

Striders of Croydon

JUNE 2017 MAGAZINE



**James Bennett on his way to a new club record at the London Marathon
(photo by Matthew Kiernan)**

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Mon 12 June – Southern Veterans League – Kingsmeadow
Sun 18 June – Richmond 10K – Richmond (Surrey championship)
Sun 25 June – British Masters 5000m Championship – Birmingham
Mon 10 July – Southern Veterans League – Croydon Arena (Striders co-hosting)
Sat 15 July – Elmore 7 miles – Chipstead (Surrey Road League)
Sun 23 July – Elmbridge 10K – Walton (Surrey Road League)
Sun 13 Aug – Wimbledon 5K – Wimbledon (Surrey championship)
Sun 24 Sep – Switchback 5 – Lloyd Park / Addington Hills (Striders organising)
Sun 8 Oct – Croydon 10K – Lloyd Park Avenue
Sat 14 Oct – Surrey Cross-Country League Division 2 – venue to be confirmed
Sat 11 Nov – Surrey Cross-Country League Division 2 – venue to be confirmed

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER JUNE 2017

Another full magazine for you and definitely into tough events. Matt Stone describes his Aquathlon in Bratislava where he won the M55 silver medal. Ally Whitlock describes the ND Way 50. Well done Ally. As she says: "The body achieves what the mind believes". Martin Filer describes the Madagascar 30K – seems the journey there was about as tough as the race. Graeme Drysdale on the Paris Marathon, which included four nights in Paris (it's a hard life:)) Karim Akhtar on the Manchester Marathon: his problem was the training journey to the start, which didn't go at all well. Peter Li on the IOW challenge, a 106K non-stop run/walk and another one who had problems before the start: this time finding somewhere to sleep. And finally, Simon Ambrosi on learning to be a coach, which seems quite challenging in its own right.

Meanwhile back at home: well done everyone who finished a marathon this spring; I can't name you all but you know who you are. I hope our training run series helped you achieve your goal. Also thank you to everyone who helped at the Croydon Half Marathon; a smaller event yet again but we covered our costs and made some small donations. Next year it will be on April 6th and looks like we have a sponsor, which will help us cover our cost and enable us to renew some of our signage.

While all that was going on the new bar was finished and opened and I think everyone agrees it is a vast improvement on the old one, further improved by the effort the Darren, Sue and Luke have put into improving the service. I find it amazing that the possibility of all this happening hadn't even been discussed in early January and only came about because Steve and Darren were chatting and realised there was an opportunity that would benefit them both.

This was a very fortunate occurrence because at the January committee meeting the Sandilands Committee was struggling to see how to take things forward with very little income from hall hire, including no nursery and a few problems with the building. In fact, in the short term we had been saved by the start of the regular yoga sessions.

Now there is quite a demand to hire the hall at weekends for parties etc. so we shall see how it goes over this year. Not only has the hall improved but you may also have noticed the showers and changing rooms are a lot cleaner now that Darren's cleaners have taken over from Steve's. Having said that we must thank Steve for looking after the bar for the last ten years or so and always serving Striders well even if he wasn't always the most cheerful chap.

Personally, I survived becoming 70. Much to my surprise I won the M70 prize at the Crystal Palace Triathlon (only because I was the only one) and have just succeeded in finishing the Dorking 10 in what I think is the club M70 record. I think an easy target for you youngsters coming up behind. Next challenge is a half Marathon and just maybe a Marathon, though I think my legs were trying to tell me on Sunday that 10 miles is plenty enough. For those of us of increasing age it is very puzzling how you feel much the same as you run whatever distance and feel much the same as you cross the finish line but somehow it seems to take you a couple of minutes longer every year.

I had hoped to buy you all a drink on a Wednesday evening before now but my wife's holiday schedule has got in the way. However as current plans stand I will be there for the final of the club handicap races in about four weeks' time, when all the drinks will be on me.

May all your runs be through sunlit forests.

2017 BRATISLAVA AQUATHLON ETU EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS (by Matthew Stone)

I'll start by explaining what this aquathlon was, as it is a fairly new sport and there are variations.

This race had the following features

- Open water lake swim, wet suit optional (98% of competitors actually wore a wet suit)
 - Start on land all standing at the water's edge
 - 2 x 500m swim laps around two buoys
 - Exit the water after 1st swim lap to run over timing mat, re-enter for second lap
- Transition area, wet suit off, running shoes on
- 5 x 1,000m laps run up and down a narrow road

This is my favourite format – pool swims are time trials, and also tend to be at shorter distances, as a pool cannot handle a large number of swimmers. A 400m pool swim is typical; this can be fun, but I think it is biased towards a good runner. For open water, deep water starts are less exciting, with less splashing and no diving in.

Selection – For triathlons there are now qualifying events for age-group competitors, where you have to enter designated events and get a good result to qualify for the GB team. Aquathlons are less formalised currently, and I just had to submit a time for an aquathlon that I had done in 2016. I had a good result at one of the Ocean Lake series aquathlons in Kent, so I was pretty confident about qualifying after registering my interest on the British Triathlon website. Still it was an exciting moment when I read the email confirming that I had got onto the GB team for the fourth European Championships, in the 55-59 years age group.

Kit – The GB trisuit is compulsory for GB competitors, and why wouldn't I want one? I decided to buy a better wetsuit. New prescription goggles were necessary as well, as sighting is very important in open water: it is difficult to swim in a straight line – much harder than you would think.

Location – Why Bratislava? This seems mainly because it is the hometown of Richard Varga. He is one of the strongest swimmers amongst the triathlete elite, first out of the water at Rio, and four times World Aquathlon champion. He won the elite race of course, and had lots of local support, including the announcer. The swim was in Velky (Lake?) Drazdiak, which is about 5km south of the centre of Bratislava. It is certainly the best location for an open water race I have been to; the water is lovely and clear, no taste to it, and sighting was very easy. There were a few swans, but they kept away on the race day, and no geese. The run was pretty, but not exciting by the fifth lap – it was good for spectators, who could get very close to us competitors, including Richard Varga.

Travel – My wife Rosemary came with me, to enjoy the trip. We decided to go with the GB team agents Nirvana, who did a good job and we didn't have to worry about any arrangements. A bit more expensive than doing it yourself, but I think it was worth it. We flew from Gatwick on Thursday morning, the race was Saturday morning (27th May), and we came back on Sunday afternoon; luckily we flew with Easyjet, not BA. The team hotel was by the lake, however we couldn't get in on Thursday evening, so we stayed in another hotel in the city centre – I think this was better for sightseeing, as we had a chance to look round the historic city centre and wander along the Danube for a bit.

Start lists – These were published before on the organisers' website – I wasn't too worried about the other GB team members, but had no idea about how fast the other countries' competitors would be. The main threat seemed to be the Irishman Neil Cooper who had won this event for the previous two years.

Training – I was running and swimming well over the winter. However, in May the weather was cold and the water temperature was too low to swim outside beneficially, then I got a mild cold with three weeks to go. So I had to balance some running, cycling and gym work to not lose too much fitness while still needing to recover for the 27th May. I had a reasonable parkrun on 20th May and a good swimming gala the next day, so I started to feel more confident in the final week. Swim familiarisation on the Friday (26th) afternoon gave me some more confidence in my new wetsuit, and the water temperature was fine (18–19 °C).

Opening ceremony – there was a short march to a civic building from the lake, with athletes carrying all the national flags and welcoming speeches and some music and an opera singer.

Preparation - Age groups 50+ went in the first wave of the day starting at 9am. So I got up early and had a warmup run. It was OK, but I felt my endurance was below par. Then I had to get set up in the transition area, which would be closed off at 8:45am – each competitor had a small box labelled with their race number already been positioned by the officials. I memorised the location of my box. I shouldn't be able to miss my size 13 blue ASICS – but I had lost my bike in transition before. There was not much to put in the box – shoes, shaded glasses and running cap. I looked over the route in and out to impress it on the brain and noted to put the wetsuit, hat and goggles in the box during the race, or get a 10 second penalty.

There was a chance to get in the water beforehand to warm up and avoid the initial shock of cold water during the race. I knew that this would help a lot so I was very glad to take advantage for a few minutes.



The Race – we gathered in the marshalling area, which was under a tent. Slight panic, as I had forgotten to put the timing chip on my ankle. Thankfully it was close by in my bag, so no problem. There was another timing chip on my race number, which was pinned to my tri suit,

currently under the wetsuit. We were called down to the water's edge one at a time and could select one of eighty starting positions. Careful here, as taking up two positions was a DQ offence. I made sure my goggles were tight and looked apprehensively at the pebbles and shingle in the shallow water. The klaxon went suddenly, I was taken by surprise, charged into the water, spray everywhere, and dived into the water when running was no longer possible, hoping not to dislodge the goggles. Is the start going to be a scrum, is any violence going to be required, I wondered? – No it was quite civilised for an open water start, so we started racing to the first buoy.

I tried to conserve energy on the swim, aware that my endurance felt low beforehand. So I tried to pick someone going at the right pace to draft on. Twice I realised my target was going too slowly, so I needed to sprint to the next group then settle down again. This race was the first time I have had to get out after 1 lap to go over the timing mat. My feet were cut and bruised getting out and back in again, although I was not aware of it at the time, but I thought that I needed to protect my feet with a 5K run to come.

I utilised more drafting on the second lap and was swimming well in a straight line – I clambered over the pebbles again, then into transition. This is my weakest area, but my new wetsuit comes off quite easily; the only problem was I forgot about the timing chip around my ankle and tried to lever that off as well – luckily I couldn't succeed, but precious seconds wasted. Shoes, shades and cap on, then I started the run – I didn't know my competitors by sight so it was difficult to tell where I was in the race (I was third out of the swim, I found out later). I must have overtaken the fastest swimmer quite quickly, but I didn't know – then I spotted a distinctive green trisuit coming the other way, that must be Neil the Irishman. Could I bridge the gap to him? He had run 18:46 last year; I wasn't up for that today. I overtook some other runners, including some GB's in my age group, then I realised I was closing the gap on Neil at each turn. Eventually I overtook him, still with a way to go, so I concentrated on putting distance between us, in case he had a sprint finish. I was getting tired myself now; my lack of endurance at this pace was starting to hurt, though I had a lift from being in the lead. Then with a short distance to go I noticed a short man overtaking me, I didn't know who he was or which country he was competing for. I didn't go with him, but a few seconds later decided to start my finishing sprint. I didn't look behind, I just imagined Neil was behind me so I had to finish hard.

It was all bit of a blur after that, I didn't know what had happened – Neil thought I had beaten Yaron, but Yaron knew he was first – he had been tracking me for the whole of the run as I led him past the others. I must have nearly got him back at the end, the official margin was 0.7 seconds, my time was 35:33. I think I finished as the most exhausted of the three.

Yaron from Israel was a really nice man, and there was a great feeling of comradery and humour between the three of us afterwards and at the podium medal presentation. He had won the world championships before in 2007 and 2008, having started swimming only in 2003. He hasn't got any slower since then, and says his all-time 10K PB is 31 minutes. I said that as Israel is not in Europe, I was European Champion, though he was the real winner. His father was with him, and took several photos of the three of us around the finishing line.

We met again before the medal presentation and talked for quite a long time about swimming and running and our training. He had an Israeli flag and was very concerned that I didn't have a Union Jack – I think the GB team just had three, which was all we needed at once, and we swapped going off and onto the podium, a source of amusement. He thought that GB would be able to fund us to take part in this event, though of course we have to pay everything ourselves. I found a good way to make an Irishman laugh, which is to ask if he has a flag to wave.

The medal presentation for the elites was quite long. They had flowers and a medal, which the age groupers had; in addition they had a bottle of champagne each, which they sprayed in Formula 1 fashion and the national anthem of the winner was played. Richard Vargo gave a pleasant speech, thanking all the visitors to Slovakia and congratulating us all for our performances. Our presentation was great: they didn't rush through it and seemed very sincere; we had a few minutes to pose for photos and waving our flags having won something for our countries, and enjoying being on the same platform that the elites had been on.



So we just chilled out after that, I had a few Zlaty's, the local beer, to celebrate, and we enjoyed the sun and scenery around the lake before getting back to Vienna airport on Sunday and back to normality in Croydon on Monday.

Looking back I am obviously disappointed not to have got the gold by such a small margin. However, getting on the podium was sufficient to have the full experience. This was the highest level of competition of this event that I have found so far and it was a great location, so I am very content.



Swim time 14:51: Transition 1:06: Run 19:35

ETU race report at

http://etu.com.triathlon.org/news/article/brits_mop_up_the_medals_in_bratislava

THE NORTH DOWNS WAY 50 (by Ally Whitlock)

Stats: 51 miles, 11:21:02, 13:21 min/mile, 5,600 ft elevation gain

Nine months after I entered on a bit of a whim, six months after I started training and we are finally here. Race Day.

I am nervous, so nervous. I have butterflies in my tummy. I am scared. I repeat to myself a phrase a friend said to me. It becomes my race mantra:

The body achieves what the mind believes.

MY body will achieve what MY mind believes.

As I was running, and to occupy my mind at times it needed distracting, I was wondering how to write my race review, trying to compose and remember sentences in my mind (failed on that one, I can't remember a single word!). How to make it interesting, how to avoid it being 'just another race review of the NDW50'. I'm not a writer as such; I've been writing over the past six months for myself, to record my journey, my memories and as something I can look back on in weeks, months and years to come: the story of my first ultra. So, this is my race. This is **my** North Downs Way 50.

Nervous, I arrived far too early, passed kit check, collected my race number and ate breakfast. Watching, looking, observing. I saw both Myles and Mark, the two other Striders running. Bumped into various people from Twitter and said hello to Stuart, the photographer (obvs!).

Race briefing, stomach turning somersaults. I don't remember much of what was said. We walked to the start line. A quick selfie and we started.

The first few miles were busy and congested. My plan at this stage was simple, slow and steady, if it felt slow, go slower, aiming for an average pace of 11 min/mile up to the first check point 6.8 miles in. The early miles flew by. I was trying to take in all in, remember the route, the people, how I was feeling but in the excitement it all seems a bit of a blur. I was consciously holding back, I wanted to go faster but was paying attention to all the pre-race advice I'd been given by experienced ultra-runners.

Three miles in I cracked open the race picnic and chomped down on peanut butter and jam sandwich number one of the day. This would become my fuel of choice throughout the race, I probably ate about 20 PB&J sandwiches over the 50 miles. In my inexperience I think I pretty much got my fuelling spot on, basically eating, whether I wanted to or not, every two miles. I never once felt low on energy.

Through the small village at Puttenham before arriving at check point one a little ahead of schedule. I was feeling good. I knew it was early, I knew I shouldn't get carried away but I was running well, pacing well and had enjoyed the first seven miles. I topped up my Tailwind and carried on running.

There was quite a group of us running together at this stage, we'd chat, someone would pull away, ease off, catch up, it was all quite fluid. I chatted with Myles from Striders, Chris who

I'd met on Twitter, a lady who was doing all EIGHT of Centurion's races this year and numerous other people whose faces and running stories I remember but names I forget.

Woodland trails, fields and roads, the route vaguely familiar from my recce run a few months earlier.

At the crossing of the River Wey just outside Guildford was the Bacon Barge, two guys who voluntarily set up an unofficial 'bacon' aid station every year, this year dressed as sumo wrestlers. A little bit of online banter pre-race hadn't resulted in any bacon for us vegetarians but there were some very welcome potato wedges and a lifting of spirits as we all smiled and laughed as we ran through.

I enjoyed the next section through Chantry Wood. I think undulating woodland trails are my favourite! Running up to the Church at the top of St Martha's Hill we hit 12.5 miles. A quarter of the way through. It felt as if the miles were flying by. The view at the top is spectacular. I am going to be writing that phrase a lot: 1) because there were a lot of hills; and 2) because they all had spectacular views at the top! I paused, took a quick photo and carried on. I almost wish I'd paused a little longer to really take it in.



People may wonder why I took so many photos. It's what I do. I was told to enjoy the race. To me that is stopping, taking in the views and capturing the experience on 'film'. I want those visual reminders, I want those photos to look back on and remember that time I ran 50 miles. I look at photos and I'm reminded of the feelings and emotions that I had as I was taking them. I remember the people I was with, the conversations I was having, the sights, sounds and smells. To me, a photograph is a powerful memory.

There was a steep descent, I flew! One of those moments I ignored my pacing plan and just let gravity take me down the hill jumping tree roots and branches as I ran. I was smiling, happy and loving it! A few more miles took us to the second checkpoint. I arrived 15 minutes ahead of my schedule. In my inexperience at this stage I didn't know whether that was a good or bad thing. My bag was starting to run my back so I stopped to put some Vaseline on it. Topped up my Tailwind again, used my mandatory cup for the first time and tried some coke (not really a fan). Ate what felt like half a watermelon (so good) and filled a bag with some more PB&J sandwiches for the journey – it was nearly ten miles till the next check point.

Still 15 minutes ahead of schedule, Myles and I left the second check point together. Up until this point there'd been a group of about ten of us running pretty much together but it wasn't long after this that we all began to separate, conscious of our individual race goals and

plans. I pulled away from Myles about 16 miles in and then didn't see him again until the finish.

I ran most of the rest of the race alone. In some ways this bothered me; there were times when I couldn't see another runner, other times when I'd be running in a silent companionship alongside someone until one of us pulled away or dropped back. Some conversations. A lot of silence. Eighteen or so miles in and my legs were beginning to ache. Not hurt, just ache; but I was still feeling strong. Still smiling.

I kept shovelling in PB&J sandwiches and soon was at Denbies Vineyard. This was the start of the section I knew well. I love the descent through Denbies. After a few photos, and knowing what was to come in a few miles, I allowed myself a mile of speed as I cruised down the hill. Mile 24 I did my one and only sub-10 minute mile!

I made it to the Box Hill check point in 04:36:26, still 15 minutes ahead of schedule. I'd been told that if you get to Box Hill in under five hours, you've got enough time to finish within cut-off. I was now pleased that I was a little ahead of target. Knowing I had just over eight hours to cover the second half psychologically had a huge impact on me. I knew I'd finish. Even if I had to walk some of it as I left Box Hill I felt strong and I knew I would get to that finish line. That gave me a huge mental boost right when I needed it.



The stepping stones at Box Hill (photo by Stuart Marsh Photography)

I filled up with water, more Tailwind, PB&J sandwiches and some amazing banana and chocolate cake and headed off for what I thought would be the toughest section of the whole run. I crossed the stepping stones, pausing to smile for Stuart the race photographer, had a few quick words of encouragement from him on the other side and started on the steps up to the top of Box Hill. I was prepared, I knew they were coming: it doesn't make them any easier!

Half-way.

It began to rain a little, a light drizzle. It didn't last long and barely cooled me down. Not long after Box Hill my knee started hurting. It always does at some point and I was pleased it had lasted over 25 miles. Looking back I think this was the longest I have run without any knee pain for, well, as long as I can remember. At Thames Meander Marathon in March it started hurting six miles in, at Brighton in April at about 14. I knew I could run it off but it did make for a fairly uncomfortable couple of miles along some quite uneven and technical trails.

It was also here that my Garmin clicked over 26.2 miles. I had now officially run further than I had ever run before. Whatever happened for the rest of the race I had a new distance PB!

At the base of the next hill section I was running in a spread-out group of about five other runners. As we turned a corner to be greeted by six or seven cows standing in front of the gate we needed to go through I was very glad I wasn't alone! I was brave. I walked on through. I even tried to take a selfie with one but she seemed more interested in the sandwiches that were in my bag than in posing with me!



I had a tricky mile here. It almost felt as if I was losing focus. I stumbled a number of times along a particularly uneven and rutted track, at one point almost falling into a fence, another going over on my ankle. There was no lasting damage but I was getting frustrated with myself. I swore a few times. Repeating my race mantra to myself, 'The body achieves what the mind believes', I paused, took a few photos and refocused. A minor blip but things were beginning to get tougher.

The next significant milestone was the climb to the top of Reigate Hill. It's a beast. But like Box Hill I knew it was coming, I didn't let it bother me, I walked, as I had on all the hills right from the start, and before I knew it I was at the top and on the fairly flat section along to Reigate Viewpoint, where I knew the next check point was and the friendly face of Amy who was volunteering. I'd met Amy on the head torch run on Wimbledon Common back in December and we'd stayed in touch on Twitter and Instagram. By now my legs were really sore. It was tough. My head wanted to run, my feet wanted to walk. I was trying to stop my mind focusing on the 19 miles still left and instead focus on the fact that I had already run over 30 miles. I was more than 3/5 of the way through!

This aid station came at exactly the right moment. The highlight though was not food and drink but getting to wash my hands! Covered in sticky drinks, the juice from watermelon, jam, peanut butter and who knows what else after six and a half hours of running they were feeling pretty gross. Water and soap felt pretty damn good!

From here on in my mind took over. The body achieves what the mind believes.

My feet and legs were done with running, they hurt. My mind though wasn't giving up. Up to this point I'd walked the hills but pretty much run most of the rest of it. I now adopted a run/walk approach. And I was fine with that. I've always had a bit of a thing about run/walking. I feel as if by walking I'm cheating myself but one of the things that this ultra training has taught me is that walking is okay. I ran when I could, I walked when I needed to.

From Reigate right through to the next check point at Caterham I was alone, bar about 250 metres in Merstham, but I knew this section well. I focused on my race and on getting to the next check point. At Caterham there was only 12 miles to go and that was practically the end.

I crossed the A23 and was about to turn down Rickshaw Road, a really boring road section that's monotonous and I don't like, when I heard a frantic beeping of a car horn. I turned, and Claire, who I know from Twitter and who I've met at a couple of races and parkrun, just happened to be driving down the A23 as I crossed it. It was SO good to see her (she probably doesn't realise how good!) and such a random coincidence. I stopped for a brief chat before heading off with a smile on my face. At the other end of Rickshaw Road, just before we turn off and back onto trails, was Karim, a Strider who I only know a little, with a bag of veggie Percy Pigs! He'd come out to see and support Myles and me, and I can't tell you how much that meant to me.

Merstham Hill. I was going to reward myself with another PB&J sandwich at the top. Whoop whoop! I'd been charging my Garmin since Reigate, I decided/hoped 40% battery would get me to the end (very nearly, not quite). I don't remember a lot about this section, my focus was purely on moving forwards.

The body achieves what the mind believes.

The body achieves what the mind believes.

The body achieves what the mind believes.

I was going to finish. I could do it.

Caterham Viewpoint. The sun was shining. It was glorious. The obligatory photo. I've lost track of how many photos I've taken of this view. So many, but each one different and each one with a different story to tell. More Tailwind, more watermelon (still so good) and more sandwiches, although at this point I really was not wanting to eat. I knew how important it was, so I made myself.



I set off again with another girl, Claire. She'd run the previous year and finished in 12 hours 50 something minutes. We pretty much kept each other in sight for the next six or so miles, chatting occasionally. Company came at the right time.

Forty miles in I phoned the husband to tell him I hurt! I had ten miles to go. The bluebells that had been so beautiful just two weeks earlier were dying off, but the wild garlic still were in abundance, the woods still beautiful in the now late afternoon sun. The views continued to be spectacular, the slightly moody skies of the morning miles now replaced by vivid blue and white fluffy clouds. No matter how much I hurt, this made it all worthwhile.

The last hill up to the last check point. 43-ish miles. Claire and I chatted and walked. I stocked up on enough to see me to the end, pausing to say hello to Keith, a Strider who was volunteering, before heading off with a couple of others on the home straight. Just 10k to go. That's an easy morning run. I felt ready and able. My body was sore but my mind was still strong.

Woodland, fields, blue skies. A road section that Martin and I flew down a couple of weeks ago, today, not quite so fast. The wonderful yellow of the rapeseed fields. I'd been waiting miles for this splash of colour, not remembering how far along they were. I stopped, looked, admired, smiled and photographed. Then 47 miles. Three to go. A parkrun to go.

Cows, more cows. Now alone I had no choice but to walk through them.

The body achieves what the mind believes.

Fields, more fields. Dry, hard and rutted, it's not easy to run.

The body achieves what the mind believes.

My Garmin beeps for 50 miles. We'd been told in the race briefing that the race was 'roughly' 50 miles. I am not at the finish.

The body achieves what the mind believes.

Another field. I look over and I can see the finish gantry. I know it's a mile away and that I have to run round the field.

The body achieves what the mind believes.

I run. My Garmin battery dies. Leaving the field, the last section is road. I walk. I breathe. I am nearly there. I want to make sure I can run the finish straight.

Into Knockholt Pound. The village sign where I stopped on my recce run two weeks earlier.

The body achieves what the mind believes.

I turn left. 100 meters to go. I run. I smile. I finish. I am an ultra runner.

The body achieved what the mind believed.

Is this the end of my story or the beginning of a new one?

I'm writing this 48 hours later. I've had my post-race massage; my legs feel great though I have promised them at least a week of complete rest. They did me proud.

I need some time to reflect, not just on the race itself but on the last six months. Whilst training for this ultra I have learnt so much, not just about running. But this adventure was never just about running.

I learnt about mental strength. I learnt that I can do it. A mind that often doubts and wonders if it is good enough believed I could do it, and I did.

I ran 50 miles.



The finish (photo by Stuart Marsh Photography)

(A slightly longer version of this article, with many more photos, is on Ally's blog: <https://photogirlruns.wordpress.com>)

THE UTOP MADAGASCAR 30K (by Martin Filer)

So, I got an email from a colleague with a link to the website... UTOP trail Madagascar T-RAIL (30km) race. It was just 6 weeks away. It was a point to point race through the 'hills' from a small village called Carion to the capital, Antananarivo. It was an exquisitely laid baited hook by my colleague, Hugh. I'm partial to some exotic trekking, jungles and generally like a bit of an adventure. Throw in a race, over a 'manageable' 30km, at altitude and in a word, a bit 'Mountainy' (1000m of elevation) and you have me eating out of the palm of your hand. The problem was that Hugh was planning to be out there for work, and therefore our work was paying for his flights, and for his accommodation while he was officially working there. I was able to tag along, but at cost. I have been at my work quite a while, and I do have a hand on the purse strings - however, I was never going to be able to justify that expense to the company. Could I afford this rather extravagant adventure at just 6 weeks' notice? Just about I thought. To be fair I didn't really think at all, I just had the money to book the flight (rather hefty £600+) and not much else - so I kinda just went for it. Add to the fact it was a delightfully tasty baited hook that he had laid, I thought I'd worry about that later - after all it's only money!

So there I was all booked up, and then the realisation that I need to come to terms with a niggle I had been carrying on the basis of ignore the problem and it would go away - a common runners mantra. My exploits had taken their toll a bit on my left calf, that was just a bit aggy. And very deep. Massage: relax; run: tighten; massage: relax – and repeat. The niggle had dented my London marathon preparation and with Madagascar just two weeks after, I weighed up the plan to defer London and just do Madagascar for the experience! It was a good choice, and it was a bonus that Alan's elbows (!? - I can never tell laying face down) did the trick and I flew to Madagascar via Paris without any sign of what I had felt just wouldn't go away.

So here I was in Madagascar, one of the VERY few (I'd say a handful) of race entrants who spoke English and little else. We didn't really know the Capital, Antananarivo, or whereabouts the registration and race briefing was. We kind of just did it all on a need to know basis. The registration and safety briefing was at the same time at Lycee Francais Tannarive. This was also to be the departure place for the buses to take us out to the race start (at 5:30am – ouch.) We managed to register, show our race medical certificates - seems to be a French race thing, and a massive pain. I get the impression most people just feel them out and sign them themselves. We also attended the safety briefing. Organised chaos, or disorganised, I didn't really know as the Ultra safety briefing was still going on. It became clear that the safety briefing was going to be as useful as a chocolate teapot, because it was in Malagasy and French. And neither of us spoke any – in fact I kept accidentally speaking Spanish on my trip – given the countries I had previously visited – and to be fair I don't really know any Spanish either, so were up against it really. So we decided to skip the safety briefing, as it was getting dark, the mozzies were descending and despite it being a wonderful country, Antananarivo becomes a bit of a different place after dark, and to be fair it can be a bit intimidating even during the day.

We were up at 4.30am, had to be there for 5ish, to catch the bus out to Carion. Our security guard at the hostel called our taxi (as he went out in the dark and hailed it for us). Which was nice. So we got in and asked for the Lycee Francais Tannarive... All good. When abroad, especially in Africa, never let anybody get into your cab! First rule of adventurous travelling. Unfortunately, our taxi driver decided to go past the local night spot (not the sort of place to be as a European at 4am – particularly dressed in running gear) Thankfully, most people seemed like they had drunk enough rum to not be able to see past this being a taxi. Our driver however saw his friend, whistled out of the window and stopped. Next thing you know

drunk guy in front – alarm bells were ringing. Danger or dysfunction? Luckily, the latter, as before we knew it, we were there and relieved. And the taxi driver's friend was our friend. Result.

We bumped in to a Northern Irish expat who worked for G4S – he ran this race every year and had lived in Tana (its shorter to type and say... antann .antanan . anaananan..... Tana) for ten years. !?!?!?. I had been there 4 days at this point and I wasn't really a fan, literally couldn't wait to leave the city. Although the irony of running back to it on this occasion wasn't lost on me. Before you knew, it was 6.30am and we were at Carion. Two hours before race start. And being winter it was nice and cool. So we chatted with Bill and slowly the crowds gathered. A few expats of various English-speaking nations turned up and conversation varied!



It had been cloudy each morning for every day we had been there. So typically as race time approached, the clouds started to disperse. Surely not? And by race start the sun was out. We were in the shade at that point, but I think that was the last time.... So sun and heat it was. Just above the Tropic of Capricorn and below the Equator... the sun was going to be strong, and you know what I'm like with heat!

There were about 700 runners on the start line, and we tried to take our place at the front (ish) after being informed the trail is quite narrow for a while. And we were off. With the typically fast opening to any race we were probably ahead of target pace. (We were aiming for under 3.30 and a top 50 finish – although unbeknown to us, conditions meant that top 50 would be much slower time this year). The views were stunning, and I was taking a few photos, and video on my GoPro. Taking in the villages we were passing through – I say villages – maybe just a handful of houses. Then it got slightly more remote as we left the main road we had kind of been parallel to and took in some high points. Eventually after an

awkward roll on my right ankle on a rocky descent from the highest point (1800m) and the relentless heat, the pace dropped. Hugh (my colleague) moved on and I hung back a little, losing a bit of confidence in my ankle and the rocky downhills. By km 18 I had a bit of dehydration cramping, as the heat had increased, and the water/refreshments were sparse. There were no water stops other than at checkpoints, and at each checkpoint water consisted of no more than a paper cup, on top of what we were carrying – which in hindsight wasn't enough. The cramping was an early warning sign of what may come soon. So I lowered the pace and heart rate and covered myself in an attempt to at least try and stop sweating. This meant walking a section I wanted to run, which was a bit frustrating, but the alternative wasn't going to end well. I rested at the second checkpoint, taking in salt and snacks and cola. But I had realised that in stopping and sorting out my bag my drenched 'bib' had fallen off and was now back on the trail somewhere – my race was falling apart! I didn't even know whether they would accept me just remembering my number. But they seemed to – after all who would lie about it and cheat and look in this state? After a ten minute break, which included a teaspoon of salt in a small bottle of (FIZZY!) water and a few other snacks. I felt good, but the temperature was increasing and there was little in the way of shelter. With my target now beyond reach, it was about completing. The last big climb I decided to just sit on the hill to take a break and soak in the view, the local who I had been sort of running with decided to do the same but he laid out under a tree, in the shade. We were at around 1400m elevation and hills were hard work. I think we could have touched the clouds, if there had been any! I trickled into the finish, back into the capital running around inconvenienced locals in 4.04.36 and 85th place.

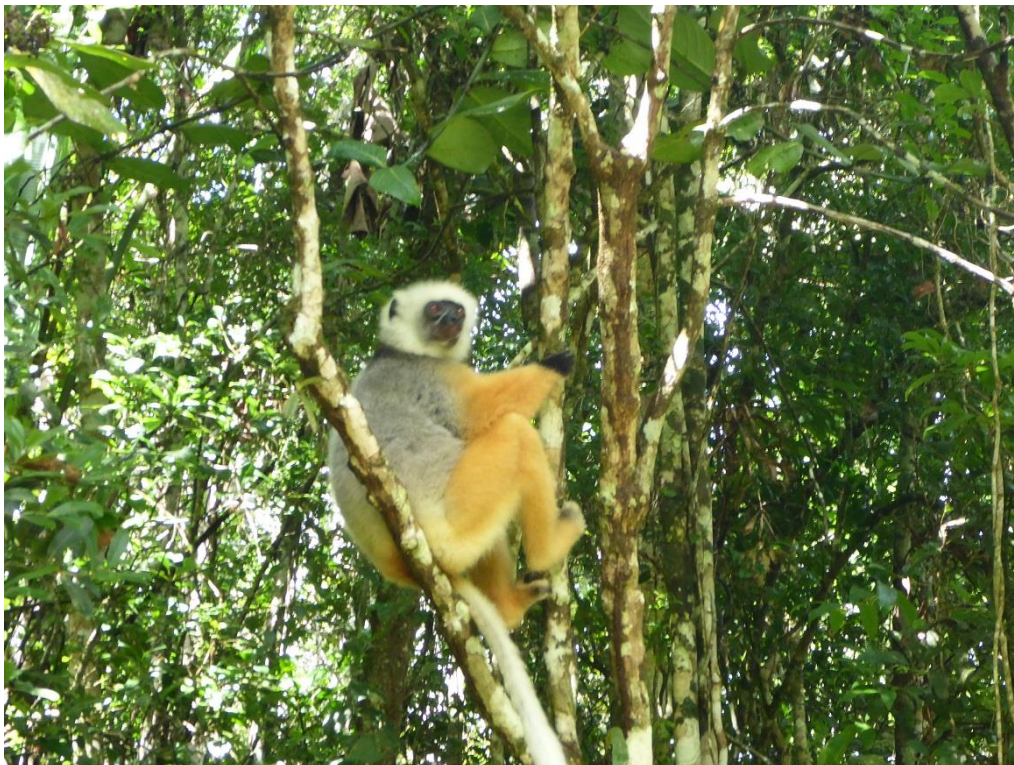


By the time I had finished, received my medal, and found some shade, I required some medical attention as dehydration had caught up with me. I was cramping again and couldn't

move. Then we found an English-speaking medic – she had worked in Birmingham previously. She helped me massively. A simple rehydration solution cured me in a few gulps. Remember if you are ever severely dehydrated, one litre of water, four teaspoons of sugar and one teaspoon of salt.

We actually got a lot for our money: a race, a bus journey there, stunning views, a medal, two t-shirts, a flannel, some drink – I think about 4 separate bottles including fruity Fanta – a free post-race massage, and a full meal in the post-race tent, all for about £30!

Whilst the capital was more leave it than take it in my eyes, the rest of the country was stunningly beautiful. We spent 7 days driving and trekking (probably 20 miles walked with around a further 1500m of elevation gain – for the trail enthusiasts) from the rainforests of Ranomafana and Andasibe-Mantadia National Park, where we successfully found the Indri (*Indri indri*) [the largest living lemur – Debra] and the large Parson's Chameleon (*Calumma parsonii*), to the savannah and canyons and oasis streams of Isalo National Park – encountering many types of lemurs, trees, plants, animals, birds, snakes sometimes in very close quarters, almost all of which were not only not found anywhere else on earth but most were endemic to that actual park or area. Cut off for so long, that they had evolved into very, very different species. It was a very surreal magical experience living your own Planet Earth II documentary. We managed to do our own very brief (if not allowed) night tour in one of the parks on our last night, where we managed to find our own Mouse Lemur, very close to the lodge where we were staying. Magical. A nocturnal lemur that is no bigger than the palm of your hand, and very inquisitive / nervous / excited that it had seen these strange beings in a park that hadn't had night tours in it for ten years. We were a bit lucky, but it was so much better than the guide who wanted £15 (which is close to the average teacher's week's wage here) for us to walk along the side of the park, and try and tempt one out to lick a strategically placed banana. I also managed to pick up a leech, but it never made it up past my Roclites, thankfully!



Diademed sifaka, *Propithecus diadema*

Another wonderful adventure and destination ticked off the list.

SCHNEIDER ELECTRIC MARATHON DE PARIS (by Graeme Drysdale)

It was completely by chance that I ended up running the Paris marathon this year. I had entered a competition at Running Heroes (uk.runningheroes.com) who had 20 places to give away, with no thought whatsoever that I would win one of them, but much to my surprise I received an email in late October telling me I had been one of the lucky ones. The date of the marathon was 9th April 2017 and at first I wasn't sure I wanted to run it as I had already entered the London Marathon two weeks afterwards and had never run two marathons so close together, but when I realised it fell right in the middle of the Easter holidays it made perfect sense to make a family holiday out of it, and having never been to Paris before, a good excuse to do some sightseeing as well as my first international race.

The Marathon de Paris starts on one side of the Arc de Triomphe, in the Champs Elysées, and finishes on the other side, along the Avenue Foch, so when booking our accommodation I wanted to be as close as possible to the Arc de Triomphe so that I could walk to and from the start. We used the travel website Booking.com (other websites are available!) and were able to search for all hotels close to the Arc de Triomphe. The choice was mind-boggling, as were some of the prices! After quite a bit of investigation, we eventually settled on a small studio apartment rather than a hotel, and booked it through another website because they wanted to give us 15% off the price! We booked for 4 nights, and chose Wednesday to Saturday, as I'm not usually able to walk much after a marathon, and just want to laze around and eat all day, so it seemed better to do the touristy bit beforehand and head home straight after the race. In the end it turned out to be an ideal location: quiet, close to the Metro, with a small supermarket around the corner for those evenings when we were too tired from sight-seeing to go out and eat. At around £500 for 4 nights it was not exactly super-cheap, but for 3 of us, with such a good location, I would certainly recommend the Residhotel Impérial Rennequin. The room came with a buffet breakfast, but more importantly, free wifi, which as you can imagine, is top of the list for a 13 year old!

Before leaving for France it is important to get a doctor's signed medical certificate stating you are fit to compete, as this is a pre-requisite of the event. This gave me some concern beforehand – not because I thought I was at all unfit, but because a quick look through the running forums raised a multitude of possible difficulties. Some runners said that their GP had flatly refused to sign such a document without first subjecting them to a full medical, at some expense; others had said that their GP charged a standard letter fee; others had signed it for nothing. Reluctantly, I made an appointment with my own GP, who I hadn't even met before as we had only moved into his catchment area four months previously. After firstly apologising for taking up his valuable time, I was pleasantly surprised that he seemed genuinely interested in my running and the fact that I was clearly passionate about my sport, and after a check of my heart and blood pressure, signed the form and wished me good luck. And that was that!

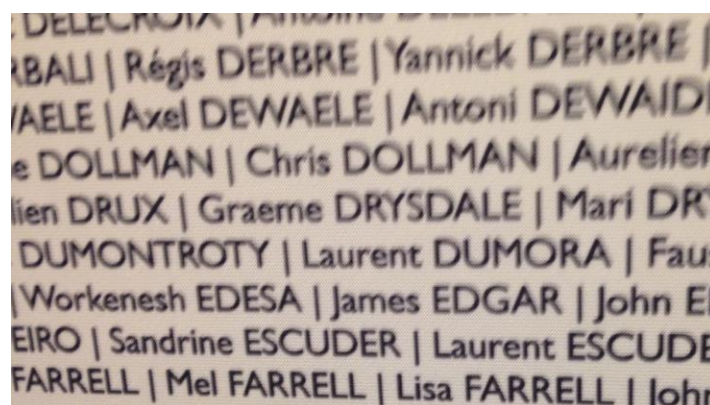
We took the Eurostar to Paris. For me, this was a no-brainer because I don't like flying, but if you have limited resources I would guess the budget airlines will save you some money, although you do need to remember that the train takes you right into the centre of the city, and it is easy to get a taxi or the Metro to your hotel from there, whereas the airport is quite some distance away. We boarded the Eurostar from Paddington, but next time I would investigate getting it from Ebbsfleet, which is only a 45 minute drive from Croydon, and saves having to lug your luggage across London. You do have to pay for parking, but that is probably offset by not having to get a rail ticket into London.

Like all big marathons these days, there is the Expo to attend beforehand to pick up your number, provide proof of identity and have your medical certificate checked. We decided to visit it when it opened on the Thursday afternoon to get it out the way. Based in the south of Paris, it's a fairly lengthy journey on the Metro, with at least one change to get to. Mind you, I was surprised how efficient and easy to navigate the Metro is, and by buying a book of 10 tickets for 14.50 euros, it is a cheap way to get around.

The Expo at the Parc des Expositions, Porte de Versailles, is huge, and I'd definitely recommend going early if you can because it was quite empty on the Thursday afternoon. If you like this sort of thing, you could easily spend a few hours wandering around it. We were already tired from a day of being tourists, so quickly got in and out and headed back to our apartment, though I did stop for a quick photo beside the countdown clock:



On one of the walls the organisers had also printed every one of the 57,000 entrants' names, and it was a task to find mine despite it being in alphabetical order:



After a further two days sight-seeing, for which we were fortunate enough to have glorious weather, I readied my gear the night before, ate a pasta meal and attempted to get to sleep early. Unlike my previous road marathons, which had all been in the UK, my preparation for this one had been very different: I hadn't run since the previous Sunday, and I hadn't carb-loaded, as it was just too tricky remembering to eat six times a day when you're perusing the Louvre or wandering through the Eiffel Tower gardens. On the morning of the race, after a somewhat poor night's sleep (as is quite usual for me before a marathon), I was up at 6:15am for my usual breakfast of porridge and bread and jam, dressed, packed my bag and headed out the door at 7:15am dressed warmly. It soon became apparent that I didn't need

to be dressed for spring: although it was cool in the shade, there was already warmth in the sun, and the forecast had been for beautiful blue skies, so I was starting to anticipate a rather hot run.



After a 15-minute stroll through the quiet Paris streets I reached the Arc de Triomphe and looked around. I had been led to expect signage in English as well as French, and thought the baggage drop would be clearly marked, but it wasn't, and, not really sure what I was doing, just followed the long stream of runners right to the far end of Avenue Foch, where I then queued to go through security and wandered along trying to work out in which tent my baggage needed to be stowed by following some code on my baggage label. That had taken 20 minutes, so it was already 7:50 before I started heading all the way back the way I'd come, past the Arc de Triomphe (no road closure here, there were still cars trying to weave their way through hundreds of runners, sometimes aided by a policeman's whistle), now jogging a little because my pen, the 3-hour group, was due to leave at 8:22. Although the race was to be started in waves, the 3:15 pace group started only a couple of minutes after

my group, followed quickly by the 3:30 group; this meant I hit a bottle-neck where those trying to get to the 3:00 and 3:15 pens were merging with those trying to get into the 3:30 pen, and a proper London tube crush ensued. Emerging through that, I eventually found my start with just 10 minutes to go. You can never give yourself enough time, but the 45 minutes recommended by the marathon guide is clearly not enough – I would recommend arriving at least an hour before your pen is due to leave.

At 8:13 the wheelchair racers started the marathon off, followed by the elite and championship runners at 8:20. My group was next, but it was started in two stages: the left hand side of the Champs Elysées before the right hand side, so being on the right side I spent 2 minutes longer waiting for the klaxon to sound. That meant there were already lots of runners in front of me, and although it didn't matter in the end to me, if you are a 2:45–2:55 runner you would be wise to make sure you line up on the left side of the road.

Just before the start I was wished good luck by a West 4 Harriers runner, and during the race came across a few other local clubs, although I can only remember a Hercules Wimbledon runner now. Considering that 7.5% of the runners participating were from the UK, I saw very few.

And off we went. Despite the first kilometre being gently downhill, it wasn't that quick, with a fair bit of accelerating and decelerating as I either got blocked or passed people. The route leads out to the east, down the Champs Elysées, around the huge square that is the Place De La Concorde, along the Rue de Rivoli until reaching the Place De La Bastille at around 5km. By this time I was already starting to feel the heat and I was already down on my anticipated finish time by about a minute, so I started to realise that this was what my pace was going to be today.



After the Place De La Bastille the route continues easterly and the roads get narrower to normal high-street standard. There were some people watching and cheering from the pavement, but not many. By five miles I felt like I had already run 15. My legs just felt heavy, and my usual marathon pace, where my heart rate is around 150, was feeling very hard and

was ticking over at 4:22/km – about 10s/km slower than it should have been. I can only put this down to the heat. There was a little respite at six miles where we entered the Bois de Vincennes, the largest park in the city, which appeared to have its own micro-climate, and was cool and damp. My memory of the Bois de Vincennes is one of calm and tranquillity. There was literally nobody out supporting, and apart from a few other non-marathon runners, and people walking their dog, it was very empty. All you could hear was the patter of many hundreds of feet. One of the highlights to look out for here is the Chateau des Vincennes, but it is set back from the course and I really didn't take much notice of it.

Still in the Bois de Vincennes, at just after 13k, the route changes course and it starts to head westwards back to the City. Approaching 16k I remember a nice gentle downhill section where I was able to claw back a few lost seconds, but it didn't last for long. The Paris route is not flat – it gradually rises and falls by small amounts quite a deal, and this was another factor that was causing me some mental anguish: all of a sudden I could be feeling great and in the groove because of a slight downhill, but every small incline was a struggle. At least it was cooler in the woods, though this was soon to end as the course entered back into the streets at 19km.



I reached half way in around 1:32:15, so had kept a steady pace of 4:22/km up to that point, which would have resulted in a time I'd have been happy with if I could maintain it, but that was looking unlikely as I was already starting to struggle with the heat. Around the Place De La Bastille we went again, now heading in the opposite direction, and at 23k began the long stretch along the River Seine which would take the runners past Notre Dame, The Louvre and the Eiffel Tower. This stretch was very warm, with little shade from the sun, and somewhere along here I missed one of the water stops due to an ambulance passing slowly alongside me – I didn't want to just dive in front of it for a drink! With the water stops at only every 5k, in hindsight this was a big mistake, because I was gasping by the time I reached the next one (if I was to run the race again, I would definitely carry my own water). There are also a number of underpasses to go through along this stretch, and although this was a descent and ascent that I didn't need, it at least shielded me from the sun for a little while. The crowds had come out at last now that we were passing through the main part of the city again, and at 30k, having just passed the Eiffel Tower, I passed my wife and daughter, who managed a snap of me still looking relatively fresh (I didn't feel it!)



I was still going, but my pace was slowing more and more. At 34k the route turns away from the main roads again and into the City's westerly park, the Bois de Boulogne. I can only remember this being very open with little shade, and by 35k I resorted to my first walk break. I'd never walked in a road marathon before, so was disappointed to have to do this, but I was clearly dehydrated as my heart rate was extremely high for the pace I was managing. The walk break worked, and I was able to run 1–1.5km before I had to stop and walk again. The walking probably lost me three or four minutes overall, so it was no big deal, and there was some good support from the crowd along this stretch that encouraged me to start running again. The finish line was a very welcome sight when it arrived, and from somewhere I still managed to up the pace for the last 400m, but it was a little late. I finished in 3:16:50, some way off my intended 3 hours, but still enough to give me a Good For Age entry to London in 2019.

All in all, my four nights in Paris with the family were excellent, and not something that would have been high on my list of destinations to visit without the marathon entry. The marathon itself was very different from my experience of Brighton and London, the most notable point being the lack of support from the crowds, but I don't think that affects the enjoyment of the race. As an overseas event, I would heartily recommend it, and we certainly felt very welcome in France. One big benefit of Paris over London is that there is (currently) no ballot, and although all the early bird entries were snapped up in the first 55 minutes of being available, entry for April 8th 2018 is currently available for 99 euros, rising to 119 euros after September. It is a beautiful city to run through, and the route does take in some of the best sights, so if you're looking for an overseas race, why not give it a go?

HOW NOT TO TRAIN FOR A MARATHON – MANCHESTER 2017 (by Karim Akhtar)

Last year I ran my first marathon, Brighton 2016, and once I could walk normally again I knew I wanted to do another. I entered Manchester 2017 within a minute of entries being opened and booked my hotel almost a year in advance.

As with Brighton, the Striders' marathon training runs were to be the basis of my training including December 18th along the Wandle Way. I was coughing a little and had felt tired during recent runs, but as I had taken the morning off work to do this for the first time I was going to give it a go. The run started well from Clapham Junction. 3km in and no coughing but my right leg felt tight and eventually I felt like I was limping. I thought about dropping out at 5km, then 10km, then 15km but kept going until we reached central Croydon at 20.5km.

10 days later my legs still felt tight from the run but I jogged up to do the post-Christmas Wednesday run. Under a mile in I stopped and realised something wasn't right. Over Christmas I was busy working, cooking, carrying heavy bags around so not much chance to use my ice packs or rest. I attempted a couple more short runs in the snow of January, cold enough to wear my new LED torch beanie hat from Santa, but running still didn't feel right.

By the end of January, I still couldn't run freely and had lost the first six weeks of my marathon training. Alan Dolton was assisting me as ever and recommended that I see an Osteopath. I went to see Niamh Wright at Croydon Physio and she gave me plenty of twice-daily exercises to do, including various fun hopping exercises and squats. A week later another visit, still no running allowed but cycling was. During this time of no running there were major things going on in my life with family and friends. The very time I needed to run to bring life back in balance a little, I couldn't: the irony was not lost on me. Before my next visit I cycled 12km and 15km; I felt amazing, a complete lift of my frame of mind and ready to take on the world again.

Between each treatment I worked out a new training plan, revised each week that I still wasn't allowed to run. It started off at six weeks of training plus three weeks taper and steadily decreased. I think at one point the plan was to run every other day, not easy when working shifts, and increase the distance by 2–3km each time.

Another week, another visit to Niamh. Still not certain about Manchester but the advice was don't cancel the hotel just yet and I was finally allowed to do some short test runs. Just 2km first, then 3km if all okay, then 5km maximum. Tentative running but all good; sheer joy at being able to run freely again but time to train was fast running out. In an ideal world, the treatment would have continued at the same pace, but I was allowed to try a 10km, probably the definitive test of whether I still had a chance to run my marathon. The advice was to try 10km, then a 12/13km then 15km.

Over eight weeks after overdoing things and missing so much training I was out on the road again for a proper run: 11km, day off; 14km, day off; 18km, all without any problems. A little further than Niamh suggested but I felt good and I think she knew I might be going a little further! Three days after the 18km I ran 25.35km: a big step up and my furthest run since Brighton 2016. I then ran an easy 10km and as if my journey to Manchester wasn't fun enough I managed to catch the flu and had a week off running. Anything else going to happen?!

With nine days to go before my taper was due to start I ran a post-flu 5km to test everything was okay then two days later ran 32.20km (20 miles). From 11km to 32.2km in 3.5 weeks –

probably not your everyday training plan. I then ran my first Wednesday club run of the year plus another 10km plus my first club marathon training run of the year, Regent's Canal (32.26km/20 miles): 52.23 miles in eight days and training complete. Taper time! I attempted a half marathon run a week later but stopped at 16km with tight legs, then some gardening with GoodGym also left me with tight legs, but trips to see Alan did the trick. My idea of gardening is getting the strimmer out twice a year so I probably should know better.

I was told that it always rains in Manchester but the weather app report changed from overcast, to cloudy, to sunny in the week leading up to the marathon. Not what I wanted as I don't run well in heat, but the free version of the app doesn't let me control the weather. I checked in the hotel the afternoon before and found that my view was directly over the Salford branch of the corporation I work for: can't get away from the place! Comfortable though, woke up feeling okay, legs fine, and feasted on Sugar Puffs with UHT milk and bananas. The walk to the marathon village was easy and relaxed, with plenty of people in running shoes going the same way and a nice walk past the Theatre of Dreams on the way. The bag drop was easy, plenty of loos then off to the start line.

I joined the back of the 4hrs pen hoping to run past people at an easy pace at the start to build up confidence. There was the usual 20 mins of shuffling forward before the start down a dual carriageway. For the first couple of miles there seemed to be loads of male runners stood facing various fences, trees, bushes etc. Hilarious. Curiously when we reached some of the posher looking areas nobody was doing such things: discerning runners perhaps!

The course itself is mainly residential roads with a few dual carriageways thrown in, nothing iconic but plenty of room to run. The support was well spread out all the way with no dead areas such as the Road to Hell in Brighton. Having my name on my race number was a nice touch and I remember some shout-outs from children early on and plenty from marshals later on; all helped me along as did spotting our stand-out club colours with Darren Woods (on his way to a PB) and Alastair Smith both way ahead of me coming down the other side of the road. Around half way in Altrincham there was a bridge that we would be returning over after looping around the local town. At this point, this looked like the Forth Road Bridge to me. Note to self: 'Britain's flattest marathon' does not mean it is completely flat.

Up to 26km I was comfortable and surprised that I was well within a 4hrs marathon pace. The gels seemed to work better than my jelly babies the previous year. I knew the heat would slow me down eventually but after my adventures just to get here I was well happy to be where I was and still at a pace I didn't think would happen this time. Then after 26km everything started to fall apart. My right quads started to tightened. I slowed down to manage it and hoped I could get back to my earlier pace but then the left IT band tightened as it compensated for the right leg. Great. I had the same thing two years earlier just before a series of half marathons and Alan had worked his magic and got me back in time. Both sides tightened to the point where I had to walk. I couldn't believe it and with 16km (10 miles) still to go. Unbelievable.

I split each km into 100m walk, 900m run. Fed-up thoughts such as "why do I bother with this?" and "this running thing is pointless" were completely on my mind, generally not a happy bunny, thoroughly fed-up and thinking of giving up running to take up Scrabble instead. The water stations were frequent and well-spaced, with the added bonus of being bottles instead of cups: such a lifesaver being able to sip regularly. I reached 30km and thought I'd keep this walk/run thing going for a bit then decide whether to continue. I reached 32.2km (20 miles) so I had at least matched my training distance. The tight legs didn't ease up so it was either drop out or walk/run to the end. At one point, there was a sign for the next water station and refuge point 400m and I seriously thought about stopping there. I think the only thing that kept me going was not knowing how far the walk from the refuge point to the start/finish line was. A couple of times when I've dropped out of club runs I found the walk

back to the clubhouse to be the longest in the world, so not knowing how far this refuge point was from the end helped me keep going. Walk, run, bottle of water, repeat.

32.2km soon became 35km. As the walk/run continued and the distance left decreased I became more confident of getting there. A stark contrast from 9km earlier when this all started. 37.2 km, only 5km to go, a parkrun, nothing more than a warm-up around the block. 40km, no point stopping now, 2.2km to go. Plenty of encouragement from the marshals. Finally the long, wide, straight road to the finish arch, although the arch looked tiny from how far away I was when I first spotted it. With 200m to go I thought I might as well go for it, if I collapse then the finish line, with people around to help, was the best place to do it. Sprint finish!

I stopped a few metres after the finish line, leaned over, hands on knees and took a moment. A marshal came up to me and kindly asked if I was okay. I replied "yes mate, just ran a marathon," with a big, if tired, smile on my face.

A slow walk across the road to collect my bag and across the quays to the Lowry Centre for an emotional jacket potato (me, not the potato). The previous year I was smiling for a week after completing my first marathon. This time I was just so happy to get across the line after one of the hardest mental battles I've ever had. 'Happy' probably doesn't even come close. Back to the hotel where three Hershey bars and five vanilla custard donuts didn't last long, and eventually off to central Manchester for a pint with my fellow Striders to round off a very good day.



THE ISLE OF WIGHT CHALLENGE APRIL 2017 (by Peter Li)

Friday

Driving to the Isle of Wight on the Friday before a bank holiday: we should have known better! The roads were starting to get busy even though we all had half-days off from work, but we ploughed on regardless. Using a bit of GPS technology we managed to miss most of the bad bits around the M25/M4 and made it down to the outskirts of Portsmouth in pretty much the time we estimated, with only a small detour around Guildford to avoid an incident on the A3. I bit on a piece of toffee and my filling popped out; I thought: that is seriously going to bug me!

So as mentioned getting to the outskirts was relatively easy but the next bit to get to the ferry was another story altogether: it took us almost two hours to crawl through the streets of Portsmouth to get to the ferry, where it turned out that there had been issues with the weather and faulty boats so everything was running about an hour behind: our 8pm departure became a 9pm departure.

The short hop over was uneventful, it took about 45 minutes so quite an expensive trip per mile. Once on the Island the journey from the north (Fishbourne) to the south (Bonchurch) was very quick as everyone seemed to have gone to bed –someone mentioned this place was full of retired people. ☺

We got to the 'apartment' and the promised key was not where it was supposed to be in the key safe, however the front door was open! A few frantic calls to the contact and knocking on various doors did not prove fruitful. By that time it was 23:15 and as we had two kids less than five years old in our party we were all getting annoyed.

We were desperate to find alternative accommodation – we even started contemplating all six of us sleeping in the car – but as we drove up the road we came across a large hotel. Sarah popped to the reception and luckily they were still there. Although they first said they didn't have any suitable rooms, after a bit of prodding they managed to find a couple of rooms that were actually in the middle of some renovation: seeing our desperation they quickly sorted out linen and by 00:00 we were all in bed!

I had to cancel the apartment, which meant losing pretty much all the money we had paid, but that was far from our thoughts at the time.

Saturday

07:00 Early start – before the hotel's breakfast actually started (at 08:00) – oh well, cereal is better than nothing... It turned out that my walking buddy Andy had only had 3 hours sleep: remember those two under-5s?

We drove to the start to register; the process was quick and simple due to the staggered start – I think from 07:00 to 14:00 that day in 20 minute blocks. At 09:10 we got called to the area where we proceeded to do a Zumba workout. ☺

At 09:20 on the dot we were sent off.

Progress was good; the terrain was mostly well-maintained grass and we averaged about 10 minutes per km. Quite early on we picked up another walking buddy, Lewis, who had started off as a team but everyone else had dropped out before the day, so he was on his own.

Lewis is a soldier who had tickets for the Army vs Navy game at Twickenham that day, but as he was committed to a charity he decided to do it, even though he was nursing blisters from a previous training walk. He was supposed to do the overnight option and although the organisers had put him in the 2-day category he was planning to go through the night.



Terrain throughout the event was variable: we had sand, mud, pebbles, road, pavement, up hills, down hills, pretty much everything; our speed was affected a lot, probably down to 20 minutes a kilometer at some points!

One thing that this challenge does is expose any niggles you have. My knee (which I had surgery on years ago) started to stiffen up – luckily I had something to strap it up with which helped immensely; also the odd ibuprofen took the edge off any pain.

The 106 km course is broken up by rest stops at roughly 11km to 17km intervals. At each stop are snacks, water, energy drinks etc. and at some are hot food; I fully participated in those stops. ☺ We blasted through the early stops just taking some snacks and refilling water etc. and changing socks if needed.

There are four distances and three categories in the event: 26km, 52km, 106km (2 days) and 106km non-stop (our distance), for runners, joggers and walkers. At the various finishes people drop off, so by 52km only the people doing the overnight are still on the course.

We had completed the first 52km in about 11 hours, so maintaining our speed we estimated a finish in 22 hours.

It was dark when we got to the 52km half way mark. At that time unfortunately we lost Lewis as his feet were in a terrible state, so he decided to try to come back the next day at 06:00 to finish the 2nd half (we found out afterwards that Lewis didn't make it back and had to withdraw).

The section from 52km to the 66km rest stop is mostly inland so lots of pavements and roads; during this part a couple of girls were handing out bits of paper with the work 'moral support' on them, I found that sweet, I think I still have it somewhere. ☺

The 66km to 81km section was very eventful: Andy's energy levels took a massive dip and he was struggling to walk and wasn't positive about whether he would be able to make it away from there at all. I forced him to take an energy gel and immediately he started perking up. The weather although dry was cold and windy. We hobbled to the rest stop which perversely was up a hill! We both tried to get some sleep to recharge our batteries; I got about 35 minutes and I had to wake Andy up after an hour otherwise he would have stayed there!

Sunday

At this point the sun had started to come up which gave us both renewed energy so we headed off to get to the 95km rest stop in Ventnor.

We got another morale boost at the stop as Sarah and Andy's family had decided to meet us there; it was nice to see their faces. ☺

So, only one more chunk to do, and we set off from Ventnor for the 11km section to Chale. I was feeling quite energised so suggested we try a little run/jog and funnily enough I felt it gave my walking legs a rest; I think it was because we were striding further and therefore taking pressure off our legs/feet – or maybe that was just all in my mind. That burst really helped our speed, although we were no way near the initial speed: by this point we just wanted to finish and had given up on any specific times.

For the last 5km we picked up another walker, Amy, who had gone through the same issues with speed that we had had; she was also just looking to finish.

With 1km to go we could pretty much see the flags and parked cars and that really gave us a boost. No more running though, but we walked with purpose and crossed the line in 26 hours 54 minutes.

As soon as we got into the tent for something to eat the rain started: phew, that was lucky! ☺



All in all this was a good experience. It's not one that I am planning on repeating any time soon, but Andy is making noises about wanting to finish it in under 24 hours!!!

Oh well he can do it with Lewis who's decided that he has unfinished business on the IOW Challenge. 😊

Recovery has been slow but sure; each day is better than the previous. I was lucky not to get any bad blisters, just the knee to settle down and a nasty rash under where I had strapped up the knee, then I'll be back to running on Wednesday...

A few other metrics:

- Quickest in our category: 10 hours 3 minutes (running)
- Slowest: 36 hours
- Total number in our category: 823
 - Did not finish: 28% (232)
- Estimated steps: 150,000
- Estimated calories burnt: 10,000

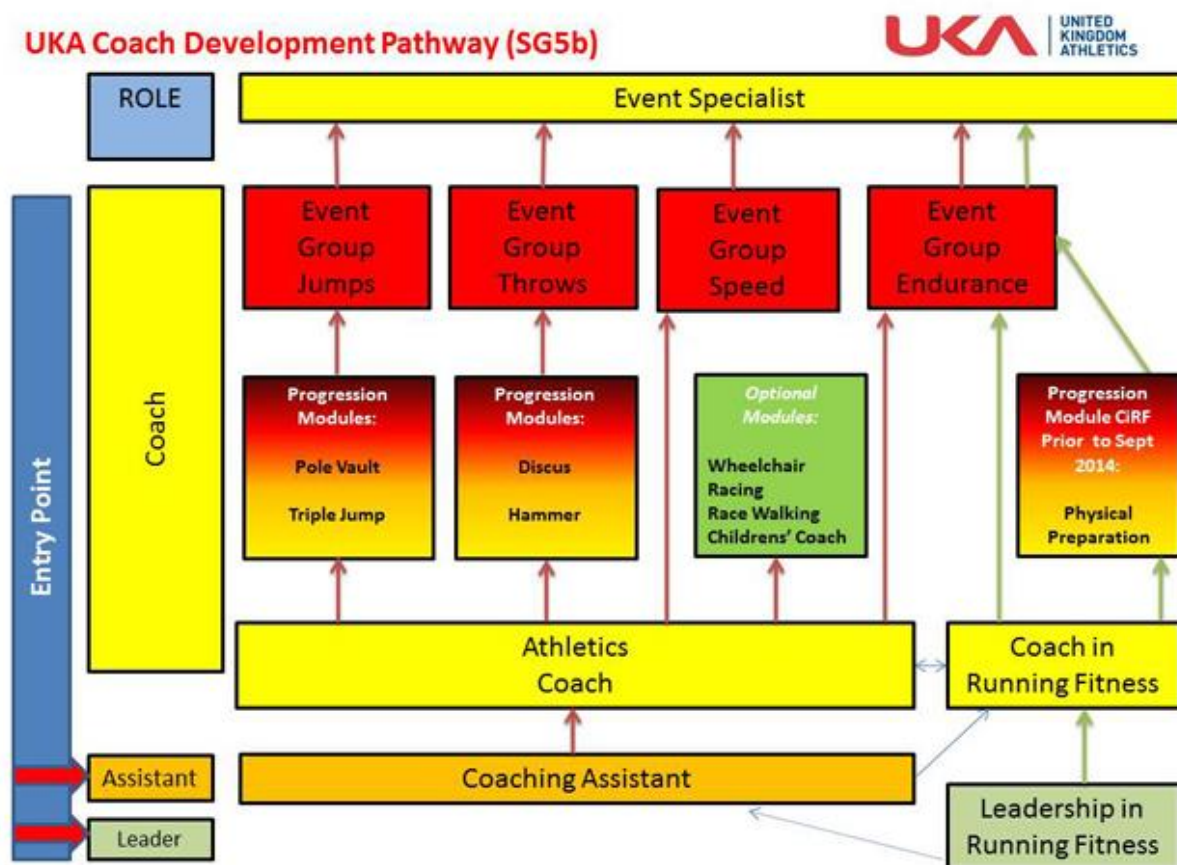
LEARNING TO COACH (by Simon Ambrosi)

To coach or not to coach!

I recently qualified as a running coach and I found it a very rewarding but not always straightforward process. So I thought I'd write something for anyone else thinking of going down the same path.

Leader, assistant, coach?

For a while I had been seeing emails about various training courses and fancied doing something myself but I didn't know where to start. Become a leader, assistant or a coach? For anyone looking to go into this sort of thing a few years ago it was simple, you trained to become a level 1 coach, then you could progress to level 2, 3, ... Nowadays there are a few decisions to make: see the diagram below. For me, I knew I wanted to become a coach (some may want to stop at the assistant leader level, equivalent to the old level 1) but I still had to choose between an Athletics Coach or the relatively new Coach in Running Fitness.



If you want to be able to coach someone in any of the field events (jumps and throws) then it's simple, you go down the Athletics Coach route. However, if you're only interested in running, it's not simple. Officially, if you're a Coach in Running Fitness you can train endurance athletes on the track but you can't train the same athletes for track races. This means for training anyone interested in the sprints, 100m, 200m, 400m, and probably 800m

and 1,500m you would be expected to become an Athletics Coach, but for 5,000m, 10,000m or older athletes it's a bit greyer.

I couldn't make my mind up which way to go on the coaching choice but had another decision to make first. Do I first become a Coaching Assistant or Leader in Running Fitness, another recent qualification? First of all I considered the main differences. The run leader course is 1-day while coaching assistant is 2-day, but neither have a formal assessment at the end. The Coaching Assistant course involves taking part in most track and field events throughout the weekend (no pole vault unfortunately) but just to understand the basic principles, not to be expected to compete in them. I decided not to rule out any options and that it would be quite fun to learn about all the field events, especially as I can't throw for toffee, so went for the Coaching Assistant course.

Finding a course you want to do in a reasonable timeframe can be tricky but if you're willing to travel it increases your options. The UKA website has all the information you need: <https://www.ulearnathletics.com/qualification/index>. My course was at a leisure centre in Horsham on a Saturday and Sunday with a dozen other trainees. These included teen athletes being roped into coaching younger athletes at their clubs, parents of athletes who were already helping with coaching informally via a club, and 'athletes' such as myself that want to get more involved. Of course we also had our trainers, who were all great UK Athletics coaches with a wealth of experience and knowledge that they were more than happy to pass on.

Coach in Running Fitness - CiRF

I learnt a lot over the weekend, and while it was fun throwing a 16lb shot into a sand pit it felt like I was better off specialising in endurance running than trying to cover all the different events when it was unlikely I would be training the next Jess Ennis-Hill or Katarina Johnson-Thompson.



I just had to find the next available CiRF course and this happened to be in East London, starting a couple of months later. Because of availability of courses it's well worth planning ahead and seeing where and when future courses are being run, especially as the coaching course takes around nine months from the initial 2-day session at the start, to the assessment day at the end, when you hopefully get your licence.

Most of the people with me on the CiRF course had attended the Leadership in Running Fitness course. I found that they seemed to be a bit more vague on some of the basics that were expected to already be known, so I had no regret in my choice of becoming an assistant coach rather than a run leader. There are a lot of really interesting topics covered on the course such as energy systems, uphill/downhill running technique and fundamental running skills, and to be honest you only really touch the surface on a lot of them.

Knowledge of the material is assessed via an online test which needs to be completed before the assessment day.

Assessment day

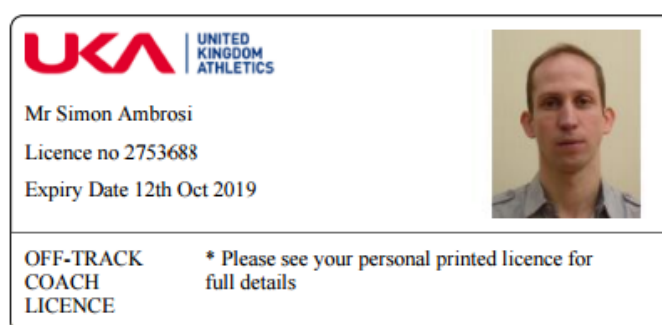
Now you might be thinking six months is a long time to prepare for a 40-question test; the truth is the time is to allow you to cover everything else you need for the assessment day. This can be broken down into two parts. The first half of the assessment day saw all the trainees put into groups of 5–6 and we took it in turns demonstrating we could lead a safe and successful training session, including warm-up, drills, main session and cool down. To help me prepare, I spent a few months assisting Alan Dolton with his Tuesday and Thursday track sessions at the Arena and it was good to get his thoughts and feedback throughout. Luckily for me, on the day I was picked to go first which meant I could relax a bit once I was done. However, when we weren't being assessed we were athletes for the other trainees and yes, this meant I had to take part in five training sessions in one morning!

The other and definitely more time-consuming half of the prep for the assessment day involved coaching an individual athlete. Until I did this course I had no idea how much was involved in properly coaching someone. To start with, you need to carry out an initial assessment looking at their running technique in different situations, each time comparing this to the officially recognised 'correct' model of running technique and identifying any differences. The next stage is, with the athlete, to come up with an 8-week running target and then create a training plan around it. The final stage is to help the athlete follow the plan, guiding and offering advice where possible and helping them through unforeseen difficulties which may make sticking to the plan very difficult. The latter is something which was a reality for me and I learnt a lot more from this than if everything had gone completely smoothly. The plan itself, as well as how everything went along the way, was discussed with a UK Athletics coach to allow them to see if I was capable of coaching properly and thankfully, they thought I was!

Coaching in practice

I am now the proud owner of a UKA coaching licence, which I've been told gets me free access to all the usual out of bounds areas at the Olympics – with the small caveat that I need to be coaching an athlete competing there. But really my education as a coach is only just beginning and I'm keen to put it into practice as soon as I can. I've recently moved from the Arena track sessions to join Chris Morton on the Tuesday night grass track sessions and am slowly trying to get more involved and test out what I've learnt.

So, if anyone fancies being a human guinea pig and having me shout at them to 'drive their arms' more or just wants to talk about the process of becoming a coach you know where to find me.



Simon Ambrosi (simon.ambrosi78@gmail.com)

SURREY ROAD LEAGUE TABLES (as at 31 May)

MEN

Reigate	69
Ranelagh	68
Woking	61
London City	59
Croydon Harriers	58
Guildford	58
Stragglers	54
Striders of Croydon	54
Sutton	51
South London	50
Fulham	46
Wimbledon Windmilers	46
Epsom Oddballs	44
Tadworth	44
Clapham	43
Epsom & Ewell	38
Hercules Wimbledon	37
Horley	36
West 4 Harriers	35
Herne Hill	30
Walton	29
Thames Hare & Hounds	23
Barnes	22
Collingwood	22
Camberley	18
Dorking	15
26.2 RRC	14
Windle Valley	13
Redhill Royal Mail	12
Lingfield	9



Our men's team at the Richmond Half-Marathon

WOMEN

Ranelagh 70
Stragglers 65
London City 64
Epsom Oddballs 61
Woking 61
Sutton 58
South London 54
Horley 51
Elmbridge 50
Clapham 48
Striders of Croydon 44
Wimbledon Windmilers 42
Croydon Harriers 40
Fulham 34
Collingwood 27
West 4 Harriers 26
Epsom & Ewell 25
26.2 RRC 24
Guildford 22
Tadworth 22
Epsom Allsorts 21
Reigate 21
Thames Hare & Hounds 20
Hercules Wimbledon 19



Our teams at the Sutton 10K

COMPETITIVE HIGHLIGHTS: MARCH – MAY 2017

On 5 March Rachel Lindley had an outstanding run at the Cambridge Half-Marathon, setting a new club women's record of 85 minutes 06 seconds. This was more than half a minute faster than the previous club record, set by Debbie Picott at Wokingham in 1988. Two weeks later Phil Coales ran a personal best 74 minutes 37 seconds in the Reading Half-Marathon, which lifted him to fifth place in Striders' all-time club rankings.

The seventh Croydon Half-Marathon took place on 2 April, and was won by Chris Wright of Nene Valley, who ran 72 minutes 19 seconds. Striders were led by Liam Redmond who placed ninth in 83 minutes 11 seconds. Rob Lines was 11th (83.42) and first in the M45 age-group, while Andy Perks was 14th (85.47). The first woman to finish was Carole Penlington of Blackheath & Bromley, who finished 20th overall in 87 minutes 08 seconds. Striders' women were led by Serena Stracey who was the fourth woman to finish, placing 46th overall in 96 minutes 16. Natalie Clerke was 116th (1.53.16) and Yasmin Anderson 133rd (1.57.13). Striders won both the men's and women's team events. On the same day, Krzysztof Klidzia set a club over-50 record of 77 minutes 44 seconds at the Paddock Wood Half-Marathon.

Striders did well to win the East Surrey League for only the second time in the club's history, despite only finishing fourth in the final match (the road race at Ewell on 6 April). Andy Perks won the individual over-40 title and Matt Stone won the individual over-50 title.

James Bennett had an excellent run to finish 158th in the London Marathon on 23 April, setting a new club record of 2 hours 35 minutes 43 seconds. Krzysztof Klidzia placed 28th in the over-50 category (2.48.20). Alastair Falconer ran a personal best 2 hours 50 minutes 51, placing him 15th on Striders' all-time club rankings. There were also personal bests for Mike Stewart (2.57.39) and Liam Redmond (3.00.26). Striders' women were led by Rachel Lindley who set a new club over-35 record of 3 hours 08 minutes 17.

Peter Mills placed eleventh out of 621 finishers in the Richmond Half-Marathon on 30 April, recording 76 minutes 05 seconds. Matthew Stone also ran very well to set a new club over-55 record of 84 minutes 55, finishing 52nd, while Andy Perks placed 57th (85.34).

In the Sutton 10-kilometre road race on 7 May, Striders were led by Graeme Drysdale who placed 65th in 39 minutes 17. Andy Perks was 79th (40.01), with Mick Turner 85th (40.11). Striders' women were led by Serena Stracey who was the 18th woman to finish, recording 43 minutes 14. Michelle Clarke was 42nd (46.54) and Selena Wong 58th (49.24).

In the first Southern Veterans League match of the season, at Kingsmeadow on 8 May, Striders' men did well to place fourth of the seven competing clubs (beating local rivals Croydon Harriers), while their women were fifth. Striders' leading points-scorer was Paul Cripps, who won the over-50 long jump with a leap of 4.39 metres, placed second in both the 100 metres (15.0) and 1500 metres (5.34.6), and placed fourth in the discus (20.60) and hammer (14.69). Julian Spencer-Wood was third in the over-60 400 metres in a club over-65 record of 73.4 seconds. For Striders' women, Sandra Francis won the over-60 long jump with a club age-group record of 2.99 metres.

Both Striders' men and women placed fifth in their second Southern Veterans League match of the season, at Ewell on 22 May. Striders' leading scorer was again Paul Cripps who won the over-50 triple jump (9.74), was second in the 200 metres (29.0) and third in the shot (8.14). Julian Spencer-Wood ran well to win the over-60 800 metres (2.42.7), while Alan Dolton was third in the over-60 3000 metres (12.44.2). For Striders' women, Steph Upton was third in the over-35 discus (10.89) and fourth in the 800 metres (3.05.4).

20 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN SPRING / SUMMER 1997

The twelfth Croydon 10K was held on 6 April. The winner was Barry Cooke of Croydon Harriers in 33 minutes 41. The first Strider was Lee Morgan who finished sixth in 34 minutes 53. Colin Cotton was 23rd (38.20) and Keith Sheppard 25th (38.47). Former Strider Simon Morris ran well to place ninth in 36 minutes 40, which would have been a club over-50 record if he had retained his club membership. The first woman to finish was Viv Mitchell of South London Harriers, who placed 34th overall (39.40).

The East Surrey League held its annual road race at Ewell two days later. Lee Morgan placed seventh (23.21) with Eric Parker eighth (23.33), Tony Sheppard 12th (24.00) and Gerry Crispie completing the scoring team in 16th (24.38). John McGilvray ran 25.32 for second in the over-50 category. Striders placed second in the team event and fourth in the overall table, behind Box Hill Racers, Croydon Harriers and Hercules-Wimbledon.

The 17th London Marathon took place five days later, on 13 April. The first local runner was John Fitzpatrick of Croydon Harriers, who ran a lifetime best of 2 hours 31 minutes 23.

The Surrey Veterans' Championships were held at Tooting on 24 May. Striders' Kevin Burnett had a very successful afternoon, winning the over-55 shot with a putt of 6 metres 51, and taking second place in the 100 metres (15.0), 200 metres (31.4), javelin (24.16) and hammer (15.30). Future Strider Alan Dolton won the over-40 1500 metres in 4 minutes 32.1. The oldest Croydon medallist was Harriers' stalwart Ken Crooke, who won the over-65 5000 metres in 24 minutes 38.1. (Ken died in December 2015: his obituary is in the March 2016 issue of this magazine.)

Striders' Eric Parker had an excellent summer in 1997. On 25 May he placed third in the Holland Sports 10K in a lifetime best 34 minutes 29, while on 15 June he set a lifetime best of 2 hours 53 minutes 18 in the Potteries Marathon. He also set lifetime bests of 56 minutes 04 in the Thames Towpath 10-mile race and 75 minutes 35 in the Southend Half-Marathon.

Three Croydon athletes were selected for the World Championships in Athens in August. Both Donna Fraser and Michelle Pierre ran in the 4 x 400 metre relay. This was Michelle's first major Games: earlier in the year she had run a personal best of 52.77 for the 400 metres. The British women placed sixth in the final. The other Croydon athlete was shot putter Judy Oakes, who placed 14th in her event.

At club level, Croydon Harriers' women suffered from a lack of distance runners and had a disappointing season, finishing bottom of Division Three in the UK Womens League. Croydon Harriers' men's team finished 18th in Southern League Division One, while South London Harriers were 24th in Division Three and Holland Sports were 20th in Division Seven. The Holland Sports team included several Striders. Among their best performances were Lee Morgan's club record of 15 minutes 24.1 for the 5000 metres and Eric Parker's 10 minutes 36.7 for the 3000 metre steeplechase.

Striders enjoyed their second season of track competition in the Southern Veterans League (Southwest London Division). Their women did very well to place third of the eight competing clubs, while the men were sixth. Wendy Smith set a club record of 6.70 metres for the women's triple jump. Linda Daniel set club over-35 records of 33.3 for the 200 metres and 2 minutes 47.0 for the 800 metres. Georgina Dumler set a club over-35 record of 75.0 for the 400 metres (subsequently beaten by Serena Stracey in 2011). For the men, team captain John McGilvray produced several good performances including 12 minutes 21.4 for the 3000m steeplechase. Mick Gambrill set a club over-40 javelin record of 28 metres 84.

10 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN SUMMER 2007

The Dorking 10-mile road race, which incorporated the Surrey Championships, took place on 3 June. Striders were again led home by Justin Macenhill, who placed 27th of the 600 finishers, recording 62 minutes 48 seconds. Only a week earlier he had run a personal best of 2 hours 48 minutes 53 seconds in the Edinburgh Marathon.

The third Rosenheim League match of the season took place at Tooting on 6 June. A very good all-round performance by multi-eventer Yasmin Ramsay took Striders' women to third place in the match. Yasmin finished a close second in her first 400 metre race, and showed her team spirit by taking third place in the discus and fourth in the high jump. Striders' men faced strong opposition and had to settle for sixth place in their match.

The third Southern Veterans League match of the season was at Ewell on 11 June. Striders placed equal fourth. Our best event was the 5000 metres where Bob Ewen, competing against younger opponents, ran 18 minutes 17.7 seconds to place third in the over-35 race.

The fourth Rosenheim League match took place at Tooting on 20 June. Striders' women placed equal third, thanks to Yasmin Ramsay who had another eventful evening with third places in the 200 metres, long jump and javelin. For Striders' men, Matt Morgan also ran well to place third in both the 400 metre hurdles (76.2) and the 1500 metres (4.28.9), while Darren Piper was third in the 400 metres (58.7). The team placed fifth in the match.

The Dysart 10 kilometre race, which was the third race in the Surrey Road League, took place on 24 June. Striders' first man home was Justin Macenhill, who placed 14th of the 400 finishers in 35 minutes 29 seconds.

The final Southern Veterans League match of the season took place at Croydon Arena on 2 July. Striders' best event was the 2000 metre walk, where Dave Hoben was second in the over-50 race with Mick Turner third in the over-35 race. Striders' men placed fourth in the match, and were also fourth in the final league table. Striders' women finished sixth.

In the Rosenheim League match at Tooting on 4 July, Samantha White made an excellent debut for Striders' women, placing third in the shot with a club record of 6.96 metres. She was also third in the discus (17.31). Both Striders' men and women placed fifth in the match.

The Elmbridge 10 kilometre road race, which was the fourth race in the Surrey Road League, took place on 15 July. Striders' first man home was veteran David Batten, who placed 56th of the 525 finishers, and fourth in the over-50 category, recording 38 minutes 52.

The final Rosenheim League match of the season took place at Tooting on 25 July. Striders' man of the match was Duncan Lancashire, who took third place in both the 400 metres (59.2) and 3000 metres (9.34.0). Matt O'Hare placed third in the javelin (29.42) and fourth in the shot (7.95), both these marks being new club over-35 records. Striders' men placed fifth in the match, and fifth in the overall league table. Our women held on to fourth place despite forfeiting the final match.

The Belgrave 5 kilometre road race, which incorporated the Surrey Championships and was the final event in the Surrey Road League, took place on 12 August. Striders' first man home was Duncan Lancashire, who placed 14th of the 213 finishers, covering the undulating course in 16 minutes 34. David Batten won the over-50 category, placing 51st overall in 18 minutes 28.



**Yasmin Ramsay leads from Sarah Guest of Croydon Harriers
in a Rosenheim League race at Tooting
(photo by Robin Jamieson)**

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