

Striders of Croydon

Newsletter

Spring 2012



**The Start of the Second Croydon Half
500+ Runners Take To Our Fine, Sunny Streets!**

Chairman's Corner

Good luck to the 50 odd of you that are running Marathons in the next two months. Especially to Peter Atwell who only has to finish at Edinburgh to claim the club M65 record and give me something to aim for later in the year. I hope you all enjoyed the marathon training runs this year we have been amazingly lucky with the weather. I think the only run you got wet on was the Botley Hill run. I suspect we will do much the same schedule next year but if anyone has any suggestions for different route please let me know. The only one we might do differently is the Kingston Run. Start in Kingston, run the loop round Hampton Court and Bushy Park first and then head down the river to Clapham Junction.

The Half Marathon went very well not least because of the superb weather. All the feedback I have received commented on the support and encouragement they received from the marshals. Again well done and thank you to everyone who supported the event.

The summer is coming and its back to running off road on Wednesdays, speed training in Lloyd Park, 1 mile time trails once a month, some fairly informal track and field events in the Rosenheim League and also the Vets Southern League, the club handicaps which kick off on 23rd May. On top of all that we will also fit in a few away runs and bike rides when the opportunity arises.

Finally back to the Half Marathon. It all came together on the day and although practically I do a lot of the admin work as I have the time I couldn't have done it without the input and advice from the Croydon Half committee. John G, John H, Kath, Susan, Hannah Amir and later Roy and also Nicola and Mike Fleet from Croydon Harriers. So partly as reminder to me for next year here is the short version of how to organise a Half Marathon.

Sunday 3rd April 2011 - Watching the finish of our first half marathon with the guys from streets ahead who supplied the lead and sweeper cars we though it went surprisingly well. The title "streets ahead Croydon Half Marathon" sounded good they offered to sponsor us, Sunday 1st April seemed like a good date and that was it committed!.

Two weeks later - The general feedback after the event had been that it would be much better if we could keep the whole event up at Sandilands so tried for ages to come up with a variant of the route which would allow us to start and finish at the gates. Finally gave up and went for the option with the finish 200 yards down Sandilands and the finish in the grounds,

September – Applied for the licence, requested UKA to come and recertify the course distance, updated the website, checked our sponsors were still on board. Opened on line entry requested a meeting with the council and we are off.

October – rather slow entry compared with previous year thought we would be lucky to get 500 this time.

November – met with council and police – all supportive and much preferred the position of the start it saved having to close Chepstow Road. We now have to pay £136 for road closures. Agreed closures and parking restrictions on Grimwade and Sandilands.

streets ahead offered to print new signs for us, the previous year we had borrowed them from Croydon Harriers. Walked round the course doing an early risk assessment, lots of road works ☹. Decided what signs we really needed designed some new ones – largely by copying and pasting from the Running Imp catalogue. Book the loos, the ambulance and notify the trams

December - entries still trickling in maybe we will get to 600 which means maybe 500 starters. Kath has some suppliers lined up for goody bags. I hear John Querstret the man due to certify the length of the course has injured himself ☹.

January - Check with Nestle and Costco re water supplies. Both OK for this year but probably the last time “It’s the recession you know” no Fruit Pastilles ☹
Start digging out stock from the store, order more ties more tape, more safety pins. Have a debate on T shirts versus medals. Medals win they are cheaper. Couldn’t find a reasonable design so did our own with the Striders Logo the sample that came back from Running Imp was surprisingly good so went for it. Ordered 600.
The entries keeping coming in, maybe we will make 700.
Hannah puts out call for helpers.

February – The entries keep coming look like we will make 750 maybe 650 runners. Up the order for medals to 700. Kath sees if she can get some more stock for goodys bags. Meet with Michelle and man with the P.A. to survey the site. Decide to go with one for the grounds and one for the top of my car for the start!
EA rules have changed. I am now referee Nicola Fleet is adjudicator

March – Discover two people have managed to enter the 2011 event on Runners World!!! Decide to freeze entry at 750 the licence limit. Meet with the Fleets to discuss start/ finish arrangements have long discussion on best way communication how many laps the runners have to do and come up with the sign you might have notice at the 200M to go mark.
Hannah has collected a long list of helpers. I match them up with the jobs marshal list and discover we are about 10 short.
Told we will only get 1200 bottles of water – probably not enough so stock up on cups and water containers. Traffic Management Order published. I note that they have given us permission to prevent parking on Radcliffe Road and Ranmore, not on Grimwade and Sandilands. However no one reads it so I wonder why bother!.
The route measurer is finally fit. We cycle round the course and confirm that my gmap measurement of the route is only about 2 yards out. Get more offers of helpers from streets ahead and nightwatch. I now have too many helpers ☺.

Final Wednesday – goody bag packing, we pack around 600 in an hour or so. It took me three days the previous year.

Final Friday – Council deliver cones, Michelle and I collect Radios and P.A. system we get lecture on how to put it together. Richard collects all the stuff from my garage. John Foster collects water from costco. Discover we have 1750 bottles not 1200, plenty enough.

Final Saturday – Sort out signs have to go and buy yet more ties. Saturday night two teams of 4 of us put up around 100 signs in about 1hr 45 mins.

Sunday at the club house at 6:30. The gates are locked! No sign of Steve! Turns out he is in the club house waiting for us. People start turning up. Tents start going up first runner arrives at 7:00!
And we are off.

And after all that we only had 515 finishers a 30% drop out rate same as last year. So I needn't have worried about numbers of goody bags and water and I've got nearly 200 medals left over.

The only real cock up we failed to check the sex of the leading lady before announcing the results ☹️

I finally get round to reading the small print on the UKA guidelines for road races and discover since we had more than 500 runners we are supposed to have a doctor on site. Just as I hear someone died at the finish at Reading. Thank goodness that the worse we had was a bleeding toe.

Thank you again to everyone who helped make this such an enjoyable and successful event. Although there was a lot of work building up to it you all knew what to do on the day and for me at least a surprisingly relaxing day 😊.

We've still to confirm how much money we made for the charities but it will be around £9000.

Next year it will be on Sunday 7th April.

Robin

And From the Half to the Full....

Me, me mates and me marathon – by Stuart Hills

I suppose it all starts in earnest at Christmas. You know you're going to be running a Spring marathon and the training planners of Striders have in place a series of Sunday specials to encourage, cajole and improve the possibility that you may actually get to the start line on your allotted marathon day.

Club physio Alan Dolton, mentor and guide to the waifs and strays of Striders, says this is his busiest time of year. The aches, pains and heartaches seem to find their way to the House of Pain on a fairly regular basis between Christmas and April. Having running a couple of halves in the Autumn at Barns Green and Benidorm and drunk far too much at the Brighton 10k I was in a reasonable state of readiness to tackle the never ending training which was to start Christmas week. Dressed a la Michelin Man plus hat, gloves and obligatory polar buff I was gradually stepping up the frequency, mileage and intensity in readiness for the first Sunday event The Polar Run via the White Bear, North Pole Lane and Iceland in West Wickham. The following week was a train to London Bridge with a run to Greenwich and back, stopping for history lessons along the way and finished off with a Café Rouge breakfast.

Two local runs followed, to Beckenham and the rather challenging but enjoyable Riddlesdown, before January ended with a train journey to Clapham Junction and a run back via the occasionally picturesque Wandle Way. With all the midweek runs my mileage was gradually increasing and the feeling of running taking over my life was all around me.



February dawned and brought with it some snowfall to accompany us around the Three Commons route via Keston. The aches and pains were near the surface but we bravely soldiered on, hoping to feel the benefit at sometime in the future.

The following week was my nemesis – the North Downs Way. Having volunteered to lead the middle group, even though I hadn't run the route previously, we set off by train to Merstham and the 15 or so mile run back to Sandilands. The snow and cold weather were still with us and Robin had kindly printed off a map for me to follow. "Quite straightforward," says Robin. "Mmm," think I, warily.

He was to provide car support with jelly babies and water and I decided my best strategy was to keep the fast group in my sights until the North Downs Way. It was only when this strategy fell apart that I realised the difference between the fast group and the mid-paced group was pretty obvious and the clue was in the names! So there we were, clambering up the big, long, snow covered mountain with nobody in front of us and I made a little mistake – turned left instead of right, and that was the beginning of our troubles. A phone call from Robin enquiring as to our whereabouts as he had seen the fast and slow groups go past him, meant an about turn and, after what seemed like an age, we eventually got back on track only to encounter injuries, extreme weariness and feelings of mutiny from the troops. When we arrived at Limpsfield Road, buses were caught, phone calls were made requesting lifts and people were waving goodbye to me as I plodded back alone to Sandilands, eventually racking up over 20 miles! This was definitely one of those runs I was pleased to see the back of.

The following week was Route 21 to Ladywell – flat, no snow and a route I actually knew! February ended for me with a half in Torrevieja, this year measured correctly, in 24 degrees.

The first week of March was Botley Hill – another challenge with strong winds and driving rain which I believe toughened up a lot of Striders and, from a personal point, I can say the Guinness never tasted better in the club house bar on my return. The Spitfire 20 came a-calling and, on the advice of Coach Dolton, I decided to run this at my proposed marathon pace. Carmen decided to join me and we kept a steady pace all the way round in near perfect conditions.

This left one last long run at Kingston - and I wanted to do the extended run of 22 miles around Hampton Court and the stunning Bushy Park. On another glorious Spring morning, with bike support from Robin and Steph and passing the Striders who had travelled by train, it was nice to get the last long run in the bag. As part of the taper, the Croydon Half, proudly sponsored by Streets Ahead, and ably directed by Chairman Robin and his vast support team, was targeted. Carmen and I again decided to stick with our marathon pacing, this time joined by Philippa and, for around eight miles until she could contain herself no longer, Tina Mac. Having marshalled last year and run it this year I can genuinely say what a great event in which to take part.

So, as we all wait, in taper time, somewhat impatiently, imagining aches, willing the day to come, I would like to wish all my training chums the very best for their respective marathons and I hope you've all enjoyed the training and preparation as much as me.

Running For George - Carmen & Phillipa Somerset

We are both grateful to Striders for our marathon places for this year's Virgin London Marathon, which we both got through the club ballot. Eager to do the club proud, (well try!) we are looking forward to lacing up our trainers, and putting in the miles.

The focus for our training took a very unexpected turn in early January, our Stepfather George died very suddenly. We both decided that despite this terrible situation we must carry on running and training for the marathon, and we *must* run this for George.

Through the cold runs in January and February (let's not forget the Merstham 15!) when all we wanted to do was stop, we both carried on, continuing to run, with Striders, with each other and Running For George.

As 22nd April looms, ever closer we have mixed feelings for many reasons. One of the charities that we are fundraising for is Guide Dogs, in memory of George.

Please help us and support us by making a donation
<http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/team/runningforgeorge>

See you all in The Builders for a much needed pint.

Carmen and Philippa

x

Getting There - by Linda Daniel

Remember when Persian met Greek face to face?
Well, that was the start of the Marathon race.
You wouldn't remember, you're younger than me –
Or were you around in 490 BC?

The year 96, in Victoria's reign,
Saw Greeks lining up and the race run again.
With free shoes and clothes for the hero who won –
And chocolate, too, weighing nearly a ton.

Today it means jogging for twenty-six miles,
With men of all ages in various styles,
And nurses and postmen and waiters with trays,
And bankers from Boston and housewives from Hayes.

From Greenwich to Westminster, yard after yard,
A test for the best and the brave breathing hard,
The hale and hardy, dustman and don,
With half the world watching and cheering them on.

Good luck to all Striders running the London Marathon – Linda

HISTORY OF THE OLYMPIC MARATHON - By Alan Dolton

The modern Olympic Games were first held in Athens in 1896. The International Olympic Committee had been set up two years earlier with Demetrius Vikelas of Greece as President and Baron Philippe de Coubertin of France as Secretary-General. De Coubertin was largely responsible for ensuring that the Games included a long-distance race, which was held over a 40-kilometre course from Marathon to

Athens, to commemorate a legendary run by a Greek messenger in 490BC (bringing news to Athens of a Greek victory over a Persian army). There were 18 starters, and the early leaders were Edwin Flack of Australia, who had already won the 800 metres and 1500 metres, and Lermusiaux of France. However they both dropped out of the race, and the winner was the Greek runner Spiridon Louis, who covered the course in 2 hours 58 minutes 50. Another Greek, Charilaos Varilakos, was second in 3 hours 6 minutes 03.

The next Olympics were held in Paris in 1900, and again the host country provided the first two finishers. The course was 40.26 kilometres long, and on a very hot day, the winner was Michel Theato in 2 hours 59 minutes 45. Only two other runners finished in less than four hours.

The third Olympics were held in St Louis in 1904. The marathon reverted to the original distance of 40 kilometres. The winner, Tom Hicks, had been born in Birmingham but had emigrated to the USA as a child. He recorded 3 hours 28 minutes 53. Albert Corey of France was second in 3 hours 34 minutes 52.

The 1908 Olympics were held in London and the marathon course was longer than in the previous three Olympics. It started in the grounds of Windsor Castle and finished at the White City Stadium, and measured 26 miles 385 yards. As in 1896, the early leaders started too fast: Jack Price of England led at the 13-mile mark in 75 minutes 13, but dropped out a mile later. At 20 miles Charles Hefferon of South Africa led by four minutes, but he slowed badly and at the 25-mile mark he was overtaken by Dorando Pietri of Italy. Pietri entered the stadium in the lead, but collapsed on the track and was helped across the line by concerned officials, being timed at 2 hours 54 minutes 47. The first runner to cross the line unaided was Johnny Hayes of the USA, who recorded 2 hours 55 minutes 19 and was awarded the gold medal. Hefferon took the silver medal in 2 hours 56 minutes 06.

At the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm, the marathon was held over 25 miles (40.2 kilometres). In hot conditions, the first two finishers were both from South Africa: Ken McArthur won in 2 hours 36 minutes 55 with Christian Gitsham second in 2 hours 37 minutes 52. Francisco Lazaro of Portugal collapsed in the heat and died in hospital on the following day.

After the First World War, the Olympics resumed in 1920 in Antwerp. The marathon was held over the longest course so far, measuring 42,750 metres. For the first time the marathon was won by an athlete who had made his reputation as a track runner. Hannes Kohlemainen of Finland, who had won the 10000 metres eight years earlier, was the winner in 2 hours 32 minutes 36. Juri Lossman of Estonia finished second, only thirteen seconds behind.

In 1921 the International Olympic Committee decided that, for future Olympics, the marathon should be held over a standard distance. One might have expected that their choice would be 40 kilometres, as used in the first Olympics in 1896 and again in 1904. However, as most of us know, they decided to perpetuate the somewhat illogical distance of 26 miles 385 yards which had been used for the London Olympics in 1908.

The next Olympics were held in Paris in 1924. The marathon was run by Albin Stenroos of Finland in 2 hours 41 minutes 23. He finished almost six minutes clear of the runner-up, Romeo Bertini of Italy (2.47.20). In the Amsterdam Olympics of 1928, the marathon was won by Boughera El Aouifi, an Algerian who was running for

France. He ran 2 hours 32 minutes 57. Manuel Plaza of Chile was second in 2 hours 33 minutes 23.

The 1932 Olympics were held in Los Angeles and the marathon was won by Juan Carlos Zabala of Argentina, in 2 hours 31 minutes 36. For the first time, a British runner won an Olympic medal at this distance: Sam Ferris was four minutes behind the leaders at halfway, and was still only sixth after 20 miles, but finished strongly to take the silver medal, only 19 seconds behind the winner.

At the 1936 Olympic marathon in Berlin, the defending champion Zabala took an early lead but was overtaken after 28 kilometres by the eventual winner Son Kee-Chung, a Korean who was running for Japan (since Korea was under Japanese occupation from 1910 to 1945). He finished more than two minutes clear, running 2 hours 29 minutes 20. Britain again gained the silver medal through Ernie Harper of Hallamshire Harriers, who ran 2 hours 31 minutes 24.

Because of the Second World War, the next Olympics were not held until 1948, in London. As in 1936, the race saw Argentina win the gold medal while Britain won the silver. The first runner to reach the stadium was Etienne Gailly of Belgium, but he had slowed so badly that two runners overtook him on the final lap of the track. The winner was Delfo Cabrera in 2 hours 34 minutes 52, while the silver medallist was Tom Richards, a Welshman who had moved to London and ran for South London Harriers. He recorded 2 hours 35 minutes 08. Having led with 400 yards remaining, Gailly finished at not much faster than walking pace, almost a minute behind the winner in 2 hours 35 minutes 34.

The 1952 Olympic marathon, in Helsinki, was notable because the Czech runner Emil Zatopek, who had previously won the 5000 and 10000 metres, made his debut at the distance. British runners had won medals at the previous three Olympics, and Jim Peters of Essex Beagles had raised British hopes by setting a world record in the Polytechnic Marathon six weeks earlier. Peters set a fast early pace: but Zatopek stayed in contact, overtook Peters shortly before halfway, and went on to gain a comfortable victory in 2 hours 23 minutes 04. Reinaldo Gomo of Argentina was second in 2 hours 25 minutes 35.

The Melbourne Olympics of 1956 also saw a victory in the marathon for a runner who had served his apprenticeship on the track. Alain Mimoun of France had finished second to Zatopek in the 10000 metres in both 1948 and 1952. He won the marathon in exactly 2 hours 25 minutes, with Franjo Mihalic of Yugoslavia second in 2 hours 26 minutes 32. Zatopek, who already had four Olympic gold medals, finished sixth (2.29.34).

The Rome Olympics of 1960 saw Abebe Bikila of Ethiopia make history by becoming the only runner to win the Olympic marathon while running barefoot. (Since major marathons now require the use of electronic chips, it is unlikely that his feat will ever be equalled.) Bikila's winning time of 2 hours 15 minutes 17 equalled the world record set by Sergey Popov of the USSR in the 1958 European championships. Bikila finished 25 seconds clear of the silver medallist, Rhadi Ben Abdeslem of Morocco.

In the Tokyo Olympics of 1964, Bikila became the first runner to win the Olympic marathon twice. He set a fast early pace, with only Jim Hogan of Ireland and the Australian track specialist Ron Clarke attempting to stay with him. Both Clarke and Hogan subsequently dropped out of the race as Bikila cruised to victory in a new world record of 2 hours 12 minutes 12, more than four minutes clear of the runner-up.

Kokichi Tsubaraya of Japan entered the stadium in second place but was overtaken by Basil Heatley of Coventry, who had started cautiously but covered the last 200 metres in 32 seconds. Heatley took second place in 2 hours 16 minutes 20, with Tsubaraya three seconds behind. Heatley's Coventry team-mate Brian Kilby, who had won the 1962 European championship, finished fourth in 2 hours 17 minutes 03. The 1968 Olympics were held in the high altitude of Mexico City and the marathon times were, predictably, slower than usual. Ethiopia gained their third successive gold medal, with Mamo Wolde winning in 2 hours 20 minutes 27. Kenji Kimihara of Japan was second in 2 hours 23 minutes 31.

Wolde tried to defend his title in Munich in 1972, but had to settle for third place. The winner was Frank Shorter of the USA, who finished more than two minutes clear in 2 hours 12 minutes 20. Karel Lismont of Belgium was second in 2 hours 14 minutes 32.

Shorter in turn sought to defend his title in Montreal in 1976. However he had to settle for the silver medal. Waldemar Cierpinski of East Germany won in an Olympic record of 2 hours 9 minutes 55, with Shorter finishing 47 seconds behind. In Moscow in 1980, Cierpinski emulated Bikila by successfully defending his Olympic title. He won in 2 hours 11 minutes 03, with Gerard Nijboer of the Netherlands taking the silver medal, seventeen seconds behind.

From 1896 to 1980, the Olympic marathon, like the longer-distance track races, had been for men only. The Los Angeles Olympics of 1984 saw the first Olympic marathon for women. The winner was Joan Benoit of the USA who pulled clear of the field after six miles and went on to win in 2 hours 24 minutes 52. The pre-race favourite, Grete Waitz of Norway, took second place in 2 hours 26 minutes 18. The men's race was won by Carlos Lopes of Portugal, who was a former silver medallist in the 10000 metres. He won in an Olympic record of 2 hours 09 minutes 21. John Treacy of Ireland was second in 2.09.56, with Charlie Spedding of Gateshead finishing just two seconds behind him in third place. This was the fifth occasion on which a British runner had won a medal in an Olympic marathon. At the Seoul Olympics of 1988, Gelindo Bordin of Italy won the men's marathon in 2 hours 10 minutes 32, with Douglas Wakiihuri of Kenya taking the silver medal, fifteen seconds behind. The women's race was won by Rosa Mota of Portugal in 2 hours 25 minutes 40. Lisa Martin of Australia took the silver medal, thirteen seconds behind her.

The Barcelona Olympics of 1992 featured tougher marathon courses than usual, as the runners had to climb a long hill in the closing stages to reach the Montjuic Stadium. The men's race was won by Hwang Young-Jo of Korea in 2 hours 13 minutes 23. Koichi Morishita of Japan was second in 2 hours 13 minutes 45. The women's race was won by Valentina Yegorova of Russia in 2 hours 32 minutes 41, with Yuko Arimori of Japan taking the silver medal just eight seconds behind her. Yegorova and Arimori both also won medals four years later in Atlanta, but each finished one place lower than they had done in Barcelona. The race was won by Fatuma Roba of Ethiopia in 2 hours 26 minutes 05. Yegorova was second in 2 hours 28 minutes 05 and Arimori was third (2.28.39). The men's race was won by Josiah Thugwane of South Africa in 2 hours 12 minutes 36, just three seconds ahead of the silver medallist, Lee Bong-Ju of Korea.

At the Sydney Olympics of 2000, the men's race was won by Gezahegne Abera of Ethiopia in 2 hours 10 minutes 11, with Eric Wainaina of Kenya taking the silver medal (2.10.31). The women's race was won by Naoko Takahashi of Japan in 2

hours 23 minutes 14, just eight seconds ahead of the silver medallist, Lidia Simon of Romania.

The 2004 Olympics saw the race begin at its traditional start, in Marathon, and end at its traditional finish in Athens. However, because the official distance of a marathon had been increased since the inaugural Olympics of 1896 (when the course was 40 kilometres), the race had to include a small detour to bring it up to the full distance of 26 miles 385 yards. The men's race was won by Stefano Baldini of Italy, who started steadily but finished strongly to win in 2 hours 10 minutes 55. Meb Keflezighi of the USA was second in 2 hours 11 minutes 29. For the second successive Olympics, the women's race saw a Japanese winner. Mizuki Noguchi increased the pace on an uphill section just after 25 kilometres and pulled clear of her rivals to win in 2 hours 26 minutes 20. Catherine Ndereba of Kenya finished strongly to take second place, just twelve seconds behind her.

At the Beijing Olympics of 2008, the women's race saw an unusually cautious start, although the conditions were not as hot and humid as had been forecast.

Constantina Tomescu-Dita of Romania, who at 38 was one of the oldest runners in the field, moved away from the pack just before halfway and was more than a minute clear at 35 kilometres. In the closing stages Catherine Ndereba of Kenya began to close the gap but Tomescu-Dita had enough in hand to gain a comfortable win in 2 hours 26 minutes 44. Ndereba had to settle for her second successive silver medal in 2 hours 27 minutes 06, just one second ahead of Chunxiu Zhou of China.

The men's race was held in hotter conditions, and saw 21-year-old Sammy Wanjiru of Kenya produce an outstanding run to win the men's race in a new Olympic record of 2 hours 06 minutes 32. Jaouad Gahrib of Morocco was second (2.07.16), with the rest of the field more than three minutes behind the winner.

Wanjiru's training was interesting: he ran lower mileage than most international marathon runners do, but when he was not racing, he aimed to do a weekly long run of about 38 km (about 23 miles) at a relaxed pace, and a 30km tempo run at slightly slower than his marathon race pace. He also did a weekly session of long reps such as 3 x 3000m, and a speed session such as 10 x 400m: on the other three days he just did easy recovery runs. One notable feature of his training is that it was very specific: he did two runs of 30km or more each week, but he didn't do training runs in the 12-15 mile range, on the grounds that they were too short to be marathon-specific but too long to qualify as 'recovery runs'.

Sadly, Wanjiru only had a relatively short career: he died in May 2011 after falling from a balcony at his home in Kenya.

Recent Olympics have seen African athletes dominate the 5000 and 10000 metres. However the position in the marathon has not been so clear-cut: Africans have won three of the last four men's races, but Europeans have won five of the last nine. Only one African woman has won an Olympic marathon, while Japanese women have won two of the last three and European women have won three of the last six. No Briton has won a medal in the Olympic marathon since Charlie Spedding in 1984, although Paula Radcliffe did win the IAAF World Championship in 2005. Paula is now 38, but both Carlos Lopes and Constantina Tomescu-Dita have won the Olympic marathon at that age. Many Britons will be hoping that, despite her long catalogue of injuries, she can still emulate their achievements.

MARTIN WALMSLEY (1956 – 2011)

Martin Walmsley, who was one of Croydon's best-ever marathon runners, died in November 2011, at the age of 55.

Martin was brought up in the Midlands, and began his running career with Sparkhill Harriers, a club based in the outskirts of Birmingham. He moved to Croydon in 1979 and joined Croydon Harriers, where he was a member of the Croydon teams which placed second in the Surrey Cross-Country Championships in both 1981 and 1982 (still the Harriers' best ever placing in this event, which they have never won). In October 1981 Martin placed equal second in the first-ever Croydon 10-mile road race (the predecessor of the present-day Croydon 10K), and six days later he won the East Surrey League's annual cross-country race. However his best ever race came in the 1983 London Marathon, where he ran a lifetime best of 2 hours 26 minutes 22, which still places him fourth in Croydon's all-time marathon rankings. Indeed, in the 28 years since that race, no Croydon runner (either from Harriers or Striders) has got within five minutes of Martin's time.

Martin was a great competitor, and personally I will always remember our battle in the 1985 Surrey 10000 metre championship, when I placed third in 31 minutes 50.5 and he was fourth in 31 minutes 50.6. It is very sad that someone who had been such a good runner should die so young.

Alan Dolton

Dates for Your Diary

Sunday 22 April – London Marathon. If you're not running, the only place to be is with the Striders' Marshall Team on Hungerford Bridge

Friday 27 April – Striders' Stroll Wandsworth to Richmond, see Robin for details

Monday 6th May – Olympic Park Bike Ride, see Robin for details

Sunday 13th May – Sutton 10K First Owen Trophy Race of the year

Monday 21 May – Vets Track and Field Wimbledon or Tooting Bec

Wednesday 23rd May – First Handicap of the Season at Sandilands. See Striders' website for details

Wednesday 30th May – Rosenheim League at Croydon Arena

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