as well as pay for their travelling costs, (this generosity lasted till his last day on earth – the 1st of January, 2012) and his coaching partnership with Ray Williams was producing numerous GB Internationals. His squad was an all-star line-up including the likes of Tim Hutchings, Gerard Long, Chris Van Reece, Mike Harmer, Neil Leech, Paul Williams, Mark Hirsh, Graham Jackson, Martin Wilson and numerous talented girls like Lesley Pamment, to name but a few. An example of the power of this squad was one national under 20 championship 1500m race final – Frank had 5 runners finishing in the top 6!

Both Frank and I shared a life changing experience that brought us closer. We had both suffered from cancer. Frank told me way back in 1987 that his outlook on life had changed after his diagnosis with stomach cancer, which had required the removal of half his stomach. This experience had resulted in what he described as an inner strength to deal with most conflict he encountered in his life. Poignantly he told me, "It changed me Phil old boy- I find that I'm intolerant with those who complain about trivialities, you need to be real in life. For example when an athlete thinks the world has ended because he or she has had a bad race, I look them directly in the eye and say 'Be thankful you can race!'" One key piece of advice Frank gave me was, "Never make my early mistakes Phil. Do you know I once only coached athletes who had ability- I thought my experience and knowledge should not be wasted on scrubbers" (See the book *Obsession for Running* – by Frank Horwill ; Frank quotes similar comments on page 94). With emotion, Frank continued that, "I now coach athletes with various abilities and I am privileged to help this group with you as my assistant. Over a period of time they have changed my way of thinking and shown me a new side of coaching. They have shown untold kindness to us both which neither of us have asked for. Compared to others who are more privileged, they have given generously out of their need and this is a lesson we must never forget."

One of the best pieces of advice I received from Frank was to be mindful of some parents who become "pseudo coaches"



Proud coach Phil Kissi celebrates with Katy-Ann McDonald who has just won the 2016 Wandsworth Sports Personality of the Year. Photo courtesy of Phil Kissi.

and one of his golden rules was to look out for telltale comments. Frank warned that one of the signs to look for is when parents start comparing their child's performance against another athlete in different part of the country and even begin turning up at the track with stopwatch in hand. This he said may be an appropriate time to 'nip things in the bud' as this may impact negatively upon the whole team if unchallenged.

In May 2001, I took my son Sam to watch Surrey County's championship race in Kingston upon Thames. He was inspired by what he saw and at this point, I was desperate to give my son the expert help he needed and looking through old training manuals I was over the moon when I discovered my past training diary with Frank, which was dated from 1976 onwards. Having no coaching experience myself at this stage, I meticulously followed Frank's program. My son went from being a total novice to achieving 2:05.7 for 800m and 55.6s for 400m after five months training, age 13. I realized it was time for Sam to go to Frank so off we went to Battersea. Frank took a look at him and said, "Yes, damned good runner – better than you were Kissi!" I implored Frank, "Please take him - he's all yours now". To my surprise Frank said "I'm getting on old boy, however, I think it would be good if you could observe what I'm doing with your son" and I guess this is how our coaching relationship took off. My son worshipped Frank and every time he ran a personal best he received £10 from his coach and the famous Horwill generosity continued as he got given new kit once a year from Frank.

In January 2002, I moved to East London and now lived only 5 minutes away from

Frank's house. Over the next decade I learned what made this man tick. We would share a bottle of wine in the evenings together discussing training systems and session plans. Listening to this genius was invaluable and as a civil servant I found his explanations simply honest and blunt. I will never forget Frank would often remind me, "Never be frightened to act alone if you believe in what you are doing even if it goes against the accepted conduct at the time".

It's no secret that Frank could be quite blunt at times and when he was 78 years old I witnessed an example of this side of his personality at Battersea. One day one of Frank's athletes came up to him and informed him, "That coach over there said I'm doing the wrong training!" Frank got up and moved towards the coach with lightning speed for a man of his years and I have never seen another man run so fast for his life!

Frank's Saturday sessions are famous and the tradition lives on now with my group. Many athletes have turned up on Saturday at Battersea Millenium Arena with their coaches to experience the Horwill method.

In 2006, whilst Frank was away in South Africa, a group of athletes and I thought it would be nice to redecorate his flat but during this process a valuable collection of Frank's athletics books went missing. I informed a number of athletes of Frank's condition and told them I was trying to locate the "borrowed" books and if they should happen to come across them they should return them – no questions asked. To my surprise but a measure of the respect for the man, I found that every book was returned.

In November 2011, I was contacted by one of the athletes who told me to go and see Frank urgently. I popped over to his house to be greeted by an amazing smile from the man himself. As our discussion unfolded he revealed that he was in fact dying and he felt it was necessary to pass the baton on to me if I wanted it. In December, Frank was moved to St Joseph's hospice in Hackney and I was very fortunate to be given time off work to keep him company in his last days. Frank spent all this time downloading knowledge and information and challenging my thoughts and experience. It felt as if I was

going through a final exam with the legend.

On his last day I visited Frank at 7.30am on the 1st January 2012 and we talked about one of his athletes who was about to run a 10k in Hyde Park. He still summoned up the strength to advise me and said, "Tell her to start off steady and at the half way point go flat out." He gave me what her target time should be at 5K. I left him that morning to attend the race and returned in the afternoon to report results and say my final farewell at 4.25pm. He passed away surrounded by many friends. This was Frank Horwill, the legendary middle distance coach, active and aware of his athletes' right until the very end.

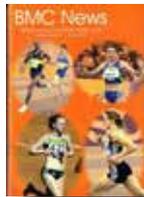
Even today, when I am thinking of performance improvement. I lie down and think – 'What would Frank do with this athlete?' The old genius somehow shows me the way. Goodbye Comrade. Until we meet again.

**Blackheath and Bromley's Phillip Kissi joined his former coach Frank Horwill, founder of British Milers' Club, as supporting coach in 2001.**

IN THIS SERIES, **BECKEY SELVEY** TAKES A LOOK BACK AT THE BMC NEWS, DECADE BY DECADE, FOR THE LAST 50 YEARS:

### Spring 2007

This edition featured an interview with Scottish athlete and the first BMC member, Hugh Barrow. In a wonderful piece, he described the fascinating races he competed in during the half time at soccer matches! In his own words, he recalled that, 'Rangers FC at that time promoted athletics meetings and they brought in some of the best athletes in the world to compete at Ibrox, just like the major Grand Prix meets today.....I even ran at Hampden Park in a 1 Mile International event before the Scotland v England match and there were 129,000 in the stadium!'. The contribution that soccer made to the promotion of athletics in Scotland at that time is now a forgotten chapter but back in the 1960s, it was more normalised.



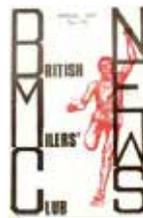
at the Bahrain International Marathon Relay in both the men's and the women's races. The race consisted of 20 stages of around 3km each. Staggeringly, it was reported that there were no less than 33 stage records set by BMC athletes. The athletes were overseas at the request of SAAD coach and BMC member Ian Wilson.

### Spring 1987

Shock horror as no edition was produced!

### Spring 1977

Pages 3-4 profiled a 20 year old Moscow Olympic prospect going by the name of Sebastian Coe. You may have heard of him?! His PBs from the age of 13 to 19 years of age showed a year on year improvement plus an impressive list of championship wins. The profile went on to describe the ethos of his training - 'Winter training is always low mileage - but good quality on hills plus a few decent cross country races.' Notably, his winter mileage increased from 20mpw at 17 years to 35 mpw at 19 years. Circuit and weight training also featured in the winter. With regards to the outdoor



season, it was said that, 'Summer training is 50/50 fast track and fast road work.' Seb's father and coach, Peter, was a great fan of the multi-paced system developed by our founder, Frank Horwill and unsurprisingly, races included some over distance at 3000m and some under distance at 400m. His long term target was, 'a gold at the Moscow Olympics,' which he of course went on to achieve over 1500m – a feat which he subsequently repeated four years later in Los Angeles

### Spring 1967

Exactly 50 years ago senior. A.A.A's coach, Tony Saunders penned a piece on page 15 entitled, 'Weight Training For Milers.' The issue of integrating strength training into your periodised programme of work still remains half a century later. Take a look at the suggested workout and judge whether any of it is as relevant today as it was 50 years ago.



### Spring 1997

There was a distinctly international flavour to this edition of the magazine as BMC athletes competing for Saudi Arabian SAAD Track Club, dominated



**As a Masters 40 athlete, Becky Selvey has competed in a BMC Regional event last summer and was 2016 Westminster mile champion in her age category.**

## BMC YOUNG ATHLETE OF THE YEAR, **GEORGE MILLS**, SHOWS A CLEAN PAIR OF HEALS TO **CHRIS HOLLINSHEAD**:

I first met George, as his mentor, when he was on the British Athletics Advanced Apprenticeship Sporting Excellence (AASE) programme. His aspirations for the 2016 season ahead were clear from these early meetings and what a season it turned out to be! In one glorious week in July, he won Gold over 800 metres at the European Athletics Youth Championships, before setting a new 800m personal best time of 1:48.36 at a BMC Grand Prix meeting in Oxford. I caught up with George after he was named 'BMC Young Athlete of the Year, 2016', to reflect on his progress so far and discuss his aims for the forthcoming season.

In sport we frequently hear about the power of role models and their potential influence so I was interested to find out whether George had any role models. Without hesitation, Mo Farah was the answer; as George explained that, "being able to see him win four Olympic titles really shows that British athletes can be the best in the World. When I see him run over the line and put his arms out I think 'Wow, that's how you win races!'" I casually enquire as to whether there have been others whose influence has rubbed off on him. He readily acknowledges that, "My dad (Danny Mills) has been a big role model for me because he played football to a really high level. I think his biggest achievement was playing in the 2002 World Cup. Having that experience in the family is obviously helping me deal with big competitions and that sort of thing because he has done it before."

George's pathway into athletics will seem familiar to many; playing football for a local team, being introduced to running and cross country at school before progressing to a club (in his case Harrogate) and there, having the opportunity to try different disciplines. "I started off sprinting running 100 and 200 though I don't really know why," he recounted, before adding that, "For the school I ran 2.15 minutes for 800m and while it doesn't sound that fast now, at the time I was really happy with it. As I started to win, I started to take it more seriously, as I realised I was ok at this and started to win more and more races."

George soon realised that he was not going to follow in his father's footsteps as football was not right for him. "The thing I like about running is that it is all down to you", he says assertively. "I used to get annoyed when we lost at football but obviously cannot do a lot about that in a team, where as in running you can work out what you did wrong and better yourself. If

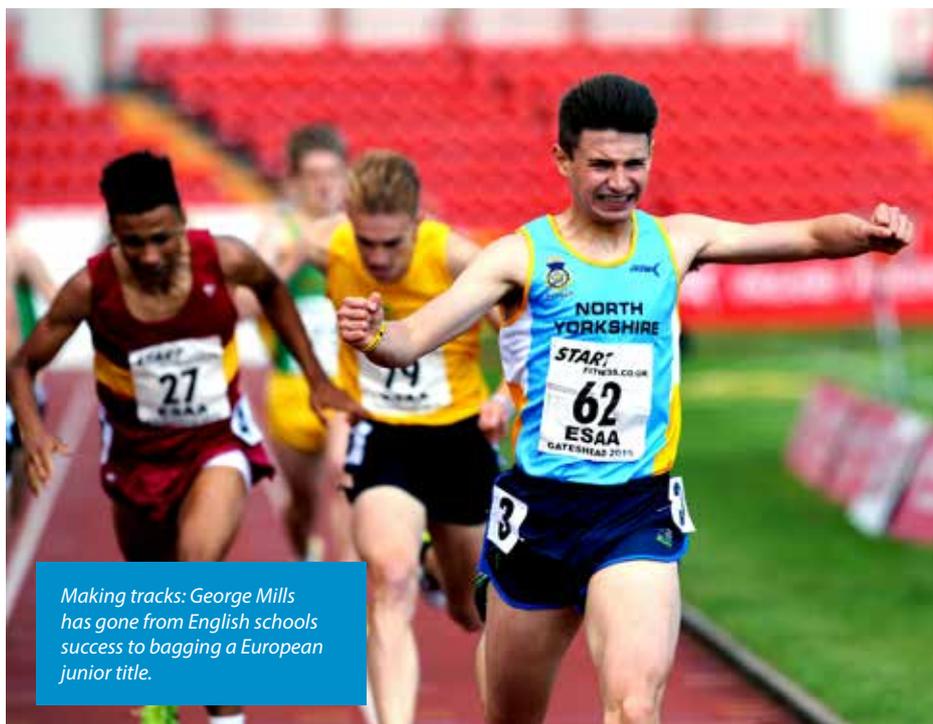
you lose it is your fault."

In the European Athletics Youth Championships, in Tblisi, George qualified for the final by winning his heat from the front before taking gold in the final with another dominant display of front running and establishing a new personal best time of 1:48.82. I discussed whether the tactic of front running had been pre-planned. "Yes it had", noted George, before he continued to describe an influencing factor in that decision. He had been competing in the 800m final at the England Athletics U20 Championships earlier the same year and finished second. Tactically the race did not go to plan, having to, "sit in the pack and run really wide in the last 200, I was disappointed to come second", but it had not been a "terrible day". The experience allowed him to go away and reflect on the outcome and from that his coach Joanne Day (see pages 36-37) and he had, "decided not to worry about anyone else and go out and run my own race".

With the tactics formulated, had he researched the current form of his competitors before for the 800 metres in Tbilisi? He replied in the affirmative, adding that, "I could see on the rankings that there were two Italians placed above me but it was really close. I was confident that I could beat them but I think it is quite difficult when you first go onto the European circuit as you don't really know much about the other people and I think that why it worked because you must run your own race and can't be bothered worry about other people

too much." So could this also work in your favour? "Yes exactly," responded George, reflecting that, "maybe it came as a surprise to them when I did just go out and run hard from the start."

All in all, when reflecting on the aforementioned Championships, George felt it was a massive achievement for him, capping off what was a really good season. Yet within a week of his triumph, George was back in action over 800 metres at Oxford and running another PB of 1.48.36 but this had not been a pre-planned race. "Oxford was a bit of a strange one really because I had just won the Europeans and the next day my dad texted me saying 'Do you want to go and run in Oxford?'" At this point in the interview George acknowledged he had been in the peak of performance and, "So I thought 'why not let's give it a go'. We had not planned to do that one - it was quite spontaneous but worked quite well." I was interested to know whether he had been feeling confident going into the Oxford race or apprehensive in that having peaked the previous week, motivation may be an issue. He claimed that, "My confidence improved through winning the Europeans and there was a really good buzz from it, though I was also quite wary of the comedown and had read a few books from big athletes and some say they relax quite a lot after major championships." He remembered that, "I had got myself pumped up before the BMC race and even the commentator remarked on it. But it worked," he recalled with a laugh. Clearly the win in one of our Grand Prix



*Making tracks: George Mills has gone from English schools success to bagging a European junior title.*

races was something to be treasured. He continued that, "I also enjoyed the Oxford 800 metre race because it was the first time that I had won a BMC Grand Prix race". He acknowledged that, "I had raced in a few Grand Prix in the B race but was in the A race this time and managed to win." At this point I wanted to find out what felt when crossing the line? With a chuckle he said, "I saw the time on the clock and thought 'GET IN!' I was just happy that I had run a PB and that it wasn't the waste of a trip"

George had an excellent season which was capped by being named the BMC Young Athlete of the Year 2016. What does this accolade mean to him? "I was delighted to be recognised by the BMC for my achievements as they are such a big part of middle distance running and endurance running in the UK. It means a lot too because both of my PBs over 800 and 1500 metres were run at BMC events." (at the aforementioned Oxford and Stretford).

For George it is the quality of the competition that attracts him to our races, as it provides him with an opportunity to, "run against people you would not normally compete against in age group championships," providing a great learning environment for athletes.

George explained that running in BMC races help him to establish a current performance benchmark and act as sharpening up races before Championships. "Sometimes you can go long periods with just training and sometimes you lose that sharpness so it is nice to get in the feel of it again by getting a fast race in your legs," he tells. How does he prepare for our races? He responded candidly- "The start list for some comes out a few days before and so we will have a look and obviously if I see anyone I know I think ok it will be an interesting race and will look forward to it. I aim to beat whoever is in the race so it does not make a massive difference to me."

George had alluded to 'motivation' on a number of occasions during the interview so I was interested to find out his motivation for training. It became apparent that running is a part of him, and he convinced me that, "I really enjoy training and everything that comes with it. I like the routine and I like working hard." What about longer term goals? "Obviously what keeps me motivated is that end goal of wanting to become an Olympian and even an Olympic champion. I think that is what everybody dreams of and that is what everyone is working towards," he says with honesty.

Athletes are frequently asked for their favourite session and George took no time to answer- flat out 150 metres! "Yes I just

like going as fast as I can for 150, jog or walk back and just see how it goes. I won't do too many- maybe 5 or 6. I also enjoy that one because I normally do it before a race and I know a race is coming, that's the best bit. That was the last session I did in Georgia and it really helped me, worked and sharpened me up," he disclosed.

I then sensed an opportunity to find out about his plans for the forthcoming season. Qualification for the European Juniors was discussed, and he agreed that, "I will go to the Europeans aiming to medal but after this year I still have another year left as an under 20 -so I am bottom age".

So has training changed much this winter? "Yes"- came the reply, by increasing the overall mileage though the basis of the training would be consistent with last year. George undertaken four cross country

races last winter and he noted that he had surprised himself by how well it had been going. He ended our exchange by stressing that, "I have always been ok at cross country but never been up there at the front but it just seems to be flowing really well. I seem to be able to hold on to the front guys in the cross country races."

Whether holding on to the leaders or front running George looks to have a bright future ahead of him.

**Chris is a Level 4 endurance coach and a Flying Squad coach for England Athletics. He is a Lead Tutor on England Athletics Running and Fitness Courses and lead endurance coach on the Parallel Success Talent Development camps for British Athletics. He is also a self-employed coach for Castle Coaching Fitness.**



*George bagged a brilliant PB here at Oxford last summer. Photo courtesy of David Lowes.*

2014 HORWILL SCHOLARSHIP WINNER, **ANDY SHAW**, ASKS WHETHER DOWNHILL RUNNING CAN ENHANCE RUNNING ECONOMY IN HIGHLY TRAINED COMPETITIVE DISTANCE RUNNERS:

### Background

In an era of marginal gains, one question is asked to physiologists more than any other – ‘how can we improve running economy?’ Though running economy is well recognised as a physiological determinant of endurance running performance, established training methods to enhance running economy are few and far between. Previous research would suggest that including strength (Paavolainen et al. 1999, Saunders et al. 2006) or high intensity training (Billat et al. 1999) into an athlete’s programme could enhance running economy. However, these training practices are often already used extensively by high performing athletes, thus novel methods to enhance running economy are sought after. Running downhill could be an effective method to enhance running economy by allowing a greater time spent at high running velocities due to the lower ‘energy cost’ and also promote adaptations to muscular properties and running mechanics due to high impact forces. As negative gradients are often a common feature of modern treadmills, structured downhill running could represent a novel and accessible method to enhance running economy.

### Aim

Our aim was to assess the effect of a supplementary 8 week programme of progressive downhill running on an athlete’s running economy. To isolate the effect of the surface gradient on running economy, the downhill running intervention was compared to an equivalent supplementary 8-week programme of intensity matched flat running.

### Participants

Nineteen highly trained runners were recruited for this study (17 males;  $V_{O_{2max}}$ :  $73.9 \pm 5.5 \text{ mL}\cdot\text{kg}^{-1}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ; 2 females;  $V_{O_{2max}}$ :  $62.6 \pm 1.4 \text{ mL}\cdot\text{kg}^{-1}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ). Participants’ best performance times over the previous

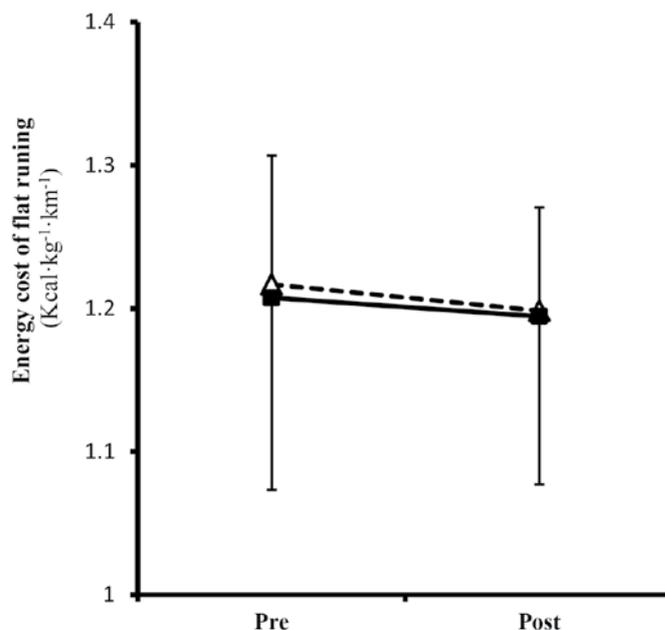


Figure 1 – A general overview of the investigation

two seasons were  $118 \pm 6\%$  of the current British record as of May 2015 in their primary event between 800m and marathon.

### Intervention

Athletes were pair matched based on their training, competitive distances and sex, with one the assigned to train on the flat (1% gradient) and the other downhill (-5% gradient) during prescribed sessions. For the intervention, two progressive ‘tempo’ training sessions were included in the athlete’s weekly training programme, split into two 4 week training blocks, with submaximal and maximal running assessments performed pre and post the training

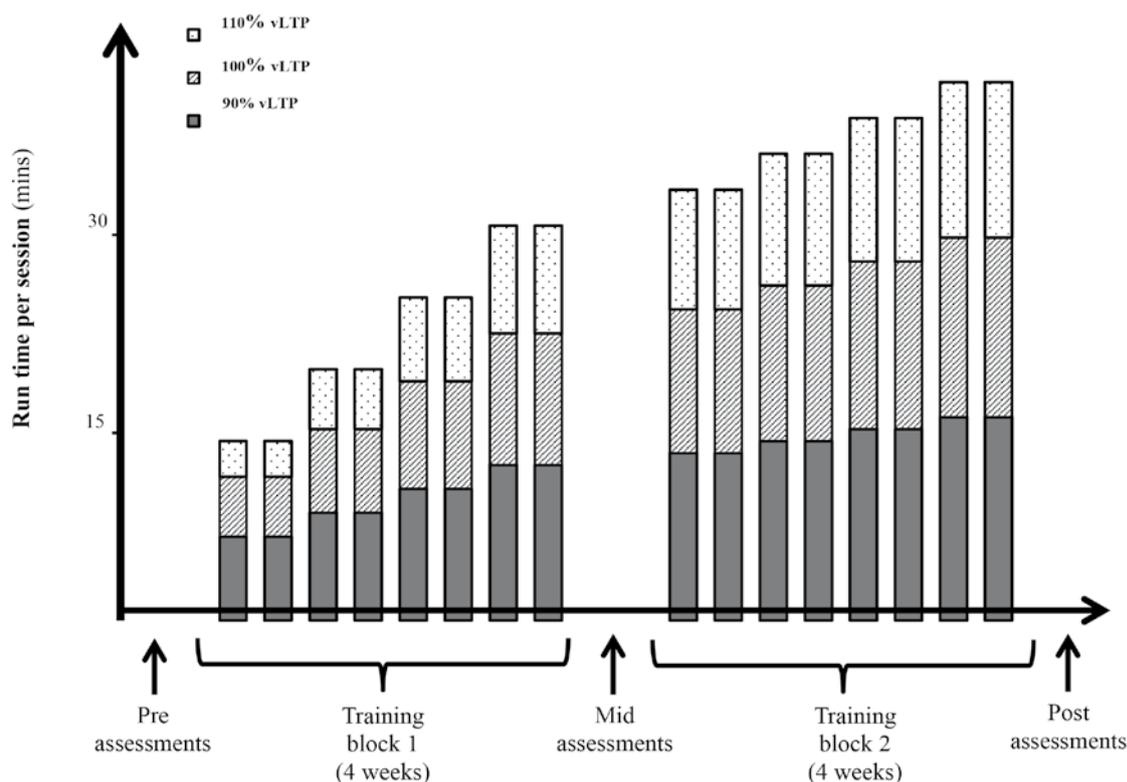


Figure 2 – The changes in running economy following downhill (White triangles, dashed line) and flat (Filled squares, solid line) run training.

intervention (Figure 1). All sessions were performed on a treadmill, with training speeds set based on the athlete's running velocity at their lactate turnpoint (vLTP; also referred to as the 'second threshold' or 'anaerobic threshold'), with training time increased by 6 mins per week in training block 1 (2 mins at each running speed) and 3 mins per week in block 2 (1 min at each running speed). During submaximal assessments (week 1, 5 and 11), running economy was assessed via a metabolic cart (Oxycon Pro), and quantified as the energy cost of running relative to body mass ( $\text{Kcal}\cdot\text{kg}^{-1}\cdot\text{km}^{-1}$ ).

### Results

Following the training, we observed no significant changes to running economy in either the downhill (Pre:  $1.22\text{ Kcal}\cdot\text{kg}^{-1}\cdot\text{km}^{-1}$ , Post:  $1.20\text{ Kcal}\cdot\text{kg}^{-1}\cdot\text{km}^{-1}$ ) or flat training groups (Pre:  $1.21\text{ Kcal}\cdot\text{kg}^{-1}\cdot\text{km}^{-1}$ , Post:  $1.19\text{ Kcal}\cdot\text{kg}^{-1}\cdot\text{km}^{-1}$ ; Figure 2). Both training groups showed improvements in the running velocity at lactate turnpoint, indicating that improvements in this threshold were likely due to the prescribed training intensity rather than a specific response to the downhill gradient. However, no changes in  $\text{VO}_{2\text{max}}$  or velocity of  $\text{VO}_{2\text{max}}$  were evident in either training group.

### Conclusion

Contrary to our hypothesis, the short programme of supplementary downhill run training did not enhance running economy in already well trained individuals. These findings could in part reflect the common challenge of improving running economy in a highly trained population, especially within a short time frame. Though

substantial improvements in running economy have been observed in truly world class athletes (~15% increase), these changes took almost 10 years to achieve in a programme that included comprehensive strength training, high intensity training and regular exposures to altitude (See Jones 2006). Consequently, the already extensive training history of high performance runners could diminish the physiological responses to short term training interventions, with more time being required to induce a meaningful change running economy even when using such novel methods as structured downhill running. Therefore, enhancing running economy should be viewed as a long term, rather than short term goal, within a highly trained athletes' programme.

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## RUSS BEST GIVES US AN UPDATE AS TO HOW HIS 2016 RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIP IS PROGRESSING:

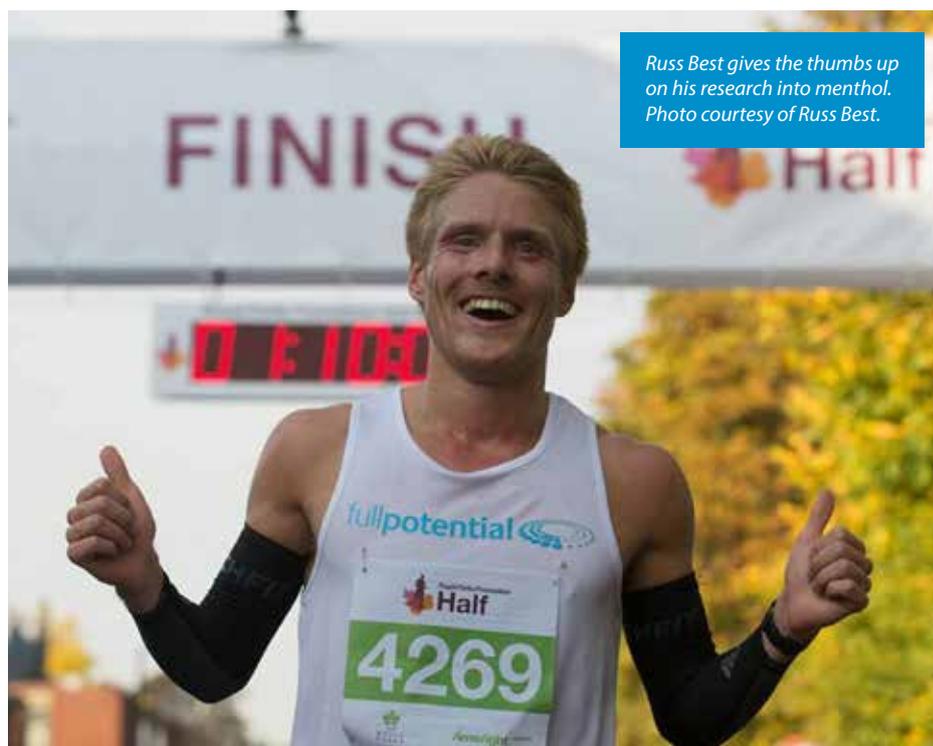
Here is an overview of my investigation into menthol and running economy and why this may be of value to athletes. Briefly, menthol imparts cool, or refreshing sensations in our mouths and it is this that has led to the growing interest in using menthol to enhance athletic performance. Menthol acts upon cold-sensitive receptors in the skin, mouth and other tissues has been shown to increase ventilation and feelings of openness in the nasal cavity, as well as improving athlete perception of heat.

My team and I have used a menthol mouth-rinse to administer menthol at a low concentration (0.1%), and have been the first to explore athlete responses to menthol in typical UK temperatures. We have measured athletes' physiological and perceptual responses to menthol at different training speeds (14, 16, 18 and 20 km/h) at 15°C and 28°C. Participants have also completed 1 km time trials following this incremental block of work.

I am pleased to report that so far the feedback from athletes has been very positive, with most enjoying or reporting that the menthol provided a cooling hit that was sustained throughout the exercise. This has led to work outside of the scholarship, with us asking athletes about their experiences of menthol

supplementation and how they feel it can best be used road or trackside. Measures of thirst and athlete comfort seem to have improved at first glance and we have seen some impressive efforts over the 1 km time trial (2:33 for the 1 km, and a 25 km/h closing drive are currently vying for the top

spot) but an analysis of the physiological data will reveal whether an improved physiological state and or running economy is behind menthol's potentially performance enhancing effects, or whether we perform better due to feeling cooler, and fresher for longer.



Russ Best gives the thumbs up on his research into menthol. Photo courtesy of Russ Best.

BMC SECRETARY AND ACADEMY DIRECTOR **DAVID LOWES**, WAS INTERVIEWED BY ONE OF HIS ENGLAND ATHLETICS MENTEES, **RICHARD MASSEY**:

**Richard: Many congratulations on your BMC Life Services award, what does this mean to you?**

**David:** It genuinely means a lot. A Life Services award usually means, in my opinion, that it's almost time to call it a day – however, this is far from the truth. I'll keep going until I stop breathing – athletics is and always has been my passion – I love it! As a coach though, any award is always greatly appreciated – and proudly received on behalf of all coaches – I just happen to be the chosen one!

**Richard: I understand you were a very good athlete. Could you give me a summary of your running career?**

**David:** I started as a 100 yard sprinter and finished at the marathon. I won English Schools' 880 yards when aged 14 and also finished runner-up and bronze medalist in subsequent years. At the AAA age-group champs I also finished in silver medal and two bronze medal positions. It was always a tough age-group with athletes of the calibre of Dave Moorcroft, Barry Smith, Ron McDonald and Julian Goater all the same age as me and there were many more too. I won the Cinque Mulini junior race by a distance and that made me think I could really make it. Things progressed really well until the age of 22 when I had three Achilles surgeries in a 12-month period. I had gained GB senior and England honours and the PB's came down to 7:52 (3000m) and 13:43 (5000m). Unfortunately, this almost signaled the end of a promising career as the surgery wasn't successful and it would be around six years before I got back to a decent level, albeit as a

road runner. I eventually got into fantastic shape running 63min for a half-marathon and an irksome 2:15 marathon. I was in at least 2:10 shape Fate struck again in that Glasgow Marathon after jogging through half-way before a sudden pain in a calf muscle which quickly became an excruciating and almost unbearable pain. I've always maintained I lost at least 4-5mins trying to find a way to hobble the final 12 miles. Nevertheless, a badly torn calf healed, but a compartment syndrome of the hamstring and surgery again put paid to doing what I knew I was capable of. Another come-back lasted six races, all victories, I think, before an arthroscope of my left knee told me what I didn't want to know. End of story.

**Richard: So what got you into coaching?**

**David:** Once I had finished with competing, I started coaching some lads at my club at the time (Chester-le-Street AC). I wasn't a bona fide coach, no qualifications and just gave them what I thought was beneficial – usually what I had done. After a while more and more athletes from other clubs asked me to coach them and I started coaching out of Gateshead Stadium. Once you get into it and take it seriously, your whole perspective changes and indeed your life and thought processes change too.

**Richard: Could you outline your coaching career to date?**

**David:** I would like to say I'm not about ego and the coaches and athletes I like are the ones that are humble – they just get on with life and go about their business in a good manner. I have made so many good

friends through coaching both in the UK and around the world and 99% of coaches are fantastic human beings. To date I've coached 17 athletes to varying degrees of international status. I have had some immensely talented athletes and many who have succeeded simply because of a hard work ethic and fantastic coaching! In respect of all the athletes I've coached, let's say I've had English Schools' winners, AAA senior and age-group champions, major age-group representation at World, European and Commonwealth events, including vets.

**Richard: Who are the coaches you have looked to for help and inspiration and why?**

**David:** Stan Long was the coach at Gateshead Harriers and his sessions were all Lydiard-based. Of course, I've been reading running books and physiology books since that tender age and have met some fantastic coaches. George Gandy for example still talks to me about winning the English Schools' and the great athletes around at that time. Back in the day, we just did it and then maybe asked questions later. My first book was the Jim Ryun Story and I was awestruck with his ability and his workload – a fantastic read if anyone is interested. Like I said, if you read, watch and listen and are prepared to take on-board new or different ideas and also admit that you are wrong now and again, then you won't go far wrong. When I look back to what I was doing 50 years ago and compare it to today, there are elements that remain, but in essence the training cycle is much different. Coaching is an evolving wheel, sometimes it comes around again and sometimes it just moves on.

**Richard: What are your coaching principles that have enabled you to be so successful?**

**David:** Hard work! Seriously though, coaching is not as simple as one key session. It's a lot of patience and having a keen eye for detail that an athlete may not realise. Having a big aerobic engine is what I'm trying to build and once this is in place, you can begin to add so much more that will make the athlete run as quickly as they can. I'm big on subtle psychological input and making the athlete realise that anything is possible if positivity is engaged constantly. I also tend to go by body language instead of what the watch says all of the time – how quickly an athlete recovers and how they deal with adversity are definitely top of my list. Probably one



Team Lowes trackide.  
Photo courtesy of David Lowes.

of the major things I've integrated over the years is more recovery days and multi-pace and multi-surface sessions.

**Richard: Do you have any core sessions you use as a guide to how your athletes are running? What are they and why do you use them?**

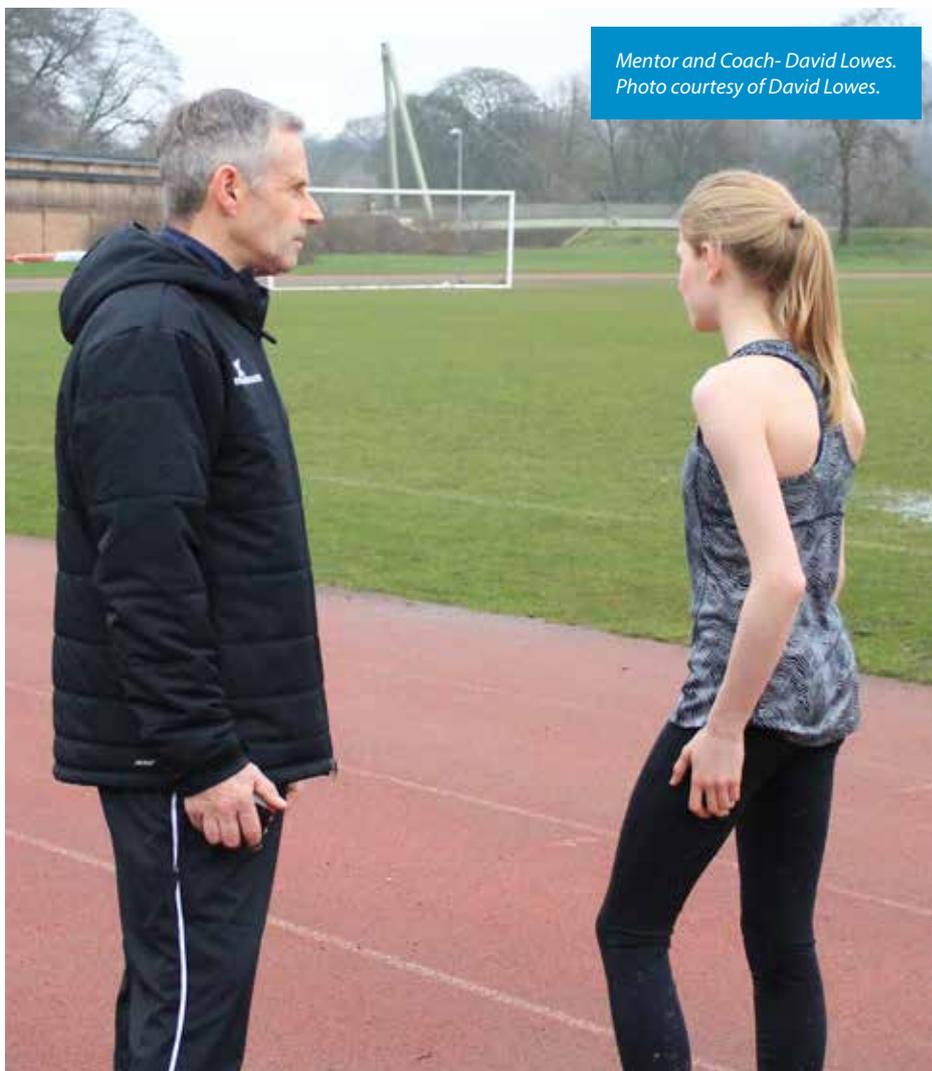
**David:** Like any coach, I have a periodised plan in place, although this rarely runs smoothly with injuries and colds meaning that a constant re-evaluation has to be done. I don't have a particular core session, but have used many ways of charting progress from a monthly road time-trial- 12min track run for distance, hop/bound tests and so on. One of my top sessions that make the pathway smooth towards the track is my Kenyan Hills session on a Monday – it is absolutely key and it is the variety from week-to-week and the 4x1min on the flat at the end that maintains speed endurance. We don't start track work until after the County champs – it has always worked this way and it also ensures they run well right through a season. Mind you, there are other things I do include to keep speed capabilities high – anyone interested, just ask.

**Richard: What are the highlights of your coaching career?**

**David:** If we're honest as coaches, we would all like an Olympic champion or a world record holder – in reality, coaching is all about getting the optimum level of performance out of an athlete, whatever that may be. I remember last year, an athlete was trying to go sub-2 over 800m and had fell agonizingly short with a few tenths of a second giving him that satisfaction. However, in one of my regional BMC races he was running against his brother who always beat him. At 400m in around 60sec I honestly thought he had blown it. With 150m to go he was on his brother's shoulder and coming down the home stretch his eyes were like ice – a 10 tonne truck wouldn't have stopped him! He stopped the clock at 1:58 and his celebrations would have matched any Olympian – it's little things like that which mean so much and a job well done. As coaches we're in it for enjoyment first and foremost and I think that is sometimes forgotten. The squad I have presently are magic, wonderful people who I enjoy their company as well as putting them through hell!

**Richard: More specifically, how does the BMC assist you as a coach?**

**David:** They just let me get on with it and anything I need, within reason, I usually get their full backing. I have organised the



Mentor and Coach- David Lowes.  
Photo courtesy of David Lowes.

BMC Residential Courses now for 12 years, maybe longer, I'm not counting. Without the BMC I certainly wouldn't be where I am now and have the respect of the majority of athletics fraternity.

**Richard: With your work at the BMC as race organiser, academy director and coach mentor for England athletics how do you find the time to fit in your coaching?**

**David:** Believe it or not, I seem to have more time than I've ever had. Back in the early years of coaching I worked in publishing and the working hours had a start time, but no finish time – I made some decent money, but it closed many doors athletically due to the pressure of the job. I was often turning up late for sessions and not in a good state of mind. I'm lucky now that I've been working in athletics-related work for 14 years now – six years as an Athletic Development Officer, then almost seven years as Coaching Editor at AW and now England Athletics Mentor and University Coordinator plus Team Coach for England and Great Britain. I don't make anywhere near the money – but am I happy? ... you bet I am!

**Richard: What are your aspirations for the future?**

**David:** Simple- keep enjoying it, keep learning and most of all keep it simple! Writing is my passion and when I was asked to contribute to The Coach journal in 2000, little did I realise that I would write for every issue. This of course led onto to my AW post and that opened up many opportunities related to my coaching with invites to speak both abroad and all over the UK. The most daunting situation was when I spoke at the European Coaching Conference in Pajhulahti, Finland with the legend Lasse Viren sitting two metres away from me! I even won Best Sports Magazine/Newspaper article for Valencia. Now, I have been Team Coach for England and also GB and these are things of past dreams. Don't get confused here, these are not ego-trips, it's me saying that anything is possible – you never know what's around the corner.

**Richard: What advice would you give to any coach just entering our sport?**

**David:** Coach the athlete, not the group. Also and very important, remember there is a life outside of athletics – I just don't know what it is!

## MATT LONG CATCHES UP WITH BRITISH 1500M CHAMPION CHARLIE GRICE:

Few athletes are privileged enough to get the chance to take part in what is proverbially known as 'The greatest show on earth', so asking Charlie Grice about his recollections of the Rio Olympics last summer, simply has to be my starting point. With a deep breath and twinkle in his eye, he tells me, "I have amazing memories but looking back it feels odd that it's a distant memory now and that the competition is done, medals have been won, and life and training go on! As the 2016 date became closer you get inspired in the amazing event and nothing else matters because it's an event you have worked so hard for and is all consuming, for such a long time. When it ends it's like, 'Well what happens now?'"

He admits to feeling a sense of disorientation at the prospect of his first Olympics. With candour he tells me, "I didn't quite know what to expect. I medalled in the inaugural Youth Olympics in Singapore way back in 2010 but as an adult now I have bigger goals. People kept telling me the Olympics would blow my mind but I love the big occasion. The atmosphere in and around Team GB was immense and we had amazing support from both the British Olympic Association and British Athletics. The holding camp in Belo Horizonte went really well and we were well positioned to acclimatize to the South Americas".

So what was the atmosphere in the Olympic village like, I eagerly ask? With a smile, Charlie recalls that, "The Athlete village was a little crazy, with every country having their own apartment block. Some countries could be heard partying all night, which did disrupt some sleep but luckily ear plugs were provided! The atmosphere in the Rio Olympic Stadium (Engenhão) was so disappointing! My first heat was in the morning and to think that I had trained for four years to compete in an empty Stadium was very frustrating. But luckily it did pick up for the evening sessions. I wasn't able to go to the opening Ceremony owing to the pre-Games preparations. I based myself in Font Romeu for 5 weeks before the Games, and I flew into Belo Horizonte two weeks before my first race and by that time the Olympics had already started".

Many of you reading this will rightly be aspiring to make the Games in 2020 or 2024 and the management of pre-competition nerves is all important. So how did Charlie feel when walking out onto the track for the Olympic Final? Was he apprehensive or did he relish it? With a sigh he tells me, "I was pretty relaxed actually and was a lot

more nervous for the semi-final because I had something to prove. I'll happily admit I got given a lifeline in the heats. In the final, don't get me wrong, I was nervous but I had nothing to lose but everything to gain. I was in great shape and I wanted to take it all in, because this was the race that every middle-

distance athlete wants to take part in during their lifetime -the blue ribbon event. The hardest part was negotiating through the rounds, and it was gloves off for the Final".

Those of you who stayed up to watch Charlie on that Saturday evening last August will recall that the final was an extremely



Phoenix from the Olympic flames: Charlie Grice.

slow tactical affair. How did he feel the race went and what lessons has he learned from it? With a shrug of the shoulders he admits, "I knew the race would be slow, but not as slow as it went. Last year at the World Championships on the start line for the Final I was shattered after the heats and my legs were in pieces, but this time I felt pretty fresh. I was quite happy when it was slow, because usually the Kenyans mess up the tactics and the smarter athletes can take advantage of this. With the foot issue (plantar fascia injury) I had all summer, a slow race with a fast finish wasn't the best race for me, and at the same time I don't think I would have been strong enough to make an impact in that race by pushing the pace. I have learned that I need to be able to finish faster than we thought we needed to. Normally a 38 second last 300m will win you a medal, but you have to be prepared for every eventuality in an Olympic Final!"

I remind the Brighton Phoenix man of his high profile win at last season's Prefontaine Classic as well as the fact that he finished last season as British Champion over 1500m. I ask what these achievements mean to him. With a smile he responds, "It always means a lot to retain the British title and to be the National Champion is huge and I do not take it for granted. It is great to run in front of a home crowd and not something that I do that often these days. Having my parents in the crowd watching me run, and to make them happy means a lot to me because they've supported me so much throughout my career so far. The Prefontaine Classic is one of my favourite meetings of the year. Nike really look after their Athletes there and it is a huge event. The fans are knowledgeable so to win the International Mile Race there in a new personal best of 3:52 was really special for me and a great indicator of how my training had been going. The time I won the International Mile would have put me in contention for the win in the Bowerman mile which was very encouraging going forward to the European circuit and gave me confidence for the forthcoming season".

So having looked back, we then turn to the future as I ask him to assess how his winter training has gone. He readily admits that, "Winter training started late this year because I had to take 10 weeks off to let my plantar fascia injury heal. I have a lot to thank the medical team at British Athletics for in enabling me to carry on competing because if I had not had such extensive treatment I would not have been able to compete in Rio. On reflection I think the rest did my body and mind good. I have never had that amount of time away from training

and it was good to experience different things and not worry too much about what I was eating but I am ready for hard work now. I was in Kenya for all of December and then went to Potchefstroom in South Africa, with the British Endurance Team. The main focus is obviously London this Summer so I am making sure that I work on my weaknesses and also my biomechanics to be able to absorb all of the training that needs to be done".

On pages 38 and 39 of the magazine we have credited Charlie's coach, Jon Bigg, as 2016 BMC Coach of the Year. I am keen to ask Charlie what makes his relationship with Jon work. So I press Charlie into assessing the qualities of his mentor. Without hesitation he responds that, "Jon is a great coach because he is very relaxed and really wants the best for the athlete. He is open minded to learning and improving his knowledge from other people. We have been fortunate to be able to try out different things over the years and now know exactly what works for me. Jon is very experienced and nothing fazes him because he has been through it all with his wife Sally Gunnell. I am a very driven athlete so I think we have a good balance between us".

Member number 5168 is clearly a fan of the BMC having taken part in our races, just like many of you reading this piece. I am keen to explore that given his exalted status as an Olympic finalist, whether he feels the club still has a role to play in his future development. He answers, "I would like to think so. Part of my training programme requires me to be on a mountain living at altitude for half the year so the races I do

all have a purpose. The last race I did at the BMC was an 800m at Watford, back in June 2015, which went really well as it was an early season opener. I think that the BMC can still have a part to play in my future development. I must learn to win races so if it fits in with my programme then you may see me at Watford. I want to run a good 3k and improve my range from 800m-5k."

I wrap up our chat by encouraging him to come clean about what his goals for 2017 and to ascertain how excited he is by the prospect of being part of the London World Championships. He says with conviction, "My main goal for 2017 is to get on to the podium at London. I feel I have gained a lot of experience over the last few years, so now I must take my chance. I am so excited to race in London because I missed out on the chance to run in London 2012. I really enjoy competing in the London Diamond League because the crowd's enthusiasm is amazing and they really get behind the athletes. We have learnt so much on how my body works and what it needs to get in peak condition, so I will do everything in my power to make it happen this summer, so watch this space!"

The time to watch is 8.30pm on the evening of Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> August and lets sincerely hope that one of those coveted podium spaces will be filled by an affable young man, who at the age of just 23 years, has already stamped his authority of the domestic middle distance scene in being a national 1500m champion no less than a hugely impressive five times.

**You can follow Charlie on social media channels --> [instagram](#) --> [charliegrice](#).  
Twitter --> [@charliegrice1](#)**



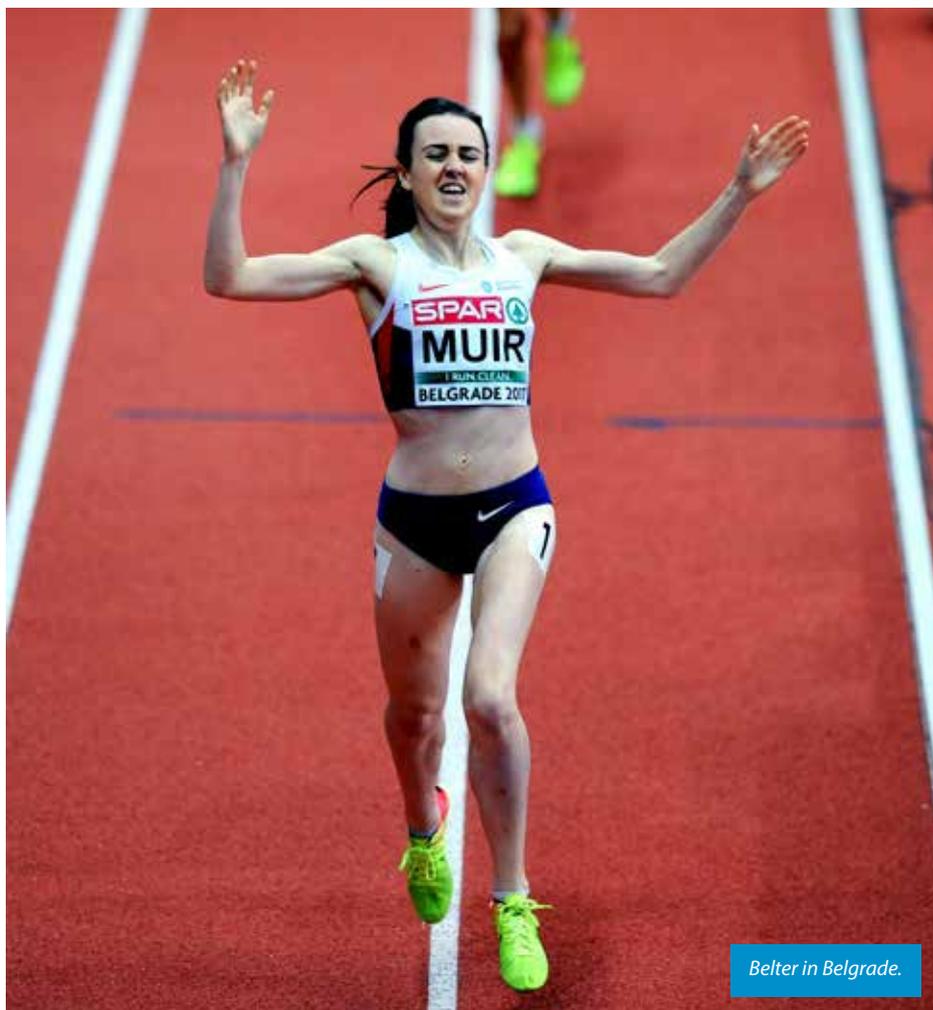
Rio Rollercoaster.

**MATT LONG** IS LEFT  
BREATHLESS IN TRYING TO  
CHASE OUR 2016 ATHLETE OF  
THE YEAR, **LAURA MUIR**:

It's early evening on 9th June 2016 and a dozen or so women are packed into the call up area in the Olympic stadium in Oslo. The Diamond League has moved onto the Norwegian capital for that most historically prestigious of fixtures on the annual global athletics calendar- namely The Bislett Games. A recently 'retired' former World 800m bronze medallist is adjusting her blond locks and her trademark shades as the locker room conversation nervously turns to talk of an assault on the world mile record. All eyes are on Faith Kipyegon as the woman in form and the athlete most likely to follow the diligent Jenny Meadows for the first half of the race. Minutes later, a hushed conversation – a moan about the temperature dropping and possible high winds and the rumour mill has it that the Kenyan may instead sit off the pace and be content with the win.

Keen to support one of her fellow Team GB athletes, the 'Pocket Rocket' decides on having a quiet word with a young up and coming Scot. The response given to Meadows' disclosure that no one may go with the pace clearly astonishes the Wigan woman who in two decades of being a regular fixture and captaining British teams thinks she has seen and heard it all. The young pretender to the throne whose previous occupants have included the likes of Dame Kelly Holmes, Hannah England and Lisa Dobriskey as British metric milers who have all achieved in recent years on the global stage, uttered just three words. But it was the way in which those three words were uttered which convinced one of the most revered elder stateswomen of British Athletics that the new kid on the proverbial block had well and truly arrived. Those three words were simply – "WELL I WILL". Simple- matter of fact- assertive yet unassuming and lacking in arrogance –it's almost a testimonial for the young woman herself- and that young woman is of course Laura Muir.

Fast forward six months or so to 4th January 2016- on a dazzling grey and blue track at the Emirates Arena- with the words 'Glasgow' emblazoned on the yellow infield and Laura Muir has the loneliest of journeys in navigating the last two fifths of a 25 lap race. The yellow and pink spikes stand out that much more in contrast to the mundaneness of her grey and black kit, as she sticks diligently to her task of running



each and every lap in a shade under 36 seconds. If she does so she will supersede a legend of our sport, in Liz McColgan, whose British indoor 5000m record has lasted an unbelievable quarter of a century. The dark pony tail is bouncing furiously as the lone ranger continues to battle the centrifugal and centripetal forces of the indoor boards which threaten the brave quest to join her fellow compatriot and world beater in having her name as a permanent fixture on the record books. As she embarks on her final circuit, the cracking ripples of applause begin to give way to whistles of delight as the crowd realise something very special is on the cards. Athletes who have long since completed their 3000m before giving way to Muir's solo campaign against the clock have ignored their coaches pleas to get the acid out of their legs and put their cool downs on hold to form a queue in the outside lane by the finish line- they are lining up like footballers on Cup Final day in anticipation of having to shake the hand and bow down to the new Queen of British endurance running. As the line approaches the athlete wearing number 60 with the letters 'BMC' on that very vest seems to momentarily lean back- there is a mix of pain and anticipation on her face as the moment is frozen in time (see front cover) - then the arms are raised in

jubilant and relief- the clock has stopped at a staggering 14:49.12- as she allows herself to sink to her knees just yards after breasting the tape.

The fact that Laura earned her first two indoor championship titles in the space of 24 hours in Prague in March, after waiting so patiently, brings to mind the old one liner about waiting for the proverbial bus before two arrive at once. Like many will have done over the last couple of months, I extend the hand of congratulations to the young Scot on her recent successes. I am itching to know how it feels for her to have bagged yet another record. Enthusiastically she responds that, "I am delighted to have another British record next to my name, I work very hard in training so it was great to be rewarded with a quick time at the start of the year".

I remind Laura that she took the record from a great athlete and of course another fellow Scot in 1991 World 10,000m champion McColgan. Laura wouldn't be born for another 2 years when McColgan enjoyed her finest hour in Tokyo but I press as to whether as a youngster growing up and with the benefit of youtube, she has followed the career of her fellow Dundee Hawkhill athlete in any way? Candidly she tells me, "To be honest I have not watched

a lot of the longer distance races, I guess because I have been concentrating on the 1500m!" With due respect she adds, "But I was certainly aware of Liz growing up and her achievements on the world stage".

Attention then shifts to the aforementioned race in January and I go for the jugular in asking her whether she set out to break the record in a BMC organised race or did it just happen? What made her think she was in the kind of shape to have a crack at it? She asserts that, I knew from my training I was in great shape and I would run a quick time if the race went to plan. For me the target was to break 15 minutes and fortunately that would mean grabbing the British Record too which was previously 15:03".

So what was running through her mind during those long 25 laps around the Glasgow boards? She easily recalls, "I had a pacemaker for the first 1k and then one of the other girls took over for a couple of laps thereafter. I was feeling really strong so went to the front at about 1600m and ran the rest of the race on my own". Always keen to respect her fellow competitors she acknowledges that, "The other girls ran to 3k and stood at the edge of track cheering me on for the last 2k which was nice of them". Not wanting to let her off the proverbial hook, I insist that those final few laps of running solo must have allowed the demons of doubt to surface in her mind. On the contrary she points out that, "To be honest I found the last 2k not too bad, the final 1k started to hurt quite a lot though! I knew all the splits in my head so that kept my mind busy and I had hit a really good rhythm so I just managed to keep churning out the laps and before I knew it I was hearing the bell". So was there a point when she realised the record was effectively 'in the bag' or did she have to wait till she actually crossed the line to realise what she had done? She tells me that, "I knew at 3k I would likely have the record, I was timed at 8.59 for my 3k split and knew I could up the pace so I was quite confident I would hopefully break the record at that point".

As a fan I'm keen to know whether the move to 5k is one in which she thinks she will make in the future at some point, given this success. Understandably keen to keep the cards close to her chest she responds that, "I genuinely don't know if I will 'move up' as it were to the 5k- I think I still have a lot of unfinished business at the 1500m". With a shrug of the shoulders she continues that, "So for the time being we are looking to compete in the two events but with the 1500m still being my primary event".

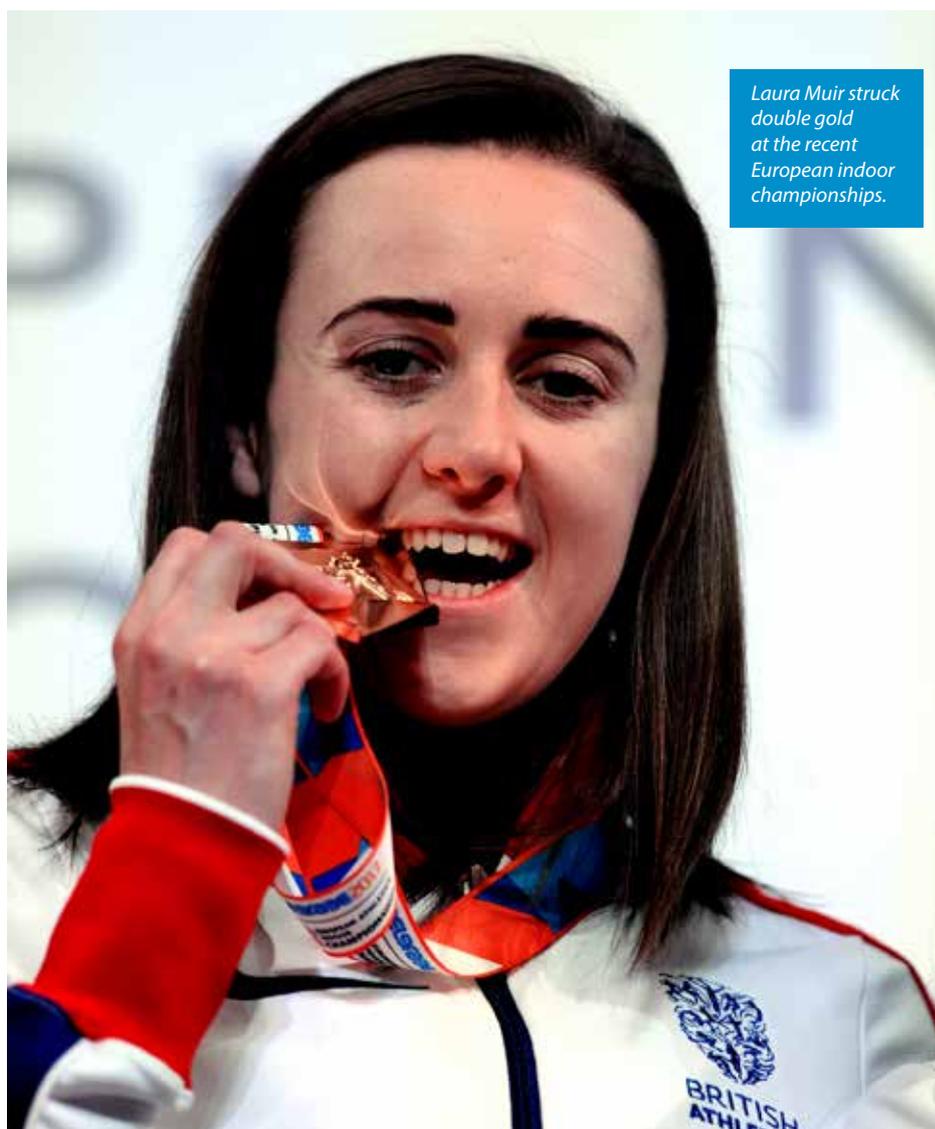
Our amiable chat concludes with an enquiry as to how her winter training

has progressed. I momentarily forget the tremendous juggling act which she has managed for several years with her managing top flight athletics with dedicated Veterinary studies. She reminds me that, "Since the end of the 2016 track season I had a lot of placements to do, so I was training in Glasgow for a couple of months". Having attempted to rib her with an age old joke about the joys of the British weather, I finish by asking about her overseas travels. With a laugh she owns up to her fair share of jet setting in recent months. She admits that, "We then went to South Africa for November and came back for Christmas, before flying back out to South Africa in January". She is presently in the French altitude resort of Font Romeu as we speak- and I want to know how camp is going. She willingly reports that, "Training has been going really well. I was a lot fitter returning from my break than previous years so we were ahead already at the start of the winter training block and it has just been a matter of training hard week in week out consistently".

I am keen to credit the sometimes unsung but massively influential guidance of Andy

Young. I joke that his laid back nature saw him caught on live TV swigging a bottle of coke shortly before Laura bagged the first of two brilliant indoor European golds in Belgrade back in March- at a time when less confident coaches may have been biting their fingernails! It's abundantly clear that athlete is number one fan of her coach as she discloses that, "Andy has been a full-time coach now for just over a year which has made a massive difference meaning we were both able to attend the training camps and he has had more time to concentrate on my training".

Sounds like a partnership made in heaven as well as on the indoor boards of Glasgow, or the sunshine of South Africa or indeed the snowy trails of Font Romeu! Watch this space for more from Scotland's affable double act of Muir and Young this summer. If there's a golden ending after three and three quarter laps for a 24 year old originally from Inverness, as the London Olympic stadium clock strikes 9:24pm, you can bet your bottom dollar that Andy Young will be entitled to be caught on camera sipping at something a little stronger than coke for the rest of the evening of Tuesday 8th August!



*Laura Muir struck double gold at the recent European indoor championships.*

It's worth noting that both the longevity and standard of this volunteer's work have received the highest praise from none other than our Chair, Tim Brennan:

"I think the moment I will always associate with Mike is his commentary on one of the best BMC races ever when 3 men broke 1:46 at Watford in 2006. Mike's delight and amazement captured the mood of everyone perfectly and illustrated his enthusiasm for and knowledge of the sport. Mike's involvements are multiple with the BMC, Trafford AC, England and British Athletics; a true mainstay of athletics".

Exultation indeed. So who is he? You will have heard his voice when nervously limbering up for one of our races. He's the man behind the 'mike' if you will pardon the pun! He's one of our most esteemed commentators and his name is Mike Harris.

Mike Harris is one of those men who is always busy – he's one of our sports 'doers'. Quiet, unassuming, he goes about his business diligently- he gets the job done. He beckons me into his office at Trafford where he is busy filing papers just minutes before he is due to be wired up on the microphone and head out to perform 'on stage' so to speak at native Stretford track, for one of our meetings. A busy man indeed but busy people always make the time.

As I sit down, I demand to where it all started for him. He willingly shares that, "Along with another chap, my father more or less formed Trafford AC or Stretford as it was back in the day. I got involved straight after I'd left University and I basically started coaching middle distance athletes".

He's still shuffling some of those papers which I alluded to as we speak- he's still busy and it doesn't take a detective to realise I am in the company of a multi-tasker. Has he always been a juggler so to speak? He leans back in his chair and with a laugh agrees that, "I've always done a bit of everything- whether it be coaching, team management and committee duties. I was involved with the Stretford track league on Tuesday nights and worked again with youngsters at weekends. My father was an announcer and I took over from him gradually".

So now I've got the big picture and the sense of family lineage, I'm keen to focus more specifically on our club. Why the link with the BMC? He points out that, "It was logical for me to get involved with the BMC through the coaching I did and athletes that I was working with. In addition, you have to remember that BMC races have been here in Stretford for long time. A bloke called Alan Free passed on the baton



*Man behind the Mike.  
Photo courtesy of  
Mike Harris.*

of announcer on to me, so to speak. If I remember rightly, that must have been back in the early to mid-80s".

At this point, I challenge his use of the term 'announcer' reminding him that he brings such enthusiasm to the role that he is effectively a 'commentator'. Is there a difference between the two? Without hesitation he asserts that, "I definitely see myself as a commentator not an announcer. My view is you don't really need the latter with the modern technology that's on offer. I try to both inform and enthuse the crowd".

It's staggering that Mike has covered over 50 national grand prix and "hundreds and hundreds" of regionals and he readily concedes that the role can be all consuming to the point that, "races can be so fast moving- it can become a bit of a blur" and at this point he is keen to credit the commentary box assistance of, "a fascinating fun facts guy", in Neil Canham.

So what's his favourite recollection? In an instant he responds that, "I was working at Watford alongside Peter Matthews. At the time I was coaching Cath Riley, who was going for a European under 23 qualifying time. Peter was tickled that I managed to down my microphone and sprint down the back straight to see Cath and then dash back into the commentary box at lightning speed, desperate not to appear out of breath when I resumed my duties!"

He's had his fair share of laughs along

the way as he remembers that, "I remember a few years back we were at Longford Park. There was a huge deluge- typical Manchester weather- the track flooded. Top athletes like Sam Ellis were using the rubbish bins to collect the water and the pics even made Athletics Weekly! As I recall, there was a silver lining in that *Take That* were in concert over the road at Old Trafford cricket ground and one way or another it made for a cracking atmosphere that night".

So where will his role of commentator be at in five years' time? Mike looks into his crystal ball and responds that, "It's going the way of the Highgate 10k – you know, music and Samba bands in lanes 3 and 4. Our much valued officials are realising that rules are rules and they need to apply them but athletes have so much choice these days and you want them to come to your meeting so commentating and music all helps. I accept that it was unheard of a decade or so ago. It's here to stay as long as we don't overcook it".

Just as Mike utters these last sentiments, his name is called on the tannoy and he jumps out of the seat- ready for yet another day behind the microphone. As the man in demand disappears, I reflect on how we all hope that this most knowledgeable, informative and regular of all our fixtures should be here to stay for many years to come. Don't look out for him but listen out for him this season!

## SEASON PREVIEW BY **TIM BRENNAN:**

### Grand Prix Meetings

Grand Prix and Elite meetings are our top level of competition. A qualification standard is set but members without the standard may be accepted if space exists.

The good news from fixture planning is that we have retained five Grand Prix meetings despite pressure from some quarters to reduce. We also have reasonable dates to work to. All this has to be debated with other competition providers and ultimately adjudicated by UKA as the governing body. Thanks go to Paul Gooding for the great job he has done in representing us in these sometimes difficult planning meetings.

As a club we try and gear our dates to support qualification for the major national and international championships. 2017 is likely to be a long season. Not only does London host the World Championships but the calendar is also influenced by the 2018 Commonwealth Games which take place in April down in Australia.

We are very pleased to be including Loughborough as one of our BMC Grand Prix meetings this year. This is in fact a return to the venue as it featured in the first season of the Grand Prix 21 years ago, and we last held a Grand Prix meeting there in 2006. The intention is that we do rotate between different locations for the Grand Prix meetings and we hope to return to Oxford and the iconic Iffley Road for a Grand Prix



Last season's women's 3000m at Sport City. Photo courtesy of David Lowes.

in the near future. We will be maintaining a regional race at Oxford.

All the Grand Prix meetings will have male and female 800m and 1500m events. We have varied the endurance distances, with 5000m races in the first two meetings where we hope qualifications can be obtained. The Sport City race on the 27th May will feature the European U20 and U23 trial. Watford on 24th June has 3000m races as a chance to sharpen before the UK trials the following week, plus a 5000m race for those not targeting the trials. Loughborough on 8th July will have 5000m races.

To create a suitable opportunity in June for 5000m qualifications, the Watford Gold Standard on 14th June will have an Elite race.

The final GP meeting of the season at Trafford on the 19th August has the England 10,000m championships for men and women. We are delighted to be hosting a championship event. Hopefully it will be a good opportunity for those targeting the Commonwealth Games. For those not fancying twenty-five laps of the track there will also be 3000m races.

Steeplechase races include a repeat of the 2000m distance in the first fixture of the season as this proved popular last year. There is a 3000m opportunity for men at Sport City and for men and women at Loughborough.

A feature of Grand Prix meetings this year will be the pre-meeting coaching corners targeted at both athletes and coaches. We are also offering free entry to the meetings for paid up BMC coaches.

### PB Classics

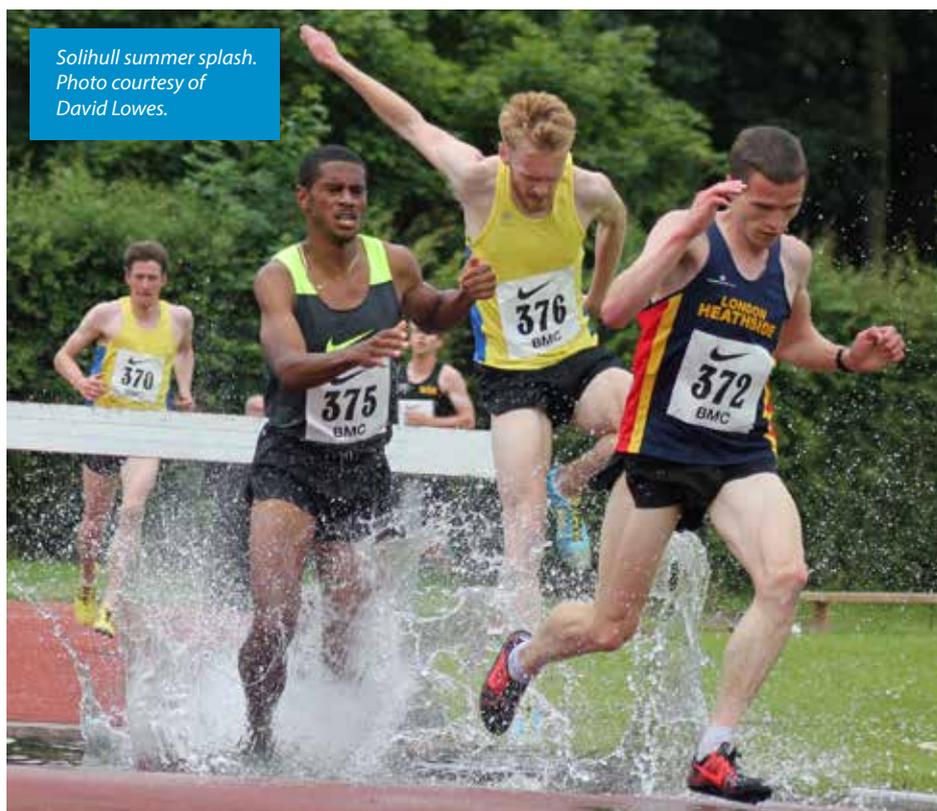
These meetings are targeted at our 'academy' or U20 athletes. The two meetings are scheduled in May and early June to give qualification opportunities. The Milton Keynes meeting will include a comprehensive steeplechase program.

### Gold Standard

The series of Gold Standard meetings at Trafford and Watford frequently produces performances as good or better than the Grand Prix meeting. They are hosted in open meetings and have limited time slots. This year entry will be limited to members and overseas athletes who would enhance the races.

### Regional Races

Regional races are open to all members and cover a wide range of standards. They are held throughout the country.



Solihull summer splash. Photo courtesy of David Lowes.

## BRITISH MILERS' CLUB COACH OFFERING

**BMC News twice a year**

Each coach member will receive a copy of the much-respected BMC News twice a year packed with coaching articles and athlete profiles. Current issues are exclusively for BMC members.

**Eligibility for BMC Coaching awards**

The coveted BMC Coach of the Year award and the lifetime coaching achievement awards are open only to current BMC members. These awards recognise outstanding coaching in our middle-distance community.

**Free Entry to Grand Prix Meetings**

All BMC coaches will receive free entry to the Grand Prix Meeting on production of their BMC membership and UK Coaching Licence cards.

**Free entry to BMC Coaching Corners**

Some BMC Grand Prix meetings will feature coaching corners before the start of the track action. The aim of these is to provide both coaches and athletes informative workshops in a casual setting. By putting them before a meeting we are recognising how busy coaches are, and aiming to bring easy access to coach education without the need to travel to a separate event. Free entry to the BMC meetings will also enable admission to the coaching corners.



*Watford Men's 800m last season.  
Photo courtesy of David Lowes.*

**Reduced cost of attending the BMC coaching seminar**

The BMC holds an annual coaching seminar with top quality speakers from the UK

and overseas. Speakers are both coaches and athletes. The seminar aims to provide practical and thought provoking coaching advice. BMC coaches pay a reduced registration fee.

**Grand Prix Program Articles**

The Grand Prix program will contain brief articles aimed at athletes and coaches informing on athlete development topics in a concise way.

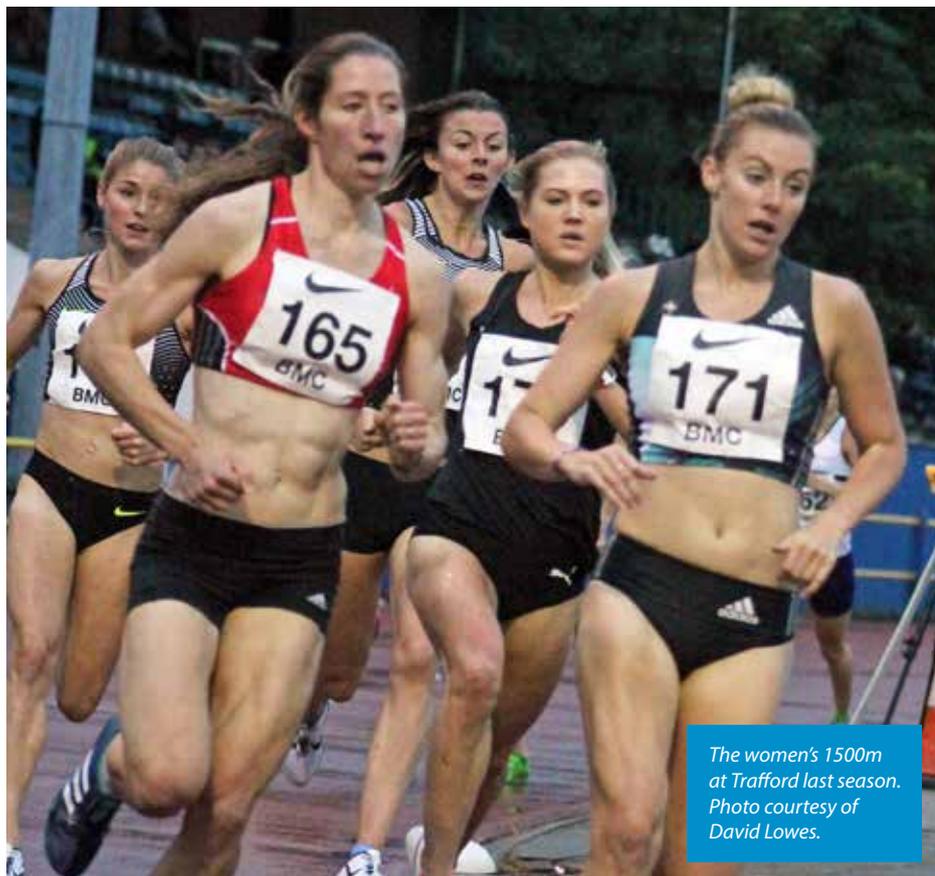
**Participate and influence the British Milers Club's direction**

The BMC welcome opinions and ideas from its members which further the club's aim to improve the standard of middle distance running in the country. Coach membership provides an opportunity to influence the club's policies across coaching, competition and athlete support.

**Future Initiatives**

The BMC believes that developing coaching talent is an essential part of improving the standard of middle distance running in the country. We will continue to find new initiatives in support of this aim.

**Details of how to join the British Milers Club can be found on [www.britishmilersclub.com](http://www.britishmilersclub.com)**



*The women's 1500m  
at Trafford last season.  
Photo courtesy of  
David Lowes.*

## GRAND PRIX AND OTHER ELITE RACES 2017

See [www.britishmilersclub.com](http://www.britishmilersclub.com) for Entries, Timetables, Seedings, Information and Results

DATE	VENUE	EVENTS	TIME	CONTACT	CONTACT DETAILS	STANDARD
Sat 13 May	Solihull	800/1500/5000/2000sc Men & Women	4.30pm	Paul Hayes	hayespaul43@yahoo.co.uk	Grand Prix
Sat 27 May	Manchester	800 Men	5.30pm	Mike Deegan	07887 781913	Grand Prix
Sat 27 May	Manchester	1500 Men	5.30pm	Jon Wild	07947 157785	Grand Prix
Sat 27 May	Manchester	800/1500 Women	5.30pm	John Davies	07967 651131	Grand Prix
Sat 27 May	Manchester	5000 Men and Women (European junior & U23 trials)	5.30pm	Dave Norman	07868 783818	Grand Prix
Sat 27 May	Manchester	3000sc Men	5.30pm	Dave Norman	07868 783818	Grand Prix
Wed 14 June	Watford	5000 Men	7.30pm	Rupert Waters	rupert.waters@tiscali.co.uk	Elite
Sat 24 Jun	Watford	800/1500/3000/5000 Men	5.30pm	Rupert Waters	rupert.waters@tiscali.co.uk	Grand Prix
Sat 24 Jun	Watford	800/1500/3000 Women	5.30pm	Tim Brennan	timbrennan@britishmilersclub.com	Grand Prix
Sat 8 July	Loughborough	800/1500/5000/3000sc Men & Women	5.30pm	Steve Mosley	029 2241 1440	Grand Prix
Wed 19 July	Eltham	City Mile	8.00pm	David Reader	davidreader@britishmilersclub.com	Special
Wed 16 August	Eltham	Wooderson 800 Men, 800 Challenge Women	7.30pm	David Reader	davidreader@britishmilersclub.com	Special
Sat 19 August	Trafford	800/1500/3000 Men & Women	5.30pm	Steve Green	stevegreen2011@live.co.uk	Grand Prix
Sat 19 August	Trafford	10000 Men & Women (England Championships)	5.30pm	Steve Green	stevegreen2011@live.co.uk	Grand Prix

### GRAND PRIX SERIES ENTRIES

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

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

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

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

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

Entries should be made through online entry

system on our website. Race Entries from paid up BMC members are £5 payable at gate on the day and £15 for non current BMC Members of which £5 (non refundable) is payable when entering.

### PRIZES

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

Best of British - A prize of £200 is available for the fastest British BMC finisher in each Grand Prix event (excluding EA Key Events) who does not win a higher sum in the time related prizes.

For full details of the prizes available see [www.britishmilersclub.com](http://www.britishmilersclub.com)

### PACEMAKERS

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

Those interested should contact Tim Brennan at [timbrennan@britishmilersclub.com](mailto:timbrennan@britishmilersclub.com) or via the BMC website.

### OVERSEAS ATHLETES

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

Contact Tim Brennan at [timbrennan@britishmilersclub.com](mailto:timbrennan@britishmilersclub.com) or enter via the website.

### INTERNATIONAL RACE OPPORTUNITIES

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

### WE EXPECT FROM ATHLETES THAT THEY WILL:-

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

## PB CLASSICS, GOLD STANDARD, ACADEMY AND REGIONAL FIXTURES 2017

All entries should be made on our website [www.britishmilersclub.com](http://www.britishmilersclub.com)

BMC ACADEMY YOUNG ATHLETES PB CLASSICS (Age Groups U13, U15, U17, U20)					
1st May	Millfield	800/1500 M&W 3000 Mixed	5.45pm	Steve Mosley	029 2241 1440
3rd June	Milton Keynes	800/1500/3000/1500sc/2000sc	4.00pm	Jim Bennett	jim.bennett@btinternet.com

**Fastest of U15 & U17 PB Classics to be invited to Frank Horwill & Peter Coe Miles at Oxford 23 July.**  
**RACES FOR YOUNG ATHLETES ARE ALSO INCLUDED IN REGIONAL RACES**

### OTHER BMC RACES

MONTH	DATE	VENUE	EVENTS	TIME	CONTACT	CONTACT DETAILS	STANDARD
APRIL	Sun 23	Alexander Stadium, Birmingham	800/1500	12.15pm	Paul Hayes	hayespaul43@yahoo.co.uk	Regional
	Tue 25	Trafford	800 (7.15pm) & 1500 (8pm)	7.15pm	Steve Green	stevegreen2011@live.co.uk	Gold
	Tue 25	Exeter	800/1500	8.00pm	John Knowles	07850 812229	Regional
	Fri 28	Crownpoint Stadium, Glasgow	10000	tbc	Norrie Hay	Norrie.Hay@glasgowlife.org.uk	Regional
MAY	Weds 3	Watford	800/1500	7.30pm	Rupert Waters	rupert.waters@tiscali.co.uk	Gold
	Mon 8	Chester le Street	800	7.30pm	David Lowes	07930 318651	Regional
	Tue 16	Trafford	800 (7.15pm) & 1500 (8pm)	7.15pm	Steve Green	stevegreen2011@live.co.uk	Gold
	Tue 23	Tipton	800/1500/3000	7.30pm	Paul Hayes	hayespaul43@yahoo.co.uk	Regional
	Wed 24	Eltham	800/1500/5000	7.30pm	David Reader	davidreader@britishmilersclub.com	Regional
	Tue 30	Exeter	800/1500	8.00pm	John Knowles	07850 812229	Regional
	Wed 31	Brighton	800/1500	7.00pm	Paul Collicutt	paul@paulcollicutt.com	Regional
JUNE	Fri 2	Scotstoun Stadium, Glasgow	800, 3000	tbc	Norrie Hay	Norrie.Hay@glasgowlife.org.uk	Regional
	Mon 5	Chester le Street	1500	7.30pm	David Lowes	07930 318651	Regional
	Mon 12	Leeds Beckett University	1500 M&W	6.30pm	Andrew Henderson	A.E.Henderson@leedsbeckett.ac.uk	Regional
	Wed 14	Watford	800 M&W, 1500 M&W, 5000 men only	7.30pm	Rupert Waters	rupert.waters@tiscali.co.uk	Gold
	Mon 19	Chester le Street	800	7.30pm	David Lowes	07930 318651	Regional
	Tue 20	Tipton	800/1500/5000	7.30pm	Paul Hayes	hayespaul43@yahoo.co.uk	Regional
	Wed 21	Eltham	800/1500/5000	7.30pm	David Reader	davidreader@britishmilersclub.com	Regional
	Mon 26	Leeds Beckett University	800/3000	6.30pm	Andrew Henderson	A.E.Henderson@leedsbeckett.ac.uk	Regional
	Tue 27	Trafford	800 (7.15pm) & 1500 (8pm)	7.15pm	Steve Green	stevegreen2011@live.co.uk	Gold
	Tue 27	Exeter	800/1500	8.00pm	John Knowles	07850 812229	Regional
JULY	Mon 3	Chester le Street	1500	7.30pm	David Lowes	07930 318651	Regional
	Wed 12	Watford	800/1500	7.30pm	Rupert Waters	rupert.waters@tiscali.co.uk	Gold
	Tue 18	Tipton	800/Mile/3000	7.30pm	Paul Hayes	hayespaul43@yahoo.co.uk	Regional
	Wed 19	Eltham	800/City Mile/5000	7.30pm	David Reader	davidreader@britishmilersclub.com	Regional
	Tue 25	Trafford	800 (7.15pm) & 1500 (8pm)	7.15pm	Steve Green	stevegreen2011@live.co.uk	Gold
	Tue 25	Exeter	800/1500	8.00pm	John Knowles	07850 812229	Regional
	Fri 28	Scotstoun Stadium, Glasgow	1500, 5000	tbc	Norrie Hay	Norrie.Hay@glasgowlife.org.uk	Regional
	Sat 29	Oxford	600, 1500	tbc	Oliver Paulin	oliver.paulin@merton.ox.ac.uk	Regional
AUGUST	Wed 9	Watford	800/1500	7.30pm	Rupert Waters	rupert.waters@tiscali.co.uk	Gold
	Wed 16	Eltham	800/1500/5000 inc Wooderson 800	7.30pm	David Reader	davidreader@britishmilersclub.com	Regional
	Sat 26	Tipton	800/1500	7.30pm	Paul Hayes	hayespaul43@yahoo.co.uk	Regional
	Tue 29	Trafford	800 (7.15pm) & 1500 (8pm)	7.15pm	Steve Green	stevegreen2011@live.co.uk	Gold
	Tue 29	Exeter	800/1500	8.00pm	John Knowles	07850 812229	Regional

Additional races may be arranged at other venues. Check website for more details  
 Entries - priority will be given to paid up members who have achieved meeting standard  
 Please enter at the latest 7 days before meeting. No entries on the day. (Text entries will not be accepted)

# AW

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# AW

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## SCOTTISH INTERNATIONAL **EMILY DUDGEON** INTRODUCES A MOUTH WATERING MENTORING SCHEME WHICH COULD BE FOR YOU:

Teamwork makes the dream work. The BMC is a team of athletes, coaches and officials all working towards being the best we can be. One of the greatest tragedies in athletics is the thought of each generation of developing athletes making mistakes that their predecessors made. Why not try and learn from each other's experiences to work towards our common goal of raising the standard of distance running in Great Britain? The junior to senior transition is a difficult period for many athletes. It is a period during which you might be starting to think about leaving home, which might mean moving on from your club coach. You might be worrying about how to combine training and racing with work or study. You might be asking yourself how to manage your time, or how to make appropriate snacks and meals for yourself pre and post training. You might struggle to set realistic goals for yourself without the clear stepping stones that age group competition provides. Wouldn't it be great to be able to speak to someone who has been through it already? Someone in your event group, from your region, who understands exactly what it takes? Someone who can offer you, your coach and maybe even your parents the lessons they have learned during their development?

With all that in mind, we are launching a pilot athlete mentoring programme. This will allow female middle distance athletes from u17 to u23 age groups to ask questions directly to 3 senior international

athletes- Lynsey Sharp, Laura Weightman and Alison Leonard. They are all extremely passionate about their role as mentors. 2014 Commonwealth silver and European bronze medallist, Laura Weightman, tells us that, "I think it's important for younger athletes to feel like they have someone they can ask questions no matter how silly they may feel like they are as the chances are I had the same questions when I was the same age." 2012 European 800m champion - Lynsey concurs and discloses that, "I have found it invaluable to gain advice from individuals who have dealt with injuries/the lifestyle and sacrifices needed to fully commit to being an athlete and even simple things such as dealing with travel and being away from home so often. Having been involved in the sport since I was 7, I would love to pass on some of my experience and life lessons to younger athletes to help make their career in the sport as successful and enjoyable as possible." 2016 European 800m semi-finalist, Alison Leonard, shares that, "I know from experience how hard it can sometimes be making the step from promising junior to senior; encouragement and advice from my peers helped keep me in the sport. I'd like to be able to do the same for younger athletes."

We hope to grow this programme so that athletes of all age groups can contact a mentor from their region and event group in the future. This will allow the BMC to take advantage of the collective experience that exists in Britain- a truly under-appreciated resource.

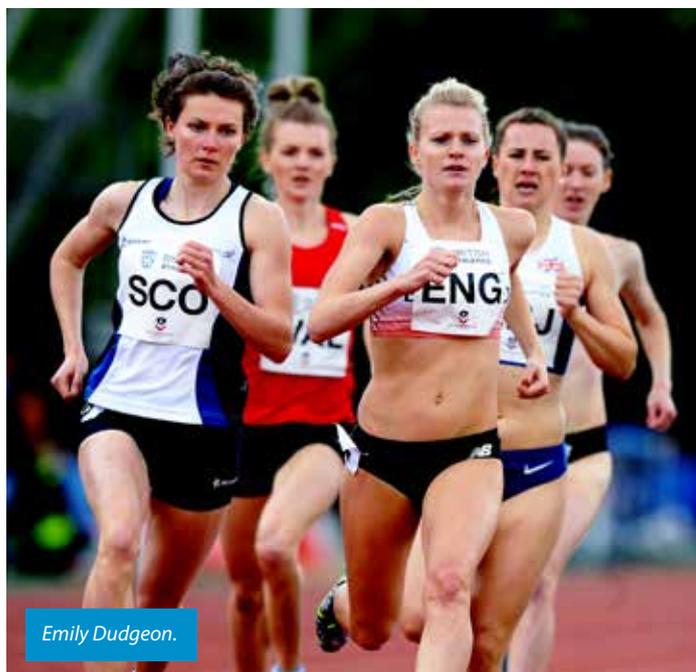


Alison Leonard.

**More details of the scheme and applications can be made through [www.britishmilersclub.com](http://www.britishmilersclub.com). For further information about the scheme contact [mentor@britishmilersclub.com](mailto:mentor@britishmilersclub.com)**



Lynsey Sharp.



Emily Dudgeon.



Laura Weightman.

## STEPHEN GREEN, NORRIE HAYE AND MATT LONG LOOK OVER THEIR SHOULDER AT THE INDOOR SEASON ON THE BOARDS:

### BMC Indoor Meeting, 9th January, EIS Sheffield

James West's 3000m return of 7:58.9, was the pick of an exciting BMC indoor meeting, now established as the curtain raiser for the track season.

Nick Goolab led the pace through 13 laps, whilst Andrew Heyes made a victory bid in the last 300m, taking West with him. The Tonbridge man showed no signs of his exertions 24 hours early in the 1k relay in Edinburgh to overhaul Heyes (who also broke 8 minutes) in the last 10 metres. In addition, Ieuan Thomas and Phil Sesemann also broke new ground a couple of strides adrift, just outside the eight minute barrier.

An eye catching Spencer Thomas sped to a solo 1:50 two lap clocking (1:49.62) ahead of training partner Finley Bigg. Fittingly Sophie Mansfield continued the Brighton winning theme with a 2:10.99 800m win, ahead of Katrina Simpson.

The women's 1500m also proved to be a pulsating affair, with Elinor Kirk bringing her superb 10k road form onto the track. Kirk pulled away from front running Jackie Fairchild and in-form Kate Maltby in the final furlong, to clock an impressive 4:18.31.

Dominic Brown, took a close metric mile win over Stuart Ferguson in the men, breaking the tape just under the 3:50 mark whilst Stephen Morris recorded a new British 800m T20 best in the 800m with a 1:56.67

return in winning his heat.

The BMC are proud to partner with England Athletics with this meeting now in its fifth year. The idea behind setting up the meeting, run by Stephen Green and Tim Egerton, was to give BMC members on the edge of national selection, an early opportunity to run fast. BMC Chairman Tim Brennan, notes that, "This meeting has gathered in popularity year on year since 2012, so much so that many target this as a priority race, the added chance of an England vest enhances the prestige of the meeting."

The following athletes achieved England selection for at least one of indoor internationals in Bratislava and Vienna, based on their Sheffield performances.

800m – Finley Bigg, Sophie Mansfield, Katrina Simpson, Spencer Thomas, Katrina Simpson.

1500m – Dominic Brown, James West, Jackie Fairchild, Ian Crowe-Wright, Phil Sesemann.

In addition Nick Goolab gained selection for the European indoor championships over 3000m, after clocking 7:53.82 in Birmingham. Andrew Heyes was unlucky not to gain a place after recording 7:55.76 in the same race.

### BMC / Glasgow AA Metric Miler Meeting (Inc Scottish 3000m Championships &



The BMC flies the flag on the indoor circuit.

### Glasgow Pole Vault GP), 4th January 2017. Emirates Arena, Glasgow

The Glasgow BMC Miler meet continues to go from strength to strength with entry places available snapped up in just four days. This year's event produced the best indoor performance seen in Scotland for many years. Laura Muir's 5000m run (see our front cover) - with the last 2k essentially a solo time trial was breath taking to watch. The big crowd inside the Emirates Arena were treated to a truly world class display of endurance running. The crowd played their part also roaring their home favourite around the indoor track. The new record time, eclipsing Liz McColgan's National record, of 14.49.12, will surely stand until Laura herself decides to improve it!

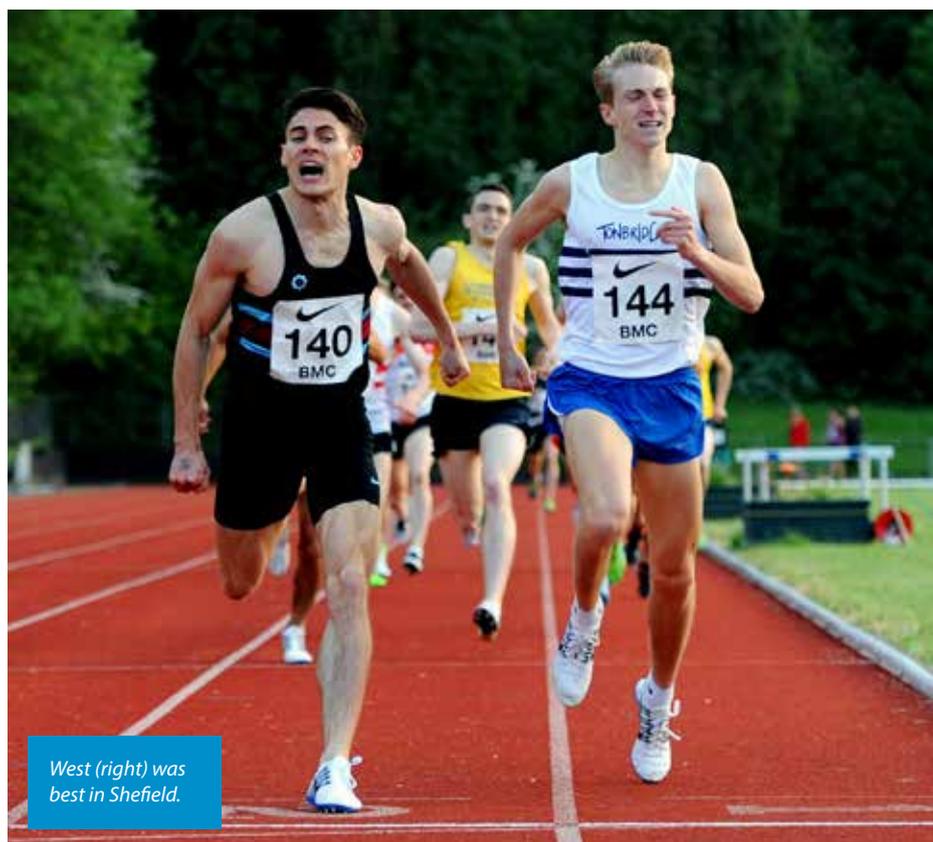
Whilst Laura was the star there were a number of other record breaking performances on the day. Jemma Reekie setting a new Scottish U20 record 3000m record of 9.28.19, with Erin Wallace close behind and also inside the old record. Pleasingly in terms of the diversity engendered by our club, there were also Masters records for Guy Bracken and Fiona Mathieson.

In stepping back and assessing the meeting as a whole, the overall PB count was approaching 70% and coupled with our largest ever spectator attendance the meet added more evidence to the growing strength of Scottish endurance running.

### BMC Lee Valley Open, 1st February. London

Brighton Phoenix's Spencer Thomas (1:49.53) had over a second in arrears over runner up Richard Charles (1:50.59) of Shaftesbury Barnet and St Mary's University, in the Men's 'A' 800m race with his University team mate and Birchfield Harrier, Robert Umeokafor a more distant 3rd.

Craig Winnow coached Adelle Tracey (2:03.58) looked majestic in the women's event run over 4 laps of the boards with Reeve Walcott-Nolan (Luton and St Mary's) grabbing second, with a hard chasing Sophie Mansfield (Brighton Phoenix) clocking a new PB of 2:07.40 in 3rd place.



West (right) was best in Sheffield.

LAST WINTER'S BMC ACADEMY SAW **JENNY MEADOWS** GRILLED BY DIRECTOR **DAVID LOWES** AND A KEEN GROUP OF COURSE ATTENDEES, EAGER TO DRAW LEVEL WITH THE 'POCKET ROCKET' - AS **MATT LONG** REPORTS:

It's the 19th August 2009 and a diminutive 28 year old from Wigan, has just 200 metres and less than 30 seconds to save the day and achieve her life-long ambition of winning a medal on the global stage. She is off the pace- It's looking like a lost cause. For the preceding 600m she has been a somewhat distant spectator in a race which is being wrapped up by South Africa's Caster Semenya around the final bend. Clad in her customary sun glasses and now in her 21st year in the sport, she could have been forgiven for trailing home in 6th place- after all she had already exceeded the expectations of many back home. The athletics press would have had ink and typewriters at the ready to pen another customary 'Plucky Brit just falls short' story for the small print of the back pages. You may have read it and shrugged and muttered something about the glory days of Coe, Ovett and Cram being sorely missed.

As the race enters its final furlong Steve Peter's Chimp is perched on her shoulder and nagging at her as blond locks bounce. The voice in her head reminds her that she has always exited well before the third and final act of any global athletics championships and that her place in this championship final is nothing more than that of making up the proverbial numbers.

Then something happened.....In her own words Jenny Meadows leans forwards to tell an enchanted young audience, "I had like an outer body experience. I looked well up the field and focused on the athlete in 3rd and told myself, 'There's the medal you always wanted and you need to get there.' It was sheer willpower- I believed I could do it. It was like a magnetic force pulling me down the home straight as I picked off people. When I crossed the line I didn't want to celebrate because it was so close between me and the Ukrainian, Yuliya Krevsun, for that medal. In my head I always thought if I ever won a medal it would be so out of character for me to grab a flag and do a lap of honour. When it flashed up on the scoreboard that I had grabbed the bronze believe me all of that went out of the window and I just grabbed the nearest flag and was jumping up and down!" In shoving off Steve Peter's Chimp from her shoulder as the blue Berlin track was fast running out as she made that late surge, this most endearing of athletes had also gotten the monkey off her back.

Fast forward seven years and the BMC Academy athletes are demanding to know what prompted the affectionately dubbed 'Pocket Rocket' to finally hang up her spikes

after the best part of three decades when she was regularly lacing 'em up all over the world. She confesses, "It was mainly age and injuries. I intended to retire after the Glasgow Commonwealth Games in 2014 but thought I'd carry on to the end of an Olympic cycle. You have to remember that I started at age the age of 7". So how does she spend her time now? With a giggle she says, "I am almost going through a rebellious stage! I used to be so regimented. With what happened to me being denied several medals due to those who cheated it's great to be able to turn this into a positive in terms of the exciting work which I'm doing with European Athletics". She quickly adds, "Of course I'm still training- it's a way of life and I have to be fit for my pace making duties on the circuit. I'm also doing some work for modern pentathlon and keeping well busy with a masters degree as well".

David Lowes then casts her mind back to those early days and probes as to exactly how she started out. She remembers vividly, "My mum was a 400m athlete- Club and county standard I guess. It's quite funny because she didn't want me to go to athletics club way back then and since I've never looked back she comes down to watch me at track once a week". Clearly a believer in the ethos of building solid foundations and fundamentals- she recalls that, "I did sprints. I had a go at long jump and throwing too even though I was pretty rubbish at that".

Attention then turns to her relationship with her coach who happens to be her husband too. Trevor Painter is himself a former international sprinter and formidable rugby league player. In wearing two hats does Trevor ever argue with Jenny?! With a chuckle she asserts, "There are never any arguments. On the one hand I am a complete control freak and on the other hand whilst Trevor is very academic, he is actually so laid back. This works really well between us and helps keep me relaxed. In fact back at the world indoors in Doha, I remember stretching and Trevor was standing by me laughing and joking with someone and former Head Coach Charles Van Commenee couldn't understand what was going on. Trevor told him, 'Hey, I'm relaxed and so is she. That's all that counts'".

So what of her illustrious achievements?- coach Lowes is keen to know. With a sigh and more than a hint of nostalgia she acknowledges that the world bronze in Berlin was "My breakthrough moment", in 2009. This being said she alludes to her European bronze (soon to be upgraded to a silver) and recalls that, "This was achieved after weeks of injury in 2010. Physically I wasn't in good shape at all. It was so bad that I had to improvise my warm up due to my Achilles and do it a bit like a footballer with shuttle runs. This being said, mentally I just knew how to run that race. It was what was between the ears that drove me forward. I basically stole that medal. I mean for



*Jenny's service as a Squad Lead Coach at the BMC Academy last winter proved a massive hit. Photo courtesy of David Lowes.*

someone so methodical to miss 7 weeks of training and still do that- from that moment on I realised 'don't talk yourself out of things in the future'."

So now she is busy mentoring a number of athletes and passing on the benefits of her monumental experience, what are her thoughts on long term athlete development? Looking straight into the hearts and souls of some adoring young pretenders in the audience, she asserts, "Hey, you guys should remember that just getting to the English schools is fantastic. People forget the fact that there's lots of people who may win the English schools but don't go on to achieve anything as a senior or are lost to the sport".

One senses that she was keen to avoid overtraining and she confirms that, "I only trained twice a week when young teenager. When I turned 15 I was up to three sessions a week. It's quality rather than volume that counts. Mind you I couldn't qualify for my county team for XC. I thought that my endurance was poor. I could sprint as my backgrounds over 400m showed. I was coached to my strengths and looking back I hardly ever ran 1500s. I guess I wish someone would have pushed me that way a little more".

In terms of assessing the cause and effect link between training and performance, Jenny urges caution, telling David and the audience that, "Remember in athletics you don't always get an instant result. It is not always like revising for an exam. I got the benefit of my hard work in 2008 in 2009 in Berlin- it can take that long".

As she pauses for one moment, there is



Jenny Meadows' interview shades it at Spinkhill.

an impromptu ringing of a mobile phone in the audience, which the embarrassed culprit scrambles to quickly turn onto silent much to the amusement of his peers. Seeing the funny side of this, Jenny seizes the moment to say, "That's a good reminder to be careful of being sucked into social media. Focus on yourself and what you are doing. It's quite sad but one of my friends was only half joking when she said that Power of 10 had ruined her life. The important thing is knowing your journey and just being true to yourself. When you are young it's easy to forget that everyone progresses differently- this can be in terms of body shape, genetics and training load. Remember there should be no hard and fast rule. I think I ran 2m14 when I won the English schools in the mid 1990s. These days there is a girl in our

training group who ran 2m08s when she was my age but it took her another 5 years to improve her PB".

David perceptively notices that for Jenny, the focus would appear to be on cognition as much as it is on physiology. Does she agree? "Yes. Belief is important", she nods. "I used to think 'Why should I win? Why me? Who am I?' I am no different to anyone at this Academy. You simply have to have that hard work ethic and be fortunate to have the support of others. In terms of training, I think consistency is key. I was at my best when I never missed a session".

Given his role as Academy Director plus his being the recipient of our Lifetime Coaching Award (see pages 15-16), David is understandably itching to ask the woman who also bagged European indoor gold and World indoor silver medals, her perception of the value of the BMC. Without hesitation she keenly responds, "The BMC is fantastic. In my first year as an 800m, runner back in 2005, I did all the major grand prix events. They are great for learning how to race. Races are always quick and it really prepared me for other races during the season. I like the idea of mixed races too. My favourites are Stretford and Watford. At the end of my career it's been good to come full circle back to my roots".

Jenny's career may have come full circle but before this piece does we will leave the final furlong to our bidding young Academy athletes – in their own words:

**Jenny and Trevor now deliver workshops and group coaching sessions around the country that draw upon their knowledge and experience. Visit the website [www.jennymeadows.co.uk](http://www.jennymeadows.co.uk) to find out more.**

## QUESTION AND ANSWER

**Q. Have you ever been thrown by anything that's happened to you pre-race?**

**A.** Lol. As an U23 at Bedford. I was warming up for my heat but told it was straight final. I'm embarrassed to say I argued with the officials! I then calmed down and realised everyone was in the same situation. I think I went on to win anyway!

**Q. Have you any strange pre-race habits?**

**A.** Superstitions are a comfort blanket. I'll admit I've taken to using the same toilet cubicle before a final if I've used it before the heat! When you get older you realise you don't need superstitions. But do whatever makes you feel comfortable.

**Q. Who was your biggest rival?**

**A.** At one point in my career there was rivalry between Marilyn Okoro, Jemma Simpson and myself. It's good to have domestic rivalry as it brings you on. One year I think 6 of us got under 2 minutes for 800m. This definitely helped me win

medals on the world stage. Those girls really pushed me to do well internationally.

**Q. What other sports did you try when you were younger?**

**A.** I did a bit of swimming to make sure if I ever I got pushed in a lake I could swim! I remember wanting to dance as a youngster.

**Q. Even stars like yourself have heroes. Who was your inspiration?**

**A.** I've got to say it was amazing to see what Kelly Holmes did at Athens Olympics with the 80m and 1500m double. I took up 800m running that winter.

**Q. What's with the sunglasses?!**

**A.** I got given free glasses as long as I agreed to wear them for races. I ran a PB in them! Do you remember that cartoon character called Banana man and how he transforms after he eats a banana?! When I put the glasses on it's like my version of Banana man. It helps me become the person I want to be".



# The best times are at the BMC

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Friday 27th-Sunday 29th October 2017

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Application forms should state age, personal best times and **MUST** include a **STAMPED ADDRESSED ENVELOPE** to:

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## REGISTRATION & BOOKING FORM Mount St Mary's 27th-29th October 2017

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

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

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Surname: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Post Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Birth/Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Gender: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone/Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Academy Member: Yes No \_\_\_\_\_  
 Membership Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Does your child suffer from any of the following?  
 Asthma  Skin Problems  Diabetes  Epilepsy  
 Fainting  Heart Problems  Migraines  Allergies  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Is your child currently on medication or have any injuries?  
 Yes  No If yes, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you consider your child to have a disability?  
 Yes  No If yes, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your child's Ethnic origin?  
 White  Mixed Race  Asian  Black  Chinese  
 Other

Do you object to photographs of your child being taken for publicity purposes? (NSPCC guidelines)  
 Yes  No  
 Club: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Dietary requirements (please state):  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Please state pb's (for squad allocation):  
 800m \_\_\_\_\_ 1500m \_\_\_\_\_ 3000m \_\_\_\_\_

**For Coaches Only:**  
 What is your current UKA coaching level? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Please enclose photocopy of licence.  
 Do you have a UKA CRB certificate?  Yes  No  
 Please enclose photocopy of certificate.  
 (If no, please contact administrator (contact details above).)

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

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

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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



## GEOFF JAMES WAS OFFERED A FASCINATING INSIGHT INTO NORWEGIAN MILLING THROUGH THE EYES OF 70s STAR **KNUT KVALHEIM**:

I had the pleasure of doing what many in the 1970s would have been unable to - catching up with Norwegian distance legend Knut Kvalheim. This likeable man was a regular fixture at European championships throughout the 1970s and ran against the great Lasse Viren at the 1976 Montreal Olympics, who you may remember I wrote a little about in a previous feature on Finnish miling.

**Geoff: What made you think that Athletics would be your sport at an early age? Lets's not forget you had a brother- Arne- who went to the Mexico Olympics in 1968 and even set a world record in the 4 x 1 mile relay over in America back in the late 60s.**

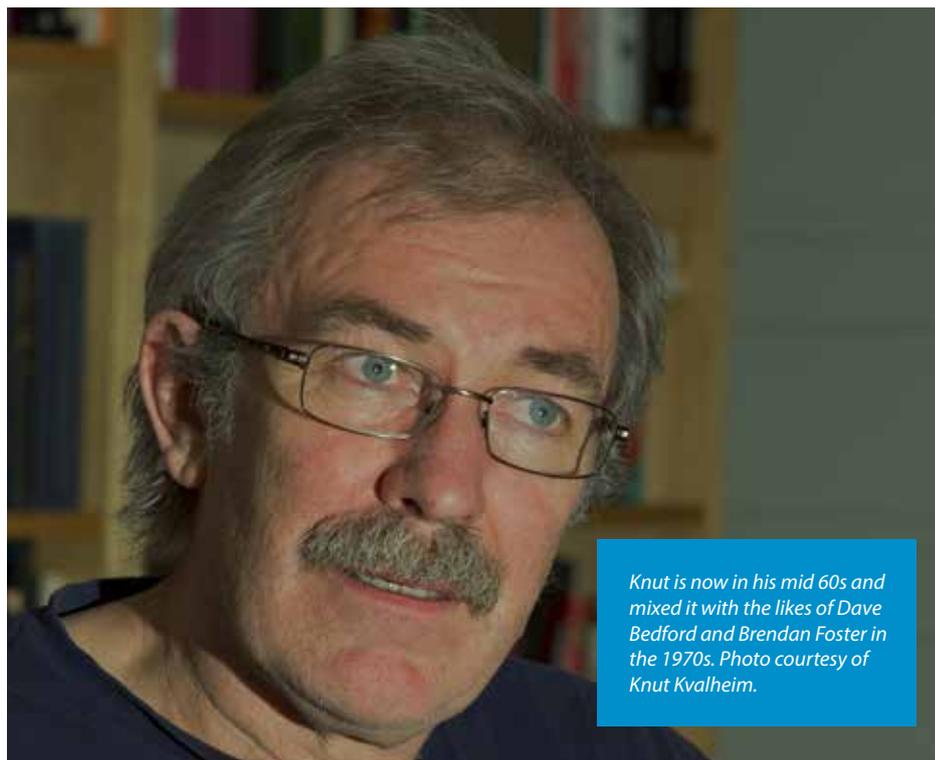
**Knut:** My older brother joined an athletics club when he was 17 years old. I remember I was 12 at the time and joined straight after him. I tried football at the same time, but since I was diagnosed with a heart disorder when I was one and a half and I still was not declared healthy, my mother would not allow that! She believed that in the athletics club I could throw the javelin, high jump or do something less tiresome! I liked athletics from day one, but it was the running I loved. To be honest, the other events which others had suggested, I did not get the same joy out of".

**Geoff: When you started running, which club did you choose, and coach, and why?**

**Knut:** I joined what at the time and ever since has been Norway's best athletics club. - It is named Tjalve after a person from Scandinavian mythology. Legend has it that Tjalve could run faster than the speed of thought! As I just told you, I joined the club because that is where my brother was enrolled. He chose that specific club because of its coach Arne Nytrø who had coached Audun Boysen and was Norway's first scholarly qualified coach of a high level. I joined his group when I was seventeen after I had gone through the age groups in the club.

**Geoff: When did you first feel that you could be a good athlete and why?**

**Knut:** In many ways, the year I was seventeen was a big breakthrough for me. I started the Norwegian season running a modest 2.07 for 800m just running hard intervals all the time. This was in many ways my own idea and I had no one else to blame! Nytrø intervened and put me on



*Knut is now in his mid 60s and mixed it with the likes of Dave Bedford and Brendan Foster in the 1970s. Photo courtesy of Knut Kvalheim.*

a much more balanced program, but with a lot more running. When I look back, my improvement started immediately and I ended up running 1:57 for 800m and 3:57 1500m that same summer. From then on I believed I would be a top runner.

**Geoff: What were your first championship wins and over what distances?**

**Knut:** When I was 18 I became Norwegian junior champion for 1500m beating runners who were two years older than me. This was big for me and something I will never forget.

**Geoff: In the 1970 period Europe had some of the greatest endurance athletes in the world. How did you feel at that time, and did when you think that you could become as great as them?**

**Knut:** The 1970s was my best period as a runner. In 1974 and 1978 I trained for and competed in the European championships and in 1976 it was the same for the Olympics. Whilst I never succeeded making a massive impact in those races, the idea all the way was still to try and become a champion.

**Geoff: Did you meet any of these great European athletes, and who did you set your ideals on?**

**Knut:** I competed against and obviously recall the career of the 4 time Olympic champion Lasse Viren of Finland. I also

have fond memories of the Swede, Aners Garderud, who took the steeplechase gold at the 1976 Montreal Olympics. As far as the Brits were concerned I remember with affection the 10,000m bronze medallist from Montreal - Brendan Foster and also Dave Bedford who of course ran a world record for 10,000 in 1973. In the latter part of my career, I also met and knew the rising star Steve Ovett who went on to win Olympic 800m gold in 1980 in Moscow. His great rival who took the 1500m gold in Moscow- Seb Coe - I had met, but cannot say I knew him.

**Geoff: What do you consider was your greatest performance?**

**Knut:** I ran 7:42 for 3000m back in 1974 and 13: 30 for 5000m and two years later ran 13.20 odd again in the heats of the Olympics in 1976. I still blame Brendan Foster for that! (Foster ran an Olympic record of 13.20.34). In the final, I placed 9th not being able to run up to my best. I have a very good excuse for that like all runners who do not run their best do! Later in my career at the European championships in Prague in 1978 I ran 27.41 and yet again placed 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Geoff: Tell us about when and why you retired from competition?**

**Knut:** I retired in in 78, but kept running for recreational reasons. I had a family and besides work time did not allow serious running any more. After 1980 I did compete some but not at a high level.

**Geoff: Do you still work within the Norwegian sport nowadays?**

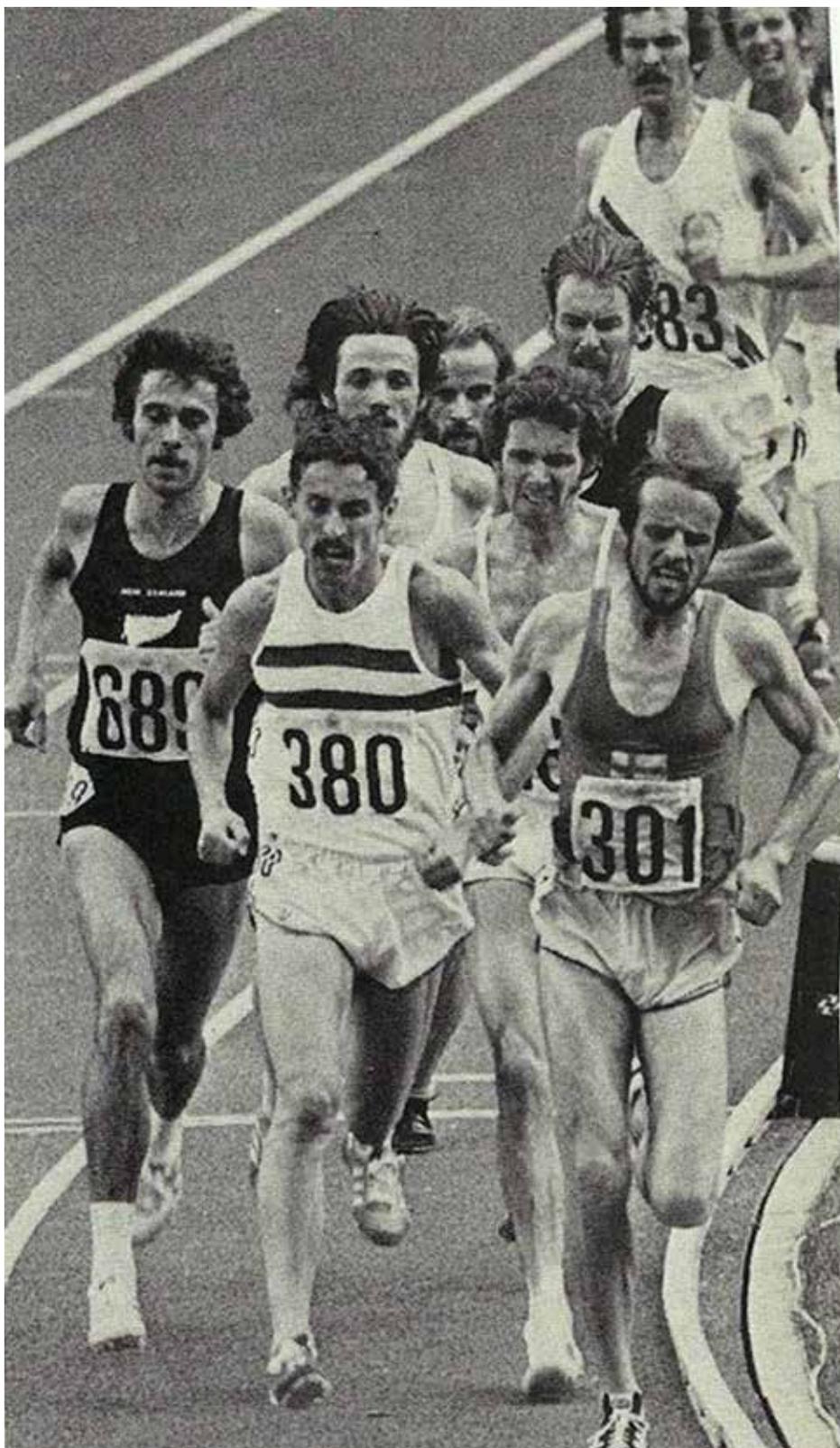
**Knut:** I still work as a coach in my old club. I do have some good runners. Sorre Løken ran 3:38 for 1500m last year and was just 0.4s away from reaching the finals in the European Championships in Amsterdam in 2016. In addition, Asbjørn Pesen got 31st place in the world half marathon championships. I did coach Susanne Wigene from 2003 and through her 30:32 for 10,000 in taking the silver medal at the 2006 European championships in Gothenburg.

**Geoff: We've talked about the past so now let's turn to the present. We are all aware of Henrik Ingebrigtsen who now has a full set of gold, silver and bronze medals from the last three European championships and who holds your national record with 3:31.46. We are also well aware of Henrik's younger brother, Filip, who of course outran Henrik in Amsterdam last summer to bag the European title himself. How do you view the relative strength of Norwegian endurance running going these days?**

**Knut:** That is a very difficult question. Norwegian distance running has not produced any top runners after Susanne Wigene got injured and retired. Now Karoline Bjerkeli Graøvdal is finally starting to live up to her great potential. Her running is the most exciting thing happening in races over 1500m in Norway right now. At the same time the Ingebrigtsen brothers rely heavily on endurance training for their good 1500m running. When more Norwegian 1500m runners realise this, it could develop into distance runners over time. But then Norwegian athletics struggle in the media world we are seeing. It is very difficult for Norwegian athletes to make any money off their running. This makes it hard to commit 100%.

**Geoff: Do you see or hear anything of the British Milers' Club, in Norway, or could the philosophy of the BMC help to improve things, in Norway?**

**Knut:** Sure, we have a version of a Norwegian Milers' Club like you do in Britain. For the last couple of years they have had 4 meets each year. In my view, their work has made a good contribution to the athletics calendar. You have to understand that since Norwegian athletics is much smaller compared to that which exists in Britain, counterpart we have to concentrate and focus each meeting much more.



*Knut is buried in the pack as Lasse Viren begins his surge for another Olympic gold.  
Photo courtesy of Knut Kvalheim.*

**Geoff concludes:**

As I say my goodbyes, I reflect on the fact that it's been more than four decades since Knut mixed it with some of the best athletes in the world. A cursory glance over the 'All Time' lists for Norwegian athletics reveals this 66 year old is still staggeringly ranked at no. 3 for both 3000m and 10,000m and at 5<sup>th</sup> for the 1500m and

5000m. The great Lasse Viren may have beaten him but if you will pardon the pun, back in the 1970s, Mr Kvalheim would have been a tough Knut to crack!

**Geoff James has served as a BMC Academy Squad Lead Coach and has authored several coaching articles for Athletics Weekly magazine.**

## JAMES MAYS IS STILL SETTING THE PACE BUT FINDS TIME FOR A RABBIT WITH **MATT LONG**:

The clock ticks towards midnight on a steamy summers evening in Oslo. It's 27th July 1985 and 13 men are nervously putting the finishing touches to their warm up routines before the annual Dream Mile, customarily held in the Norwegian capital as the cherry on top of the cake which is always a mouth-watering Bislett Games.

Checking his shoe laces that one last time is the 1982 European 5000m champion Thomas Wessinhage of

Germany. Making sure his vest is tucked into on his shorts is the great New Zealander John Walker- the first man to go sub 3:50 for the mile and the 1976 Montreal Olympic 1500m champion. Then there's the hugely talented Steve Scott of America, who took a silver in the inaugural world championships over 1500m in 1983- he is striding out on the balls of his feet that one last time before the field will be called to its marks. Perhaps it's easy to overlook up and coming stars Abdi Bile of Somalia and Jose Luis Gonzalez of Spain, who would go on two years later to take gold and silver respectively over the metric mile at the Rome world championships. The camera then pans to the reigning Olympic 1500m champion and current world record holder Sebastian Coe, who brushes his dark hair back away from his forehead before taking a deep breath in anticipation of the 4 laps of frenzy which are shortly to follow.

It really is a 'who's who' of world miling- possibly the greatest field ever assembled in history for the blue ribbon distance of athletics. But despite the presence of Coe, all eyes turn to two men who exchange a nod and a brief but clearly respectful and affectionate shake of the hand before turning to take their marks that summer evening. One hails from the North Eastern town of Jarrow and wears the number 90 on a distinctive yellow club vest which he would make famous throughout the 1980s and the other is from Dallas, Texas and wears an all-white strip which bears the number 23, along with noticeable matching wrist bands. That man is one James Mays- a world class two lap 800m runner and Team USA regular throughout that decade. On this evening however, he is no rival of Steve Cram- for the man affectionately dubbed 'The Rabbit' is there to help the Jarrow Arrow attempt to wrestle the world mile



*A more relaxed James as he is today. Photo courtesy of James Mays.*

record away from the grip of the aforementioned Seb Coe. I have the privilege of catching up with him some 32 years after he faithfully guided the first 1000 metres of that historic mile race in Oslo.

I start by asking James to share his background in the sport and how he came to track and field. He eagerly tells me, "I have four older brothers, two of them ran the 800 meters. I always wanted to follow in their footsteps.

My oldest brother would set records at my high school- and then my brother after him with new records. When I came along I broke his records!" With pride he mentions that, "My High School record of 1977 still stands". Inspiringly for you younger readers he readily admits that, "I never dreamt that I would to become a world-class athlete. I used to watch Olympic athletes when I was younger, and wonder why would they do such things. How can they put their body through such torture? I could never do that!"

Being the modest kind of guy that he is, I have to press James as to what he regards as his own best career achievement. With a pause and shrug of the shoulders he explains that, "I might start when I won the State High School track meet completing an undefeated season my senior year. Going to college at Texas Tech and becoming the first three-time All-American in school's history, and setting the school 800-meter record which lasted for over 20 years are among my favourite memories. While running for Bud Light we set a world record in the Sprint medley relay, which was broken the next year by Santa Monica with the great Carl Lewis and Johnny Gray. This aside, being a part of several world records, and numerous national records as a pacesetter is a very important milestone in my career. However, I believe my most significant achievement was when I set my 800m personal best in Stockholm – Sweden (1:44.62) in 1984. The world seemed perfect then!"

Whilst Britain was enjoying the golden era of Coe, Ovett and Cram, when James strutted his stuff around the floodlit arenas of Europe, Team USA had its fair share of stars too. With a hint of nostalgia in his eyes, James continues that, "The eighties and nineties were an extraordinary time for 800 metre runners in the US. We had an impressive list of world-class runners during

that era. Among that list were my friends Johnny Gray and Earl Jones. I've raced against both of them on many occasions, with varying results. In the early years of our professional career, just after college, we hovered around the 1:47 range. However, as Johnny and Earl became more serious and perhaps improved training methods, they excelled beyond imagination. Johnny was a naturally built 800 metre runner. His long fluid strides could eat up a track and his competition. His setting the American record did not surprise me". Then with a mischievous grin he continues that, "I refer to Earl Jones as the Mike Tyson of the 800 meters. Not that Earl did anything unsportsmanlike. Quite the opposite - however anytime you were in a race with all you knew you were in for a tough bout. And just as a Mike Tyson punch, Earl would take you out the first lap with a jab (50s), and then uppercut you on the 2nd!"

We both share a laugh before conversation turns to his thoughts on the British Milers' Club ethos of having paced races. We do have our critics, so I want to know if he thinks it's a good idea. Candidly he responds that, "In my opinion, the best runner is going to win the race regardless if there is a pacesetter or not. Perhaps some think that a Pacesetter negates the runner's ability for a strategic race. I believe the same strategies can apply whether there's a pacesetter or not. A pacesetter can bring out the best performance in the runners and that's what the spectators want to see. And no one receives an unfair advantage".

I then press him on his memories of our holy trinity of Coe, Ovett and Cram. With a chuckle he responds, "Here in America we've always heard that the British are known for a stiff upper lip. I found that true with the exception of Steve Ovett. Steve Cram and Sebastian Coe were not very accessible even to the other athletes. It was difficult to chat with them both before and especially after their competitions. I of course was able to talk to them to discuss strategies about the races. I would consult with Seb's father and coach Peter Coe as well. I really enjoyed talking with Peter and Angela- Seb's mother. They would both admonish me about doing too much pacing and not enough racing! Steve Cram and Steve Ovett seemed not to have a care in the world prior to each race. While Cram was always very business-like and not emotional, Ovett always had that trademark smile. In fact when I first met him and his beautiful wife Rachel, it felt like we had known each other for years. Steve had a way of making people feel that

way. And I always heard he supposed to be the mean guy!" His chuckle turns to a full blown laugh as he ends this exchange by stating that, "There are no really funny stories about the big three. Now your double Olympic decathlon champion Daley Thompson?! That's a different story but I'm sworn to secrecy!"

I try sitting on my hands but am itching to ask him to recall that famous night in Oslo where he succeeded in laying the platform for Cram's victory, record and place in miling immortality. Clearly enthused by my question he keenly explains that, "That was a magical night. I felt so focused on the task that was ahead of me. It didn't really sink in that I was in a race with all of the greats. I was just focused on what I had to do. I knew there would be a world record that night - period - but I wasn't sure by whom. All I knew was that Mike Hillardt and I were going to get them there. It was up to me to get started correctly. I was the only person in the race who had to run a specific time. It's all I could think about. I knew that if I was not accurate it might cost someone a world record. I felt a tremendous burden. Nevertheless I told Mike Hillardt what I was going to do and that he needed to stay on me. I spoke to Steve Cram and explained to him what the lap times would be. We had already run a few races prior together. For this reason I believe he had confidence in me. I relayed to all of the runners what the lap times would be. When they look at the video I can hear the incredible noise of the spectators. But I don't remember hearing noise while I was running

the actual race. I believe I was too focused on what I had to do. I don't know if I felt more joy running my own person best in the 800 or seeing Steve set the new world record in the mile that night".

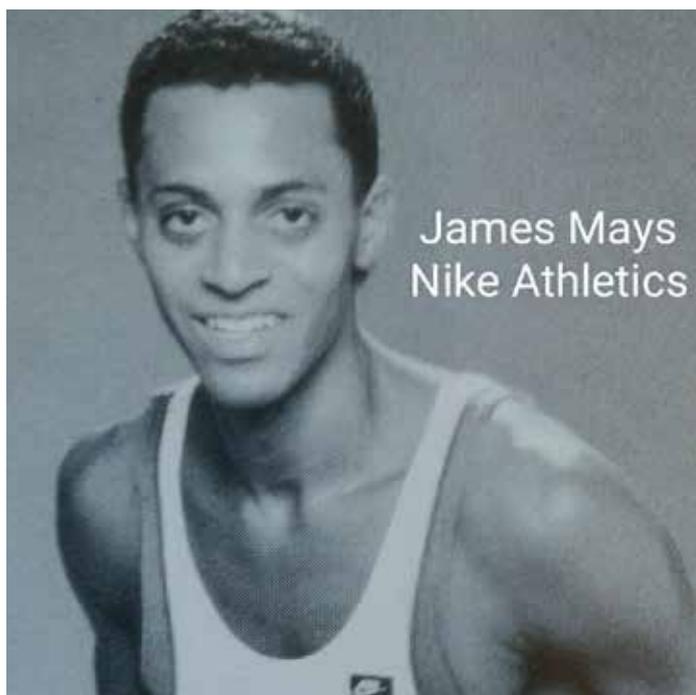
I sense we could both chat about the past forever but life moves on as they say and I'm curious to know what James is up to nowadays. A clearly well-educated man who has a masters degree from Texas Tech University, James discloses that. "I have a teaching certificate and I work in Dallas. I have a passion for teaching kids. I've taught high school and University, but my favourite age group is 4th through to 6th grade. I've been fortunate enough to teach in several different schools. In some schools my students or brought in chauffeur-driven limousines. I remember one 12 year old asking me to hold his watch for him in gym class. I looked at it and saw it was a Rolex! I've been at other schools where students struggle to meet the bare necessities of life. My faith has me to believe that what we do for the least of these, we also do for Christ. And only what we do for Christ will last".

I am aware that pleasingly, a man of his ability and obvious intellect is still involved in our sport but I want the finer details from him. He shares that he still gets a buzz from aged graded competition, continuing that, "I'm currently training for the upcoming summer track season (age group). When I was at University there was an elderly doctor who trained on the track with us. I say elderly then but he's about my age now. I remember admiring him and hoping that I

could do at his age what he was doing back then. I'm basically running on memory, not stamina, lol. I've also done volunteer work with the YMCA in Dallas".

So having dealt with matters both past and present, we end our conversation with a look to the future of American middle distance running. I don't feel disrespectful by mentioning that for many, Matt Centrowitz's Olympic 1500m gold in Rio for Team USA, was quite a shock. I sense James was less taken aback by it as he counters that, "I was happy for Matt Centrowitz and all of the upcoming middle distance runners in the US. They keep getting better. I was around when Matt's father ran. So I know the type of lineage he has. There seems to be a resurgence in the US middle distance. They are bold, brash, and seem unintimidated".

On that note we have come full circle- Coe, Ovett and Cram on our side of the Atlantic and the likes of Gray, Jones and Mays in America- all seemed similarly bold, brash and unintimidated three decades ago. Those privileged to witness these men strut their stuff on the running tracks of Europe when they were in their pomp in the 1980s may feel it's unlikely that history will ever repeat itself but you never know. So go back in time on YouTube and enjoy this golden era and as you are watching never forget that none of this would have been possible without the diligent contribution of an unassuming man who hails from Hereford, Dallas - it's truly inspirational to enjoy a natter with the man forever affectionately dubbed as 'The Rabbit'.



*James sports a Cram collection style vest, given to him by Steve shortly before a world record attempt. Photo courtesy of James Mays.*



*Pace making prowess led to the affectionate nickname of 'The Rabbit'. Photo courtesy of James Mays.*

## NATIONAL COACH MENTOR FOR YOUTH ENDURANCE, **CHARLOTTE FISHER**, UNPICKS THE COACHING PHILOSOPHY OF **JOANNE DAY**:

Last summer in Tbilisi, Georgia, I had the privilege of witnessing BMC Young Athlete of the year George Mills in action and so it was a great pleasure to recently get to interview his coach Joanne Day and learn more about the coaching philosophy and set up behind George's success. Jo likes to hide her light under a bushel and let her athletes do the talking and so persuading her to be interviewed in the first place took a bit of work, but she was open and generous about her approach.

Jo's journey into coaching is typical of many. She started about 6 years ago, when her daughter started at the local club and as an ex athlete herself of regional standard quickly found herself helping out. In a relatively short period of time she has developed a strong group of young athletes in Harrogate and guided one of her charges, George Mills, to a European Youth gold in 2016.

### Philosophy

Jo cited strong values of both discipline and fun and also longevity. In an age when we are attracting less people into the sport and competing with many more sports for the competitive athlete and when the drop out of teenage girls in particular is as high as ever Jo's approach seems essential if our sport is to continue to thrive. With insight she tells me, "I always say to my athletes don't judge on what someone else is doing, you are all developing at different stages. It's not about now, but about when you are all developed and you are still in the sport, without injury and enjoying it. Are they in it to the end rather than in it for a short while? And if I can help any kid whatever their potential, to come out of school and be disciplined about exercise, diet, and so on and see those habits go into adulthood I'm happy. And if they've learnt that discipline from a club or a coach then I think that's great."

### Training Environment & Structure

Club sessions take place on Mondays, Wednesdays and Sundays. Monday and Wednesdays are generally intervals and Sunday a longer sessions or hills, with easy and tempo running in between. Some of the training is done on grass, with the nearest track at Leeds Met University. Significantly, in the run up to Tbilisi George only went on the track once a week after Christmas. Jo believes there have been many advantages of not



*Cool Runnings. Joanne relaxes with some of the squad. Photo courtesy of Jo Day.*

having a track on their doorstep. She cites very few injury occurrences within the group, finds she can be more creative off track in terms of structuring sessions that meet both the needs of George and also the younger athletes in the group and believes it prevents her athletes getting too fixated on times too early in the year. She warns that, "Too many athletes focus on their target time for the summer rather than just aiming to progress a little each month through the winter towards that."

### Physical Preparation & Drills

With no track facility in Harrogate, the club invest heavily in the use of an indoor space and physical preparation is something the club are big on. For the likes of George, this includes one gym session of progressive plyometrics and circuit training. The club use a gymnastic type facility with soft flooring where they can hop and bound safely and for the more advanced athletes like George, do box work. Jo emphasizes that, "Drills are run whatever session they are doing, whether its freezing rain, on the grass, we do drills, always." 20-25 minutes is dedicated to drills before each session, so quality movement patterns are always being reinforced. Jo uses video on a regular basis to enable the athletes to watch themselves back. Additionally, when George does his physiology treadmill tests Jo uses the time to video his foot plant.

### Planning & Peaking

Going into last autumn/winter, coach and athlete discussed the pros and cons of a cross-country season or going indoors. Jo feels that George would be well suited to running indoors, but both coach and athlete had decided this year to focusing on building strength on the country. And as well as the physical benefits of running cross-country, Jo believes that athletes benefit from the camaraderie, club and team element are a welcome psychological break from the intensity of track competition during the winter. Planning is paramount. "If it's not in the plan then there needs to be a very good reason for changing your mind mid-way through the year," Jo adds.

In 2015, George competed at both the English Schools which he won and at the Commonwealth Youth Games in Samoa, in his first international where he finished fifth in the final. With the two competitions being two months apart this was a big challenge for Jo who says she learnt a lot about trying to get a young athlete to peak. Clearly the lessons that athlete and coach learned paid dividends in Tbilisi where George went through the rounds in an almost clinically perfect fashion. Jo discloses that, "We had to make sure he was fit and conditioned to go through the rounds and cope with the heat. And we extended our speed endurance sessions to suit the racing plan".

Jo also referenced George's run at the

U20 England Championships at Bedford in June as an important race in terms of learning and motivation. Having made a mistake down the back straight on the second lap Jo made George watch that video of the race over and over. When it came to the final in Tbilisi both coach and athlete had clearly studied the rounds and the opposition and come the final, George was tasked with getting out faster than he had done before and controlling the race from the front in David Rudisha style, which he did with aplomb!

### Young Athletes – Volume

With George progressing from 25 miles a week- 6<sup>th</sup> in the English schools aged 15/16 years - to a current maximum of 38-40 miles a week, it's evident where Jo stands on the quantity versus quality debate which coaches have argued about for time immemorial. As an advocate of lower volumes, she leans towards quality over quantity and believes in emphasizing good movement patterns. She explains that, "Speed and quality over volume in developing a youth should always predominate until the athlete reaches senior status. It's the recovery that comes down and the pace of the reps that I believe in, not the amount of volume in terms of miles. With regards to the reps sessions - we don't add another one on, two on, three on- we tend to run faster and bring the recovery down."

She retains the conviction that, "We are always in touch with speed", before explaining that the group might go from mile reps one session to 200s the next, not every week, but regularly throughout the winter, to see where they are at. She also cited some of Peter Coe's work as being a source of learning with the group training at a variety of paces throughout the year.

### On Talent

With rising emotion, Jo tells me that, "I get so cross when parents come up to me and tell me that so and so is a real talent, when they are at such a young age. If X who is winning races at under 13 is doing 5 hard sessions a week is beating Y who is doing one quality session a week, that's not talent, that's training! And where do you go with that when they get to under 17 level and the performances plateau?" This being said, as a parent herself, Jo was also quick to defend parents recognizing the important role they play ferrying athletes to and from training. She readily acknowledges that, "Parents are highly underrated for the support of the athletes."

### Coaching: an art or a science?



Joanne is part of the furniture at Harrogate Harriers and AC. Photo courtesy of Jo Day.

During our interview, Jo uses the words 'intuition' and 'creativity' on a number of occasions. I am interested to know more about what sort of coach she sees herself as. Whilst she admits to finding some aspects of the science of the sport a bit mind-boggling she feels it was important to really understand the physiology her athletes as well as their personality. She speaks a lot about watching and observing and getting to know the character of her athletes. Maybe what Jo refers to as 'intuition' could also be described as quality observational skills along with emotional intelligence. In her own words she explains that, "I watch and observe and try and put it together. I pride myself on knowing their capabilities whether they are in shape to do x or y or whether we should back off or if can do more." It's clear that this focus on intuition is something she also encourages in her athletes. "When it comes to running fast and hard I take control of that (the timekeeping) and he (George) does the running. I want him to be intuitive and to know how it feels to run at certain paces without a watch." She warns that, "There is no wonder science out there, know the athlete, know what they are capable of and plan from there re-adjusting sessions to the plan as improvement is made".

### Always learning

It is clear that Jo's philosophy of coaching draws on a variety of sources. She explains that, "I moved around a bit as a kid and trained with a lot of different groups and from that experience and all sorts of different coaches' views, I feel like I've taken a little bit from every coach I've been in contact with". As well as this, she references George as her

biggest source of learning and like many developing coaches who find themselves working with an athlete of his caliber, the journey can be quickly accelerated. She candidly admits that, "At times I've felt under pressure working with George. He's so focused. I'll never forget the look on George's face when he finished 6<sup>th</sup> at the English Schools in 2014. Although I knew that was a good result for him at the stage of his maturity, he was NOT happy she says and I realized that together we were going to have to up our game. He had to win the following year and if he hadn't my life wouldn't have been worth living!"

She is clearly a fan of the role that our club can play in terms of coach education development and points out that, "Aside from my accelerated learning with George and reading materials - the next best thing that has helped me with my coaching journey is definitely networking with groups of coaches and taking on board what they do, BMC conference networking and reading have helped. The BMC Academy weekends run by David Lowes and having the opportunity to ask star guest Jenny Meadows questions was fantastic".

So what of her future development? With typical modesty she tells that, "As long as I can keep learning and stay engaged and help athletes progress to where they want to be and let that athlete move on if and when they want to then I'm happy with that."

Does she have one word of advice for you coaches out there? She ends her exchange by emphasizing that, "What I have learnt from working with an athlete like George is there is no room for error, if you are not prepared, not done your homework, not conditioned, then there is no excuse".

## 2016 BMC COACH OF THE YEAR **JON BIGG** OFFERS A LARGER THAN LIFE PERSPECTIVE TO **SIMON TAYLOR:**

To say Jon Bigg has learned his trade from some of the biggest names in the sport is something of an understatement. From his early days as a wet-behind-the-ears teenager in Brighton, through some glittering Olympic and World Championship highlights alongside his wife, the much loved 400m hurdler Sally Gunnell, to the present day, when he oversees the development of some of the most promising middle-distance talent the UK- Jon Bigg has seen it all. Presently working with the likes of Charlie Grice (featured on pages 17-18), European indoor 800m silver medallist Shelayna Oskan-Clarke, Robbie Fitzgibbon and his own son Finley, Jon's experiences have been notable for the quality of the people who have influenced him at various points along the way.

A highly talented middle-distance runner himself, with an 800m personal best of 1:48.40 set when he was just 18, John's own running career came to a juddering halt the day a rival's spikes accidentally raked down his Achilles tendon during the Emsley Carr Mile. "I was 21 or 22 when that happened," he recalls, wincing at the memory. "It was at Corby, I believe, and the race slowed up after about 600m and someone just trod on my Achilles tendon and ripped it open. I never really got back from that, but to be honest, my best years were when I was 18 or 19. That's when I got all my internationals and managed to get on the England tour to Australia, where I met Sally."

And the rest, as they say, is history, as the pair embarked on a glittering partnership that saw Sally clinch the complete set of Commonwealth, European, World and Olympic gold medals over 400m hurdles,

along with a stunning world record of 52.74s. In reflecting on how his injury closed one door but opened many more, Jon says philosophically, "I always think things happen for a reason and I don't think Sally and I could have achieved the things we did together if we were both trying to be full-time athletes".

Sally's coach at the time was the late and much respected Bruce Longden. Jon is keen to acknowledge that he picked up many coaching nuances at the time from Longden that he still uses, particularly in terms of strategic planning. This being said it is one of the all-time great middle-distance coaches who perhaps did most to help form the philosophy that underpins a huge amount of his thinking today. "I had the absolute privilege of being brought up in Steve Overtt's training group," he recalls wistfully, "and therefore I watched Harry Wilson come down and work with Steve and Matt Paterson, who was my coach at the time, so I was able to experience first-hand what that coaching was like."

Jon's was the ultimate apprenticeship, training regularly with world 1500m and mile record holder, Overtt, throughout his glittering heyday, and he got to see close-up the type of work that took Brighton's favourite son to the top step of the Olympic podium over 800m in Moscow back in 1980. "They were great days, absolutely great days," he recalls, with more than a hint of nostalgia, shortly after supervising a squad S&C session in the converted Threshing barn on the 12-acre grounds of the Sussex farmhouse he shares with Sally and their three boys.

"When you've got an athlete with such an

amazing talent as Steve Overtt had, you can see how they start to add huge volumes into their training. It's a bit like Mo Farah really. I think people think what Mo does is because he is hugely talented, but that is only part of it. The fact is he can handle the volume, and Steve Overtt could handle the volume, year on year and that is what allows them to be so good. It's consistency that unlocks everything- that's the Golden Rule."

Following a ten-year hiatus after the end of Sally's career in 1997, Jon was coaxed back into the sport after Steve Cram suggested to the then Brighton-based 400m runner, Tim Bayley, he seek his help with the prospect of moving up to 800m. "Tim came over for a chat, and immediately it felt like coming home, if I'm honest with you," he remembers before adding, "it was a lovely warm feeling from the very first session and it got me really inspired. As an athlete Bayley duly won the UK U-23 800m title and as a coach, Jon has hardly looked back since, other than to draw on the wisdom of the myriad luminaries he has met along the way.

He is again keen to acknowledge that his own coaching philosophy has developed, and continues to develop as a result of those encounters, and he subscribes to the adage that you never stop learning, a process made somewhat easier by his part-time role as a development coach with UKA. "I don't think you can afford to stop learning," he urges you coaches. Significantly he is clearly a fan of developing the kind of foundational and fundamental movement patterns which are necessary for endurance event group success and believes there is much to learn by thinking outside the proverbial 'box' on this score. He continues that, "I've had the complete luxury of being able to drop in and see other people's groups, and even other disciplines. For me, as a middle-distance coach it's vital to understand speed, so I've spend a lot of time with sprint groups and coaches like Dan Pfaff which is where a lot of the Strength and Conditioning stuff I do came from."

In further elaborating on his own philosophy of coaching, one cannot help but think that the late, great Harry Wilson would be smiling down on him as he stresses that, "I believe in speed - I don't think you can ever be far away from speed and whether you're a 10k runner or an 800m runner, I really think you need to tap into pace. Keep them (the athletes) near to speed so speed is never a shock to the system, and you try to build the volumes as you go along. Speed ultimately is the determinant



*Jon Bigg proudly shows off his 2016 BMC Coach of the Year Trophy. Photo courtesy of Matt Long.*

of how fast you can go” he adds, before laughing, “but I do believe in mileage as well though”:

A third pillar of his coaching practice and an increasingly significant one, is altitude training. He discloses, “I’m a great believer in altitude. I think it’s interesting that although a lot of coaches are still not sure about it, we’re getting a bigger buy-in now, and people are giving it a bit more time”. He urges both caution and patience in that, “The temptation with altitude is to try it once and if you don’t get a good experience, come to the conclusion it doesn’t work for that athlete, which I don’t think is the case. It’s very likely on your first couple of go’s you don’t get a huge response, but it’s about building an altitude plan, like you would a long-term development plan for an athlete, getting them very good at dropping in and coming out of it. That’s part of the skill.”

Ever keen to credit others with his development and ultimately success in receiving our coveted Coach of the Year Award, Jon is hugely complementary when it comes to the work UK Head of Endurance, Dr. Barry Fudge, has done in this field. He states categorically, “I don’t think there are many people in the world who know as much as Barry about altitude training, and that’s something I think most coaches need to get a grasp of – he’s very open with it.”

Having explored matters both past and present, we look to the future. We can’t ignore the prospect of the home World Championships fast approaching in a couple of months. With the prospect of a return to the London 2012 Olympic stadium, Jon’s squad is entering a crucial phase of its preparations. With enthusiasm he adds that, “I get very excited at this time of year about the potential. Starting to tap into all the work that has been done. It’s a little bit like being a farmer; you’ve filled up that barn and you’re going to start to see how good the quality of the produce is in the following weeks.”

Preparing for the summer is where the legacy of the aforementioned Bruce Longden becomes apparent. “Bruce was so skilful at getting Sally to her peak condition for a championship race. I am spending a lot of time at this time of year thinking about this stuff, and you start thinking what is the right sequence of buttons to be pressed that will deliver the athletes at the championships in the best shape, knowing you’ve got to get them qualified first, which is also not an easy task.”

The above sentiments are where the BMC enters the equation. Our races play a major role in helping Jon’s athletes achieve the kind of race sharpness and fast times they need to be competitive on the national or

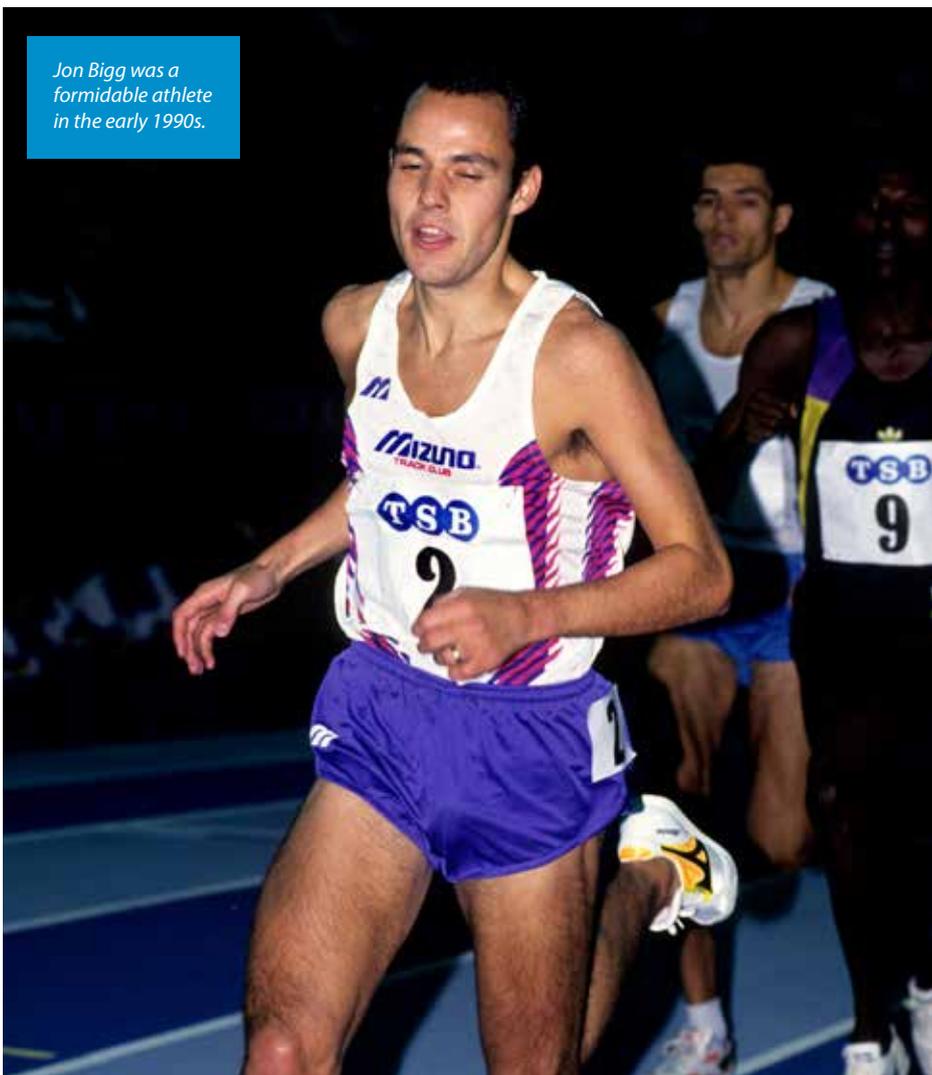
international stage. Clearly a fan of the BMC, he asserts that, “Our club, Brighton Phoenix, was set up very much around what the BMC was doing. Steve Ovett and Matt Paterson realised BMC racing could form the platform for a club that didn’t need to be in a league where the pressure was on the athlete to umpteen events- events they weren’t conditioned to do. BMC events formed the race plan for the season, really, through to the National Championships, and it remains fundamental to what we do.” He also sees BMC meetings as another chance for cross-pollination of ideas with other coaches. He adds, “I love going there and chatting to the likes of Mark Hookway and all the other coaches I haven’t seen for a while because you get a good chance to go and pick someone’s brains, particularly if an athlete has just started to run well.”

Rather than boasting about the exploits of how own training group, Jon is keen to offer closure to our illuminating chat by waxing lyrical about the long-term prospects of British middle-distance running. Clearly animated he tells me, “I think we’re in about as good a place as we’ve been for 20-odd years. I actually think the next medals are coming from middle-distance, if you

include the 5000m. A lot of the athletes on potential medal pathways are not in the 10k or the marathon, they’re sitting around the middle-distances”. Warming to his theme, he understandably lauds the progress of double European Indoor Champion, Laura Muir (Featured on pages 19-20). “She’s a huge talent. If they get it right in this next two years she could be an absolute world beater, a world record holder. She could be what Coe and Ovett were. I’ve been lucky enough to be on camps with her and see her train and chat to her coach Andy Young, and it’s a rich time to have athletes like that. Andy is a really open coach.”

High praise indeed, from a man who knows from personal experience what it takes to scale such heights. As I say my goodbyes to our award winning coach it strikes me that should Charlie Grice, Shelayna Oskan-Clarke, Robbie Fitzgibbon, Spencer Thomas, or indeed Finley Bigg do go on, like Muir, to achieve international honours this summer, they won’t just have their coach and mentor Jon Bigg to thank, but a whole host of other influences who have all helped shape the way they’ve trained from the depths of winter to the balmy yet high-intensity days of summer.

*Jon Bigg was a formidable athlete in the early 1990s.*



## 'SQUARE PEG – SQUARE HOLE': JOHN SKEVINGTON ASSESSES WHAT IS NEEDED TO MATCH THE RIGHT 800m TRAINING TO THE RIGHT ATHLETE:

We have all heard of not being able to fit a square peg into a round hole. My aim here is to discuss how correctly matching specific training to an individual 800m athlete will ensure a perfect fit - a square peg in a square hole! With its mix of anaerobic and aerobic requirements there can be no other track event which attracts athletes from different backgrounds more than the 800m. However, for many coaches the thought process is that the event favours just those with the capacity for higher training volumes. In this article, I am challenging this notion by focussing on athletes who have a predominance of Type 2 muscle fibres, and so have greater strength at shorter distances which can be transferred very effectively to 800m.

As coaches, we adapt training to individual needs and strengths. We examine what is working for one athlete and what is not working quite so well for another. To do this we look at the strengths of each athlete and adapt their current and long-term training model accordingly.

With its differing demands on both lactate, aerobic and ATP-CP energy systems, we might expect that athletes with higher endurance over long sprints would prevail over two laps. However, in my experience this is not always the case and there are different methods of coaching 800m for different types of athlete which are effective.

The key to unlocking the potential of each athlete is to apply the correct training rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. It is the core principle of athlete-centred training.

### Types

Over time, I have come to the conclusion that 800m runners generally fall into three main categories (although there will always be exceptions):

1. The 400m/800m runner who will have a comparatively quick 300m/400m time, a good 800m time and a rather poorer 1500m time. An example of this type of athlete include 1976 Montreal Olympic 400m and 800m champion, Alberto Juantorena of Cuba.
2. The "specialist" 800m runner who will have good 400m and 1500m times, but whose optimum time will be at 800m. 2010 European 800m silver medallist, Michael Rimmer, would be an example here.
3. The endurance athlete who has good 800m/1500m times, but whose 300m/400m times are comparatively weak. British and European mile record holder Steve Cram, would fit into this typology.

### The right training focus

It is, therefore, important that we, as coaches, identify these different types and

adapt training to bring out the best in them, and reduce the risk of injury and possible drop-out.

In this article, I am focusing on the first type of athlete in the list above, who will be strongest over shorter distances but will have times over 1500m or longer that do not equate to their short-distance personal bests. I have made the assumption that the athlete is not lacking a basic endurance base which is preventing their progression at longer distances.

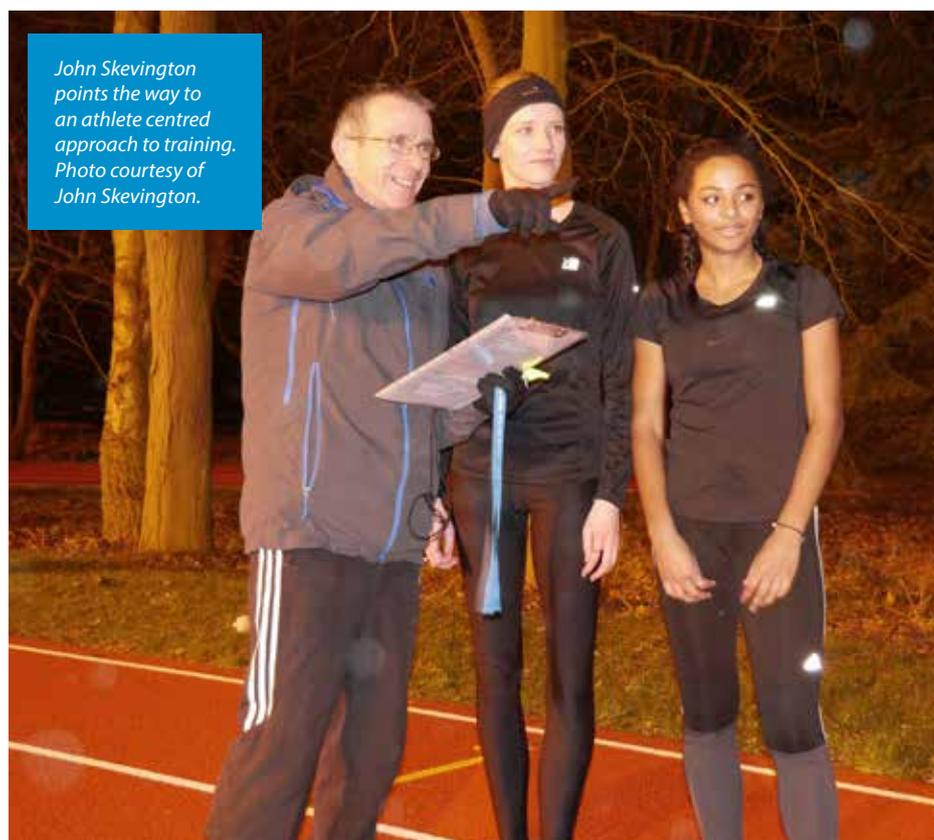
Many coaches faced with the dilemma of a disparity between short and longer distance times will address the shortfall by increasing the endurance base; for example, by scheduling longer reps and longer runs. On the face of it, this seems the logical path to take. However, this approach is likely to be detrimental to the development of the athlete. It will increase the risk of injury and drop-out because it is not aligned to the athlete's strengths and physical make-up. Finding the square-hole training programme to fit the square-peg athlete is the key to success.

### Less is not more

What I am not advocating here is taking the "less is more" pathway, but rather the "more of the right thing" route, where training volumes are geared towards the strengths of the individual athlete.

So what is the right thing for our athlete who has a tendency towards higher speeds at shorter distances? First of all a good endurance base must be created and maintained. This may sound as though I am contradicting myself. However, the way we go about this will differ from the approach taken with an endurance athlete. The programme of the latter will probably include runs of around 90 minutes or longer, which will incorporate faster work. This regime, however, will not benefit an athlete who is stronger over shorter distances, as it will induce fatigue with no discernible benefit in fitness. In my experience, the long run for this type of athlete should be of no longer than 45 minutes and should be viewed more as a recuperative run than a specific session.

It is because of its aerobic demands, that endurance training must form part of any programme focussed on the 800m. This may be in the form of a tempo run. The 800m/1500m runner tends to respond favourably to this type of training, while the shorter distance specialist may be less likely to do so. In such cases, sessions can



John Skevington points the way to an athlete centred approach to training. Photo courtesy of John Skevington.

be adapted accordingly. A good example of how to adapt this type of training for our shorter distance specialist is to make tempo runs quicker and shorter - to a maximum of 20 minutes. It may be even more beneficial to break them down to 4x5 minutes. This approach will develop VO2 max, and the pace of these intervals will be faster and more like the pace of the 800m. In my opinion, "medium paced" training runs are unlikely to benefit the shorter distance specialist. They are too fast for a recovery run and too slow to benefit this type of athlete in preparing for an 800m race. Endurance work can be built into the athlete's long-term programme utilising shorter sessions; for example, 1k runs at 5k or 10k pace, with varying recoveries depending on the stage of training. The coach can then further tailor the sessions as the athlete adapts to the training demands.

### Intervals

During the "building base" phase of training, usually during the winter, the quicker athlete may be tempted to run all reps at full speed. However, it would be prudent for coaches to advise that intervals should be tempered. Flat-out reps should be encouraged gradually, for example by choosing one interval (with no warning to the athlete which it will be of course!) that should be run at 100%. This also introduces changes

of pace which will be an important part of preparation as the building period develops. It is especially important with our shorter distance specialist runner that intervals should be executed in a controlled fashion. Increased speed should be a product of increased fitness, rather than pushing the pace too early which may contribute to excessive fatigue and may lead to missed training.

As the key aims of these early sessions are to build endurance and VO2 max, it can be particularly beneficial at this stage of the season to advise the athlete to run marginally negative splits. It is far more beneficial for them to leave the track feeling that they could have done a couple more intervals rather than crawling off and needing an extra day of recovery. It goes without saying, of course, that other complementary areas of training, for example strength/core and plyometric work, should be built into the overall programme.

Moving on from the "building base" phase, the training programme should progress gradually towards the competition period where intervals will be often be run at around race pace, or quicker. We must continue to bear in mind that the shorter distance specialist will require a different programme to the endurance athlete and may need extra rest periods following hard sessions. It is also important to maintain a good mixture of training. To accommodate

this approach it may be advisable to move to a 9-12 day training cycle rather than a 7-day session plan. Doing so will ensure that the programme for our shorter distance specialist covers all the components that are part of the overall package towards achieving their fastest 800m.

### Some questions for self-reflection

- What type of 800m runner am I or is my athlete in accordance with the three-fold typology expressed above?
- How is my training frequency, intensity and duration, appropriately geared towards the type of athlete I am or I am working with as a coach?
- What am I or is my athlete trying to develop at each specific phase of the periodisation cycle in terms of aiming to compete well over 800m?

In conclusion, we all understand that athlete-centred coaching is the key to success, and that means that the next time our 800m group heads for the track it may be that more analysis is needed to ensure we are not trying to squash square pegs into round holes.

**England Athletics National Coach Development Programme (Endurance) mentee, John Skevington, has played a leading role in co-ordinating the Leicestershire Running and Athletics Network. See [www.Iran.org.uk](http://www.Iran.org.uk)**



*Athlete centred 800m training may have given one of these athletes the edge over two laps at Watford last summer.*

## CHRIS MULVANEY ENCOURAGES YOU ATHLETES TO **SPRING TO SPEED:**

### Introduction

With the summer track season imminent it is time to start progressing your training and translating that strength base into high velocity work. This can bring the paradox of strength training and progressing exercises in a logical yet athlete-centred manner. Therefore the aim of this article is to explain how to progress through this key part of the season. Firstly I feel it is important to remember a couple of factors when considering your gym sessions:

1. Running performance is the end result and therefore performance on the track is the dependent variable. An athlete's improvement in the gym may not be the cause for any improved running, so keep the testing variables purely run-related. This is because whereas a stronger athlete does mean a greater capacity to work, the elements of proprioception, co-ordination or even self-confidence may be the factor that sees you improve.
2. Exercise selection can make the programme more effective and should conform to two factors in: Does it follow on from the previous stage and move closer towards running specific mechanics? Secondly, is it an exercise you can effectively perform? Could your coach cue the relevant coaching points and rationale?

As we run at higher speeds, we exert greater ground forces and our muscle fibres contract faster and with greater overall force production. Because of this alone it is vital we have a background in proactive injury prevention and resistance training, in order to model the soft tissues in the lower limb and pelvis to deal with this. Assuming this is the case and the athlete has been building up this work capacity, working on strength, balance, joint stability and muscular conditioning then we can now look forward to the specific preparation phase. I will focus on the lower limb, though you should use core stability and other exercises to improve upper body strength and coordination. Below in table 1 is how the next four months will briefly look. If you can perform the snatch and the clean I have made clear where this would feature, otherwise there are alternative exercises which will produce similar kinetic outcomes.

There are three different directions we can fashion a progression from a simple exercise and increase motor unit recruitment. They are: 1) to increase the load which normally means increasing the weight on the barbell; 2) to increase the rate at which we produce force against a given load, i.e. squat faster; or 3) to bring in an element of balance and proprioception. When we combine this with the number of sets and reps the athlete performs for a given exercise, we now

have a nice selection to choose from. In terms of endurance and speed endurance, quality of the exercise execution is going to have most influence rather than significantly increasing volume (sets multiplied by repetitions). This will elicit minimal hypertrophy while improving the strength and quality of movement.

So how do we know when to alter the exercise type? To answer this, will depend upon the final goal in the summer. Are you an 800m runner who wants maximal horizontal force displacement and the ability to 'kick' in the last 100m, or are you after strength endurance to maintain pace over the last 800m of a 5K race? What is important is that we understand how to progress exercises in order to produce multiple unilateral reactive plyometrics, or 'big hops' as I like to call them. Table 1 shows how to order exercises over 4 months to do just that.

Below I have shown example sessions which you could look at with your coach and have a conversation around which ones you would do, and also at which intensity. All athletes have their own "super powers" and while some are better at learning new tasks, others may have more joint stiffness and be able to accomplish more with their plyometrics or power work for example. I have shown several exercises in each of the months with dark blue being one session, and light blue being another, but also in exercise order. You may also do other ancillary exercises as well as these given, these are purely for the performance of the lower limb. Upper body strength and proprioception would be achieved through compound presses and lifts, focusing on thoracic rotation, anterior core strength and lumbar mobility/ hamstring strength and would also be continued throughout the phase.

### MAY

Key elements to this month's physical preparation are to make sure you are continually overloading and progressing the previous month's schedule. The way to ensure overload is to change one of three factors: load (kg), velocity at which the athlete performs the exercise, or by altering the biomechanics of the exercise. Examples of this include going from a "high bar squat" with the barbell across the rear deltoids to a low bar squat, or may see a bilateral exercise be



May	June	July	August
Bilateral Strength	PAP w/ Ballistics Plyometrics	Bilateral Plyometrics	Unilateral Plyometrics
Unilateral Balance	Unilateral Strength & Coordination*	Strength-Speed**	Speed-Strength***
Ankle & Foot Fatigue Resistance	Hip Mobility & Hamstring Strength	Hip Mobility & Hamstring Strength	
Hip Mobility & Hamstring Conditioning		Unilateral Strength/ Coordination	Technical Drills & Strides

\* Single Leg Squats

\*\* Power Clean

\*\*\* Power Snatch

**Table 1.** Progressive descriptive exercise selection should be in a logical and fashionable order.

changed to a unilateral equivalent. This month is including at least one exercise from the above table, at a level suitable for the athlete.

Exercise	Load	Sets x Reps	Recovery
Barbell Deadlift	10RM	4 x 5-6	3 min
Overhead Squats	10RM	3 x 5-6	3 min
Swiss Ball Hamstring Curls	None	3 x 8-10	30 sec
Single-Foot Hopping or Skipping	None	3 x 20-30s	30 sec
Y Balance Drill on Exercise Mat	None	3-4/leg	1 min



Ballistic Box Jumps



Abdominal Roll Outs



Swiss Ball Hamstring Curls

**JULY**

This month we are introducing hurdle plyometrics, where the height is NOT a measure of training or performance, but is to allow both motor output and allow a safe and effective exercise. This will be an objective to oversee by the coach, and is best overloaded by increasing repetitions and sets, not by increasing the height.

Exercise	Load	Sets x Reps	Recovery
Bilateral Hurdles Plyometrics	BW	4 x 5-6	5 min
High Pull	BW	3 x 6-8r: 2min	2 min
Single Leg Squats	8RM	3 x 5-6r: 3min	3 min
Nordic Hamstring Curls	N/A	3 x 5-6r: 2min	2 min
TRX Push Ups w/ Arm Extensions	N/A	3 x 8-10	2 min



Y Balance Exercise – Perform on mat for extra increased proprioception training.

**JUNE**

This month we wish to progress from classic strength training to getting more intensity into our plyometrics and one method is to use post-activation potentiation (PAP). This is essentially using a high load precursory exercise which excites the nervous system and, when the aerobic fatigue element is significantly reduced, this is followed by explosive but ballistic jumps.

Exercise	Load	Sets x Reps	Recovery
Squats	10RM + 20%	3 x 3-5	
Ballistic Box Jumps	BW	3 x 5	3 min
Stiff Leg Deadlifts	10RM	3 x 6-8	3 min
TRX Reverse Rows	N/A	3 x 8-10	1 min
Single Leg Squats	BW	3 x 6-8	2 min
Abdominal Roll Outs	N/A	3 x 8-10	1 min



The High Pull: Excellent for strength-speed development without needing to learn the whole clean technique.



*Suspension Push Ups (With Arm Extensions For Progression)*



*Vertical Medicine Ball Toss.*

*All photos courtesy of Chris Mulvaney.*

## AUGUST

With regards to neuromusculoskeletal training, the athlete should be very close to peaking and getting ready to taper. With that we should be increasing the intensity of the lifts through either mass moved or velocity at which it is moved. Also the plyometrics can be progressed by bringing in the element of balance, as well as the reactivity of the landing-jump. To do this, the height of the hurdles will be lower than last month and single foot repetitions will be the focus.

Exercise	Load	Sets x Reps	Recovery
Single Leg Hurdle Hops	BW	3 x 5-6/ leg	3-5 min
Vertical Med Ball Toss	8-10kg	4 x 6-8	2-3 min
Concentric Only Deadlifts	8RM	3 x 3-5	3 min
Single Leg Swiss Ball Hamstring Curls	N/A	3 x 6-8	1 min
Swiss Ball (1-Leg) Squat Thrusts	N/A	3 x 8-10	1 min

## Final Word

National Coach Mentor (Physical Preparation) Rob Thickpenny, has noted that, "movement competence and excellent execution is critical if load is to be increased". The athlete outcomes should be exclusive to that athlete. This is only achievable through good knowledge of their recovery rates, skills acquisition and therefore

good session design. A good runner does not always mean a well-coordinated athlete, and if you are a coach reading this, if your athlete falls into this category then this is something you would want to invest some time with. When we allow someone else to influence their performance, especially outside of the coached sessions, then we cannot influence performance as we would like. I bring this up as I am seeing a lot of advertisements for 'services for runners' and whereas this may be an option for the non-competitive runner, who simply want to improve global fitness, this is most certainly not recommended for the competitive athlete. On the whole, I personally take the view that group fitness classes do not look at soft tissue loading and injury prevention, coach technique and cue the athlete accordingly. Nor do they ensure optimal force development for endurance, or specify exercises to an individual. To quote a high performance coach, "Control the controllables".

**Chris Mulvaney is an NCDP endurance coach with a particular interest in developing 'strong runners'. He started his coaching at university to accompany his sport and exercise science degree and believes that as much as physiology is an essential component, the message of biomechanics in running is a working progress. He has previous experience as a strength and conditioning coach (UKSCA) and is currently up-skilling by completing his physiotherapy degree at University of Bradford. You can contact him at [chris\\_mulvaney@hotmail.com](mailto:chris_mulvaney@hotmail.com)**

**BRENDON BYRNE** CASTS A CRITICAL EYE OVER SOME OF THE LATEST BOOKS ON THE MARKET:

## THE RUNNERS` GUIDE TO HEALTHY FEET AND ANKLES

**By Brian Fullem, Skyhorse Publications (2016)**

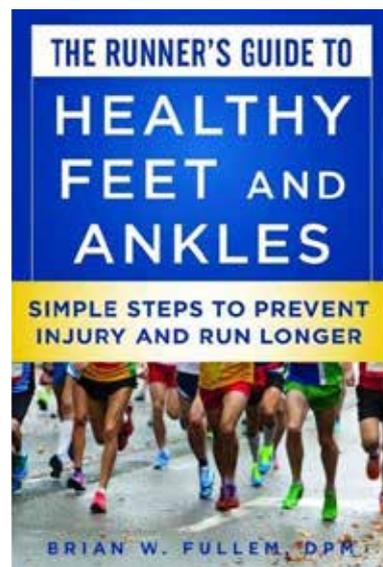
This American book has as its initial premise, "Simple steps to prevent injury and run stronger". It is an interesting one bearing in mind the high rate of lower limb injuries amongst runners. Could it be that the less active life style in younger years of athletes these days have an effect on injuries later in an athlete`s career? It is certainly a point made by Verne Gambetta in his book 'Athletic Development' a few years ago. Gambetta`s point was that college athletic teams had to play catch up on basic fitness among young athletes before they could make progress.

Fullem`s book has a section on choosing the right running shoes and orthotics. There follows a section on maintaining healthy feet including how to deal with blisters, in-growing toe nails and fungal infections. An important section deals with how to diagnose injuries how to deal with them, how to treat them and how to stop them reoccurring. This includes injuries from plantar fasciitis to tarsal tunnel syndrome. There is a very useful section on prevention, rehabilitation and taping.

The part of the book dealing with Achilles tendinosis and shin splints, the dreaded running injuries, is also very relevant. The various types of stress fractures are covered including how to identify them. He makes a point that stress fractures are the one injury that really must be rested by an absence of load bearing. X ray photographs are also used to help explanations.

Fullem makes the case for strengthening exercises and flexibility exercises to reduce the incidences of injury. Advice is also given as to when surgery may be necessary. An interesting piece of advice is that if the athlete is limping then he or she shouldn`t be running!

Fullem is a podiatrist and has run at quite fair level himself. This is of course a book for health professionals and would be a useful addition to the coach`s library. This is particularly so for those coaches who monitor their athletes injury record! It must be said that it isn`t just another book on injuries.



## RUN WITH POWER: THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO POWER METERS FOR RUNNING

**By Jim Vance, Velo Press (2016)**

This is an intriguing book with a new slant for both coaches and athletes. We are by now all familiar with the use of heart rate monitors and their uses in training. However, Vance makes the case for the use of a power meter to assess training thresholds. The use of them in training for cyclists has been in use for some time.

According to Vance, by knowing your power zones you will be able to increase efficiency, work rate and threshold power. It will enable you to monitor recovery and help you to taper before an event. In fact it is a new way to train.

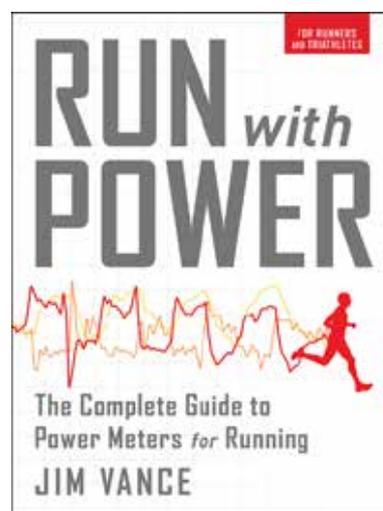
As well as a training programme he includes a section on how to test for power including formulae for the mathematically minded. For example:-

$IF = NP / rFTPW$  where IF stands for the intensity factor and rFTPW stands for the rate of functional threshold power rate.

The use of formulae may understandably put people off. However, Vance maintains that all of this can be incorporated into an efficient training programme. A full programme is included in the book. He also maintains that with a power meter you can take control of your training and racing to improve every aspect of your running career.

All of this is relatively new and probably shouldn`t be dismissed out of hand. Power meters are available via the internet, although it seems that very little use of them has been made on this side of the Atlantic. Perhaps power meters are ones for the future?

If this is all too much it might be comforting to remember a quote from Father Colm O`Connell at St Patrick`s in Iten, Kenya. He has probably coached a greater number of top athletes than most including David Rudisha- "I was given a heart rate monitor more than twenty years ago, it is still in the box!" he quipped.





*Top left: The men's 5000m at Watford last season.  
Top right: Peter Coe Mile at Oxford last summer.  
Centre right: 2016 Frank Horwill Mile.  
Below: Last season's women's 1500m at Solhull.  
All photos courtesy of David Lowes.*



THE LIFE OF **DEREK IBBOTSON** IS CELEBRATED BY **ALASTAIR AITKEN**:

George Derek Ibbotson, MBE, was born on June 17th 1932, in Huddersfield, West Riding in Yorkshire and died on 23rd February 2017.

Derek attended King James Grammar School, Almondbury and did his National Service in the RAF.

Derek Ibbotson's first wife, Madeline (The Women's National cross-country Champion in 1963 & 1964) was at the White City Stadium, with the crowds of athletics fans, to see Derek break the World Mile record on the famous cinder track on 19th July, 1957.

When I look back through the years, since the 1940's and, of the 100's of athletics interviews I have done, I would say 'Ibbo' was one of the greatest characters in the sport that I have known. When he was competing, one of the national papers affectionately dubbed him as the 'Cheeky Chappie of Athletics!' He always had a glint in his eye and could often make girls heads turn with his wry, Yorkshire sense of humour.

There were so many races that Derek achieved fantastic results. He beat two 'Great' Hungarians, coached by Mihaly Igloi in the form of Lazlo Tabori and Sandor Iharos over the 1500 in 3:49.2, at the White City in 1956. In 1959 he beat two very good East Germans in Hans Grodotzki and Siegfried

Valentin in the Whitson British Games over 2 miles. He took a fine bronze medal in the Olympic Games in 1956 in 13:54.4 behind Vladimir Kuts (USSR) who achieved an Olympic record of 13:39.6 and Gordon Pirie of GB, who clocked 13:50.6. Derek did think he made a bit of a mistake sticking to Pirie, who would did not run as he usually did, challenging for gold. Pirie ran conservatively and Derek followed him round but, he nevertheless he still achieved the bronze on the greatest stage on earth.

A dedicated Longwood Harrier, Derek Ibbotson was AAA's 3 mile Champion in 1956-57 and he was also handy at cross-country running and, when he was down South, he ran some races for South London Harriers.

It was on the unforgettable evening of the 19th of July 1957 that 'Ibbo' lined up for the World Mile record attempt at the White City Stadium. In the field was Ronnie Delany from Eire, the Olympics 1500 Champion, the previous year; Stanislav Jugwirth (Czech) who had recently set new world figures for the 1500, Ken Wood (GB); Mike Blagrove (GB); Stefan Lawandowski (Poland) and Alan Gordon (GB). This was a really loaded field to say the least. The net result was that for the first time, four people in one same

race broke the 4 minute mile barrier. Mike Blagrove set a furious pace at the start, taking the field through in 55.3s and was still leading with 1.55.8s at the 880 yards mark. On the third lap, Jungwirth decided to go ahead then Derek came alongside him and went for broke in the last 300 metre and he won convincingly taking John Landy's record of 3:57.93 (rounded up 3:58) off the books, with a magnificent 3:57.2; (2nd Ronnie Delany 3.58.8; 3 Stanislav Jungwirth 3:59.1 and 4th Ken Wood 3:59.3).

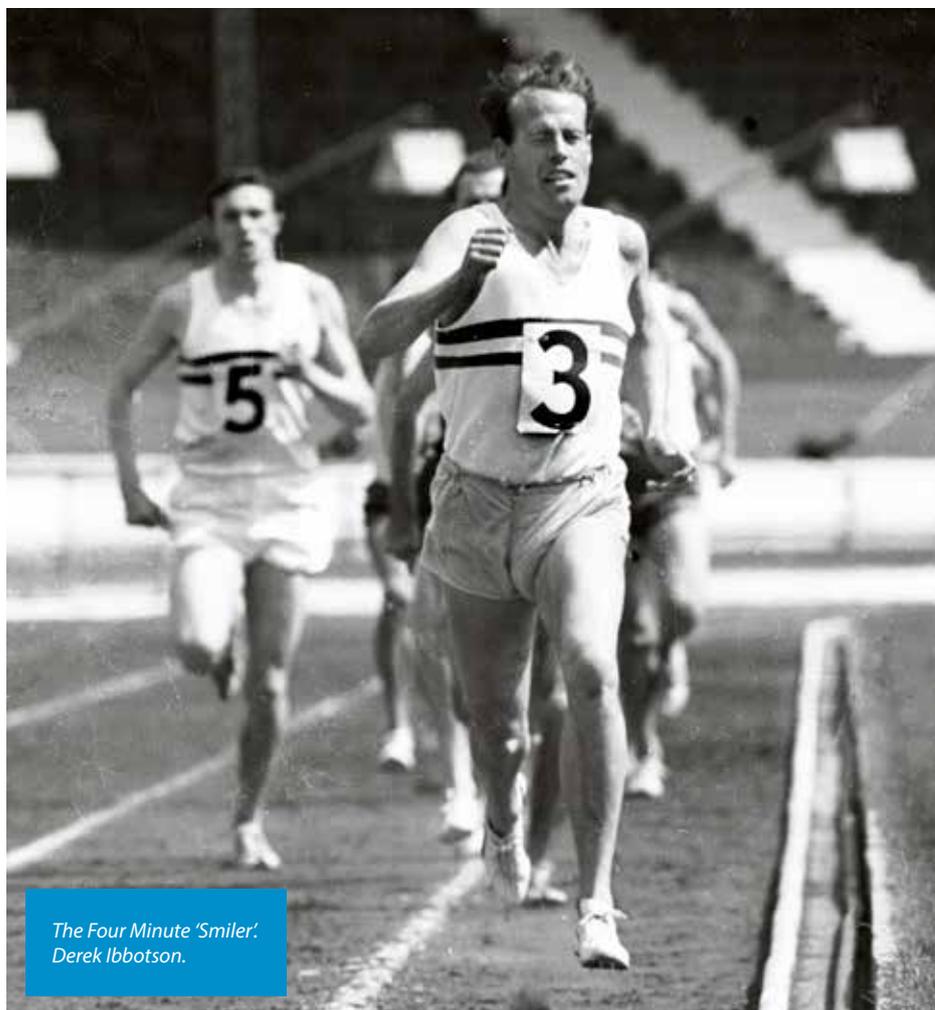
#### Who inspired Derek?

In his own words 'Ibbo' told me at the Brighton Sports Arena way back in 1962, that, "Nobody really. I have inspiration from thoughts of breaking World records. I always wanted to become a World record holder, a lot of drive inside me. I have never had a coach. I have admired lots of runners but have never been inspired by them. I have always wanted to become the best in the World". When I pressed him, he continued that, "I think money should be paid to some athletes for broken time. Roy Fowler and Brian Hall running abroad have to lose money and wages which, I think is basically wrong. With me and Gordon Pirie and other people, the amount of training is fantastic, near enough 360 odd days a year and one and a half hours per day".

#### What can you BMC athletes learn from Derek?

Fifty-five years ago Derek told me things which are relevant for some of you younger readers today. He asserted that, "The main thing when you are young is not to be worried by reputations and size because World Champions come in all shapes and sizes. When you are young you think a big runner is bound to beat you. This may be true when you are 16, 17, or 18 but when you get older there are lots of things that come into it. It's what you have in the heart and in the mind that counts because the mind can plan a race well, to make up for the lack of physique".

For the last part of his life, Derek unfortunately had dementia and was in a care home but one will never forget 'Ibbo' the Yorkshireman with such charisma and he gave so much to the sport. The man undoubtedly paved the way for future British world mile record holders who would follow three decades later in the form of Sebastian Coe, Steve Ovett and Steve Cram. He was awarded an MBE in 2008 and rightly inducted into the England Athletics Hall of Fame in 2011.



*The Four Minute 'Smiler':  
Derek Ibbotson.*

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