

THEBLISTER

The Magazine of the Sydney Striders Road Runners Club Established 1980

Issue 116

January-April 2012

A River Runs Through It!
Six Foot Track Marathon Cancelled

Atacama Adventure
Roger Hanney reports from Chile

Technique is King
Keith Bateman explains

Plus! All our regulars:

- 10km series
 - Athletics NSW
 - Juniors corner
- and more ...**



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

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WELCOME TO THE “new look” Blister, a streamlined version of the Sydney Striders Road Runners Club newsletter.

We decided it needed a bit of an overhaul and since the club has been doing so well recently we thought we would up the production quality.

Of course the magazine is still all about the club, so we still want as many reports and photos as possible from all our members about what they have been up to in their running world.

But it's all right, you're still getting this fabulous publication at the bargain price of zero dollars!

This issue features a host of fascinating member stories: from the plateaus of chilly Chile to the new hilly finish of the North Head course (but alas, not via the Blue Mountains this year!).

But Striders, we still need your gossip, snippets and stories so please keep in touch via blister@sydneystriders.org.au or the Facebook page.

In the meantime we hope you enjoy the new experience—we can't wait to hear what you think of it.

David



Club President David Bray and a silver cup

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Sydney Striders Juniors

The Club was set up to encourage young runners to train and compete as a group.

The training sessions take the form of group training rather than personal coaching.

We train on Monday nights at the Sydney Academy of Sport at Narrabeen, and Thursday nights at Manly.

We have members of all ages and standards: from 8-year-olds to HSC-aged, from NSW State Representatives to those who just want to keep fit and socialise.

Our main focus is ANSW events, but we are also very active in the fun run circuit, with many taking part in the City to Surf.

Please contact us via email at juniors@sydneystriders.org.au if you would like to find out more.



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A Chile Desert Adventure: or One Down, Three to Go

This year a group of Sydney Striders, new and renewed, are taking on the Racing The Planet 4 Deserts Challenge, raising funds for Type 1 diabetes research while running a bloody long way in tough conditions. Roger Hanney reports.

ASSEMBLED BY GREG Donovan, motivated by the Type 1 diabetes diagnosis of Donovan's son Steve and featuring his older son and crossfit instructor Matt, Team Born to Run also includes:

- holder of multiple Australian records, and Narrabeen All-Nighter Race Director, Ron Schwebel;
- ultrarunner and Terminator, Jess Baker;
- and me, Roger Hanney, Hoka OneOne rep and ultrarunner with type 1 diabetes.

Together, Team Born to Run will

race 250km this year four times. We returned in mid-March from our first such event in Chile's Atacama, meant to be the world's highest and driest desert. We aim to become the first team to complete the 4 Deserts Grand Slam by completing three more efforts across the Gobi and Sahara Deserts and "the last desert" in Antarctica. (See the website www.4deserts.com/ for more information on the challenge.)

From our Atacama experience each of us learned a bit about him- or herself, a bit more about each other, and even more about what to expect and how to cope with an event that

only lets you eat what you can carry for the week, while running four middle-distance days of 34 to 40km and one longish day of 73km across white-hot salt pans in temperatures up to and beyond 42 degrees C.

What Did We Learn?

GREG DONOVAN: DREAMER, INNOVATOR, RUNNER ON THE COMEBACK TRAIL

Once Greg's current project raises \$5M or more research funding for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and the Type 1 diabetes online resource (www.ext1d.com.au), he will probably fund-raise for



a South American English language skills programme.

In the face of the nightmare scenario of losing his passport on the flight into Chile, Greg was frequently heard to exclaim enthusiastically about the lack of English skills in his proximity.

Everything worked out for him in the end, after a frenzy of long loud phone calls and some major hair-pulling. More crucially, he ran himself into some form by the fifth and longest day.

Greg had had his hands full coming into the event, what with the time demands and pressure of his high-level job at Insurance giant Aon, launching the Born to Run Foundation and getting the ball rolling on a 250km multi-day stage race for the Simpson Desert in May 2013—pause, breathe, continue—all

while undertaking his own training.

To overcome his own challenges and bear up on the 73km day, where we placed 22nd and finally grabbed a win on the teams board, was a seriously tough effort.

We had prepared ourselves for a 13-hour session, but with everyone pulling together and Ron especially taking the whip in hand with his 700-run-100-walk Garmin Desert Adventure, we got out of the sun and into the tent for chocolate glutamine powder just 10 and a half hours after we started—what a treat!

On a personal level, Greg had the special experience of running alongside his son for his debut ultra, proudly recalling a couple of English runners saying, “You must breed them strong Down Under, he could be the next Karnazes”.

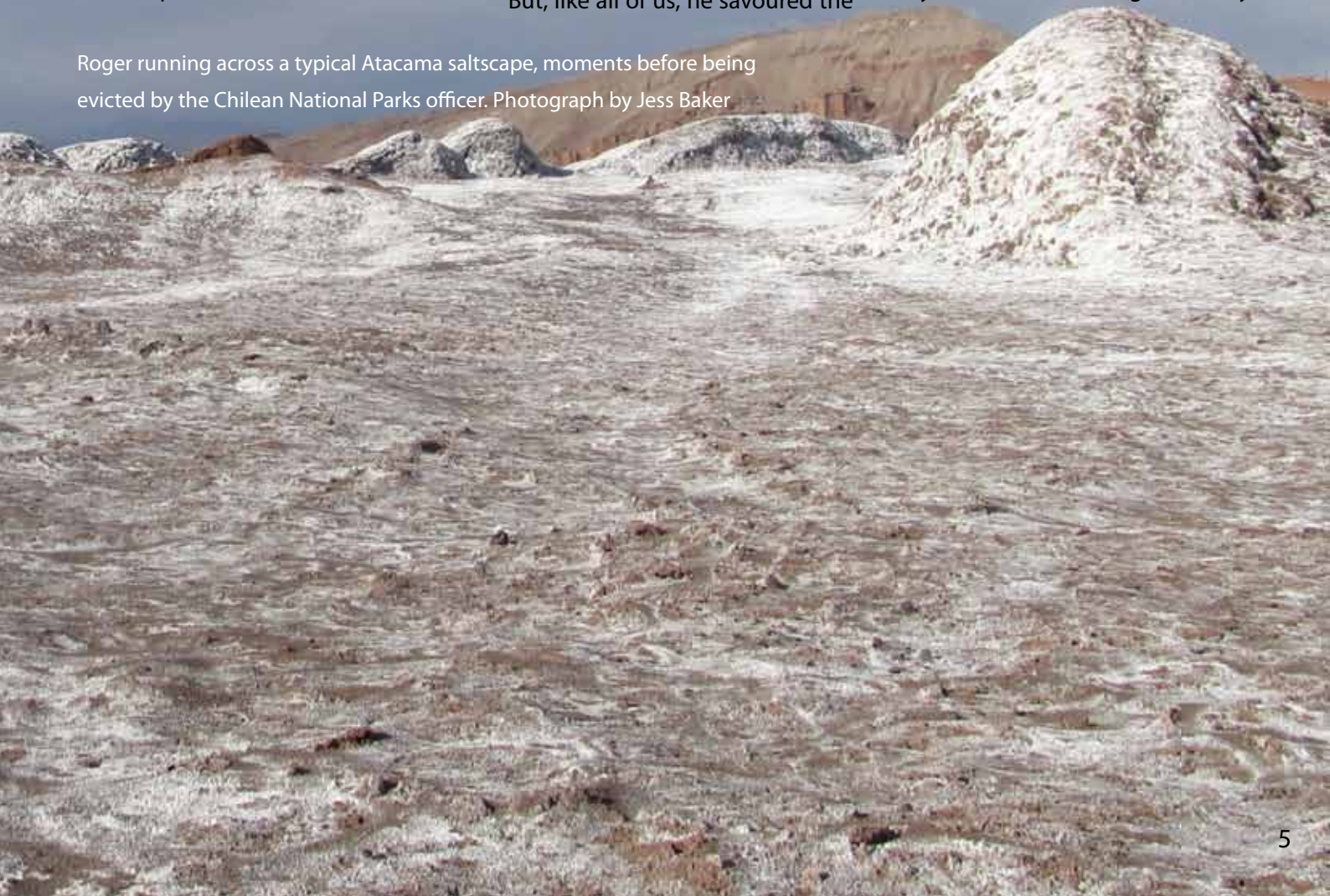
But, like all of us, he savoured the

simple pleasure of a week devoted to running, sleeping and eating... at least until the food ran out and we were left with gels for breakfast.

RON SCHWEBEL: DIESEL ENGINE, CAMP AMBASSADOR, NUMBERS MAN

Every question involving time, distance or calories ended up being either asked or answered by Ron. Any one of the leading manufacturers of wrist-mounted GPS watches should sponsor him, because they can be guaranteed that he will refer to their product at least three times a day, whatever the situation. Weights were also a keen interest of Ronathan's. At the very moment before the trip began, there was Ron, using the airport scales to weigh his hand luggage right in front of an airport official. Nearly fined for his 20kg carry-on, his load was lightened by

Roger running across a typical Atacama saltscape, moments before being evicted by the Chilean National Parks officer. Photograph by Jess Baker



the confiscation of his Swiss Army knife.

Once in the desert, Matty Donovan cracked up laughing one morning, saying that he had caught Ron weighing his underpants. With a cheeky glint in his bespectacled eyes, Ron admitted as much, saying only, "Forty-seven grams". To be fair, though, when you have to carry everything except the week's water and your tent, Ron's focus on minutiae proved almost as helpful off the race course as his positive attitude and reliable tempo did on it.

With first-day pack weights ranging from 8.5 to 13.5kg (without water), we're all going to have to get mathematical with Ron before taking on the Gobi in June. At which point, no doubt, he will again be the social butterfly of the camp, dividing his time between entertaining every international runner in whom he sees potential and indulging in the warm electric bloggy glow of the Cyber Tent.

Ron rates his Atacama highlight as the team effort on the long day, with the team succeeding in running most of it and finishing so well. "After Atacama," says Ron, "I am now much more confident of myself, and the team, completing the Grand Slam."

MATTHEW DONOVAN: JUST 21, PALEOLITHIC CROSSFITTER, UP FOR IT

Matt's defining quote of the trip came three days before the race even started, when we hiked

to about 5400 metres above sea level amidst the thin oxygen, rocky debris and thick snow on the slopes of Mount Toco. In fact, "I'm slipping in and out of consciousness" was a quote repeated daily as we sweated and trampled our way across the scorched plains of Atacama, far from the cooling breezes of the Andes. Matt saved such gems for his narrated iPhone videos of the trip.

They were so entertaining that Jess would grab our attention when he was making one so that we could eavesdrop on his version of the world. And when he wasn't making mini-docos, he was providing fodder for them.

"I'm slipping in and out of consciousness" was a quote repeated daily

Having run marathon distance for the first time on the mountainous trails of New Zealand's South Island just a month beforehand, Matt was untested over anything longer.

But the way that he plugged in his tunes, got his head right In The Zone and pushed through the relentless grind of the ultra day would have put many more experienced long runners to shame.

In addition to lessons learnt from his own experimentation with hydration, nutrition, and recovery day after day, Matt's fondest memories are of finishing the race with friends who just a week ago had been strangers, and comments that "learning the stories of the other competitors was a constant source of motivation that made the

experience even more surreal." The courage of others in facing adversity was a recurring theme throughout Run The Planet, and perhaps a defining element of the institution itself.

JESS BAKER: IRREPRESSIBLE, MUSICAL, TEAM CONSCIENCE

Whether you were slothing along out back, missing out on the joy of a desert butterfly, or spreading personal debris and shoe prints all over the group tent, Doctor Jess would always set things right—by picking up your spirits, redirecting your attention, or kicking your messily-shod ass as appropriate.

Unbowed by the day's running with full pack, she'd invariably have energy aplenty left for exploration of local mountain ranges and mesas. Definitely the strongest B2R runner, she had the most to lose from the rule requiring team members to run within 25 metres of each other.

Our Japanese fan club championed her as the strongest woman in the field, but as a team runner rather than individual entrant she was technically ineligible for fastest woman aged 20-29, or third placed woman outright, which instead went to our new Jamaican friend, Jacqueline.

In some ways the team's eyes and ears, she connected us to personal dramas unfolding in the area, most particularly that of British Army nurse Captain Clare Brownhill. With split webbings and PostIt-Note-sized chunks of skin torn away from her forefoot and heel, and blisters



LEFT: Jess seeks solace out of the sun.



RIGHT: Queen of the desert?

BELOW: Ron; The team before; Matt after.

pushing her big toenails almost off, at the start of each day Clare would rebuild her feet with tape and gauze, until eventually she cut the toebox right out of both her shoes.

With the energy to run farther and faster than circumstances permitted, Jess had enough energy to look outward and engage with those around us, when the rest of us barely had enough energy left to eat and pass out after running for hours in rubble and heat with heavy packs and niggles of our own.

“It was simply brilliant,” says Jess, “to just wake up and go running in amazing new places day after day.”

MY OWN IMPRESSIONS

With the descriptive powers of Shakespeare it would still be impossible to convey the alien landscapes of Atacama. Whether it was the sweeping beauty of the Valley of the Moon or the scorched mountain-scapes of the Valley of Death, the jagged and endless cauliflower corals of the salt flats, or just the pebbles so dried out by desert heat that they clinked together like glass under foot, we experienced a unique piece of the world and we were lucky enough to share it together and on the run.

Deeply personal memories completely out of sequence dominate any recall of the experience. There was local endurance athlete and operator of RunningChile.com, Cristian, who became our friend over his tales of running the Sahara with Ray Zahab—not to mention running over 80,000km in the last 33 years. There were the wind storms that would tear up the campsite for hour after hour across the sunset and then eerily stop, silent.

“Not to be arrogant, but bring it on ... we’re going to crush it!”

Lightning storms raged and flashed around us, bouncing from sky to volcanic peak and back, then racing across further clouds before shooting into the ground. Salt—as many types and textures of salt as there are kinds of snow (packed, powdery, slippery, soft, dirty, hard ...), and the smell of at least eight different types of dirt and sand.

And the dogs, unowned and unconcerned, roaming or asleep in the streets of San Pedro, the mainly adobe town where we stayed before and after the race itself. Oh yes, and the finish line pizza and cold drinks—almost too much of both.

As for the challenge ahead, the 4 Deserts Grand Slam? With his first ultra being the standout performance of the week, the final word should probably go to Matt.

“Not to be arrogant, but bring it on... we’re going to crush it!”

See www.BornToRun.com.au for latest news, or look for Team Born To Run on Facebook.



President Reports

Club President David Bray reports back to members at the Sydney Striders AGM held in February.



Club President David Bray in his corporate disguise

FIRSTLY, MY APOLOGIES for being unable to attend the 2012 AGM due to work commitments that saw me out of Australia. I am pleased to report that 2011 was a very successful year for our club.

It is always important to remember that we are a running club, organised for runners by runners. Many of our members achieved outstanding performances in 2011, whether breaking a masters' world record, being selected to represent NSW as a Junior, running a first marathon with the MTG, or posting a PB at a 10km race.

Your elected committee has worked hard through 2011 to maintain and develop your club's various activities. It is very important to touch on our club's financial standing. Lynn, our Treasurer, will shortly table the financial report, but I want to highlight a few important areas.

You will see that this year our club has recorded a healthy surplus from

our operations throughout 2011. This is the result of both cost reduction and increased revenue, areas that I will briefly touch on.

The reduction in costs from our operations involved a few specific areas:

1. Reduced 10km series costs, through removal of costs associated with additional parking at Lane Cove, and costs for sports doctor attendance;
2. Significant reduction in costs for the for the 2011 vs 2010 Annual Awards dinner, particularly in guest speaker costs;
3. Reduction in ANSW subsidies, reimbursing only those who represented the club at a reasonable level.

From a revenue perspective, there were also increases in a few areas:

1. Additional revenue from reinstating a Striders 10km race in May 2011, as opposed to the 2010 Sydney 10;
2. The introduction of increased member fees for non-volunteers;
3. Increased on-the-day fee costs for 10km registrations.

We see a significant portion of this surplus as being due to one-off circumstances, and it is important to understand the initiatives the committee have put into place to benefit our members through the last 12 months, which include:

1. Introduction of member key tags for better safety and member identification at STaR runs;
2. Subsidising both awards functions;
3. Increased rebate on membership renewals for volunteer members who assisted with club activities;
4. Investment in a portable defibrillator for use at 10km events;
5. Increased transaction processing costs associated with the use of the new Active Network system for membership and payment purposes.

In 2012, the task for your new committee will be to continue to seek ways of using the club's healthy financial position to benefit members, especially those who contribute to the club's activities.

Some initiatives already in place include a revamp and relaunch of The Blister, and the introduction of a free monthly STaR. I expect that these benefits will increase further across 2012.

Membership levels are still very healthy, with 700 financial members across different segments already registered, with around another 250 still potentially to renew.

This compares well against last year, with numbers of 690 and 180 respectively. As always with any computer systems, there have been challenges for some members in renewing, but in general the systems

have provided a great benefit to our club from an efficiency and management perspective.

We have also made significant progress against some of the goals mentioned in my report from last year, specifically a greater focus on managing and rewarding our volunteers and improving our club email systems.

This will continue in 2012, and this year we will also be dedicated to proceeding with a revamp of our website to be more user-friendly from both a content and an administration perspective. Our involvement with the Six Foot Track

race continues, with all proceeds going to the Rural Fire Service and the Six Foot Track Trust, who were received donations of \$40,000 and \$7,000 respectively from the profits generated from the 2011 race.

There is no impact (either positive or negative) on the club's financial position from the Six Foot Track race.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all who have contributed to our club's operations in 2011, especially the committee members, but also the many who have undertaken various off-committee roles that are invaluable to the success of our club.

Book Review

Wayne Pryke reviews *RUNNING WITHIN* by Jerry Lynch & Warren Scott (Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics, 1999), 197pp.

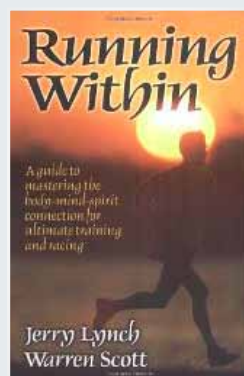
Co-authored by an elite triathlete and a sport psychologist, this book deviates from the standard of its type, going beyond the usual bread-and-butter components of racing, training and minimising the incidence of injury to introduce psychological and spiritual elements to one's running.

Chapters touch upon techniques of mental preparation via the practice of rhythmic breathing, detachment, the letting-go of anxieties and handling the inevitable disappointments that come linked to such a demanding sport.

A section on visualisation provides a little light relief, proposing among other things imagining "pearls of energy" cascading from one's hair when fatigue begins to approach. Perhaps a little

fanciful, but I will admit to attempting this technique in desperation as I approached "the wall" in a marathon some years ago.

A somewhat more straightforward approach is employed when outlining goal-setting, motivation and race preparation. Of particular interest to me was the suggestion of building in pauses when the desire to head out of the door for a run begins to wane.



This book inspired me to make an attempt at altering training and racing techniques I'd relied upon for decades, and to expand beyond my perceived limitations, both physical and mental, in the hope of connecting to some hitherto untapped potential.

It may even go some way towards answering the intriguing question as to what impels us to run.

New STaR Route?

STRIDERS PLANNING NEW STaR routes may have been as excited as I was last year when I heard about plans to build the Greenway trail alongside the planned light rail extension to Dulwich Hill.

Excitement soon turned to disappointment when I heard of the State Government's decision to "defer" the construction of the Greenway Trail (while proceeding with the light rail), on the grounds that its cost had been underestimated.

Linking up the Cooks River cycleway with the Bay Run makes a lot of sense not only to "active commuters" (that's bikeriders to you and me) but also to runners looking for a bit of variety in their offroad long run routes. Imagine a Greenway Gallop STaR, or extending existing runs such as the Cooks River Recuperator. The possibilities are endless. See the website (www.greenway.org.au) for information on the route.

There has been a lot of community concern about this decision, and the (slightly) good news is that a petition of more than 10,000 signatures has been presented to Parliament, meaning that the matter will be debated in Parliament on 31 May.

For more information see the Friends of the Greenway website (www.friendsofthegreenway.org.au).

- Linda Barwick

Technique is King

The most effective running technique is child's play, Strider and running coach Keith Bateman explains.

YOU ARRIVE AT the start in a new area; a race you have never done before. What's the opposition like? You haven't heard of any of them; you don't recognise any names.

You do your warm up and then your drills. That's always a give-away—good runners know they need their muscles warm (see box 1) to get full benefit straight from the gun. You don't see anyone else warming up so that's a good sign.

The race is about to start and you are on the start line. How good are the other runners? Final check: look at the shoes and then the body shapes.

Light shoes, (see box 2) a firm rear-end (see box 3) and well-proportioned calf muscles (see box 4) will equal good competition!

Of course there is the chance there is someone younger and fitter who

Box 1: Warm Muscles

Running correctly uses the muscles to a much greater degree, and it is not possible for them to be effective until they are fully warmed up. I find that until my muscles are fully warmed up, very poor runners will pass me but I know that after 15 or 20 minutes my stride length will naturally increase (because the legs have more spring, they lift my centre of mass a little higher and that takes me further along the road each stride).

doesn't have good body shape or technique, but the longer the race, the less advantage that is—usually the threat will disappear by the 3km mark.

There are many ways of getting from the start to the finish in a race, but there is only one way that will get you there efficiently and with least damage to the body. It's not labelled with a name—it doesn't need one.

"It's not Chirunning, POSE Method or anything else"

It's not Chirunning, POSE Method^R or anything else. It's the way you used to run as a child. It's the way the best runners run. It's the way everybody should run. There are a number of ways of describing it, some complicated, some over-simplified in some people's mind. I choose the simple approach.

If you jump up and down on the spot, you land with your feet under you, with ankle and knee flexed (see box 5)—easy and natural! If you do it again and land on your heels, you will get a hint as to what is coming next.

If you incline your body forward as you jump you will move forward. The other way of considering this is: if your feet are behind, you are pushing forward, while if they are in front of you, you are pushing backward.

Once you are running at a constant speed don't push forward. You go forward almost exclusively because you are already going forward.

If you push forward while not

Box 2: Light Shoes

Since we are picking up the feet almost vertically, then the lighter the shoe the less effort; and if we are picking the feet up, we know they will land underneath us with flexy and springy leg motion, so we won't need much cushioning.

We also generally don't need "motion control" or "stability" shoes, because we can naturally use the ankle, knee and hips, which with a straight leg are locked. Therefore, a heavy shoe indicates the runner isn't going to be fast for long. Heavy shoes encourage leg swinging rather than foot lifting (leg swinging also results in kicking low-lying objects and tripping over frequently).

accelerating you will land too early—with a stiff lower leg, and your centre of mass (basically your hips) behind your supporting foot. Why waste the energy you just used to speed up only to slow down again!

So, simply put, good running is about standing tall, lifting the feet under the hips and consequently landing with flex, then re-using most of the energy you have just expended. When you want to change speed you keep the same erect stance but tilt forward gently (whole body, not from the waist) and you will accelerate (and/or you can lift your feet higher or increase cadence, maintaining 180 steps per minute minimum).



LEFT: Before in the old running style



RIGHT: After one hour coaching in the new running style

Tilt back and you will decelerate (and/or you can lift your feet less or reduce cadence, maintaining 180 steps per minute); uphill technique is the same; downhill technique is the same; soft sand running is the same (except for the angle of the foot, because it sinks a little).

Note that the stretched-out legs of a runner in action are due to the

action of the legs at speed (and not them “reaching” forward), and the neat thing is that this will happen automatically when there is sufficient height (and therefore time) for the feet to return under the hips for landing.

The combined forward and upward motion of the feet combine to make it look as though the feet move in a curve—the foot actually moves directly from the ground to a position under the hips.

Box 3: Tight Buttocks

Someone who is running efficiently will be lifting their feet instead of swinging them in a walking-style action, and to do this they will be using the hamstrings and glutes.

This will inevitably lead to a certain trimness in the rear area. Lifting the feet (pushing down) also means there is very little body rotation. Over-striding encourages shoulder rotation.

Box 4: Calf Muscles

Well-developed calf muscles are a sign that the runner has been using them to absorb and re-use the energy from landing for a considerable time—they are running efficiently and are likely to be formidable opposition!

“Changing technique needs to be done with caution”

It is difficult to put across all the finer points of running technique, or indeed to correctly describe everything and make sure the message is interpreted as intended by every reader.

Not everything can be written down as standard because of some variations in body types, but I hope this makes you think about your running and induces changes that lead you to a lifetime of trouble-free running.

Warning: changing technique needs to be done with caution, because you will start using muscle groups not used for some time, and it takes time to build strength in the right places. It is easy to overdo it, especially in the early stages, and this

can result in muscle strains or worse. If you are changing without guidance, then perhaps some short 2km or 3km runs on a grass oval would be an ideal starting point to see how the muscles cope (barefoot for better feel and less work).

The same applies to changing shoes; ease into changes slowly and listen to your body.

Box 5: Leg Flex

When you are moving forward, if your foot lands in front of you will also be stressing the quads, especially as it will be some time before your body advances to the point where you can take off again. Additionally, there will be no ankle flex at the point of landing so you cannot store and reuse the energy from landing. In fact, most of this energy CAN be reused if you use the natural springs that are your legs, but only if the foot lands under your hips.

Note that the longer your foot is on the ground, the further it will be in front of you—and the further in front the foot is, the greater the impact—and the greater the braking effect—and the more you need to push forward the next stride to keep the vicious circle of over-striding going! Simply increasing your cadence will help to stop over-striding and start to give you the opportunity to take advantage of the springs that are your legs, you need a minimum of 180 steps a minute or the muscles cannot keep their elasticity.

Masters at Work

EJ Davie brings us up to speed.

MASTERS ATHLETICS

Anyone over 30 can compete in Masters Athletics. For more information visit: www.nswmastersathletics.org.au.

The Australian Masters Championships are always held at Easter, but in a different state each year. In 2012 the Championships will be held in Melbourne, and in 2013 in Canberra.

There is also the option to represent your country at the World Masters Championships, held once a year. This year the World Championships will be held in Finland, and next year in Brazil.

You do not need to be a member of a club to compete in Masters Games (whereas you must be a club member to compete in Masters Championships). The Games planned for 2012-13 are:

- The Pan-Pacific Masters Games - Gold Coast,

November 2012;

- The World Masters Games - Italy, July/August 2013;
- The Australian Masters Games - Melbourne, October/November 2013.

NSW MASTERS CHAMPS

The NSW Masters Championships were held at The Crest, Bankstown, on 25-26 February 2012. Twenty track and field events took place, with five Striders competing (see results table below).

OTHER MASTERS RESULTS

The Australian Masters Half Marathon Championships were held in conjunction with the Cadbury Hobart Half Marathon on 8 January 2012, with Wayne Bulloch winning Gold in the Men's 40-44 category.

The NSW Masters Pentathlon was held at Blacktown Olympic Park during the ANSW Multi Event



From left: Jason McIntosh (17:53), Paul McClarnon (16:40), EJ Davie (21:53). A Striders clean sweep in the Masters 5000 (40-44 Div).

Championships on 8 January 2012, with EJ Davie winning Silver in the Men's 40-44. The Australian Masters Marathon Championships will be held in conjunction with the Gold Coast Marathon in July 2012.

More information will be on the NSW Masters website (www.nswmastersathletics.org.au) closer to the event. Don't forget all new Masters members welcome, contact us at ANSW@sydneystriders.org.au.

STRIDERS RESULTS FROM THE NSW MASTERS CHAMPIONSHIPS, BANKSTOWN FEBRUARY 2012

FEMALE 50-54	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
1500 METRES			CAROLINE YARNELL 6:03
2000 METRES SC	CAROLINE YARNELL 9:33		
MALE 40-44	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
800 METRES			JAMES JEFFREY 2:10
1500 METRES		JAMES JEFFREY 4:29	
3000 METRES SC		EJ DAVIE 14:03	
5000 METRES	PAUL MCCLARNON 16:40	JASON MCINTOSH 17:53	EJ DAVIE 21:53
TRIPLE JUMP		EJ DAVIE 6.21M	

Shoes for Planet Earth

Old running shoes for a good cause? Viv Kartsounis explains.

SHOES FOR PLANET Earth is a local charity that collects both new and used sports shoes to give to those in need, at no cost, both in Australia and around the world.

They have shoe drop-off locations all over Australia and the shoes collected get re-distributed back into the local community from where they were collected. The shoes go to homeless shelters, youth crisis centres, women's safe houses, disaster areas, and anyone with a need for shoes.

Internationally the shoes are sent to six different African countries, where they go to orphanages, churches, schools and other charities. The need in Africa is huge but postage is expensive.

"Shooz", as it is loving called, was founded in 2009 by two ultra runners, Viv Kartsounis and Nick Drayton, who operate the charity on a



volunteer basis, along with five other team members. It is a full-time job, expanding on a daily basis as more people hear about the good work

that they do. Viv is a Strider and has been for six years. Besides collecting shoes, Viv and Nick also do two-weekly volunteer fitness training sessions for troubled youth. The first is at a Juvenile Justice Centre for teenage girls in Lidcombe, and the second is with a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program for young men in Petersham.

Every week they teach these kids about the benefits of sport and discipline in their lives, and Viv and Nick know that one day they will make a difference to someone's life. If you want to find out more about what they do you can find them at www.shoesforplanetearth.com or you can contact Viv at info@shoesforplanetearth.com.

10km Series Report

10km Race Director James Masters brings us up to speed with the season so far.

The 2012 10km series kicked off at Sydney Olympic Park with almost exactly the opposite of the heat wave we had to start the 2011 series.

Despite being wet and muddy underfoot with the threat of showers, we still had a solid turn-out and some strong competition for both the men's and women's races.

From a race director point of view, it went nearly flawlessly, with great support from our volunteer army who are becoming more and more independent each month—thank you all, you know who you are!

We had our share of issues with our North Head course for 2012, having been told we couldn't use the North Fort car park area due to a change of ownership, so it was a scramble to find adequate parking and accessibility through the early part of the year.

At the eleventh hour, and thanks to the negotiating skills of our president David Bray, we came to an agreement with Sydney Harbour Trust which gave us the fantastic new two-loop course we experienced at the beginning of March.

General feedback has been positive and another big thanks to Stephen Jackson, who has saved us from the seemingly endless repetition necessary on the old course.

The rest of the season promises some red-hot racing, and with great prizes on offer courtesy of our sponsors Sydney Running Centre and Mizuno, there should be great turn-outs through the winter months. Looking forward to seeing you all out there soon! Train well.



The STaR of the Show

Volunteers are central to events, and as Georgie Moore explains, there's more to it than just buying cake.

I'VE BEEN A strider for about three years, and I've been a plodder (aka slow but steady runner) for about three and a half years. I've learned some valuable lessons along the way, and I have been told some home-truths that I feel I should share.

LESSON LEARNT FROM HOSTING THE CHRISTMAS RUN

Don't host a run which happens to fall the day after you do the Otford to Bundeena Coastal walk as a training run. The chances are you will roll your ankle and so not even be able to walk the STaR to mark it for the following day.

I promise, it is not as much fun driving the STaR only to realise that even on a B0 (a run with no bush kilometres whatsoever) there are still a few "pedestrian only areas" that Striders manage to access.

It doesn't matter how well you mark the course—someone will get lost/will follow a fellow strider down the wrong path/will read the map wrong/will get confused between left and right, etc. Whatever it is, there will be stories told at the brunch afterwards. Don't feel guilty—Striders need to learn how to read a map and follow instructions.

Hosting a STaR means that you have an excuse to not run on Sunday mornings, but you do still have to get up early AND you do have to think about what you wear, i.e., you won't



Georgie Moore and Mike Terawsky hosting the Christmas STaR

be wearing your usual running garb. Just be prepared to make a clothing decision.

You get to pick what you are having for breakfast! This is the one opportunity where you get to buy pretty much everything that you have always wanted at the end of a run.

On a similar note—you get to be the best-looking person there at about 9am. I promise that you will look better than the 100 or so people who have just run anywhere from 10 to 30km. Don't worry if suddenly a whole lot of runners you have never met know your name—they saw it on the calendar.

Hosting is a heap of fun! Don't worry if you don't get it quite right the very first time. Runners appreciate that it takes quite a bit of work to host a run, and we all take our hats off to you for giving up your Sunday

run so we could all have lollies and chocolate cake for breakfast.

LESSONS LEARNT FROM OTHER EVENTS

For all the girls out there: If attending a race that has the potential to include more than five other females, take some toilet paper with you. There is nothing worse than a pre-race bladder evacuation without any toilet paper!

Don't get a Garmin just because it matches your shoes, which match your shorts, which match your top. You will eventually buy new shoes and I can almost guarantee these shoes will be a different colour, thus you will need a whole new wardrobe!

Be organised when running a race. I've forgotten my bib, timing chip and even my shoes (I kid you not!). So seriously: pack your bag the night before, pin your bib to your Striders

singlet, and sleep with your timing chip already attached to your ankle.

Runners come from all different walks of life. I have met some of the most incredible people through running. Those I have found most inspiring include the young mothers or fathers who work full time and yet still manage to get incredible results despite having a life outside of running. Then there is the 87-year-old who gave up marathons at 85, but who still runs a half-marathon in less than two hours (I want that to be me).

You will be amazed at some of the places on your body where you can get chafing! Invest seriously in some tape—girls, think bra lines and small of your back where your shorts sit—and a ton of “anti-chafe” cream.

Now here’s a chance to learn from my mistake. My first real ultra-marathon was The North Face 100 in 2010. The week before, I went out and bought a pair of full-length tights, because it was going to be cold, and

all I owned at the time was shorts.

On the morning of the race I was taped up like a mummy, and there was anti-chafe cream everywhere (details are not important!). At the end of the day, and 100 kilometres down, I went off for my shower... and the screams of pain could be heard from Sydney (the race was in the Blue Mountains).

As a club we depend on the good heart of volunteers

My new pants that had kept me warm had a waist band that sat higher than my shorts usually did, so all the tape I had applied was about two inches too low!

Skins are a very expensive corset for your legs, but just remember, all the wobbly bits need to go somewhere. We’ve all heard of the muffin top, well think mini muffins around your ankles as well! They also take a hell of a lot longer to get on and off.

Boy I’ve really managed to get off

track! This was supposed to be an article to encourage everyone to give us a hand and volunteer throughout the year. As a club we depend on the good heart of volunteers to give up some of their precious time to help us host STaRs, put on the 10k series and internal events, organise the Six Foot Track marathon and to allow everyone a great time doing something that we all love (running). As a member you are not eligible for any internal awards unless you have volunteered during the year.

To help get everyone motivated to help out, each quarter I get to do a lucky dip from everyone who has volunteered during the quarter, and one lucky person will get a \$50 Sydney Running Centre voucher—and if that’s not enough incentive, take my word for it, volunteering is actually really fun.

So please, rather than ignoring the emails requesting assistance, please read and see if you can help us out. You’ll be glad you did!

Athletics NSW: Calling All Striders

Tom Highnam gives us the lowdown on the upcoming Athletics NSW winter series

With the Summer Athletics track season almost over, it will soon be time for Winter Season for the Athletics NSW (ANSW) events. Striders have historically performed very well over the winter season and featured prominently in the points rankings (the Winter Premiership) against other clubs.

With a number of new joiners this year, it would be great to see as many people as possible turning

up to the NSW Cross Country and Road Races so that we can win the Premiership.

As Woody Allen famously said, 80% of success is just turning up, so please support Sydney Striders. The season traditionally starts with the Novice Cross Country at Scarborough Park—this year on April 28th.

Then it’s the Cross Country Championships in June on the most attractive course known to humankind (Nowra), followed by the popular (and very competitive) Cross Country Relays and Road Relays. All races are relaxed but well

organised, thanks to new systems, and all standards are welcome. As a bonus these events are held in the early afternoon so no early morning starts! Compete in three events for Striders and your NSW registration fee is reimbursed so there is an incentive to participate.

Tom Highnam (men) and Mary Stringer (women) will be calling on you to represent the club and compete in these events so please give it a go! Contact Mary or Tom at answ@sydneystriders.org.au. For general enquiries or info how to register for NSW Winter events call Jo Cowan on 0410 594 189.

The New North Head 10km Course

Melanie Keppel strides out as a first-timer at the new North Head 10km course and lives to tell the tale.

MY FIRST ATTEMPT at a 10km series run with the Striders was a great race. I had previously participated in a lot of Sydney races and seen the Striders vests, and thought these seemed to be a mob of cool, fast runners. Then my work running partner suggested there was a 10km race near where I live, so I decided to go along. I registered and received one of the cool green and white vests.

It was a joy leaving home ten minutes before arriving at the race, and I was surprised to see so many runners. I had imagined about 80 runners, but no, Sydney is full of mad keen runners. As I picked up my race bib I saw many volunteers preparing food and helping out.

When the gun went, I was surrounded by super speedy Striders, so my goal pace of 4:30 kilometres went out the window, and I ended up doing a 4:11 split for the first kilometre. The kilometre markers were well labelled. After realising my first split was too fast, I slowed, and then experienced one of those horrible crises of confidence wondering if I would reach my goal time of 45 minutes. Fortunately, the flat, beautiful course, surrounded by sandstone heath and gorgeous flowers and bushland, helped lift me. I realised that the pace calculator had said I could run 45 mins, so all I needed



Melanie at the Resolution Run
Jan 2012

to do was harden the **** up and run. My last seven splits were much more satisfying, with times of around 4:20. It was somewhat disconcerting to be overtaken by runners with prams (I believe the 4:30 pacer was one).

“It’s all in the mind. If I was thinking strong, I would race strong.”

Going around the first loop, there is a slight downhill, and if one is concentrating, perhaps one might see the gorgeous views of Sydney harbour. Not me, I was concentrating on my pace! It was great, to see the race leaders coming towards us on the second loop, with their amazing pace. On the final loop, I realised that it’s all in the mind. If I was thinking strong, I would race strong.

So as I ran towards the stone

arches, when I saw my work running partner (who finished in a speedy 34 minutes), I yelled out to him: “Tell me I’m doing well”, in the hope of more encouragement. The wonderful volunteers at the roundabout heard me, and also yelled out to me “You’re doing well!”, which was so sweet—I wonder if they thought I was mad? The final uphill towards the end wasn’t so bad because just before the race started the announcer had apologised in advance. I ran in 45:41, 41 seconds slower than my goal time, but I believe still a great time for someone who has only been running for 18 months (and a single mum with two kids and a full-time job).

I cooled down, and worked through the intense emotions of giving it everything and not quite reaching my goal. There were so many amazing varieties of food. For a \$7 registration fee, there were muffins, fruit, soft drink (no thanks!), fruit juice, chocolate bars, water—more than I could have imagined. I have entered many races that are considerably more expensive, with much less food at the end. It was lovely to meet two men who recognised me from the 2012 Sun Run from Dee Why to Manly, and I also ran into a friend of a friend from the Epping running club.

I look forward to the next race in Lane Cove, where given the hills I might relax about my goal time!

The 6 Foot Training Group

Disappointed but not downhearted, Jim Moody gives us an update.



From left: Mike and Maria make it look easy; one down eight to go; all smiles at the start of the Equaliser

AS EVERYBODY IS no doubt aware from our cover, this year the race was cancelled for the first time. Nevertheless, for the previous four months, our zealous participants prepared as normal.

The Six Foot Track Training Group began preparation in November: over 200 members suffered the weekly updates about where we were running and what we were doing.

At the beginning of the programme each year (usually early November), the group are supplied with a programme of runs detailing start times, distances and expected difficulty, followed up with a weekly update email about the scheduled run for that week, commenting on drink stops, track conditions and appropriate clothing, as well as expected climatic conditions. Early in the programme this year we had to cancel one run due to flooding (perhaps a portent of what was to come!).

To cater for the uninitiated, in the early stages of the programme the runs are relatively short, starting at

10km and building to 20km and then 30km efforts in a relatively short time, introducing some serious hills and a variety of trail types in the latter stages. Long runs such as Lancaster's Leveller, Clare's Calamity, the Roseville Ripsnorter, 30k at Ourimbah, or three laps of Quarry Road soon build the fitness and endurance that will be needed for the race.

"This is what Striders are all about."

Many of the club's more experienced runners join in at this stage, providing a wealth of experience, advice and encouragement for newbies, as well as the promise of friendly faces on the start line.

This year, the number running the race for the first time exceeded those coming back for another race. In the latter group were a number of long-term aficionados with twelve or more runs under their Six Foot belts.

As documented in the blog (www.ss6ftg.blogspot.com.au/), the group has been in existence since 2005, when we trained for the 2006 Six

FootTrack. The friendships that have been made since and the group's support have been amazing—this is what Striders are all about.

It is a pity that the race has been cancelled this year, but runner safety is always the most important concern. For those who have been putting in the work for Six Foot and wonder where to go from here, the Canberra Marathon is coming up shortly, and on April 22nd, the Running Wild group are holding the Mount Solitary Ultra (www.runningwildnsw.com/mt-solitary-ultra), a 45-kilometre race in the Blue Mountains.

After being part of this amazing group for the last six years it is time for me to hang up my runners and hand over to the next generation. The club is looking for a new co-ordinator to take over the reins of the Six Foot Track Training Group, so if you are interested (or if there are a number of you interested) please let me know through the club email at 6fttg@sydneystriders.org.au. I am happy to offer any required assistance, including the maps and programme materials.

SUPER SERIES IS a members' points competition that not only complements the 10km series, but also acknowledges and rewards competition in longer distance events, between 14 and 45 kms.

The best eight results are drawn from twelve events over twelve months, with the aim of recognising consistent club distance performers over a range of diverse races.

Rules, categories and the finer details are all on our website.

RACE 1: THE EQUALISER

February 19th

This is a members-only race. We had a rip-roaring start to Super Series 2012 at The Equaliser. David Criniti took line honours in 52:56, just outside his own course record, followed by David Tonge (PB) with Tony Fattorini rounding out the podium.

Georgie Moore was first female in a PB time of 68:02, followed by Melissa Selby (PB) and Catriona Cater.

RACE 2: SIX FOOT TRACK

March 10th

For the first time since this iconic Striders-supported race commenced in 1984, Race Director Colin Jeftha was left with no alternative but to cancel the event, due to safety considerations. Super Series points will now be drawn from the best 8 of the remaining 11 events in 2012. We anticipate some keen competition in forthcoming events!

Sydney Striders Super Series

John Bowe talks us through the ups and downs of this iconic Striders series.

RACE 3: CANBERRA FULL AND HALF MARATHON

April 15th

This marathon course is "flat" (except for the hills), and has long been a Strider's favourite (www.runningfestival.com.au).

RACE 4: SMH HALF MARA

May 20th

Several hundred Striders turn out each year for this rollicking big event run taking in many of the City of Sydney's best views and hills on route (www.smhhalfmarathon.com.au). Alternative 20th May Race: SMC 25 Km (www.sydneymarathonclinic.org.au).

RACE 5: WOODFORD TO GLENBROOK

June 15th

Great 25km run for uninitiated trail runners! Many have been known to break their 10km personal best time on the back half, but perhaps think twice if planning a strong performance in the Gold Coast the following week (www.careflight.org).

RACE 6: GOLD COAST FULL AND HALF MARATHON

July 1st

Perhaps Australia's fastest marathon course, great for a PB target. About 50 Striders compete in each of the full and half marathons (www.goldcoastmarathon.com.au). Alternative July 1st Race: King of the Mountain. A 32km race for hill lovers! Beautiful course mostly on road (www.kingofthemountainnowra.org.au).

RACE 7: CITIES FULL AND HALF MARATHON

July 29th

Sydney's "local" Marathon. If you prefer a lower key intimate event to a big city event, this is a great choice, along bike and pedestrian pathways. Cheaper than flying inter-state!

RACE 8: CITY TO SURF

August 12th

If you prefer a big event, they don't get much bigger or more iconic than this one! This one is for the hares and the turtles! (www.city2surf.com.au)

RACE 9: MT WILSON TO BILPIN

August 29th

A wonderful RFS-supported 35km event in the mountains, this race has local heart and great scones! (www.bilpinbushrun.com.au)

Sydney Striders Super Series (the rest)

RACE 10: SYDNEY FULL AND HALF MARATHON

September 16th

Supported by Striders pacers each year, takes in Sydney's best sights, and there is absolutely nothing to compare with that finish! (www.sydneyrunningfestival.com.au).

RACE 11: INTERNAL H'CAP HALF MARATHON

October 14th

Members Only. Two laps of the Lane Cove 10km course, plus a bit more. With a staggered handicap start, most people finish within a 20-minute window, with some heroic last minute efforts to hit the line under your handicap!

RACE 12: KEDUMBA HALF MARATHON

November (date TBC)

Running Wild vs Striders Mountain Challenge. Just like Jack and Jill and the Grand Old Duke of York, except you do the downhill bit first, and then all the way back up again. All 800 metres of it! And we need you: club pride is at stake. (www.runningwildnsw.com/kedumba-half-marathon).

Six Foot Cancelled ... What Next?

Six Foot might have been cancelled but as Brendan Davies explains there's more to running than just one race.

THE WALLS OF disappointment of 850 runners resounded across the entire trail running community with the cancellation of the 2012 Six Foot Track Marathon.

I'm sure we could all walk around head down whingeing about the wasted effort, the training runs in the rain we had to endure in the lead up and the cruelty of Mother Nature. But testament to the prevailing positive nature of the running community, there is an underlying sense that many folk are going to take this disappointment and turn it into something far greater.

"The irony was that it was the most perfect day for running."

I would like to encourage everyone who was entered into Six Foot to use this huge bulk of training that you now have under your belt and carry it forward to whatever next A race you may have.

In my case, it's the 100km World Championships on April 22nd. The months leading up to Six Foot have been big months, and now the taper for Six Foot has freshened me right up; I'm ready to build on the training that was done and put in another month of hard work prior to my race in Italy.

Perhaps for you it is the Canberra Marathon or Ultra, or even The North Face 100 in May which you could now set as your new target?

Whatever it is, the training, the fitness achieved and the personal progressions made have not been in vain. I know I'm preaching to the converted here, but



Brendan demonstrates his Six Foot Track finishing technique

the process, or to use the cliché, "the journey", undertaken in running is always more valuable than the result.

Yes, the race is thrilling and gruelling, and the cheers at Cave's House and the medal you receive are deserved recognition, but it is merely the icing on the cake of a long campaign.

So what about those 850 disappointed folk? What exactly did they do on March 10th? Well a large percentage of us did what we love doing—running! My run took in the first half of TNF100 course, along the stunning Narrowneck Plateau and through to Megalong Valley.

Many others joined me on the day; in fact, from all reports, there were posses like this all over the Blue Mountains and wider Sydney region. Yes, part of the irony was that it was the most perfect day for running, but instead of cursing the heavens we embraced the moment. Mother Nature may have taken line honours in this year's Six Foot Track, but you can bet your life that, like me, most of us will be back for another go next year.

JUNIORS CORNER

BY TONY WONG

THE PERIOD BETWEEN Christmas and March is traditionally a quiet time for junior Striders, with the exception of the very serious juniors competing on the track.

However, this year ten juniors competed in the NSW Youth Athletics Championships and seven earned selection to represent NSW at the National Junior Athletics Championship.

For the first time we also have juniors running in the 10km series and there will be many more competing in the coming months.

TRAINING

Our Monday night winter track training is held at the Sydney Academy of Sport at Narrabeen every Monday from 6:00pm and 7:30pm. The cost

to Strider Members is \$5 for the use of the track, payable at the turnstile. Friends have the opportunity to “try before they buy”, and can attend one session before joining.

Training on Thursdays takes place at 6:00pm in Manly and caters for our more serious juniors.

We are also pleased to announce our resident sprints coach Nigel Wickham will be holding sprints clinics once a month.

Please contact us at juniors@sydneystriders.org.au if you are interested and for meeting locations.

10KM AT NORTH HEAD

Gus Wong and Emma McGlinn were the first two juniors to take part in the 10km series with both of them threatening to do many more.

NSW YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIPS

In the Under-18 girls steeplechase, debutant Hannah Gibson won silver in the 2000m event in a time of 7:30. She also qualified for Nationals in the 3000m and 1500m.

In the Under-16 boys, Daniel Francken ran a spectacular 4:15:90 in the 1500m to win a silver medal, while in the 2000m steeplechase, Paul Loader and Luke Gorman qualified to go to Nationals in 6:59:79 and 7:03:12 respectively.

In the Under-14 Boys, Josh Phillips (arguably the Man of the Match) won bronze in the 800m and silver in the 1500m, in 2:17:96 and 4:39:32 respectively. He also qualified in the Under-14 boys steeplechase, having run under the qualifying time earlier in the season.

ANSW SEASON'S BEST BY AGE GROUP

MALE	UNDER 14	UNDER 16	UNDER 18
800 METRES	JOSH PHILLIPS 2:17:96	DANIEL FRANCKEN 2:05:99	GUS WONG 2:13:42
1500 METRES	JOSH PHILLIPS 4:39:32	DANIEL FRANCKEN 4:15:90	TAIKI NAYAKA 4:25:17
3000 METRES	JOSH PHILLIPS 10:20:06	DANIEL FRANCKEN 9:23:62	TAIKI NAYAKA 9:32:05
5000 METRES		PAUL LOADER 18:19:72	
2000 SC (76.2CM)	JOSH PHILLIPS 4:39:32	LUKE GORMAN 6:52:33	
2000 SC (91.4CM)			GUS WONG 7:05:56
FEMALE	UNDER 14	UNDER 16	UNDER 18
800 METRES		JEMIMA HERIG-PARSONS 2:28:04	HANNAH GIBSON 2:24:89
1500 METRES			HANNAH GIBSON 4:55:91
3000 METRES	TESSA CONSTANTINE 12:27:07		HANNAH GIBSON 10:37:67
2000 SC (76.2CM)			HANNAH GIBSON 7:16:65

Daniel Francken winning his NSW All Schools 3000M, proudly wearing his Sydney Striders uniform instead of his school singlet!

Photos courtesy of Tony Wong





Josh Phillips leading the pack before crashing out of the Under-15 boys SC

A special mention to our only jumper, 12-year-old Tessa Constantine, who was tenth with 4.25 metres in the Under-14 Long Jump and sixth in the Under-14 High Jump with 1.40 metres. She also competed in the 3000m in 12:27:07.

AUSTRALIAN JUNIOR ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

For the first time, we had seven juniors representing NSW in the Nationals held at SOPAC between

March 14th and 18th. Josh Phillips, Luke Gorman, Paul Loader, Daniel Francken, Gus Wong, Hannah Gibson and Jess Vernon must be congratulated for making it this far.

The man, or in this case woman, of the match was Hannah Gibson, who won bronze in the Under-17 girls 2000m steeplechase in a time of 7:16:65. She also posted further personal bests of 10:37:67 to finish fifth in the 3000m and 4:50:14 to finish ninth in the 1500m. Here are a few more highlights: Daniel Francken put in solid performances with tenth place finishes in the Under-16 boys 3000m in 9:23:62 and 1500m in 4:17:49.

Luke Gorman set the fastest time in the club, with a 6:52:33 clocking in the Under-15 boys 2000m steeplechase to finish fifth. In the Under-14 boys, Josh Phillips finished sixth in the 800m.

Unfortunately he was injured in the 2000m steeplechase and had to withdraw from the 1500m on the last day.

LOOKING AHEAD

With the track season drawing to a close, we look forward to the winter season. We always start with the Lindfield Fun Run, which is going to be held on Sunday April 1st. The ANSW Winter Series commences not long after and the dates are as follows:

- Saturday April 28th - Novice Cross Country Championship at Ramsgate.
- Sunday May 6th - Sydney 10 and Road Championships at SOPAC.
- Saturday June 2nd - NSW Cross Country Relays Championship at Miranda.
- Saturday June 23rd - NSW Long Course Cross Country Championships at Nowra.
- Saturday July 7th - NSW Road Relays Championship at Ourimbah (new venue).
- Saturday July 14th - NSW Short Course Championships at Rydalmere.

We are looking forward to another successful season.

JUNIORS PROFILE: A Q&A WITH HANNAH GIBSON

Q: How long have you been with the Striders and what do you like about the club?

A: This is my second year with Striders. I particularly like all the friendly and supportive people. I also like how the coaches organise the events and let us know about upcoming runs.

Q: Which school do you attend?

A: Mackellar Girls Campus

Q: Why do you like running?

A: I like competing in races and trying to improve my time in every race that I run. Running with a group of people is also very motivating. It is also a good way to spend time with my dad.

Q: What other sports do you do?

A: Swimming, netball and dancing.

Q: What is your favourite event and why?

A: I like the 2000m steeplechase, because it is challenging and adds variety to the run.

Q: Does anyone else run in your family?

A: My dad runs with me on the weekend and in various fun runs including the C2S and Pub to Pub.

Q: How many times a week do you train and what is your favourite training session?

A: I train around four times a week and my favourite session is Caroline's Thursday night training because it focuses on longer distances, it is casual and fun, and it is very motivating. I also like the Monday night session, because I get to practise on the track and Tony and Caroline are very encouraging.



ANSW season's best champ

Keeping Your Balance

As a runner it's easy to lose your balance, Rachael McKinney reports on her own recent trip to the lost and found.

IT'S 9:30PM ON a Saturday night and I'm having dinner with a small group of non-running friends at a local restaurant. As they debate whether to get another bottle of wine I surreptitiously glance at my watch and try to stifle a yawn.

I wave away the offer of yet another mineral water and mentally calculate how many hours' sleep I might be able to squeeze in before I have to drag my still-tired body from bed at 5am for the fifth morning in a row.

By now a lot of you are probably nodding—it's a familiar scene in the life of a runner, especially one training for a marathon.

Most of us understand that to achieve anything as a runner, whether it's a first 5km or a fast marathon, you need discipline. Discipline is what gets us out of bed on cold dark mornings for solitary training runs, knowing they will help us reach our goals.

Tough enough for the Lane Cove 10km



And discipline is what gets us out of bed the next day to do it all over again.

But it's easy for the discipline of training to be the end rather than the means, and when clocking up the kilometres becomes more important than the reason why, there's a chance it might have turned into an obsession.

To be honest, many runners think that a little bit of obsession is no bad thing; we all want to be seen to be passionate about what we love.

"The obsession with running is really an obsession with the potential for more and more life."

The US runner George Sheehan once said: "The obsession with running is really an obsession with the potential for more and more life".

And runners love life, but the potential for more and more life through running shouldn't come at the cost of the potential for more and more life through living.

So it was that I found myself in the throes of a high-mileage training programme for the Canberra Marathon 2012, anxiously hoping that the weather/injury/illness wouldn't derail my daily running routine.

Of course it did, and very soon I was laid low with a nasty cold



Happy HM finisher, Canberra 2011

and unable to run. I swapped my nightly ritual of checking the weather forecast, laying out my gear, and making sure my Garmin was charged with the unfamiliar but enjoyable company of my husband after 9pm in the evening.

And as I began to recover I realised I had lost my balance and fallen headfirst into an obsession with training at the expense of everything else when the goal really wasn't that important to me.

It's a tough call to admit you're not up to a challenge, mentally or physically, but to me marathon training is all or nothing.

So I pulled out of the marathon (of course I'm still running the half!), cut back on training, stayed up after 9pm, and began to join in with the rest of my life.

Sometimes you've just got to know when the balance isn't right.

No Brain! No Pain!

Long time Sydney Strider and Principal Physiotherapist at Camperdown, Tim Austin explains.

IN THE LAST edition of the Blister, I gave some basic information about how pain actually works. To summarise, pain is not a sensation, but rather an experience that requires the brain to determine whether there is something threatening the body. Even though pain is often so immediate, there is quite complex processing in the body's nervous system before you "feel" the pain.

Let's put this into a running context. When you have an injury that hurts, there are lots of nerve processes going on—it is not just that something is damaged "where it hurts".

This is no psychological mumbo-jumbo. For example, most runners don't like it when they can't run (a massive understatement)! We like running, and don't want to stop. When you can't run, you always have an emotional response to that situation.

Maybe you feel down (depressed), angry, frustrated or edgy. These emotions are brain processes too, and they can fuel the pain response. Therefore, some appropriate psychological strategies need to be deployed.

If possible, I try to keep injured runners doing some running, even if only a little. If that is not appropriate, then some other form of exercise can usually be safely done. This not only allows for some fitness to be maintained, but is also a strategy that enables you to avoid "catastrophising"

the injury (having an over-dramatic response to it).

For example, we mildly sprain our ankle, and then fear that that means that we won't be able to do the City to Surf in August... next year! We all have doubts when we have an injury, don't we?



Pain is the outcome of the nervous system deciding that there is a threat in the body

Pain is the outcome of the nervous system deciding that there is a threat in the body that needs to be addressed. When you treat an injury, either by yourself or guided by a practitioner, it is important to minimise the physical and psychological impact of the injury.

The nervous system is an amazingly adaptive organ. It is always changing, depending on experiences. The nerves adapt quite quickly to be better able to pass on messages. Inflammation around an injury sensitises nerves, making them more likely to pass on a pain message. Not only that, but

even parts of the spinal cord and brain change to pass on more pain!! Sounds bad, doesn't it?

But it is all part of the way that the nervous system tries to find out problems in the body, so it can then stop us from damaging ourselves more. This adaptive nervous system explains why, for some time after you have had an injury, you will be likely to feel some sensations or even pain in that area.

So, if you are recovering from an injury, having pain of a mild intensity in the affected area is usually acceptable if the pain does not continue to build up as you increase your running again.

I am not talking about running "through" increasing levels of pain, which can clearly be quite damaging; what I am indicating is that it is very important to determine the "pattern" of the pain that is associated with an injury.

Even learning more about injuries usually assists, because understanding is a psychological strategy about being more in control of a situation (you can see how the brain would not be as likely to "see" a threat if it feels in control).

So, I hope this information helps you to understand your bodies a little bit more. It brings another angle to the phrase "no brain, no pain".

Happy running and injury management.



It's all fun and games until some bloke with a pram is catching you



Team Born to Run demonstrate their serious side



The sun always shines on the Six Foot Track Training Group (maybe!)



Juniors: when it all started, with Gus Wong, Drew Fisher Peel, Mikaela McNamara and Darian Hargreaves



Luigi Criniti heads for the finish line at Homebush



Enjoying a bit of a warm down after the Homebush 10km



Junior Luke Gorman chasing steeplechase



6 Foot Track Training Group: BYO support car?



Left: Life member Tina Campbell ... you too could look this good if you run long enough



Faster Dad, faster ... we're nowhere near the front



A wet Homebush kicks off the 2012 10km series