

Striders of Croydon

DECEMBER 2018 MAGAZINE



**Lorraine Hunte making her Great Britain debut in Malaga
(photo by Tom Phillips)**

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2019

Sat 12 Jan – Surrey XC League Division One – Mitcham
Sat 9 Feb – Surrey XC League Division One – Lloyd Park (Striders hosting)
Sat 9 Feb – Surrey Women's XC League Division 2 – Richmond Park
Sat 2 March – Surrey Women's XC League Division 2 – Lloyd Park
Sat 9 March – Striders v Harriers mob match – South Norwood Country Park
Sun 31 March – Croydon Half-Marathon – Sandilands (Striders hosting)
Sun 28 April – London Marathon – London (Striders marshalling)

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER DECEMBER 2018

Welcome to the Winter 2018 edition of our club magazine.

Thanks as always to Alan for putting it all together and to Debra for her copy editing/proof reading.

I have the pleasure of writing my first Chairman's Corner on the back of a very positive, and as far I can remember back most well attended, AGM we have ever had. On that note I must first start by saying thank you once more to Robin for all of the hard work, direction and leadership he has given to the club over the last ten years as Striders of Croydon's chairman. From being the driving force in bringing the Croydon Half Marathon to the club to overseeing the many changes in that time including such varying activities as triathlons, swimming, cycling and yoga, more and varied marathon training routes and away-day runs, and a significantly increased membership.

Robin was one of the first people I met upon joining Striders. Having worked with him on the club committee over several years, and knowing how much he has put into the club (both seen and unseen), it was an absolute privilege to be at the AGM to be part of the collective and heartfelt thanks given to him.

As Robin has said before me, the primary objective of this club is to help you improve and enjoy running and achieve your goals, whether to finish your first 10K or marathon, achieve a PB, beat a club record or just stay fit.

It's quite a simple aim really, but of course only made possible due to all of the many and varied volunteering roles that you continue to do.

In this edition of the newsletter, we once more circumnavigate the globe as we follow trail-loving Ally Whitlock on her changing journey as she throws everything she has at her final road marathon in Toronto. Rachel Lindley runs track sessions with the elites in Kenya but has to avoid hailstones in the Impact Marathon, and Jon Dean travels to the Mount Etna parkrun and finds out that one third of the field are from the UK.

Lorraine Hunte, Simon Pannell and Alan Dolton represent Great Britain at the World Athletics Masters Championships in Malaga and share their various and ultimately enjoyable experiences. Dave Shaw reminds us you're Never Too Old in an article about real-life training and what can be achieved given our individual circumstances.

As a frequent gym-goer I was particularly interested in Beatrice Schaer's article about strength and cross-training for runners. Having read a fair bit about such matters and also spending a lot of time in my own 'gym bubble', it was interesting to see that I already applied a lot of Bea's recommended structure in my own training – but that's something that I've ended up gravitating to over years. I agree with Bea in that it ultimately comes down to what you enjoy, but my advice would be to take the shorter cut and get with the structured and progressive programme first!

Speaking of cross-training and of getting there in the end, Mark Bayliss shares some photographs of him riding a penny farthing all the way from London to Brighton taking part in the annual Veteran Car Run!

Good luck to those setting out on their spring marathon training, and big thanks to Myles McCarthy for his all his hard work in bringing us this year's new and improved marathon training schedule.

I was personally fortunate enough to receive a place in London 2019 through this year's club ballot – but in my 12th year of applying for the main ballot and my 5th in the club draw!! It has come at a good time as I seem to have stayed relatively injury-free for the longest period I can remember in several years. Time to start turning up more for yoga, speed training sessions and Sunday runs!

I write this with a slightly sore head and croaky voice following the Striders xmas party and what a great evening it was! Many thanks to Lyes Fridi and to Hannah Luffman for organising a great and well attended event.

Finally, well done to both Matt Stone, winner of the inaugural Lloyd parkrun age-graded challenge, and to Selena Wong, winner of the 2018 Owen Trophy for most improved performances over this year's road racing calendar.

Have a great time over the new year!

Tony



THE TORONTO WATERFRONT MARATHON (by Ally Whitlock)

This was going to be my swan song, my final road race. I was going to go out in glittering style with a ginormous, shimmery, shiny PB. I was giving this race my absolute EVERYTHING. Throwing every ounce of strength I had behind it, pushing myself to the maximum to see what I could do. I was prepared to neglect my beloved trails for three months and hit the roads hard. I set myself an ambitious target and I put it out there.

A PB wasn't enough.

London GFA wasn't enough.

I wanted sub-3:40.

Some might call it cocky: that's 14 minutes faster than my current fastest, but I truly do believe that my race times don't reflect what I am capable of running-wise, partly because I don't think I've ever given training for a race my everything and in the past I've not had the confidence in myself to really go for it. Happy, stronger, fitter and more confident as a runner than I've ever been, I felt that this was one final opportunity to prove to myself, and no one else, that I can do it.

I had the training plan; I worked out all my goal paces: marathon pace, tempo pace, what time I needed to run 800s in on the track. I put away my trail shoes, bought new road shoes. I was set and ready to go.

So why was this all or nothing?

Simply, I don't enjoy road running, and I enjoy road races even less. I am now all about the trails. Whilst I'm as quick as the next person to bask in the afterglow of achieving a PB or adding to the bling collection, I don't enjoy the process of getting there and realised it just wasn't important to me anymore. I had begun to question why am I doing this if I'm not enjoying it? After all, isn't running meant to be fun? Road races had lost their fun-ness and I decided I didn't want to do them anymore.

There was one exception though, one road race that I would end my retirement for: the Toronto Waterfront Marathon.

Somewhat inevitably, a week after I had made the decision last spring following the Big Half in London, an email dropped into my inbox with an absolutely irresistible travel offer for the Toronto Waterfront Marathon. The package was such a good deal I couldn't say no (so good I even booked the non-running husband on it even though there is absolutely NO chance of him running the marathon...!). And so, if I was doing this, I was going to do it properly. I was going to get that marathon time that I always thought I was capable of but never had to guts to go for.

But what is it about this race?

Well it's not just a race. My brother is a Torontonian (is that even a thing?). In September 2010 I went to visit him and meet my brand new niece, I ran along the waterfront of Lake Ontario and accidentally got caught up in the marathon. At that time I hadn't run half-marathon distance, let alone marathon, but I decided there and then that one day I would come back to Toronto for that race.



Toronto's waterfront

Four years later in May 2014 I met my second niece for the first time and ran the Toronto City Marathon, my fifth marathon: same city, difference race, my first sub-4. It was Toronto, but it wasn't the Waterfront Marathon.

Eight years later, with 11 marathons, five ultras and many thousands of miles in my feet since that moment in 2010, here I was about to run that dream race with my brother, sister-in-law and nieces on the sidelines to cheer me on.

It's almost the perfect end to the story.

Only life has a habit of happening and the story doesn't always follow the script.

Week one of my super-duper PB chasing marathon training plan flies by: I do my runs, hit my targets, realise I am going to have to work b****y hard. Game on. Week two and I run the club 5 mile cross-country handicap. I have a strong race and based on my current level of fitness I'm pleased with my result. Only my foot hurts. It still hurts the next day as I hobble through shooting a wedding. And the next.

It still hurt five weeks later. There is no reason, no cause, I didn't fall, trip (surprisingly) or drop anything on it. There is no swelling, no inflammation, it's not bone related; it just hurts. My therapist is at a loss. I am at a loss. By this point I've missed over a third of my training schedule.



Running along the beach in Toronto with my niece, summer 2017

A week later I slowly ease back into training, literally taking it a mile at a time. I admit, I'm frustrated, disappointed and upset. I have five weeks until race day. I've let go of the PB dreams; the goal is now simply being able to run the race.

The words I use all have negative connotations: frustrated, disappointed, upset; and whilst in some senses it was a fairly negative six weeks, I actually feel as if something positive came from that time away from running.

I'd had an absolutely blinding first six months of the year with XNRG Amersham Ultra, SDW50 (**I'm forgetting all about NDW50**) and the Serpent Trail, but I was in danger of getting so caught up in chasing times, pace and mile splits and comparing my runs to others (**why are they faster than me, it's not fair...**) that I was forgetting the reason why I ran.

When you can't run, it gives you time to reflect. You think about the reasons why you run and what you miss about not running. It makes you thankful for every step you are able to take.

- I run to explore the world around me, not just the streets around my home. *(In my head I am an intrepid explorer, in reality it is anywhere I can get to by train in a couple of hours!)*
- I run to discover new places, not to run up and down the same paths and through the same parks time and time again.
- I run to push and challenge myself, not to stay in my comfort zone.

- I run for me. To relax, to unwind and de-stress. To think, to dream, to plan. Some of my best ideas have come when I've been running, free from the distractions of the world around me.
- I run for my mind. I am a much happier, less grumpy, less stressed, nicer person to be around when I run. It calms my mind and eases my soul in a way that little else does. Running is an integral part of my mental wellbeing.
- I run to socialise, to make friends and to share a love for the sport. Whilst I revel in my miles of solitude, I also thrive in the company of others.
- I run to keep fit, to be active and to eat cake (keeping it real here).
- I run to see the views and take in the vistas. My Dad says to me before a race, *"run well, run swiftly but don't forget to take in the view"*.
- I run to see sunrise and sunset, and will often time my runs to do so. There is something very magical about watching colour and life come into the world as the sun rises.

I didn't miss the early Monday morning trot around the park; I didn't miss the Tuesday evening speed session, or even the Wednesday night club run. I didn't miss Friday's tempo miles or Saturday's parkrun.

What I missed was grabbing my bag, a handful of snacks, a flask of water. Popping my headphones in my ears and jumping on a train to somewhere and then running to somewhere else. I missed exploring new places, the joy of my feet discovering new paths and trails. The challenge of navigating, the frustration of getting lost and the exhilaration when I found myself again. Of not paying a single bit of attention to how far or how fast I was running. I missed climbing a hill and seeing the view from the top and throwing myself down the other side in reckless abandonment, arms out to the side, wind in my hair, a smile on my face, complete and utter freedom.

In those six weeks I realised I simply didn't want to run laps of a track. I didn't want to run marathon-paced miles because that's what my training plan said. I didn't want to pound the pavements hour after hour without getting anywhere.

I craved and longed for the sense of freedom that I got from hours on the trails.

I realised I actually didn't want that marathon PB, because that's not what made me happy. I was quite prepared to swap that 3:40 time for 19 miles on the sunny South Downs running up and down the Seven Sisters, taking a photo at every cliff top as I marvelled at the view. Stopping for a selfie with the ocean as my backdrop and pausing for coffee and cake at the cafe in Birling Gap before flying down the final hill to Eastbourne seafront and a paddle in the sea. So I did.

So you see, the goal posts changed quite significantly since I signed up to run Toronto Waterfront Marathon last spring. Injury is never a nice thing to experience; but rather than consuming me, not running for five weeks gave me the space I needed to reflect.

I started by saying I was excited and disappointed. And yes, I will be honest, there is a hint of disappointment that I won't be getting that 3:40 time; it's not easy letting go of a dream. Was I cocky putting it out there and saying that I was shooting for the stars? No, I don't think

I was because I do still think I am capable of it. The thing is, I realised just don't want it enough.

I could stop there, I don't know if there's a story in this race or not. There should have been the most amazing story had the best laid plans not gone AWOL, but life has a habit of happening, and anyway this Toronto story was never just about a marathon, it was as much about the family as it was running.

Which is how I ended up playing football, in ankle boots, with my 8-year-old niece the afternoon before the marathon, and not sitting on the sofa resting my legs. It's also why I shared a couple of glasses of wine with my sister-in-law and a pizza with my brother the night before the race: this was after walking 8 miles around Toronto taking in the sights with the husband. As day-before-a-marathon-prep goes it was a pretty poor show, but so is not seeing your family for years at a time because they live on the other side of the world. Sometimes it's all about choosing what's important to you. And Saturday afternoon playing football was more important to me than Sunday's marathon.



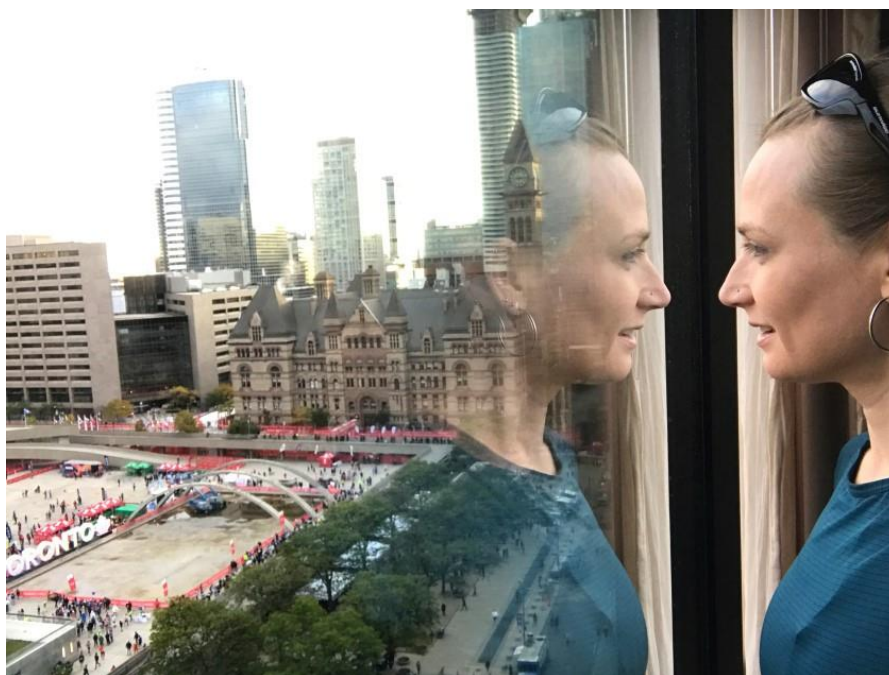
She beat me 10-9 in case you were wondering.



So onto Sunday, race day. The race started at 8:45am, but as always I'd woken hours earlier. I'd like to say pre-race nerves woke me, but in reality it was insomnia being a bugger as usual. I took my time getting ready and at 8:35am I took one last look out of my hotel room window at the gathering crowds below and sauntered down the 15 floors to the start line. It could not have been a more perfect arrangement; none of this waiting around in the cold and standing in Portaroo queues for the standard three pre-race nervous wees. I waited in the comfort of my wonderfully warm hotel room. I stood there, drinking coffee and looking out the window for about 30 minutes, watching the hustle and bustle of the race village below.

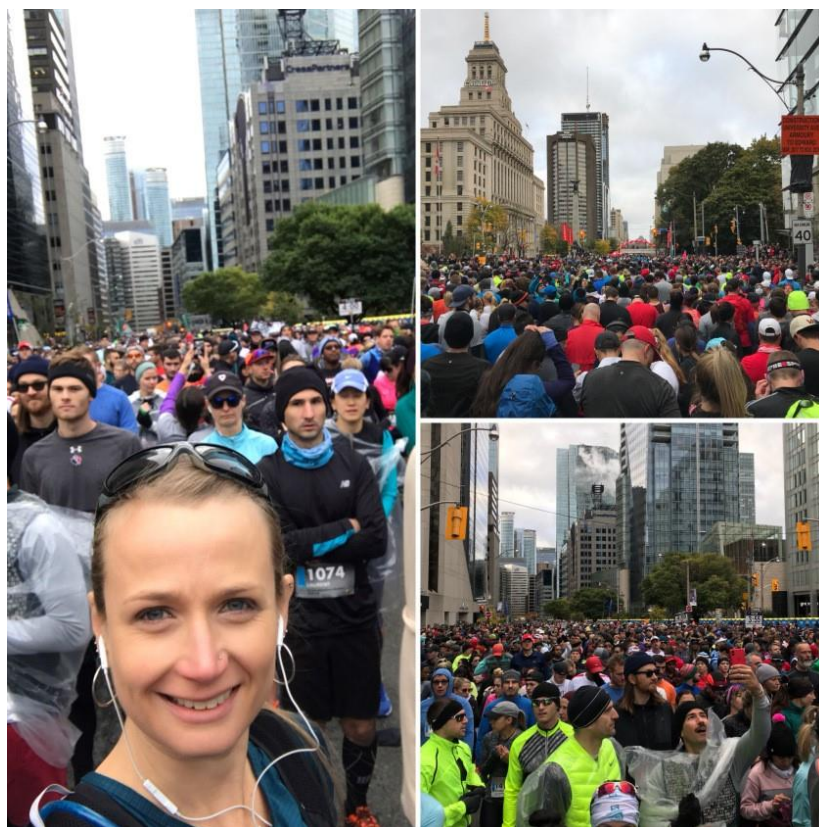


The view from my hotel room, the start line is on the left hand side, the finish on the right, the race village in the square below!



Looking out on the gathering crowds queuing for the Portaloos below!

It was a cool 5 degrees at the start. I looked around at other runners in my starting corral decked out in full winter running gear and wondered if I'd under dressed in shorts and t-shirt (with arm warmers for the first few miles). The answer was no. I got it bang on. Any more clothes and I would have moaned that I was too hot. The day gave us perfect running conditions; cool and dry with the occasional burst of sunshine. I honestly don't know how those in thick winter jackets and hats didn't suffer in the heat.



I'm used to races with a few hundred entrants, my last race in July, the Serpent Trail 100km, had only 61 starters, so standing here in a crowd of 25,000 was something quite alien to me. This was a mixture of full and half marathon runners. There was music, there was cheering, there was a hum of nervous anticipation but I have to say I was so caught up in my own little world, trying to psych myself up for 26.2 on the roads, that I barely noticed it. It took me about 10 minutes from the starting gun to cross the line, I hit start on my Garmin, pressed play on my iPod and settled in for the ride.

My feet quickly got into their stride, my shoulders relaxed and I started to think about how I should approach the race. This was probably something I should have done before the starting gun went off, but I was so unsure as to how I would feel on race morning I'd blocked all thoughts of the race from my mind for the previous couple of days. With the exception of eating lots of carbs (that I was totally on board with) I'd barely given a thought to a time goal or pacing.

This was my sixth visit to Toronto; I know the city and the route fairly well. We started downtown, ran up University, one of the few 'gentle inclines' in the race, to Bloor and past the museums, taking in a few of the sights before turning and cruising down the length of Bathurst to the lakeshore. Bathurst is the street my brother lived on when he first came to Toronto 15 years ago.

Toronto is built on a grid system, a bit like New York, with streets running for miles in practically a straight line (there weren't going to be many corners to turn in this race!). Building numbers can go up into the thousands and you don't want to get your east and west muddled up, 2522 Queen Street East is literally the other side of the city from 2522 Queen Street West. Think Fulham to Poplar in London. And Yonge Street, which starts on the edge of Lake Ontario in downtown Toronto, runs for 1896km north of the city!





7km in and we hit Lakeshore Boulevard. Lakeshore Boulevard runs, somewhat obviously, along the lakeshore of Lake Ontario. And is probably where the Waterfront in Waterfront Marathon comes from. Except it's not really the lakeshore, and it's not really the Waterfront. It's essentially a dual carriageway 50+ metres from the waterfront. We ran along this in an out and back for about 15km. As a trail runner who thrives on the views, I probably don't need to express too much my dislike of this. The light falling onto the lake was beautiful, but I was too far away to take in the views. This saddened me.

I felt as if I was running fairly consistently along this stretch. I'd decided a couple of miles in to aim to keep my average pace in the region of 8:50 min/miles and I was fluctuating 4 or 5 seconds either side of this. I felt comfortable. Pacing at times was tricky, as when we ran through some of the downtown sections my GPS went haywire and for several miles I was essentially running blind. It didn't help that I'd forgotten/not paid attention to the fact that Canadians work in KM so all the distance markers were in KM whereas I work in miles, so I couldn't really work out my splits manually either. Oh well. It's not like I'd really prepared much for this race!

23km and we turn up Don Valley. A very uninspiring 3km out and back section that felt like it was put there to make up the distance. This will make some of my Striders friends smile: about half a km after the turnaround point I hear my name being called... yep, someone I know! A guy from parkrun back in London, I didn't know he was doing the race so I gave a slightly bemused and delayed wave back. Sorry Oliver!

And then it was back to the dual carriageway for another 5km. The only complimentary thing I can say about Lakeshore Boulevard is that the surface was very smooth... I can't really think of anything else positive to say about it. If you were racing, I can see it being a fast course, but otherwise it was tedious and I was VERY thankful for my super-awesome playlist to take my mind away from it. I may have had a little out loud sing-a-long to Justin Timberlake here to ease my boredom.



Pleased to see my brother!

32km and we turn onto Queen Street East and the Beaches. I had spent the previous 32km looking forward to this section, one because it's a pretty cool area of town and two because I got to HIGH FIVE MY NIECES!!! Not once but twice! Ok, so the first time Lola was getting her face painted and missed me running past, but I got cheers from my brother, Ana and London. 2km later and after the final turnaround I got ALL the high fives and hugs, and post-race dinner plans were made! This made my day!



The Beaches, with the exception of downtown, was also the best supported section of the race. Most of it was pretty barren. There'd be the odd few people here and there or an official cheer station with a band or cheerleader troupe but otherwise it was pretty quiet. The shouts and cheers in the Beaches with 10km to go were most welcome. Something I've noticed in both of the Canadian races that I've done is that people don't have their name written on their t-shirt like we do in the UK, it's printed small on the race bib and that's it. This made it extra encouraging when someone shouts out "go Ally" because you know they've really had to squint hard to read it from your bib!

Coming out of the Beaches I knew the last six miles were going to be a struggle, as they are in any marathon. The first 20 miles are the warm-up for when the real race starts at mile 20. Only I was running this marathon on just one 20 mile long run due to the injury issues I'd had over the summer. Whilst I knew I had the endurance base and I knew I had the determination to get to the end, I didn't know how my body would deal going into this now-unfamiliar territory. Basically at 21 miles my legs stopped; I was also beginning to feel the familiar dull ache of the tendonitis in my foot: my body was giving up on me. But my mind remained strong.

I had ALL the energy and if I was in a room I would have been bouncing off the walls, but my legs were done. I went from consistent 8:50ish min/miles down to 10, 11 and very nearly 12 minute miles. It was SUPER frustrating, I wanted to run, I had the energy, but my legs just would not cooperate. The last five miles were going to be a MASSIVE struggle, but my mind was strong, I'd followed a runner earlier in the race with the phrase "the mind leads the body" on the back of her top. This stuck with me. I dug deep and knew, even as I saw sub-4 slipping away from me, that my mind would lead my body to the finish line.



36km and I again hear my name being called. Julie is an incredible runner, a 2:30 something marathoner, and she recently represented Canada at the 100km distance in Croatia. My brother hooked me up with her on Instagram 12 months ago and she said she'd be out on the course supporting today and would keep a look out for me. I was shuffling along in serious pain when I saw her, but as always a friendly face and shouts of encouragement were the boost I needed.

We're now heading back downtown, towards the familiar sight of the CN Tower. No matter how much I run (aka shuffle), it doesn't seem to get any closer. I don't remember much else, it's all I can do to put one foot in front of the other. Finally, at 41km, the crowds begin to gather, the volume increases, I walk for 10 or seconds so that I can run the final stretch, and turn my music off: I want to take this all in. We turn into Bay Street, 400m, 300m; despite not thinking I could, I do gradually pick up my pace, the husband is cheering me on to my left, 100m and done.

4:06:25. So, so close to four hours.

I cannot be disappointed with that considering four weeks ago I wasn't sure I'd make the start line, let alone the finish line. However, a tiny part of me is disappointed to be so close, especially as after a strong first 21 miles it slipped away at the end. I got the time I deserved. A PB would have been lovely, a sub-4 would have been nice, but I didn't deserve it. (Due to injury) I hadn't put the work in and it wouldn't have been fair to all those who had put in the miles over the past 12 weeks if I'd strolled in and nonchalantly run a PB on one 20 mile run. 4:06 is a fair reflection and I'm so pleased to have ticked off my 12th marathon, and my final road race.



I somewhat stagger away from the finish line, have a medal placed around my neck and a foil blanket around my shoulders. I'm not sure I've ever felt quite so beaten at the end of a marathon as I do today. If I could stop and lie down on the pavement (sidewalk in Canadian speak) I would. A coffee in the race village perks me up enough to take a couple of post-race medal pics (obvs) but being able to see my hotel room from the finish line is too big a draw. Now shivering in the five degree temperatures I head for a hot shower.

So, did I enjoy it? There were moments when I felt 'at ease' but for the large part I really didn't.

I hesitate to really review the race and I would hate anyone to form a judgement on it because of my words, because I realise this is not my kind of race and therefore I can't review it objectively. For a road marathon it was superb; looking at it as that, I can't fault anything and I would say it supersedes many of the UK races I've done. But I'm a trail runner. I like mud, hills, tree roots to jump over, rocky descents and pretty views, and this didn't have any of those things. I found it boring. Toronto has so many wonderful places but I don't feel the route made the most of them. There were lots of long straight stretches of tarmac, which would be wonderful if you were 'racing' or chasing a PB. I can see that attraction (and my original plan, pre-injury, was to chase a PB, so I may well have enjoyed those stretches under those circumstances). The section along Lakeshore Boulevard East was soul-destroying. Both on the out and back. The loop up to Don Valley superfluous. I enjoyed the Beaches. I enjoyed downtown (my Garmin didn't, it went awol and ran over 27 miles among the tall buildings...). The expo and race village were excellent, the post-run goody bag most welcome, the t-shirt surprising nice, the medal a little random (it has a streetcar on it...) but those things don't make up for the lack of mud, the hard tarmac and the fact that if I hadn't had my iPod I would have gone out of my mind with boredom.



Would I recommend this race? If you want a fast, flat road marathon then yes. The Canadian men's 43-year-old marathon record was broken, a number of Brits had key breakthrough races and 13 world records were set (see <https://runningmagazine.ca/sections/runs-races/thirteen-guinness-records-fall-at-2018-scotiabank-toronto-waterfront-marathon/>). It's fast, it's flat and it would be great for a GFA or BQ attempt.

Would I run this again for the race itself? No.

Would I run it again as a cheap way to come visit Toronto and see the fam-a-lam? Hell yes. Because let's face it, if I'm here and there's a Marathon and a bib with my name on it as part of an awesome travel package, I'm running it, road or not!

It's three days post-race and I'm sat in Toronto airport waiting for my flight home. I'm sad to be leaving a city that in many ways feels like my second home. I always leave knowing that one day I'll be back but not knowing when that day will be. The marathon may have been the catalyst of the trip, but the real reason was to spend time with my brother, sister-in-law and nieces, and whilst I'll treasure my marathon medal, I'll treasure the memory of the girls waiting at the airport for me, the hugs they gave, the game of football in the garden, the pumpkin London painted for me (don't ask!), the afternoon of skating and of just sitting on the sofa with them, more. Running is important to me and a large part of my life, but sometimes other things are more important.



Me and my nieces

So that is my Toronto story and that also rounds up my 2018 races. I was going to sneak a cheeky 50km in in December to finish the year off, but to be honest I'm exhausted and feeling pretty run down, and if I'm going to hit some of the lofty goals I have for 2019, I think I need to take the last two months of the year fairly easy.

THE KENYA IMPACT MARATHON (by Rachel Lindley)

Karen McNulty and I nearly got hypothermia in the Kenya Impact Marathon in October! Who knew there could be such vicious hailstones right on the equator?!

We spent the week up to race day with about 35 other runners, visiting charity projects across Kenya. All the runners were raising sponsorship money to help Five Talents give more literacy and entrepreneurship training to groups of women and men in poor rural communities across East Africa. These groups then save their money in a communal pot and make loans to each other to invest in their small businesses. As their profits grow, they can afford food, clothes, medicine, education etc. for their families.

Seeing the projects we were raising funds for was really inspiring, and amazing to be so warmly welcomed in all the villages.

Kenya is of course home of running champions, and a highlight of the week was definitely the track session we did with some of the Kenyan elites, including past winners of the Boston and Dublin marathons (Caroline Kilel and Bernard Rotich) and this year's steeplechase world record breaker, Beatrice Chepkoech. We learnt a few new stretches (there was a great one for the back, with everyone in a big circle), did some 'flying 30s' (30m slow, 30m faster, 30m sprint) as a warm up and then 5 x 400m with 2 mins active recovery, all led by the Kenyans' coach, Gabriel.



But the best bit was running with the Kenyans – beautiful to watch and incredibly supportive to run with, despite daunting comments like “He is a bit slow, his 800m time is 1:53” or being asked your marathon time by someone who does it in 2:08. The track itself was only barely marked out, a bit like our Coombe Field Tuesday sessions... only with winners of Boston and Dublin marathons for company, cheering us on.

Later we had a Q&A with Bernard Rotich, Paul Kirui and Kiprotich Kirui, chaired by Martin Yelling. We got to ask just why they are so good at running (Answer: because life is tough so they have learnt to struggle, and also as children they used to run 10k to school, 10k home

for lunch, 10k back to school and 10k home again, most days), and other important questions like do they ever eat cake? (No, just chapatti.)

Race Day itself dawned beautifully. It was a 4-lap course through a tea plantation, with over 1000m of ascent and amazing views over the Rift Valley from the highest point. Last year some monkeys had nicked the aid station bananas, so there was local honey and bread this year instead.



The route is at 2000m altitude, so the lack of oxygen was definitely noticeable on the hills. The ethos was 'a run not a race' so everyone ran in small groups and stopped to take photos, say hi to the tea pickers etc. It was all off-road apart from about 1 mile on tarmac. The rest was trail or grass. So stunningly beautiful.

The view from the top point was clear and bright... Until the last lap when you could see thick grey clouds rolling in. The wind got up too, and a few minutes later we were battered by horizontal torrential rain. 'That's alright,' I thought, 'I'm used to running in the rain and it will

be nice to cool down' – it had been in the mid-20s all morning and the sun burned any bits the sun cream missed in about half an hour. But then the temperature dropped and the rain seemed to get a bit more solid...

And then the hail came! I couldn't believe it was hailing on the equator, but soon was in no doubt as ice marbles were firing at my head, arms and legs. They hurt! I was on my own at this point on a trail along the edge of some woods, so I ducked behind the widest tree for shelter. This was neither wise (there was thunder and lightning) nor effective, as the trees were thin and the hail coming sideways. Also, having stopped I began to get really cold, so decided to press on and try to find better shelter and some company. Pelted full on by the hail again, it was really no fun and almost scary for a few minutes. I tried to hide in a tea bush but that didn't stop the hailstones so I carried on again.



Visibility was poor and the paths were now flooded with icy water and pretty slippery, so I was walk/running with my arms wrapped round me and head down against the hailstones. It was a huge relief to look up and see emerge from the gloom a little huddle of runners under a scrawny bit of tarpaulin. Turned out to be Karen from Striders, her sister Katy, and a Dutch

guy. It was so good to see friendly, if blue-tinged and teeth-chattering, faces! But the tarpaulin was holey and we were freezing, so we decided to press on down to the road.

We eventually made it and found another half-dozen people sheltering under a corrugated iron-sheet by the roadside. They made room for us – it was a squash but the body heat was good! Another couple of drowned and shivering wazungu (Europeans) soon appeared and then, sight for sore eyes, the race director in a pick-up truck which took us all back to base and foil blankets.

Most of us usually carry a waterproof etc. on trail runs, and one runner said she always carries a survival blanket, but we all left them at home just this once as the race was practically on the equator. Just goes to show, never be unprepared.

The race director made the right call to halt the race, as hypothermia was a real risk and safety is of course paramount. But six of us had only about a mile left to reach 26.2 (the full route would have been about 28 miles by the Garmin – the course was definitely not UKA measured) so a couple of hours later when the weather cleared we went out and jogged a mile together so the distance was done!

With the inspiration of running with some of the best runners in the world earlier in the week, somehow it didn't matter at all that the main focus of the whole trip, the Kenya Impact Marathon, didn't quite happen. After so many humbling and fun experiences together, the race itself paled into far less significance than your average marathon. Of course it would have been great to finish the official course on foot instead of in a pick-up truck, but I think the grounding effect of all we had seen and done earlier in the week meant that genuinely nobody minded that it got cancelled five hours in.

I am all in favour of training hard to get that elusive PB, but with the terrain, altitude, heat and, in the end, freak cold, this race was never a PB event. And we'd spent the week with people struggling to put food on the table or afford clothes, children working so hard in shanty town schools to get a chance in life, runners for whom running is their only route out of poverty. For us, running for fun, it made us realise there are far more important things than a DNF – and that's a healthy race result.



If anyone's interested in the Kenya Marathon 2019, ask rachel.lindley@gmail.com.

MALAGA DIARY: WORLD MASTERS ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2018 (by Lorraine Hunte)

Day 1: Saturday September 1st

Great start! Up at 2.40 am. Our flight was 6.50am. Our cab arrived on time, to take us to Gatwick Airport. I had not flown for several years, but love it; however, my partner Andy hates flying! Fortunately we had a smooth flight to Malaga, and on arrival our pre-ordered transfer car was ready and waiting. We quickly arrived at our hotel in Torremolinos and were happy with our room. We unpacked then explored the hot, bustling, holiday resort. Everything is perfect!

Day 2: Sunday September 2nd

I woke early and set off on an easy coastal 5k run, enjoying the sea, cliff and surrounding views and the company of other runners, walkers and strollers. I was surprised that at 7am it was still pretty dark, but the temperature was already 25°C. Our hotel was listed as one of the official event hotels, so we expected a shuttle service, schedules of events, an official to help with queries etc.; but no, our hotel reception staff knew nothing about any transport arrangements or even about the World Masters Athletics event!

No problem! My mantra was to *"remain calm"*, guaranteed to get me through any perceived problem. That evening the singer at the neighbouring hotel started up. Fortunately, I can sleep through almost anything.

Day 3: Monday September 3rd

Today's plan was to get a cab to Malaga station, then the train to the event stadium, and find the Technical Office, where we were to register for my W60 100m sprint event. We got a cab to the nearest train station and arrived at Malaga central, but saw no signs to the stadium. We then caught another cab and eventually arrived at Malaga FC stadium. However, the event was not at Malaga FC, but at Malaga Athletics Stadium, a good few kilometres away. So, we needed another cab to get to the correct venue, which took ages, but luckily we found a friendly cabbie of 40yrs experience, who confidently drove us to the correct destination. We were not the only ones to make this mistake. *"Remain calm"*.

At the Stadium there was a massive queue to register, but it did steadily move and I was registered, received my goody bag, then joined another, smaller queue to confirm my event. The next mission was to find the GB noticeboard, which Andy found while I was queuing, but apart from a brief note there was nothing much on it. No invitation for all the GB competitors to meet up, ask questions, build a team spirit etc, which was really what I was expecting. We did, however, pass a cross-looking GB official, who had already put in a complaint about something or other.

We next found the warm-up room, which was pretty sizeable, although I could not imagine what it would be like with 50+ athletes warming up in there. *"Remain calm"*. Outside we even saw cabbies using their mobile phones in an effort to help other athletes, who were trying to find their way around. The rest of the day was spent in the delightful city of Malaga with its grand central square and curious narrow streets leading off it, with churches on almost every corner.

That night the singer at the neighbouring hotel started up again!

Day 4 :Tuesday September 4th

We planned a quiet, restful day, yet managed to walk around quite a bit. An afternoon swim in the hotel pool was very relaxing and we ended the day with a tapas meal at our local taverna. We thought we were in for a quiet night, until we noticed white-covered tables and chairs, beautifully arranged for a wedding! The swimming pool was beautifully lit, and on came several acts, including a saxophonist, dancers, an acrobat who twisted and spun from a long dangling ribbon which hung on a huge A-shaped frame, and of course some loud thumping music!

Day 5: Wednesday September 5th Race day

After waking, I did some light exercises, then proudly put on my GB kit. I had my usual toast with honey and coffee for breakfast. We had a pleasant and direct cab journey to the stadium, where the competition buzz was starting. As we were early, we watched some of the earlier races, which included the M85s and W80s. They were amazing and inspired me to keep running in the future.

At about 11.15 I set off for the warm-up area. Once there, I noticed, on the race information board, that there were five W60 heats and I was in the first heat and in Lane 9. I was happy to be first, as that meant I would get my race over and done with quickly. It was very busy down in the warm-up room, with competitors practising on all the indoor track lanes and in the surrounding areas. I began my warm-up in a space at the side of the track, but later observed that I could share track at the top end, to practice my speedwork. At some point, Andy appeared to say that the previous race had just finished and that I should move to the call-up area. He was right! Quickly, I put on my spikes and approached the call-up area, where the officials were already waving through the W60s to sit in lines and wait.

The call-up area was at the farthest end of the warm-up area, not a special room, as I had imagined. It was good to see the other competitors. I smiled with a competitor from Puerto Rico and a friendly Canadian competitor, Wendy Alexis, introduced herself to me, but apart from that, I stood at a nearby rail, where I was told I could place my bag, and just kept moving to stay warmed up and focussed.

Soon we were called and led outside. It was here that we were asked if we wanted to use starting blocks, most answered in the affirmative. When I saw the blocks, I was most surprised at the poor quality of them. They were very light and flimsy looking and after I had set them up for the first practise run-out they threw me off to the side! I re-oriented them, setting my arms more firmly and hoped for the best. We were shortly told that we had 1 minute left. I was already puffed out from two run-outs! *"Remain calm"*. I spent the final seconds just composing myself.

On your marks:– Set:– Bang! I knew I would be slow out of the blocks, but expected to make up time in the drive phase and sped off as best I could. I did not know where I had finished, but did see people up ahead of me. Andy told me I was 7th out of the 9 and my time was 17.59. I felt really disappointed, as I did not even manage my PB of 16.71. However, for me, the race was over.

Andy consoled me that I was faster than at least 10 other people overall and at least I had been there, enjoyed it. Also, I had learned a lot from the experience and could enjoy a glass of wine that evening, after a month's abstinence. The winner of my heat was the Canadian competitor Wendy Alexis. The final was won in 14.30 by Nilsa Paris, the athlete who had smiled with me! So maybe my communication with those two runners had brought *them* luck.

My training for the next competition started the very next day!

WORLD MASTERS ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2018:

PART TWO (by Simon Pannell)

I jumped out of the taxi and dragged my suitcases up the stairs to the hotel, stopping only to say hello to an inquisitive cat watching my arrival. Out came my emergency packet of Dreamies, and cat treats were offered.

I was here in the beautiful city of Malaga for the first time, to participate in the 2018 World Masters Athletics Track and Field Championships. An influx of over 8000 athletes from more than 100 countries would make this an event to remember.

The next day I picked up a hired car and drove down the coast to Benalmadena where I had rented a house in the hills. Near to a Buddhist temple and set in a peaceful and quiet area, this was the perfect base from which to operate. On the way I noted promising routes for biking and running, and in 20 minutes I had arrived at my destination. After meeting Charlotte, the owner of the property, and Odysseus the fearsome looking Alsatian guard dog (who was as gentle as a lamb), I unloaded.

I had entered a number of events in the programme: the cross country, 10km road race and the track 5000m. In addition I had also entered a triathlon to be held just outside Malaga. This programme (ambitious for me) required a lot of kit, and I had totally maxed out on suitcase capacity. I stopped short of taking my bike and instead arranged to hire one for training and for the triathlon event itself.

After stocking up on provisions my next job was to register for the Masters events. Learning from previous championships, I had allowed myself plenty of time to sign up, to avoid any last minute dashing around. Registration took place at the impressive main stadium in Malaga, one of a number of venues used for the event.

First up was the 8km cross country. This was held in the Torremolinos stadium. The shade offered by the wooded area was welcome as it was a hot day, one of many during my stay. I was there early to prepare and as everyone else arrived the atmosphere started to buzz. I felt good and enjoyed the race, maintaining a constant pace throughout.

Some British colleagues did particularly well and claimed the silver team medal. On my way back to the car I noticed a sports centre with a 50m swimming pool that was virtually empty, so in I went. I was a bit tired, but the luxury of swimming up and down in my own lane was too much to pass on. This became a daily feature of my stay as there was a similar pool set up by the main stadium, with indoor and outdoor pools that were always virtually empty.

The next day my hired bike was delivered and I headed out to the Malaga mountains for an extended training ride. The weather was perfect and the scenery breathtaking. I stayed out most of the day and felt ready for my next event, the triathlon. This was a bonus event I had found by chance on the internet. It was staged in Rincon de Victoria, a lovely town just outside Malaga. I had deliberated on whether to take a wetsuit, noting that the average local water temperature far exceeded the level at which they were mandatory. Although I needed the luggage space I took one anyway, just in case; in retrospect this proved a wise decision. On the day of the event the sea was churning with waves about 2m high due to the storm that had broken early that morning. Rather than the mill pond I was expecting, the sea swim suddenly looked very challenging. On went the wetsuit and I was ready.

I can only say it was hard work. I had no visibility and was sure at one point that I was heading in the wrong direction. I was feeling seasick due to the pitch and roll of the waves

and a couple of times I looked at the guide canoes and thought about hitching a ride, but something made me keep going. Eventually I staggered out and stumbled up the beach wondering where I would find the energy for the bike and run sections.

Jumping on the bike however seemed to bring a change, and I pedalled off determined to make up for lost time. By the run I felt energised again. The last two sections were more uneventful compared to the swim and I finished feeling glad that I had entered.

The 10km road race was the following morning, starting inside the main stadium before leading out around the Malaga coastal roads before returning to the stadium. Conditions were perfect and made for a very enjoyable run in a huge field of runners. Three events down, one to go.



I had a couple of days before the next event, so I volunteered at a local donkey sanctuary. This was a glorious opportunity to spend time with around 70 donkeys and mules that had been rescued from poor living and working conditions in a number of European countries. Some of their stories were heart-breaking, but it was fantastic to learn and see that given a fresh start, the early challenges could be shrugged off, with all palpably enjoying their new lives.

As a brief aside (comical now, but not at the time), I bounced out of the local gym one evening only to find the car had disappeared. After a few minutes of trying to stop my head spinning, and walking up and down the road in case I had parked it somewhere else, the gym staff helpfully advised me that the local council had towed it away as I had parked in the wrong place.



Last event for me was the 5000m track race. Another hot day and no complaints from anyone. My race was in the evening and although tired by that stage, I enjoyed the occasion.

Back home the next day feeling thoroughly satisfied. With more training I might have been a bit quicker but we are where we are at any point in time, so I enjoyed it all.



WORLD MASTERS ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2018:

PART THREE (by Alan Dolton)

The December 2016 issue of this magazine included an article about the World Masters Championships in Perth (Australia not Scotland), in which I competed in the cross-country event. The 2018 Championships were held in Malaga, and the programme of events had been altered slightly for 2016: the marathon had been removed and replaced by a 10-kilometre road race. As in Perth, I decided that I was not running well enough to compete in any of the track events, but I did decide to enter the 10K (and did not enter the cross-country, which took place on a woodland course in Torremolinos). I stayed in a hotel near the centre of Malaga, close to the main railway station (so I had a very easy train journey from the airport) and to the metro (so I also had an easy journey to the tracks where the championships were held), and within walking distance of the beach.

In the three previous World Masters Championships which I had competed, I had been the only Strider. That was not the case in Malaga, as both Lorraine Hunte and Simon Pannell also competed (see the previous articles). Lorraine's time ranked her 32nd of the 42 finishers in the W60 100 metres, which was a very creditable performance for her first World Championship. Simon placed 24th out of 48 finishers in the M55 category in the cross-country, 29th out of 58 finishers in the M55 category in the 10-kilometre road race, and eighth out of 19 runners in his heat of the 5000 metres, which placed him 46th overall in the M55 age-group.

For the 10-kilometre road race, all the runners for the seven age-groups from M35 to M65 were to race together, starting at 9.00, while all the women runners, plus the M70 and older male age-groups, were to start 10 minutes later. There were a total of 99 entries in the M60 age-group (20 of the entries were from Spain while 14 were from the UK), only ten of whom had declared times slower than me. Thus it appeared likely that I would be near the back of the field, and with some of the younger female runners capable of running 10K in less than 35 minutes, it seemed quite likely that I would be overtaken by some much younger women in the closing stages of the race. I had not run a 10K since the European Masters Championships in Denmark last year, when I ran 46 minutes 32. My times for track races had been significantly slower in 2018 than in 2017, but in August I had run a four-mile road race on an undulating course in Dorset in just over 32 minutes. On that basis, I set myself a target of trying to run just under 50 minutes.

I started cautiously and reached the two-kilometre mark in 10 minutes 08 and the four-kilometre mark in 20 minutes 15. This was slower than I had hoped, and in the fifth kilometre I started feeling the effects of the heat and began to sweat very heavily. My last four kilometres took me a painful 23 minutes, and I finished in a 'personal worst' of 54 minutes 08, which placed me 76th of the 82 finishers in my age-group, and 437th out of the 460 finishers in the race (ranging from M35 to M65).

Although I did not enjoy my race, I did enjoy the opportunity to see some very high-standard track races, and was very impressed by some of the performances from athletes aged 70 or over. The 800 metre finals took place on the morning before I returned to the UK, and I was very pleased to see Britain's Angela Copson win the women's over-70 race in the excellent time of 2 minutes 54.63 seconds. There were also particularly impressive times from both of the over-80 winners: Manuel Alonso Domingo of Spain won the men's over-80 800 metres in 2 minutes 59.88 seconds, while Yoko Nakano of Japan won the women's over-80 800 metres in 3 minutes 30.41 seconds, which was a new women's world record for the over-80 age-group.



101-year-old Man Kaur of India, the oldest runner at the World Masters Championships, winning the over-100 women's 200 metres (photo by Alex Rotas)

Although Malaga has good facilities for track and field events, with three tracks in the city, all of which are within easy reach of a metro station, it did not impress me as a particularly good location for distance runners. Like several other Spanish cities, the roads were very busy with a lot of traffic, there were no decent-sized parks, and most of the pavements consisted of smooth tiles which became very slippery when wet (and we did have one day with some heavy showers).

Two of the last three World Masters Championships have been held in Western Europe, so it is not surprising that the next one will be held further afield: it will be in Toronto in July and August 2020. This is significantly earlier in the year than usual, and clashes with the Tokyo Olympics, which may reduce the number of competitors as some people will probably stay at home to watch some of the Olympics on TV. However Striders' routemaster Ally Whitlock knows the city well (see her article about the Waterfront Marathon), and should be able to give some useful advice to any Striders who are interested in competing there. The Championships will return to Europe in 2022, when they will be held at Gothenburg in Sweden. Meanwhile, the European Masters Championships will be taking place in Jesolo, a few miles east of Venice, in September 2019. If any other Striders would like to take part in international athletics, the first step (in addition to membership of Striders) is to join one of the regional clubs that are affiliated to the British Masters Athletics Federation. For most of us, this is likely to be either Southern Counties Veterans AC (<http://www.scvac.org.uk/index.htm>), who organise the track and field league in which Striders compete on Monday evenings, or Veterans AC (<http://www.vetsac.org.uk/>), who are based in London.

THE MOUNT ETNA PARKRUN (by Jon Dean)

Mount Etna is the largest active volcano in Europe and last erupted in January 2017. What better thing to do when on holiday in Sicily than the Mount Etna Parkrun?

Sadly, this is in the foothills rather than around the crater, but is through pleasant, lightly wooded, undulating terrain, with lava ash underfoot. It started just over a year ago and has had between 20 and 40 participants each week.

Getting up for a 9am start is never easy, but especially not when you are staying an hour's drive away and you have the vagaries of the Italian road network to negotiate. Nonetheless, we pulled up alongside another car discharging itself of runners in good time. After a slightly hesitant 'Buongiorno', the vest of the neighbouring driver revealed him to be from Great Dunmow in Essex. Later we all had to sign in and the people above me in the list were also local – they were keen Reigate Park parkrunners. And so it transpired that, judging by their names, 13 of the 35 participants that day were from the UK, getting their Saturday morning fix.

As for the run itself, it was 4 laps with some tight corners. I came second with a time of 21.44 which puts me 19th in their all-time rankings. I was a bit disappointed with my time until my wife pointed out that it might be something to do with the fact that we were 2000 feet up a mountain, I was wearing ordinary trainers, and we had consumed a fair amount of red wine the night before!

As always the event was made by the good spirit of all the participants and organisers. A good time was had by all, before the serious business of climbing the volcano later that morning.



NEVER TOO OLD (by Dave Shaw)

At 56 I'm very much fitter than I was in my 20s. To be fair, that's not saying very much. Back then I smoked, drank a lot and did no exercise. No way to be for a dad of two toddlers, I took up running as a way of packing all that in and getting to a moderately healthy lifestyle. I can still recall the mile loop I first ran, arriving back home gasping and retching... but I took to it. Over a couple of years I tried out the odd race, increasing up to running my first marathon: migrated from running just to complete the distance to improving my times. Joined the Striders, improving massively with the great support and advice around the club – and with it the ambition to break three hours, which I did a couple of times, either side of turning 40.

Thinking (probably quite wrongly) I'd never get any quicker, I stepped up to run a few ultras, which I enjoyed, and triathlons, for which I never really mastered the logistics of the training. Then I sort of backed off in my late 40s and early 50s, ticking over with work and other priorities. Emerging from all that I got going again, understanding sub-3 to be a distant memory but happy with the annual target of hitting the London Good for Age (3.20).

Through my job I came across a top class sports psychologist – Sarah Broadhead – who works with us business coaching/teambuilding. She got me thinking whether I was really just in my comfort zone and what it would be like to try and do the best I could. With the children having left home, and not reaching for any further rungs on the career ladder, I had the bandwidth to apply myself more – and could also afford a bit of the sort of support elite athletes get. I chatted with my very patient wife and thought: why not?

Sub-3 seemed like an obvious target, although I didn't know whether that would be physically possible for me any more. It would certainly mean becoming a different standard of runner to my previous level. I was just then doing my London GFA entry and put 2.59 as my predicted time.

Next step was finding a coach and I tracked down Nick Anderson – he's now England Athletics' lead Marathon coach and I'm very much at the lower end of his spectrum. After a brisk conversation – very much him qualifying me (previous times, training patterns etc.) rather than vice versa – he agreed to take me on. "We can get you there, and don't limit yourself to that target. No guarantees of course – there's always bad weather on the day, or injury..."

Nick sent me off to St Mary's for VO2 Max testing and subsequently for assessment/tailored strength and conditioning programme. My previous training had been exclusively long slow distance and he replaced that with of a mix of speed, threshold and hills. Shorter, harder sessions, more quality and fewer junk miles. Big emphasis on running economy and overall strength, more marathon pace in the build-up long runs. Meanwhile, Sarah fine-tuned the mental strategies to get the most out of training sessions (which for me are generally 5.30 am) and for race day. I also evolved a 30-40 Strength and Conditioning routine, mostly Pilates and bit of free weights, which I try to do 4 times a week. And a fortnightly visit to Alan (Dolton) for maintenance sports massage and sage advice.

A couple of months in, I ran the 2017 Chester Marathon, where 3.08 was just enough to sneak into the England Age Group team for the same event in 2018. Then full-on with my programme ahead of London, including a February training camp in Portugal, which I found really beneficial. It's the lifestyle of the pro athlete: train, rest and eat, which is great for a week ahead of you're a-race, but not a way of life I'd really like. Lovely also to go with my marathon- and occasionally ultra-running daughter Sophie, a former Strider now with Clapham Chasers.

On I went, encouraged to do the last Surrey League with Striders, which was my first Cross Country in well over a decade and really enjoyable: a sort of perverse pleasure rediscovered. And so to London...

"...there's always bad weather on the day..." echoed in my head as the unseasonal April heatwave settled on London. Some folks can cope with heat but I know I'm not one of them. After the first 10k, I drifted off <3 pace and finished in 3.12. Nick in Portugal had thought I was around about <3 shape and at heart I reckoned I would have been more thereabouts than there. If I was going to get under 3 at Chester in the autumn I'd need a bit of headroom, so worked out a "project 5%" with Sarah. If I could do everything 5% better – training runs, S&C, weight, psychology, diet – I could get the right side of marginal.

It all worked; I ran the Serpentine 5k pretty close to my lifetime PB, was in great shape and approaching the run-in to Chester when...

"...or injury..." about 8 weeks before Chester I pulled up in the Battersea Park 10k and limped off with a quad injury. I had often joked that I have the cardio system of a 20 year old but the flexibility of a 90 year old, but it probably wasn't a joking matter. Stretching was the one area I was neglecting, and with hindsight it was perhaps predictable that something would break. Anyway, about 2-3 weeks of no running and then the same where I could ease towards marathon pace but not get there. Pretty much daily sessions on the elliptical kept up the cardio, and I added extra S&C – but it was a month in which sub-3 certainly seemed gone: my only target was to get to the start line and wear the England vest, and I was trying to figure out how slowly it would be okay to run rather than pull out. Intensive treatment from Alan and some specialist physios (including at Croydon Physio) did everything possible, balancing how far I could push the return to training with the risk of causing a setback.

We had another training camp finishing a fortnight ahead of Chester and I felt pretty much free of the injury just ahead of that. The camp would determine how much I lost through the injury and whether I was good to run or not.

It turned out I had not lost too much: the cardio and overall S&C had done the job. The training camp includes one serious long run, which Nick uses to fine-tune his race plan for each of us. He was very encouraging (noticeably more than in the spring) and essentially told me to run however I felt, it would be fine.

And it was. Great to line up with fellow-Strider Geoff Pennells, and I then just ran at what seemed like the right pace. Hit half at 1.25 which was the same as when I first broke 3 hours back in 2001. So I reverted to the approach I used back then, just aim to keep each mile at 6-something and I would have enough time in the bank. Great moment at about 24 miles when you hit the river on the way in and I could relax knowing it was fine. Magic moment hearing 'Go Dad' as I approached the finish line: Sophie had unexpectedly come up on the day to join my wife and see me over the line. I finished in 2.57.24 – and requalified for England despite a much higher standard this year with eight V55s under 3 hours (I was fourth out of five qualifiers).

Big thanks to my running team and most of all my family. I was very happy about it. Looking back on it six weeks later I still am.



STRENGTH TRAINING FOR RUNNERS (by Beatrice Schaer)



Some form of strength training is important for practically all runners. There are a few reasons why you may want to consider adding some form of strength training to your running routine:

- You have recurring injuries or niggles and often cannot run pain-free
- You are working to improve your running form/technique/posture
- You want to get faster
- You want to increase the distance you run, get ready for your first half or full marathon
- You want your running to have longevity, and to continue running as you get older.

How much and how often?

To a degree this depends on what you might be training for.

If you do in fact train for races, half marathons or marathons, prior to a more structured training plan (i.e. 12-week half marathon training plan, 16-week marathon training plan) is the best time to build strength up, and you may want to spend 1-2 x 40-60min per week on running specific strength & core training.

Whilst you are training for an event it is best to maintain the strength you built previously, so the goal isn't necessarily to constantly improve on the weights you train with, but you would not want to lose any strength either. During this time, 1-2 shorter sessions (30-40min each) or 1 longer session (60min max) will most likely suffice (this always depends on your own personal situation). Overall these are ideals; any strength training is better than nothing.

Are bodyweight exercises sufficient?

Looking at how much weight your body has to absorb with each step when you are running (~ 2.5 x your body weight), you can understand that as a runner you eventually will have to add some weights to your strength training.

Just like with your running, strength training should be progressive, and whilst you may want to start out with lighter weights or bodyweight exercises to learn proper form and technique, you then need to progress to adding weights (kettlebells, dumbbells or barbells). If you don't have access to a gym on a regular basis, I would advise you to buy some kettlebells or dumbbells.



Do I have to worry about bulking up and getting too heavy?

No, firstly to bulk up you would have to eat more (energy) than you burn. Also running middle and longer distances are physiologically more catabolic (which means breaking down muscle), so it is very unlikely that you will gain a lot of weight or muscle mass. Strength training doesn't equal adding a lot of muscle mass, strength training helps the nervous system recruit more muscle fibres with each contraction, therefore generally speaking it's unlikely you will end up looking like a bodybuilder 😊

How many sets & reps and how heavy?

In order to progress and improve strength you need to use a weight that challenges you.

Research has shown that to improve strength, 6-8 reps is the best range; doing this over 3-5 sets should be sufficient. Your 8th rep should feel heavy, in fact it should feel hard enough that you don't want to do a 9th rep (whilst maintaining good technique). This means you are

using an adequate weight. When your strength improves, eventually this 8th rep will become easy – that is the time to increase the weight you are lifting.

If you are working out from home and have a limited range of weights you can make your workout harder by:

- Doing the exercise slower
- Tensing the muscles before you start the exercise
- Pausing the exercise for 1,2,3 seconds (i.e. at the bottom of a squat or lunge for example)
- Doing 1.5 reps, meaning going half way back to your starting point, back to the bottom of the squat and only the all the way back up)

How do I schedule this in my week between my run training?

If you can follow a couple of rules you will benefit more from your strength & conditioning workouts. However, in the end, a session even if shorter, and even if it is done at not the most ideal time, is better than none:

- Try not to schedule a really long run or a hard interval session the day before or after
- An easy run the day after a strength training session will actually help you loosen up those legs a little bit
- If you have to run on a strength training day don't schedule in a really hard session, whilst DOMS might not set in until the day after you will be more fatigued
- As a general rule do the session first that is more important on that day. So whilst you are building up to a marathon training plan, the strength training session may be more important, whilst training for an event you may want to give preference to your running session.
- If you do 2 sessions per day try and keep them as far apart as possible and ensure you recover in between, make sure you fuel your sessions adequately (protein for muscle recovery and carbs for energy).



What exercises do runners benefit from most?

Most runners will want to get the most out of their strength training for their running performance, so unless you have other goals aside from running, the limited time you have should be spent on working on running-specific strength & conditioning. There may be other areas you might need to look at, however let's look at the most important muscle groups here:

- Glut strength (the bum muscles), this muscle is often weak or simply "lazy" in runners. The gluts are the major driver in forward momentum when running, so strengthening and activating them is key
- Hamstring strength (back of the thigh) : Often overused and strained because the gluts are underused it is the 2nd muscle that drives you forward, helping the gluts, also pulling up your lower leg behind you.
- Quads (front of the thigh): There needs to be a balance between the quads and the hamstrings, in order for the knee to function properly and pain-free. In runners often one or the other can be quite dominant.
- Stability, balance and core strength, ensuring that both right and left side are equally (or close to that) strong

A running form/ technique analysis and a functional strength and mobility assessments should be done to determine which exercises may be most beneficial for you (see below)

- Squats and variations (bodyweight, kettlebells, barbells, dumbbells)
- Lunges and their many variations (bodyweight, kettlebells, barbells, dumbbells)
- Deadlifts and variations (kettlebells, barbells, dumbbells)
- Glut bridges / hip thrusts and variations (bodyweight, barbell)
- Step ups (box, stairs etc) and variations (bodyweight, kettlebells, barbells, dumbbells)
- An array of core exercises *(be aware that all of the above if done correctly require your core to be engaged so you may or may not want to add just core exercises to your program)*

Cross-Training:- Different from Strength Training

Cross-training would be another form of cardiovascular training, such as steppers, a cross-trainer or rowing machine in the gym, or swimming or cycling. So cross-training is not strength training and should not substitute for it. Cross-training can be beneficial, as it will still train the cardiovascular system without the impact that running has on your joints. This may be beneficial if you are injured or have niggles.

As general cardio exercise, swimming and the rowing machine are equal to the others mentioned; however, activities like cycling, spin classes and steppers or cross-trainers will have a better carry-over effect into running as they simulate use of the muscles used in running more closely.

Of course it should come down to what you enjoy doing, as well as whether you want to do this activity in- or outdoors, and if you have a gym membership or not.

If you have any questions, e-mail me at bea@myptstudio.co.uk

MARK BAYLISS: WESTMINSTER TO BRIGHTON



**Mark riding a penny-farthing in the annual Veteran Car Run
from Westminster to Brighton on 4 November
(photos by John Bayliss)**

COMPETITIVE HIGHLIGHTS: SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER 2018

On 12 September, James Bennett had an outstanding run to win the Olympic Park 10-kilometre road race. His time of 31 minutes 40 seconds was a new club record by 32 seconds, breaking the previous record set by Henrique Galvan in 1988. Four days later, Andrew Aitken ran the Berlin Marathon in 2 hours 46 minutes 43, placing him 13th in Striders' all-time rankings.

On 29 September, Striders produced a very good team performance to place second of nine clubs in the East Surrey League cross-country race at Lloyd Park. They were led by Krzysztof Klidzia who ran very well to place sixth overall, and first in the over-50 category, completing the five-mile course in 29 minutes 59 seconds. Lee Flanagan also ran well to place eighth (30:17) with Iain Harrison ninth (30:23) and Matt Stone 12th (30:54).

On the following day Alastair Falconer placed first out of 109 runners in the Switchback cross-country race in Addington Hills, recording 29 minutes 26 seconds. Lee Flanagan was second (30:02) with Krzysztof Klidzia third (30:26) and Phil Coales fourth (31:07). Striders' women were led by new member Jemma Zakariyyau who was the third woman to finish, placing 26th overall (34:40). Rachel Vinton was 40th (37:41) and Selena Wong 49th (39:18).

In the Chester Marathon on 7 October, Dave Shaw set a club over-55 record of 2 hours 57 minutes 24 seconds, and Geoff Pennells set a club over-60 record of 3 hours 28 minutes 04.

Striders placed sixth out of 24 clubs in their first Surrey Women's Cross-Country League Division Two race of the season, at Wimbledon on 13 October. They were led by Jemma Zakariyyau, making her league debut, who had an excellent run to place 13th of the 240 finishers in 29 minutes 41 seconds. Niamh Vincent also ran well for 32nd (31:14) with Jenny Rowe 38th (31:42), Steph Upton 44th (32:07) and Laura Fell 72nd (33:57).

On the same day, Striders' men had to settle for ninth place in their Division One match at Richmond Park. Alastair Falconer led them home in 77th position (29:59) with Phil Coales 97th (30:45), Andrew Aitken 103rd (31:11), Lee Flanagan 109th (31:33) and Iain Harrison 110th (31:38).

In the Surrey Masters Cross-Country Championships at Richmond Park on 20 October, Andy Perks was fourth in the M45 race, while Simon Pannell was seventh in the M55 race and Jon Dean was eighth in the M60 race. In the Amsterdam Half-Marathon a day later, Jemma Zakariyyau ran 89 minutes 01, placing her sixth in our all-time women's rankings.

On 3 November, Striders did very well to finish fourth out of 51 teams in the Reigate Priory Cross-Country Relays. Phil Coales ran the first leg in 14 minutes 32 seconds, and was followed by Lee Flanagan (15:57), Krzysztof Klidzia (15:36) and Matthew Stone (16:39).

On 10 November, Striders' men placed ninth in their Surrey Cross-Country League Division One match at Wimbledon Common. They were led by Phil Coales who placed 74th of the 250 finishers in 28 minutes 57. Alastair Falconer was 91st (29:30), Tatsuya Okamoto 117th (30:38), Lee Flanagan 136th (31:23) and Andrew Aitken 138th (31:30).

Earlier in the day, Striders' women were eleventh in their Division Two match at Nonsuch Park, but held on to sixth place in the overall Division Two table. They were led by Jemma Zakariyyau, who ran well to finish 31st out of the 298 finishers in 27 minutes 41. Team captain Nikki Javan was 45th (28:35), with Jenny Rowe 57th (28:58), Steph Upton 68th (29:26) and new member Tina Shortland 91st (30:43).

20 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN WINTER 1999

At the halfway stage of the 1998/99 cross-country season, Striders' women were comfortably placed in the top half of Division Two, but our men were in the bottom half of Division Three and facing a battle to avoid relegation. Our women's third match was at Richmond Park on 9 January. As usual they were led home by Jane Lansdown. Our other scorers were Elene Kayum, Linda Daniel, Michele Lawrence and Barbara Cole.

Our men had their third match a week later, on a very muddy course at Esher. For the second successive match, our first man home was Tony Sheppard. He was followed by Eric Parker, Nigel Davidson, John McGilvray, John Kirby and Simon Smith.

The final Surrey Cross-Country League matches of the season took place on 27 February, and saw both our men's and women's teams at Lloyd Park. Once again, our first two women home were Jane Lansdown and Elene Kayum. Our third scorer was Diane Ballard, making a welcome return to form after having missed the first half of the season on a long holiday in Israel. Barbara Cole and Wendy Smith completed the scoring team. Our men made sure of avoiding relegation with their best performance of the season. As in the previous two matches, our first two scorers were Tony Sheppard and Eric Parker. Bob Ewen made his first league appearance of the season to be our third finisher, while Gerry Crispie, who had surprisingly failed to make the scoring ten in either of the previous two matches, made a welcome return to form and was our fourth finisher. He was followed by John Kirby, Alan Dolton and John McGilvray.

Division One of the Surrey Womens League was won by South London Harriers, after a close battle with local rivals Herne Hill. SLH had won the first and fourth matches, while Herne Hill won the second and third matches. SLH's star runner was former Welsh international Alison Wood, who won the final match at Lloyd Park. Thames Hare & Hounds placed third; they had the individual league champion in Rachel Disley who won the second and third races. Veterans AC did well to place fourth, with Dulwich Runners fifth. At the other end of the table, Woking and Dorking were relegated to Division Two. Belgrave and Stragglers, who had been relegated the previous year, both regained their Division One status at the first attempt.

Division One of the Surrey Mens League was won by Thames Hare & Hounds, who won three of the four matches. Herne Hill placed second, while Belgrave and Ranelagh tied for third place. Aldershot placed fifth with South London Harriers sixth. Box Hill Racers and Hercules-Wimbledon were relegated to Division Two. They were replaced by Metropolitan Police and British Airways, the latter club gaining promotion to the top division for the only time in their history.

The Southern Cross-Country Championships were held at Parliament Hill on 30 January. The women's race was won by Hayley Yelling of Hounslow, who subsequently became European cross-country champion. The men's race was won by Mark Steinle of Blackheath Harriers, while the under-17 race was won by Mohammed Farah of Hounslow.

The Woking 10 mile road race took place on 7 March. For Striders, Tony Sheppard ran a lifetime best of 56 minutes 22 seconds, lifting him to fifth place in our all-time rankings.

The East Surrey League held its annual road relay on 20 March. Box Hill Racers won the event, while Striders placed eighth. Our fastest time came from Tony Sheppard, who ran the first leg in 11 minutes 03. He was followed by John McGilvray (12:28), Gerry Crispie (11:57) and Nigel Davidson (11:58).

10 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN WINTER 2009

The Surrey Cross-Country Championships were held at a frozen Lloyd Park on 3 January. Striders' men did well to finish eighth, while our women were eleventh. Our men's team comprised Duncan Lancashire (30th, 46:51); Matt Morgan (32nd, 47:12); Richard Lee-Smith (72nd, 51:42); Damian Macenhill (77th, 52:13); Lee Wadsworth (78th, 52:14) and John Foster (85th, 53:39). Our women's team comprised Serena Stracey (38th, 38:13); Kerry Backshell (49th, 40:02); Alice Ewen (69th, 43:11) and Yasmin Anderson (72nd, 43:58). The senior men's race was won by Phil Wicks of Belgrave, while Thames Hare & Hounds won the team event. Lily Partridge won the women's race and led Aldershot to victory in the team event.

The third Surrey Cross-Country League matches of the season took place on 10 January. Striders' men placed sixth in the Division Two match at Lightwater. Our two leading runners, Duncan Lancashire and Matt Morgan, both ran very well and had a close private battle culminating in a sprint finish. Duncan placed sixth in 29 minutes 08, one place and one second ahead of Matt. Our next man home was Justin Macenhill who placed 27th in 31 minutes 18, while his brother Damian was 39th in 31 minutes 55.

Meanwhile Striders' women were competing in Division One at Coulsdon. Suzy Yates led the team home in 62nd place, recording 27 minutes 58. Kerry Backshell was 68th (28:14), Faye Stammers 73rd (28:38), Josephine Thompson 82nd (29:10) and Steph Upton 108th (30:30).

The East Surrey League held its annual cross-country relay at Wimbledon Common on 31 January. Striders finished fourth, with Matt Morgan running 10 minutes 12 on the final leg. Our other runners were John Foster (11:13), Chris Morton (11:57) and Nick Batten (11:26). John Foster produced an excellent run in the annual Sidcup 10-mile road race on 8 February. He finished 41st overall in a new Striders' over-50 record of 61 minutes 13 seconds. This was fifteen seconds faster than the previous record, which had been set by Bob Ewen in 2006. Also at Sidcup, club colleague Damian Macenhill placed 32nd overall in a personal best of 60 minutes 18 seconds.

The UKA Indoor Championships took place at Sheffield on 14 February. Croydon's 36-year-old former Olympian Donna Fraser did very well to gain a double victory, winning the 200 metres in 23.48 seconds and the 400 metres in 52.83 seconds.

The final Surrey Cross-Country League races of the season were scheduled for 7 February in Lloyd Park. However, heavy snow fell on the Monday before the race, and Croydon Council insisted on the cancellation of the races. They were rearranged for 28 February. Striders' women had to settle for 14th place of the 15 clubs in Division One, and were relegated back to Division Two. The team comprised Suzy Yates (45th, 25:48); Josephine Thompson (54th, 26:18); Kerry Backshell (61st, 27:03); Yasmin Anderson (69th, 27:23) and Steph Upton (88th, 28:32).

Striders' men finished fourth in their Division Two match, and also finished fourth in the final league table, which was our best placing since 2003. Our team comprised Duncan Lancashire (9th, 31:01); Justin Macenhill (10th, 31:13); Matt Morgan (14th, 31:33); Richard Lee-Smith (37th, 33:19); Damian Macenhill (39th, 33:27); John Foster (44th, 33:43); Lee Wadsworth (51st, 34:11); Mick Turner (64th, 34:57); Tony Sheppard (67th, 35:13) and Nick Batten (76th, 35:40). Meanwhile local rivals Croydon Harriers had a very disappointing season, finishing bottom of Division Three and being relegated to Division Four for the first time in their history.

SURREY CROSS-COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS 2009



Duncan Lancashire leads from Matt Morgan in the senior men's race



Yasmin Anderson in the senior women's race

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