

Club Kit

for Running or Recuperating



We now have **two** styles of Serpie vest available.

The new style Serpie vests have no seams and are made from technical (wicking) fabric and cost £20 each. You can still buy an "original" Serpie vest for £16.

T-shirts	Club colours	£10	S/M/L/XL
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New style vests	Club colours	£20	M: 36, 38 & 40 F: 34 & 36
Sweats	Black or Red	£15	S/M/L/XL
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Full details (including photographs) and an order form are on the website at <http://www.serpentine.org.uk/club/kit/>

Orders by post to Paul Ingram, 36 Ceylon Road, London, W14 0PY, tel: 020 7371 1130. Please let me know details of which item (for vests please specify original or new style), colour for sweats, and size you want and the address to send your kit to. Cheques should be made out to Serpentine RC. You can also arrange to collect your kit from me at the monthly handicap.

SERPENTINES

The magazine of the Serpentine Running Club
summer 2004



Inside

London Marathon 2004 Race Report

Interview with Dave McGregor

Green Belt Relay

plus:

IMPORTANT SAFETY NOTICE
for All Members, Two Oceans
and Ironman Lanzarote



Chairman's Message

It's goodbye from her, and thank you

17 years on the committee means time for a change; not just for me, but for the club. New blood is good and there's certainly a lot of it about in the club. The trouble is that, with a few meritorious exceptions, it has been impossible to entice it onto the committee. Why? "Too busy" isn't a good enough answer. There's

an old (and true) adage "if you want something done, ask a busy person". This has to be my main regret. 10 years ago, James Godber (life member no. 3 and former Hon Secretary) conducted a members' survey. The replies to "What is the club bad at?" were principally "not enough members getting involved", and "spreading workloads".

Do I have other regrets? That our senior ladies' team still can't compete effectively in Track and Field. The SEAA Ladies T&F league includes events for girls, and we just don't have any. Whilst there have been discussions about combining the men's and women's leagues, nothing has yet materialised. In the interim, our ladies have to compete in open events, or join another club as second claim.

What am I proud of? Well, happily this is a longer list than the regrets. Firstly, the club's welcoming persona and the inclusiveness of all ability levels – the fact that as a card-carrying senior citizen, currently capable of around 38 mins for the handicap, I feel comfortable joining in a chat with any group of Serpies. Next, the club's reputation externally, in which I have happily and unashamedly basked. Thirdly, its growing band of faster runners. Next, the first ever Serpie ladies' team win in the Welsh Castles relay. Finally, the website. I don't kid myself that the present award-winning website owes anything to me – it would all have happened anyway, but the fact remains that my first list of club activities on a bilious puce background irritated David Hoatson sufficiently to offer, ever so politely, to take it over. The much-improved site was spotted by one Owen Barder, and the rest, as they say, is history.

My enduring memories of Serpentine? Perhaps that's for another story, but four memories do stand out. First the boat-trip from Herm back to Guernsey on a club EasterRuns trip. James Godber, Ann Dex and I grabbed the little boat's back seat, oblivious of what happened to the spray. We soon found out. It landed by the bucketful on the occupants of the back seat! Second, true captain's performances by the Walkers – John and Hilary, that is – running into the teeth of a hail-carrying gale force wind on the leg of the Welsh Castles leading up to the Drovers Arms. This was the first time this stage was included in the race, and at times they were bent completely double, or forced backwards, but, hey, they made it! Next, Ron Hagell's hilarious sketch at the Serpie dinner dance a few years ago. This was a totally unexpected cabaret, performed by professional actors, just as the coffee was being brought round. I commend the script to you, which used to be on the website, and I forgive Ron for his remarks about changes to handicap results! Last but not least, the 20th Anniversary celebration races (an age-graded team event), which attracted 200 runners, in spite of the appalling weather which demolished (permanently) the newly purchased marquee. The winners, appropriately enough, were the "Grumpy Old Bastards"

I can't finish this message without the warmest of thanks to all my current and former colleagues on the committee. I wish I had also had to thank the wider electorate, but (sadly) I haven't actually had to face an election for years! Anyway, it really has been the most enormous fun, and I wish the new committee and the club all the best for the future.

Ros Young

Editor's Note



In some ways it seems like no time at all since I was writing my last message for Serpentines and in others, especially when thinking about all the events that club members have taken part in, it seems like ages. You've all been so busy with the London marathon, the end of the cross country season, the Green Belt relay, and a serious start to the tri season with the Lanzarote Ironman, to name just a few events, that it's particularly impressive that so many of you have put finger to keyboard and submitted articles for this issue – many thanks to all our contributors. In particular, I would like to thank two regular contributors – Jamie Felix and Juliet Allan. I know that I am always thrilled when they offer to write for Serpentines and many readers have told me that theirs are the articles they will either turn to first or save until last as a real treat.

After the last issue, many of you told us how much you liked the new Serpentine design. Thanks are, of course,

due to Richard Melik (current leader of the Serpie multi-sport championship table) for the design and layout. I would also like to give special thanks again to David Knight, who has not only given kind permission for his photos to be published, but has also turned his hand to crossword compilation. The results will be published on the website after a suitable time period to give you all a chance to crack the clues. It's also good to know that David may have some competition since many authors are now sending in some great photos along with their articles.

For this issue I have had the invaluable help of the editing skills of Sharon Lindorez and Jane Harris – it's great to know that the Serpentine team is growing. Last but not least, I'd like to thank Ros for many things: for writing her Serpentine messages – not always on time but always with finesse; for her boundless energy and good humour; for being "the boss"; and on a personal note, for being the first Serpie I met on my first Wed night club run when I was feeling very lost and didn't know anyone.

Sally Hodge



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The Club Committee answers important safety and liability questions. ESSENTIAL READING!

OK, so I've joined the club. Who is responsible for property I have to leave at the Seymour Centre, and elsewhere at club events? You are. We advise you not to bring valuables to the Seymour Centre, and to use the valuables lockers at "Reception" if necessary. Neither Seymour nor Serpentine accepts any liability for property left in lockers in the club room, or in the changing rooms, or elsewhere in the center. The same applies at all events.

What about my personal safety? If you are an adult, then again this is down to you. It's up to you to look where you're going, and not get yourself run over, or to be the cause of an accident. The club has a welfare officer, currently Eddie Brocklesby who will liaise with parents / guardians with regard to arrangements for participation of minors and vulnerable adults.

What about my safety at races? Firstly, you must act responsibly, and not endanger yourself, other runners or bystanders. In order to get a race permit (under UKA rules), organisers must carry out a "risk assessment" to identify hazards, and must then ensure measures to reduce risks to both participants and bystanders are implemented. At the highest level of road race, for example the London marathon, the risk assessment defines where barriers are placed, where roads are closed as well as where marshals are positioned. At the lower end, for example our own Last Friday of the Month 5K, the risk assessment includes a pre-race briefing to warn participants that they must give way to other parks users, and the role of the marshal is simply to indicate the route, and give warnings of possible conflicts.

I've heard that there are even risk assessments for club runs and other events. What's this all about? In a sense, we've become the victims of our own success. To take Wednesday night as an example, there can be as many as 200 members assembling at Seymour, to go for a run – even more at Speakers Corner. Arguably, disgorging 200 people onto the pavements around Seymour at one time creates a real hazard for other pavement users. You may not have noticed, but many of the residents of the mansion blocks around Seymour are frail and elderly. Large groups of runners in the park can be intimidating. Faster runners (testosterone fuelled?) thundering through the Hyde Park underpass could seriously injure someone in a collision.

So, yes, the Committee arranges for risk assessments to be prepared for all situations in which the club's normal activities impact on third parties in a way which could create hazards. These are in a binder in the clubroom, and on the website at www.serpentine.org.uk/clubruns/safety and as we become aware of other situations, the list is added to. This is an issue that affects all of us. If the club doesn't act reasonably (that is: if it can't ensure its members behave in a safe and careful manner) it may have to cancel or move its runs in central London.

How do you make sure it all happens? Well, we have Risk Assessments for club runs and races. However, equally important is ensuring that the preventative measures are implemented at all times, and this requires your active cooperation. The club is run entirely by volunteers who give the safety briefings and organise the activities. Every club member must be familiar with the safety guidelines and must assist by following the preventative measures. This is particularly important where large numbers are involved. Some regular runners have been reluctant to help out by wearing bibs on a Wednesday night. This is seriously demoralising for those volunteer organisers who put so much of their personal time and effort into making these activities safe and pleasant for all. And, if an organiser does not have all the helpers required by the risk assessment, then it might have to be canceled.

You haven't said much about insurance. Is everyone who helps out with club activities covered by public liability insurance? As a club affiliated to UK Athletics we are covered by their insurance policy. Details are in the clubroom, or can be found via the website link to the UK Athletics site. Note that there are exclusions of cover (such as hazardous activities, groups of club members acting independently of the club). Our risk management procedures are intended to ensure we all act reasonably (and can demonstrate this if necessary) and we are seeking professional advice to double check their effectiveness and to ensure that we bring cycling and swimming activities into the frame as appropriate.

The Committee

Oceans, Mountains and Mud in Cape Town

by Phil Rado

Phil runs the challenging but picturesque Two Oceans Marathon

As a masochist whose preferred form of torture is marathon running, I entered the Two Oceans Marathon in 2004. This race has a worldwide reputation as the most picturesque ultramarathon. It's a tough challenging course around the South African Cape Peninsular, where the Atlantic and Indian oceans converge, thus deriving its name. The 56km of steep mountain passes reward runners with spectacular seascape views. Two Oceans attracts around 10,000 like-minded "pleasure-seekers" each year. To be eligible to take part all entrants (with the exception of overseas runners) must run a sub five-hour qualifying standard marathon.

A wave of runners headed south as if bursting from a broken dam wall

Traditionally, the Two Oceans course runs down and up both sides of the Cape Peninsular. This all changed in 2000 when bush fires and heavy rain caused mudslides and rock falls, resulting in the death of a motorist on the scenic Chapman's Peak Drive on the western side of the Peninsular. Subsequently the road had to be closed and the race lost its most spectacular views when it was re-routed inland over the long, uninspiring and high Ou Kaapse Weg. After a four-year absence, extensive construction and rock stabilisation, Chapman's Peak has been re-opened and this year the race was to return to its original course.



So on 1 April (*Ed Note: was the date significant maybe?*) I left England still gripped in its endless arctic winter and headed for the warmer climes of South Africa. I arrived fully nine days prior to race day giving me ample time to acclimatise, but as the big day neared my apprehension gradually turned into fear. On race day I got up at 4am to find all my pre-race nerves had settled. As I drove through the city centre and on into the southern suburbs, with more and more cars of track-suited athletes heading the same direction, a light drizzle began to fall – proof that the previous evening's forecast of rain was becoming a reality.

The race started on Main Road. With 30 seconds to go, 9,000+ runners surged forward to the sound of a traditional Cape fish horn being blown. Then BANG – the starting gun fired and a wave of runners headed south as if bursting from a broken dam wall. We soon settled into a steady 6min/km pace through the commercial centres of the southern suburbs where a surprising number of early-bird supporters were out to cheer us on. Eventually the darkness drew slowly back to reveal gloomy, grey early morning skies. Our pace was good and we seemingly sped through many familiar places where I had grown up. The crowds also grew with the dawning day, lining both sides of the endless Main Road. With brightening skies and intermittent drizzle we reached False Bay and the Indian Ocean. Here the route squeezed around the Cape Peninsular mountain range, hugging the coastline of the bay. With 15km gone, runners still filled the entire road, shoulder to shoulder. The scenery was beautiful – quaint fishing hamlets and colonial architecture – and always those mountains.

We reached the 22km point in Fish Hoek and the route turned right, away from the Indian Ocean, heading across the Cape towards a relatively flat saddle and the western side of the Peninsular. The crowds were thick along this part of the course, all watching out for familiar faces or cheering runners wearing local club colours. Many held banners with slogans like: "Don't stop for a swim. Keep running!" and "Who's Running the Country?" (a reference to South Africa's recent election).

Now the road started to climb, gradually at first, but just a taste of things to come. From this point on there would be no more flat sections to run. The Atlantic appeared, deep, blue and vast to the eastern horizon. As the road climbed past the half-way mark (28km) my pace was slowing rapidly. Far below was a long white beach stretching to a lighthouse at

Kommetjie. Despite the persistent rain, the views were magnificent! Relief came as the road reached a summit and traversed over "Little Chappies" but the relief was short-lived, as round the headland there was Chapman's Peak Drive in all its glory. The sheer vertical cliffs drop from dizzying heights straight into the crashing surf far below; the road winds like a piece of string, clinging impossibly to the cliff face – up and up, higher and higher until it almost disappears into the base of the low-lying cloud. Experience says that head down and keep running is the only way to tackle this beast of a climb. With aching legs I plodded on at a snail's pace. By then lots of people were walking, their pace hardly slower than my own. Slowly onwards and upwards, once again not to be fooled as the road swung past a false summit that looks identical to the real summit. Another 600m up the cliff face, until, at last, I reached the top. Even though it was a grey, wet day, the view to Hout Bay and the surrounding mountains opened out ahead.

Ahead now was a 6km downhill stretch into Hout Bay, where I truly "hit the wall" by the 38km point. Passing through the village, the route immediately started another ascent to Constantia Nek. Unlike Chapman's Peak, where the road ahead is visible, this climb hides beneath the lush green vegetation of horse farms. One has no concept of the distance covered or how far the road still has to climb. It is along this gruelling climb that you pass the "Standard Marathon" banner – 42.2km. By now walking was the norm – running wasn't even an option!

Once more the course headed downhill, but all thoughts of a sub six-hour finish were gone. It felt like my legs were being stabbed with red-hot pokers, my feet hurt, my chest felt like exploding, I was cold and soaking wet, functioning on "autopilot", my mind shutting out the pain. Even so at no stage did the thought of quitting cross my mind. The ocean views were now a distant memory as the road wound through Cecelia Forest, perching on the lower slopes behind Table Mountain. The long downhill was inevitably followed by more uphill. The next two little hills (which appear in none of the official race literature) have been christened by Two Ocean runners as "F@#%\$-It One" and "F@#%\$-It Two". Thankfully they really are only short.

Now with just 5km left, another long downhill helped us through the affluent suburb of Bishopscourt and onto Upper Newlands. One last turn took us onto the Union Drive Highway and past the State President's Residence at the Groote Schuur Estate. I can't say that I remember much about this stage, but my spirits were lifted in the last km when I caught sight of my son, waiting there to cheer me in. As I caught sight of him my mobile phone, which was in his pocket started to ring – it was Christel, a fellow Serpie calling from London to find out how my race had gone!



I was almost at the end, but there was one extra unpleasant surprise awaiting the runners. The marathon finished across three rugby fields at the University of Cape Town. Incessant rain, along with the many thousands of preceding finishers, had churned the green turf into a quagmire. After 56 gruelling km, past two oceans and up stunningly steep mountain passes, we were finishing in a bog. We had to drag our cramping legs over the soft, waterlogged fields, hardly even able to notice when we had crossed the finishing line.

Experience says head down and keep running

Well, I made it! My finishing time was 6:20 and I collected a blue medal to add to my four previous bronze medals. I felt a little disappointed not having made the bronze six-hour cut-off, but still had plenty of time to savour the hundreds of athletes who were still struggling through the energy-sapping mud. If a runner crosses the finish line just one second after the seven-hour race cut-off time, he or she is not awarded any medal and is not even credited with finishing the race – it is heartbreaking to watch. There was agony of a different kind for a woman who only just made the cut-off time, thanks to four men who carried her down the home straight. As she was carried off to the first-aid tent on a stretcher, someone in the crowd yelled: "You may end up in hospital, but you made it."

So, who's going to join me in Cape Town next year, when I go for medal number six?

The London Marathon

by Jamie Felix

Serpies tell their stories



Drenching rain, strapping wind and bitter temperatures made for less than ideal conditions at this year's London marathon. Still, that didn't stop 170 Serpies – myself included – from braving the elements on 18 April to complete the 26.2 mile course, threading our way through the nation's capital city in our red and gold vests.

The ultimate irony of the London marathon – or any major race for that matter – is that, despite sharing the road with 33,000 other runners, the event remains an intensely personal experience. I caught up with several of this year's Serpie marathoners as they reflected on their tales of triumph and tragedy, the good times and bad, the missed opportunities and the surprising successes.

If being soaked to the skin in a paper-thin vest sounds uncomfortable, triathlete and simian-sympathiser George Fraser had it far worse running in a gorilla costume for the Diane Fosse charity. As the last-minute replacement for the original gorilla who bowed out the night before the marathon, George spent over four and a half hours inside the 30-pound rubber-lined furry suit. “The rhino had it much tougher,” concedes a modest George, referring to his running partner Richard Melik, whose stride-limiting rhinoceros costume meant he had to half-gallop his way through the race. Of course, running over 26 miles in rain-drenched rubber has its limitations too: “Several times during the race I had to dump out my hand mitts, which were filling up with sweat and water,” explains George. How delightful.

The highlight of the elite women's race – apart from Siri Terjesen confessing her love to Jonny Wilkinson on the start line – was the outstanding performance of Barbara Yff, who went on to run a 2:48.10, placing 29th among a world-class pool of female athletes, many of whom were looking to qualify for Athens later this summer. “I set out at a pace to run 2:50 but wasn't sure if I'd be able to hold that the whole way, so it was to my own surprise that I actually went under that time,” explains the 25-year-old PhD candidate. Along with yours truly (2.58.33) and Vikki Sercombe (3.06.55), Barbara led the Serpie elite women to our third-place trophy in the female team category.

The women's race kicks off 45 minutes before the main event, and any advantage of starting earlier and releasing that pre-race anxiety is balanced by the marathon being a far lonelier event for us. Only 100 or so women line up at the start, and the group quickly disperses within the first few miles. The lucky ones will find someone at their pace to run with, but for the most part, the enthusiastic crowd is the real source of inspiration. We couldn't do it without the help of the millions of well-wishers and fellow club members, especially in the final miles when the rain was pouring, spirits were fading and the infamous stones on the Embankment “felt like thousands of little daggers cutting into the bottom of my feet,” as one runner put it.

For everyone, having the word ‘Serpentine’ splayed across their chests guaranteed additional cheers from the charismatic crowd, making it that much easier to forget the remaining miles and the encroaching aches and pains. “It's amazing how dead your legs could be and then the miraculous recovery they made when they heard someone bellowing ‘Go Serpie!’” reflects Sue Hammer.

Support from fellow club runners was also vitally important. When Reinhardt Kreth passed Lucy Brooks at the two-mile mark, “he asked me why I was running as slow as an old lady with a shopping trolley,” reflects Lucy, who went on to run a stunning personal best of 3:03.46 – the third-fastest female time for the club. “I still can't really believe it's true,” says Lucy, who originally was aiming for 3:15 and never even considered entering the female elite race. “I guess next year I'll just have to try and break three hours.” We look forward to seeing Lucy on the elite line with us next year.

Simon Maughan, who says he was disappointed with his PB of 3.48.58 (he was “hoping to go comfortably inside 3.40”), can take some comfort in playing an important role in inspiring Candice McDonald to run faster, after she encountered Simon whilst “popping to the loo” when she thought no one could see her. The embarrassed runner went on to finish in a personal best of 3.20.31 – 10 minutes better than she was aiming for.



On the flip side, the ultimate heart-wrenching performance belongs to Ian Loriggio, who crossed the line in a fateful 3.00.09. Missing the three-hour barrier by a handful of seconds left the witty runner waxing philosophical: “In the best traditions of British sport, heroic courage and ultimate failure, I run a 3.00.09,” he says dryly. Far more disappointing, he adds, was “not seeing the Daily Star topless women this year at the Surrey Quays junction.” Would they have made you run slower or faster, Ian?

Although the rough conditions meant many were frustrated with their final results, no one was happier than Sue Hammer with her “personal worst” of 4:29:55. Sue has an excuse, however, having run a PB in the Paris marathon just two weeks before. She admits that “a lot of Serpies considered me daft” for entering both, but she “just can't resist a marathon once I've entered it” even if it is “only for fun”. I don't know about Sue, but two weeks after my marathon I was just regaining the ability to walk down a flight of stairs, let alone cruising through another marathon for the heck of it.

“The mixture of euphoria, relief and exhaustion I felt at the end of 26.2 miles was far better than I had imagined it,” concludes Matthew Chiles, who ran the entire race with his brother, Lawrence, crossing the line together in 3:33.10. While some runners

find it hard to put into words their marathon experience, the gifted runners kept pen in hand throughout their training, keeping a detailed diary of their work up to, and including, the final marathon run. The entire saga is posted on the “Chiles Eats Miles” website. (Visit www.chiles.org for more details.)

Perhaps the most improved personal performance belongs to Robin Gray, who broke the four-hour barrier for the first time with his PB of 3.57.17 – wiping 20 minutes off his previous best. Robin knew he could do it after “passing the rhino and knowing I wasn't going to finish behind him” but concedes that the best part of the day was “consuming vast quantities of liquid poetry” at the Paxtons Head with other Serpies afterwards. The runner, who says he used to weigh 18 stone before taking up marathoning six years ago and then joining Serpentine, adds that his overall enthusiasm for marathoning is due in large part to the club itself – the Tuesday coaching staff at Paddington, the long runs with Nick Slade, and the multitude of “club members who work so hard” and collectively make the Serpies a source of inspiration for everyone. “The club is so successful and I owe everybody a big thank you, not only for help during the marathon season but for the enthusiasm and encouragement all year round,” he says. The rest of us join you in your thanks, Robin.

We couldn't do it without the help of the millions of well-wishers and fellow club members

Whether London was the dark day in their running career or the shining pinnacle of their athletic accomplishment, all the Serpies I spoke with agreed there is no better feeling than when they turned that final curve in front of Buckingham Palace and crossed the finish line some 400 yards later. One thing's for sure: they will all be back for more next year!



What do I do in Tri Transition?

by Neil Melville and Jenny Gowans

Get prepared for your first tri

Unsurprisingly, this is one of the most frequent questions which comes my way from first triers. If you're heading for your first triathlon you know the basics of how to swim, bike and run but what happens in between is a more daunting mystery and could cost you more time than a bad swim or run. On the other hand, you can gain more minutes in transition than hours spent training, so here is my guide to transition.

Setting up transition

You will normally be allocated a numbered position on a scaffolding bike rack. I prefer to hook my saddle over the rack but others hook their brake levers. You only have a small amount of space, so a small plastic tub or holdall is a good idea to keep your kit together and mark your spot. Lay your run/bike shoes out in front of your tub, perhaps on top of a small towel which you can use to wipe any grit off your feet before putting on shoes. My helmet goes on top of my tri bars and my glasses go inside my helmet, but if you don't have tri bars, then put your helmet and glasses on top of your shoes. Useful finishing touches I like are: talc inside my shoes to prevent blisters; a spare water bottle with plain water beside my shoes; a dollop of non petroleum-based lubricant under my saddle to treat any chafing.

Next, walk through the transition route making special note of where you are allowed to get on and off your bike and giving yourself mental reminders of where to find your stuff; "third rack down, next to the tree". Some competitors use a brightly-patterned towel to help them spot their rack position.

Here's my transition routine:

Leave the water. Stay calm! Breathe easy!
Put goggles on head but don't take them off until you
Unzip wetsuit and pull top half down
Now remove goggles and cap and continue running to your allocated transition position.

A useful tip for pool swimmers

The only difference is that you remove your goggles and cap on exiting the water because there's no wetsuit to remove. In wetsuit swims, only remove your cap after passing the time keeper (if there is one) because your number is on your head! Also, make sure you know your number and shout it out.

At first transition

Throw goggles and cap in tub/holdall
Remove rest of wetsuit and throw it in tub/holdall
Put on bike helmet and glasses (you must not unrack your bike without the helmet both on your head and fastened)
Wipe off grit on towel
Put on bike shoes
Unrack bike and run to bike mounting point. GO!

Tips

The easiest way to get a wetsuit off quickly is to peel the suit down your legs and then stand on the suit one leg at a time to get it over your feet. Plenty of lubricant (like KY or baby oil) around your ankles, wrists and on all joints will help the suit to peel off. Experienced triathletes often start with their shoes clipped to the pedals and slip their feet in while riding, but don't feel that you have to do this unless you have dedicated a good amount of practice time to it.

At second transition

Rack bike – you must do this before taking off helmet
Take off helmet
Swap shoes. GO!

Tips

If you use clipless pedals it is worth practicing removing bike shoes and cycling with bare feet on top of them in the last few hundred meters. When it comes to getting on your running shoes, elastic laces are a cheap and invaluable investment – you can just pull on your shoes and go but don't pull the laces too tight; they feel different to normal laces so it is worth doing some training runs using them.

What clothes to wear?

For your first event it is certainly important that you feel comfortable with what you wear. Of course you can change or add clothes but you will be watching others go past you as you struggle to get clothes off and on a wet body!

Tri clothing is tight fitting and quick drying so you can swim in it and, unless it's a very cold day, you can bike and run in it too. Wet kit dries quickly but a blob of KY jelly (or other non-petroleum based lubricant) under the saddle can be used to treat chafing. The next question is socks or no socks? Easy! If



you need socks, wear them but it costs a surprising amount of time to put them on. Those around you will have put talc inside their shoes to prevent blisters but do try this out first to make sure it works for you. Bodyglide or a similar lubricant work well on danger spots like the underside of the tongue and the back of the heel. Numbers are attached both front (for the run) and back (bike) but if racing in a crop top or in a trisuit, where you might want to undo the zip for ventilation, then use a race belt: this is a piece of elastic that you attach one number to and pull the number round to the back or front depending on whether you are biking or running. You can buy one for a fiver or make one yourself.

Nudity is not allowed in transition, so women should wear a sports bra under whatever they swim in, unless sufficiently supported by the built-in sup-

port of the tri clothing or swimming costume. Obviously it is important that the sports bra is made of quick-drying material.

One last word: Practice!

You can learn a lot just by getting to the race early enough to see what others do but there is a lot to remember, so practice your transition routine and make your clothing choices before the race. Sam Allpass and others run 'brick' training sessions throughout the summer where you repeatedly practice some of the skills of transition. When it comes to race day, mentally rehearse your own transition routine as you reach the end of each leg. But the main thing is to relax and enjoy!

You can find more help on the tri advice pages of the website at www.serpentine.org.uk/tri/advice

Better Late Than Never

by Juliet Allan



There's something different about Dave McGregor's front door. It has a chair right next to it. On the outside. I suppose I shouldn't have been surprised. He's thoughtful enough to want his visitors to feel comfortable but he's just, well, always late. And this is no exception. I've arranged to meet him at the flat in

Dave's been running all his life

Gloucester Place which he shares with his girlfriend, Cathy, and their two cats, Pad and Sapphire. I'm a few minutes late myself, but Dave's not there. So I make myself comfortable on the chair as I'm sure others have done before me, earning some odd looks

from passers by, and I wait. A quarter of an hour later, after another bout of hammering at the door, Cathy, who was in the shower, appears and invites me in. She has no idea where Dave is. But a few minutes later, as I'm about to give up, he arrives, fresh from the supermarket. He's enormously apologetic.

The next obstacle is that my dictaphone isn't cooperating. It keeps stopping and starting. I try different batteries, bang it on the table, turn it upside down, but nothing helps. I half convince myself that if I jab it periodically with my finger it perks up. But there doesn't actually seem to be any rhyme or reason and I resign myself to scribbling frantic notes, while leaving it running to catch the odd disjointed syllable. Dave, who's watched the whole pantomime patiently, fixes us a couple of gin and tonics (they were worth the wait) and our chat gets under way.

The youngest of seven children, Dave's been running all his life. He grew up in Napier – an Art Deco city on the east coast of New Zealand's North Island. When he was about ten, he and his five brothers marked out a half mile block near their home and timed themselves round it. They used to keep records of their times in a little log book, he says, laughing at the earnestness of it. In the summer holidays they'd decamp to the beach and hold races there. He competed all through high school but, although he often

came second or third, he rarely finished in first place.

As well as having five older brothers and an older sister to keep up with, Dave found athletic inspiration in his parents. His father was a wrestler and weight lifter, who also threw discus and javelin. His mother swam. "She may have run as well", he adds rather vaguely. Dave wasn't the only one to take up the athletic mantle; two of his brothers are still serious athletes. The oldest one is an all-rounder. He's a good sprinter – indeed he is, Dave admits, probably faster than him at some distances – and is the New Zealand over 60 decathlon champion. And the next brother up is very quick over short distances too.

After leaving home, Dave moved down to the South Island and spent about ten years in Christchurch. He didn't join a club, but ran a lot on his own. Running wasn't his only sport at the time. Dave took up rowing in his late 20s and his crew won the New Zealand championship lightweight 8 shortly after. "That", he says, "has to go down as my most memorable sporting success". He found the camaraderie of the Canterbury rowing club fantastic and continued to row when he subsequently moved to Tauranga, where he joined a running club (the "Tauranga Ramblers") and added basketball to his portfolio of sporting activities.

Dave did his first 10k when he was about 28, clocking a time of 34:10. "I sort of got stuck in that time zone" he says, looking slightly perturbed, but his times improved dramatically when he started to focus his training on that distance. He also enjoyed throwing javelin and discus (though he never equalled his father's distances) and combined his track and field talent to round off the twentieth century in style when he won the heptathlon in both the New Zealand and the Australasian Championships.

Meanwhile, Dave "sort of fell into" teaching. He's actually a musician and used to teach flute in secondary schools. One day he was spotted by an inspector, who suggested that he train to be a teacher. He did so, specialising in maths and music. He plays the piano too, but his main musical interest is singing. He sings baritone in barbershop groups and has competed seriously in barbershop competitions as far afield as Hawaii. "How fantastic", I say. "Oh yes. It's real serious stuff" he says. He's quite animated. He obviously really enjoys it.

Dave arrived in England on New Years' Eve 2001. Having been supply teaching in New Zealand and helping one of his brothers out with a sandblasting and spray painting business, he came to start a teaching job. He had, however, wanted to come to England for years. His grandfather was born here, which entitled him to a four-year work permit.

He currently teaches maths to 11 to 18-year-old girls at a Catholic school in Hackney. I'm not quite sure why I find it impossible to suppress an amused smile, but it's somehow such a wonderful image. I ask if he has a nickname. He gives me a wry smile. "I haven't found it, actually. Maybe I should". Oh yes please Dave. Then tell us all what it is and we can shout it out when you're running. The school has no changing facilities for men. He used to get there really early to shower after running in before the girls arrived ("I wouldn't want a scandal, would I?") but then discovered his master key worked for the showers. I take another jab at the rebellious dictaphone. It's totally infuriating.

When Dave first arrived in London his flatmate introduced him to Ruth Jackson who, in turn, introduced him to the Serpies. They're a "good bunch", he says. He went to the Serpentine winter party in his first month in London. It was his first social function here. "This is pretty good", he thought. "I can't really join another club, can I?" So he stayed. "It saved me looking around and saved me thinking", he says. He also met Cathy there. That might just have had something to do with it, I suspect. He comments that it's good to have a team, rather than always being an individual and there are so many events to compete in and such good training opportunities. He'd missed the deadline to enter the 2002 London Marathon.

Dave arrived in England on New Years' Eve 2001

Dave Lipscomb wrote to David Bedford to ask if he could have a place, but to no avail. So he ran for charity and was rewarded with a PB; a pretty spectacular one, in fact. His time was 2:30:28.

Dave's got some pretty impressive PBs in middle distances too – for example he ran a 10k in 31:58 in Napier about twelve years ago. His 3k best time is about 8:50 (which he modestly describes as "not spectacular") and his 5K around the 15:40 – 15:50 mark. His favourite distances on the track are 800m and 1500m. "There's something sensational about running fast for a couple of laps. When you can run under 60 seconds for the first lap and it feels good, then you know you're fit". I bet.

And what about his goals? The first one is obvious – he'd like to break 2:30 for the marathon. "Two minutes for 800m would be good too." He explains that you "just have to focus: decide on a target and do the appropriate training". He finds reading running books when training an inspiration. Rest, he says, is also important. It's crucial to have one day a week off and he usually has one light day as well. This must be even more important for someone who, like Dave, runs up to 100 miles per week when training for marathons. He tends to drop to about 70 miles per week about six weeks before, and then concentrates on speed and races.

I ask what his best ever running experience has been and am not surprised by the answer; the London Marathon in 2002. I'm sure it helped that he got such a spectacular time. A PB, he admits, "helps the whole experience", but the atmosphere was great too. It was the biggest marathon he'd run outside Hawaii (which he's done twice). At the other end of the scale was a 10k which he abandoned. He never pulls out of races and that really frustrated him. He was tired, he says. It was near the end of the season and he'd done too many races. He thought he'd stay in the race and jog with the slowest, but even that proved too much.



Then there was the time when, a week before a marathon, he “got the idea that I’d sort of clean my system out by taking a mild laxative”. It was just a little pill. But it turned out not to be mild at all and he suffered from severe stomach cramps all week and started the race horribly dehydrated. The race was, he confesses, “not good”. I suspect this is something of an understatement, but don’t press the point, aware that we could quickly stray into the realms of “too much information”. He learned his lesson the hard way, he admits. Now he sticks to a good breakfast with honey at least four hours before the race. Another jab at the dictaphone.

Running obviously takes up a lot of time, but Dave loves travelling when he gets the chance. Before coming to England he’d travelled reasonably widely, but the destinations had been limited to those within (relatively) easy striking distance of New Zealand – Australia, Malaysia, Indonesia and Hawaii. He’s travelled a lot in Europe over the last couple of years. “I guess I’m here for the European experience; the whole thing” he admits.

I have to tease him. I can’t resist it. “Dave. I’m sorry, I have to ask: why *are* you always late?” “I’m not going to tell you” he says, almost petulantly. But he’s joking. There’s no great mystery. He just tries to fit too many things in. “I just cram too much stuff in at the last minute, not leaving enough time. I always try to cut things quite fine and London sucks up a lot of time”. Only the weekend before our chat, he arrived too late to run in the Coombe Hill 5 miles. He doesn’t want to talk about it. In fact he hates being late so often. He finds it, he says, “terribly embarrassing”. He actually looks quite pained.

But Dave has the last laugh. As he pops off to the kitchen to get us some post-interview refreshment I notice that my dictaphone’s stopped altogether. “Can you believe it?” I call out. “Maybe it’s voice-activated or something. Ha, ha...” But a weak chuckle turns to a cold feeling inside as I notice a little button I’ve never seen before. “VA”, it says. And it’s switched on. Cathy joins us for a couple of glasses of wine and some cheese before I slope off into the May evening, nursing my writer’s cramp.

Creative Visualisation

by Sid Wills

Based on a talk given at the 2004 Serpentine Health Weekend

I am writing this piece as an enthusiast rather than an expert and some of you may not agree with some of the things I say. For example, someone asked me recently, “What’s it got to do with running?”

I developed a serious interest in creative visualisation just over a year ago whilst I was in India studying yoga. During that time I was doing my running alone, which was important for me – I felt relaxed and happy. I had begun to feel unfulfilled when running at home, nervous before races and running in groups. I also became aware that working with the beginners groups I was dealing with similar issues with others: it was more than just basic running skills. I had also become interested in coaching and had completed a level one coaching course. With all respect to the trainers, I found the course rather mechanical and not very inspiring. I felt that I wanted some more knowledge before tackling level two. The following quote said it all for me: “Unless it’s fun, better left undone” *The Zen of Running*.

I have many years experience in counselling and I felt that somehow I should be able to use some of my counselling skills in my running. Going faster was not the issue. Could I make my running a form of physical meditation, in the same way that I view yoga? By chance, I came across the following quotations which really moved me.

“I believe it is not the training, but the spaces between the training that are the most critical”
Bobby McGee.

Bobby McGee was the coach to Colleen de Reuck, two times Olympian, world record holder at 10 miles and 20k; to Frank Shorter, gold and silver for the marathon at the 1972/74 Olympics; and to Josia Thugwane, 1996 Olympic marathon champion. Bobby describes running as being magical, and he talks and writes in a very inspiring way. But what does he mean here? Well, training is important, races are important, but if you are to feel what I call a holistic runner, whether you are an elite athlete or a beginner, you need to devote some moments every away from training to re-evaluate how you feel. Some of you may do this already. Frank Shorter said “magical means creating a realistic, mental image of yourself and integrating it into your physical training



programme”. A hero of mine couldn’t put it better: Muhammad Ali said “The man who has no imagination has no wings”. Michael Jordan put it more simply: “I visualised where I wanted to be, what kind of player I wanted to become.” I decided I needed more information.

Bobby McGee had read a diverse selection of books which influenced his coaching, many totally unconnected to running. I found this refreshing and so my search began. I started by considering my early experiences of running. In 1954 as a teenager I celebrated Roger Bannister’s four-minute mile by running around the block for weeks afterwards with pace-makers (friends pretending to be Disley, Brasher and Chataway). Bannister’s was a truly unbelievable feat, yet what was perhaps more remarkable was the fact that John Landy broke his record two weeks later and others soon followed. What is not remembered is that Diane Leather broke the five-minute mile 21 days after Bannister’s great achievement. I am sure all of this opened up new visions in other people’s minds. I know my earliest memory of a sporting

Invisible Members

Are you one of our invisible members? One of the many who haven’t ticked ‘Share this info?’ in SerpieBase and are therefore totally invisible to any other Serpies logging in?

If you’re one of these mysterious people, why not login to <http://www.serpentine.org.uk/serpiebase> and click ‘Edit my personal details’ to share your mobile number, email address or other contact details?

While you’re logged in, why not check that your other details are correct: especially your emergency contact and medical details? The club needs these to be up to date for obvious reasons.

Make 2004 the Year You Start Writing

If you’ve found something to inspire you in this issue of Serpentine, why not contribute to the next issue? It’s a great way to share events you’ve loved (or hated) with others; to give advice, ask for help or to let every Serpie know about something that’s coming up. With over 1,300 members there is lots of hidden talent out there.

Email your contributions to the Serpentine team at serpentine@serpentine.org.uk

visualisation was falling asleep imagining I was in an invitation race with Kuts, Chataway and Zatopek. Many of you may also have witnessed inspiring events which have in turn inspired you. My hero as a teenager was the great Emil Zatopek who, I recently discovered, said “a runner must run with dreams in his heart”.

What is creative visualisation?

There are various descriptions of creative visualisation (sometimes called imagery). I think Shakti Gawain's is the clearest. Creative visualisation is the technique of using your imagination to create what you want in your life. There is nothing at all new, strange, or unusual about creative visualisation. We are already using it every day relatively unconsciously. Imagination is the ability to create an idea or a mental picture. In creative visualisation you use your imagination to create a clear image, idea, or feeling of something you wish to manifest. Then you continue to focus on this regularly, giving it positive energy until it becomes objective reality; until you actually achieve what you have been imagining. You create your own internal comfort zone. Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi in *Flow in Sports* put it really well: “Brain cells practice travelling down the same neural pathways you will follow later in competition, this is one of the reasons you may feel yourself moving, wanting to run.” You have created a mental blueprint in the central nervous system.

In fact the most common type of imagery is worry. Most of us have 10,000 thoughts and images passing through our minds every day and most of these are negative. When we work on visualisations we must make sure we only use positive thoughts.

Susan Greenfield, neuro-scientist and former President of the Royal Institution said that serotonin is created in the brain by positive thoughts. It would seem that the body cannot distinguish between something that is really happening and something that is being visualised, for example in a bad dream you wake up sweating, agitated and your heart is pounding. Your body has physiologically reacted to something that was only occurring in your mind. Another example is if you were to remember an embarrassing moment that happened to you. While recalling it you might start to blush or sweat – a reaction that you may well have experienced in that actual situation.

The most common use of imagery is to imagine your peak performance – what you would like to repeat over and over again. It could be, for example, breaking 50, 60, or 30 mins for a 10k. I have heard many Serpies relating stories of PBs they have had over and over again. Before the 1978 summer Olympics the Soviet Union took pictures of the facilities in

Montreal, studied them and pictured themselves competing there, so when they arrived they had the feeling that they had been there before.

Shakti Gawain in *Reflections in the Light* said “Visualisation is magic in the truest and highest meaning of the word”. Many agree, from the United States Military Academy at Westpoint to Navajo Indians to Aristotle, who talked about a way to stay ‘healthy’; from NASA astronauts to the police and actors at the National Theatre. Ohio University found people with cancer who used visualisation while receiving chemotherapy and felt more relaxed. Danish medical researchers found it boosted immunity. A study at Yale showed it helped people with depression. The Barefoot Doctor in the Observer talked of athletes using it. Garden designers planning for the Chelsea flower show have used it. Blackburn College suggested it for athletes returning from injury. Research on climbing found it to be beneficial. Jazz musicians use visualisation when improvising. My limited research has shown hundreds of North American colleges use it in every sport imaginable. And finally, of course, Paula Radcliffe uses visualisation.

Not everyone is so positive. Matt Fitzgerald in the *Complete Triathlon* described it as having ‘psycho-fluffy’ connotations. A recent discussion on a British Athletic Board's internet message board described it as psychological ‘party tricks’. Luigi Guidene and Stephen Burke suggested that mental imagery was more useful for lower ability runners, than skilled performers. Professor David Martin of the US Olympic Committee said, “When one ‘gets it together mentally’ then the physical work of training becomes a joyful effort and the inevitable result is ‘successful fitness’, in which one's dreams of excellence and passion for getting there bring reality to the experience.”

So how do we do it?

Firstly, you can't really teach visualisation by just talking about it. The key to visualisation is that you do it when you are relaxed. It's best to do after you have done some relaxation exercise, such as yoga. There are many kinds of yoga, ranging from largely aerobic to largely meditative. Correctly practised, yoga can be highly beneficial for runners in building stamina and flexibility, preventing and treating injury, helping prepare for a run and wind down afterwards.

The relaxation activity is what we call clearing in visualisation. We try and create a clean slate in the mind. Relaxation strengthens the spirit to dream. Visualise as many times during the day as possible: when you get up, before training, after training and the most important time is before you fall asleep.

Utilise every opportunity to re-inforce neuro-muscular patterning.

During the session at the health weekend I ran a practical exercise in visualisation, which is hard to describe in this forum but I will try to give a flavour of it here. In essence it involves relaxing, closing your eyes, and breathing out quietly then thinking about a place where you recently had a pleasant experience – especially one where you felt relaxed and at ease. Maybe eating a nice meal, receiving a massage or swimming in a warm sea. After trying to remember the experience as vividly as possible, you should then imagine you are in an idyllic setting. It can be a place you have been to, perhaps relaxing on soft green grass beside a cool river on a warm summer evening, but it can be totally imaginary. You should stay with this visualisation as long as you want to. The length of time is less important than the vividness of the experience. Then open your eyes, yawn, and stretch or do whatever you need to re-orient yourself.

The exercise shows that in visualisation two different modes are involved; one is receptive, the other is active. In the receptive mode we simply relax and allow images or impressions to come to us; we take what comes. In the active mode we consciously choose and create what we wish to see or image. For creative visualisation to help in running, we need to choose the active mode.

Sometimes I find visualisations difficult to achieve. I can feel “blocked”, usually when I am not relaxed and fear and doubts get in the way. Let's look at a self-defeating running belief as Bobby McGee would deal with it. Your ‘story’ may be, “I always run poorly at altitude”. This is a negative self statement. A more positive affirmation would be, “At altitude I go out conservatively and finish strongly”.

How to apply creative visualisation to running

First, decide on a goal. The goal should be a realistic expectation or the feeling you want to achieve in your running. Avoid any negative-hypnotic statements. Here are some of Bobby McGee's examples of affirmations which may be helpful:

“I am special”

“I am constantly improving”

“I am better than I have ever been before”

“I am at peace when I run”

“There is plenty of success for all”

Again, once you are relaxed, with your eyes closed and breathing out quietly, create a clear idea or picture of the goal or feeling you want to achieve. Then imagine yourself achieving the goal or feeling you chose. Keep focused on this image, and repeat it in your imagination

so it becomes sharper and clearer. Over the next few days or weeks do this often to focus on it and give it positive energy. Positive statements are called affirmations – to affirm means to make firm.

Some tips are: continually play with your affirmations – highlight those you like best. Keep quotes and pieces of inspirational writing: say them aloud to yourself regularly and place them where you can regularly see them. Affirmations can be done silently, spoken aloud, written down or even chanted. Engaging in affirmations allows us to begin replacing the negative chatter in our minds, with more positive ideas and concepts.

Finally, make your visualisation work and make it simple. Let's face it, all we have to do when we run is “Begin at the beginning and go on till you come to the end; then stop” (Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*).

Serpies online

The award-winning Serpie website at www.serpentine.org.uk has information for all runners and triathletes.

New on the website

www.serpentine.org.uk/events/planner.php

Interactive race and event planner: search by date, race or sport.

www.serpentine.org.uk

homepage shows latest results

www.serpentine.org.uk/club/howdoesitwork.php

how the Club works

www.serpentine.org.uk/tri/advice

Bike buying guide, big week training advice

www.serpentine.org.uk/tri/racing

Details of all club championship races, a new race search.

www.serpentine.org.uk/tri/training/swimplans.php

Weekly swim schedule

www.serpentine.org.uk/tri/training/bikerides.php

This weeks rides: find out who else is biking this weekend or find people to go out with by volunteering to lead a ride.

Results database

Results for many of the club races are online in the results database: www.serpentine.org.uk/rdb. All the club championship road races, handicaps and “last Friday of the month 5km” races are there, as well as many marathons and other open races. You can also add any of your own results to make your own personalised ‘results’ page.

Serpie Egroups

Our email chat-lines are the best way to keep in touch with other Serpies. All members should join the main Serpentine list, which now has around 725 members and is the best way to keep up to date with events and join in with lively debate on running-related subjects. If you are interested in triathlons or multi-sport, there is another list for those too. To join the email groups, send a blank email to:

Serpentine main list serpentine-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Multi-sport list serpietri-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Bike Buying

by Neil Melville

Buying a bike for triathlon

Although it's perfectly possible to do a triathlon on any old bike, you are sure to enjoy your training and racing more – and you could be minutes faster and find the going easier – if you have something a bit more suited to the purpose. If you have already taken part in a race you will no doubt have seen the huge range of exotic and expensive bikes out there, and this vast selection can be somewhat bewildering when it comes to choosing your own bike. I can't tell you which bike to buy but having been through this same process twice, once with a £500 budget and once with a £1,500 budget, I can hopefully help you to understand the choices you will have to make.

How much do I need to spend?

Before you decide on a budget, you need to consider what you're going to get for your money. When buying a bike you need to factor in a combination of four things: frame material and workmanship, wheels, groupset (gears, chain, brakes, cranks etc) and finishing kit (saddle, seat post, bars etc). The idea of thinking of a bike as the sum of its parts is important. My bike, for example, has a good frame and pretty good wheels but it has an average groupset found on many bikes at half the price. The reality is you get what you pay for, and many bikes below £1,200 will keep the price down by using a relatively low quality finishing kit. Don't let this bother you though – as long as the most expensive items (frame and wheels) are as good as you can afford, you can upgrade or replace other items as and when they wear out.

FRAME MATERIAL

What you want in a frame is lightness and stiffness – a light frame takes less energy to move uphill or accelerate. But stiffness is as important, which is why bike frames are usually made of metal alloys. In approximate ascending order of cost, bikes are made of cheap steel alloys (often referred to as Cro-moly), aluminium alloys, expensive steel alloys, titanium alloys and carbon fibre. Although many consider carbon or titanium the ultimate, a carbon frame may not be as light or as stiff as an aluminium or steel frame at a similar price. In comparing aluminium to steel, aluminium is three times as light as steel but it is also softer, so aluminium tubes usually require a greater diameter to achieve the same strength. A quality steel frame can be made from smaller tubes with thinner walls and end up just as light.

Of greater cost than the actual material is the workmanship and design used to produce the frame. Whatever the material, the frames are made of hollow tubes, and to make these tubes lighter still the thickness of the material used will vary along their length – thinner where less strength is needed, thicker where stiffness and strength are more important. Alloys capable of remaining strong as tubes get thinner and lighter are expensive and take time and skill to produce. A frame designer isn't just trying to achieve lightness and stiffness, but also good handling. On a twisty, turny, undulating course the stiffness and lightness of your frame will let you power up the climbs and out of the corners, and the handling will let you take the corners and downhill faster.

WHEELS

Because wheels are a pretty important component – accelerating their rotating weight is a significant proportion of the energy you expend – it's possible to spend over £1,000 on them! If you are comparing two bikes take a look at the hub (centre part) and the rims for an indication of wheel quali-

ty. The hub should be of an equivalent quality or better to the groupset being used and if it isn't it's an indication that the bike's been fitted with cheaper wheels to keep down the cost. It's difficult to do a comparison of all the different rim manufacturers, but Mavic are most commonly used and they produce a range of rims of different qualities.

In addition to more traditional looking wheels, the reduced spoke, deep rim look is now fashionable even for mid-range wheels. If you are considering a bike with this type of wheel ask for some advice and find out just how good the wheels really are. At the lower end of the quality market you may find that cheap (and nasty) tyres get used to keep the price down. But cheap tyres could turn out to be a false economy when you consider that they may cost you £20 each to replace.

GROUPSET

Quality groupsets are engineered to a high standard so that shifting between gears is smooth and positive. Because of this you will often find that bikes below £1,500 use more expensive parts for important functions, e.g. better rear derailleur than front, or good crankset and cheap brakes. The materials used at the more expensive end of the market are lighter and harder wearing and consequently more expensive than those at the cheaper end, which may make use of more plastic and steel. So, if you are buying budget and putting in a decent mileage expect to replace most of your harder working components within a couple of years. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, as it will enable you to upgrade as you need to. Don't forget about the extra weight you will be carrying in the meantime though.

The two main manufacturers of groupsets are Shimano and Campagnolo. Historically, Campag is the make that everyone has aspired to however, today, it is widely acknowledged that Shimano has caught up and Campag has become more competitively priced.

FINISHING KIT

If you were a lightweight obsessive you could spend as much on carbon fibre bars, seat post etc as you have on the frame. Of course most off-the-shelf bikes don't give you the choice and this again can be an area where cheaper and heavier parts are used to keep the price down. There's nothing you can really do about this other than pay more money for custom builds. What is important is that the bike fits to your body shape, and with this in mind you may well want to swap to different width bars or a different length stem. It will save you money to make these decisions pre-purchase – you may even convince the kindly shopkeeper to exchange these items for free or upgrade at a discount.

So back to the question: how much do I need to spend?

With bikes you pretty much get what you pay for. Be careful though, a £2,000 bike isn't twice as fast as a £1,000 bike, but you will definitely enjoy riding it twice as much. But any bike twice the cost of anything you have ridden before will feel twice as good. That said, I would suggest that you start thinking at the £500 mark (although a sale or second-hand bargain might take this down quite a bit). As I said, you get what you pay for but even an entry-level bike is going to feel fantastic compared to anything you have ridden before. If you can scrape together an extra couple of hundred quid, you will notice the difference but don't forget to save some of your cash for shoes, clip-less pedals and tri bars. Not only do these things make a much bigger difference to your speed and energy expenditure than a lighter groupset but also chances are you can haggle for a discount if you buy them at the same time as the bike.

Getting the right size

The size of the bike is crucial, and becomes more so the longer you expect to spend sitting on it. There are two simple traditional fit tests:

1. Stand-over height. Stand over the top tube and lift the bike off the ground. There should be at least a two-inch gap between the wheels and the ground.
2. Top tube length. With your elbow touching the nose of the saddle, do the tips of your fingers just touch the straight part of the bars?

But don't just rely on these two tests or believe any sales assistant who declares a bike a perfect fit on the basis of them, without seeing you on the bike first.

Many bikes have 'compact' frames with slightly or dramatically downward sloping top tubes. What this means for you is that a 54cm frame from one manufacturer may be a good fit but you can't say that the frame size you need is 54cm for all models and manufacturers. And the top tube length test is clearly not going to work if you have short arms and a long back!

So how do you know if a bike fits you? The cheapest option is to seek the advice of a shop assistant with knowledge of road biking and ideally time-trialling. He/she will look at you sitting on the bike and suggest how the saddle should be raised, slid back or angled on its rails, whether a longer stem is needed and if the bars are at the right height. Their guidance will help you appreciate what a good fitting bike should feel like. You can fast track this by going directly to a shop with a sizing jig – this is a frame that can be altered in every dimension and angle. By doing this you can expect good advice on the dimensions of the bike you are looking for. You will pay for this service but often the cost is refunded if you buy a bike from that shop. An alternative sizing method is computer based sizing. The output is a diagram showing the dimensions of your ideal bike – it's then up to you to wander the shops with a tape measure! The perfect, and so most expensive solution, is to use the Bikefit service (it's like the other measurement services but additionally looks at your riding style and is a much more in depth process). The result is a perfect fit for the bike you own or the bike you want.

In conclusion, consider what you will be using the bike for. In most triathlons, you ought to be spending a significant portion of the race on your tri bars which places you in a more stretched out position. If you're bent double in this position you won't be comfortable or pedal efficiently.

Do you need a tri bike?

Genuine Tri bikes have their own geometry – shorter top tube and a more vertical seat post designed to position you forward over the tri bars in a comfortable aerodynamic position. This position is also advantageous for bike to run transition because it encourages the use of similar muscles. Because the frame's steeper angles absorb less vibration and push you forward on top of the bars, tri bikes are less comfortable for long days in the saddle at the contact points of bars and saddle.

A bike built for tri will also come equipped with appropriate wheels and finishing kit. So in answer to the question, "Do I need a tri bike", the answer is "No" but a tri bike will be faster for the distances and the nature of triathlon racing.

Out shopping

By now you should have a goodly portion of the jargon you need, a few ideas about what you are looking for and the ability to look at two bikes side by side and have the beginnings of an idea of how to compare them. It is impossible for me to recommend one shop over another, but some to think about are Sigma cycles, Condor, Evans, tri specific shops Bike & Run and Tri & Run. Also, don't discount your small local dealer who might have the time to give you some excellent advice.

Remember that even the best bike shops have staff who won't be knowledgeable about your specific needs as a triathlete and don't be intimidated. It's their job to serve you and if they can't do it well then go to someone who can. Make sure you at least ask for help from someone who rides a road bike. Ask him/her about the relative merits of different options, what you would get if you spent a bit more or a bit less. Ask them what would be the first thing that they would upgrade as a test of their knowledge and an indicator of the weakest link on your intended purchase!

Buying second hand

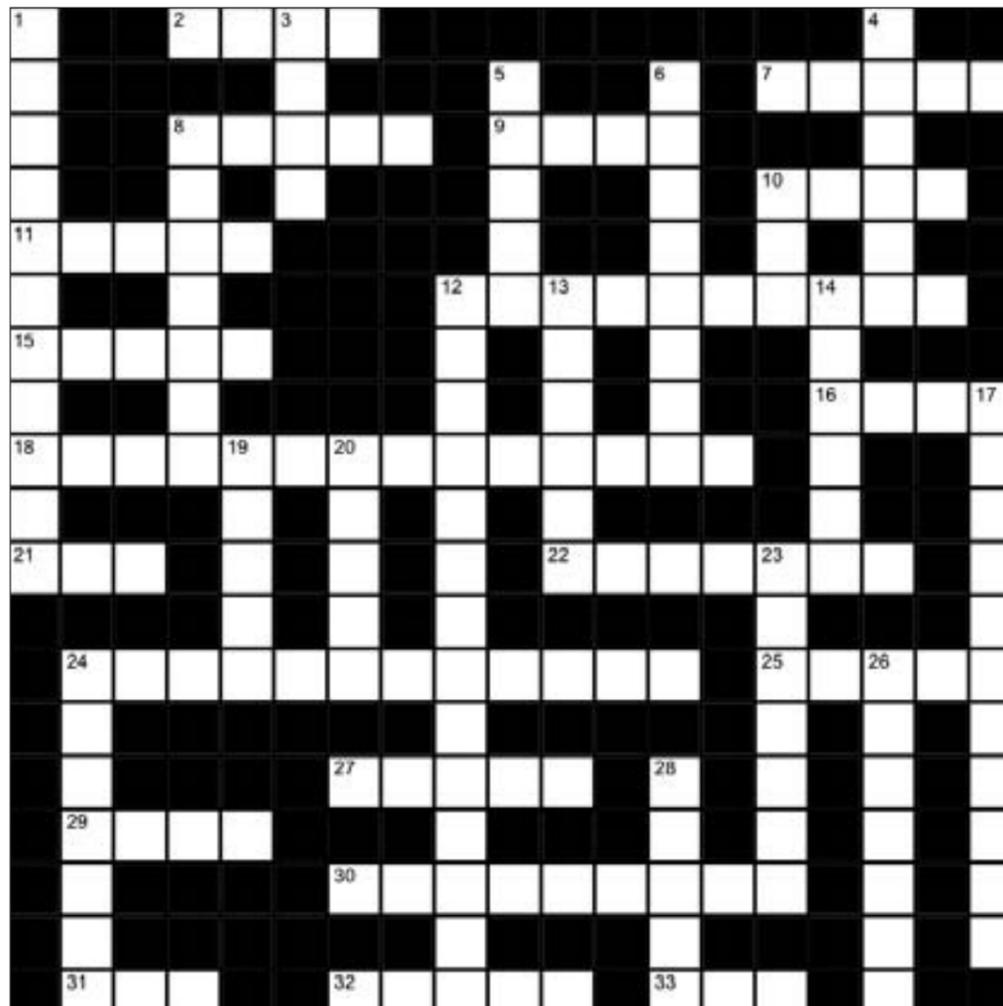
This can be a great way of buying a real bargain. Good sources of quality second hand bikes are the classified section of Cycling Weekly magazine, the Triathletes-UK website and the British Cycling website. If you are buying second hand, watch out for less obvious signs of wear – you don't want to end up spending an extra hundred quid replacing worn components.

Can I buy a bike that I can commute on and train/race with?

The two tasks are so different that if at all possible it would be better to have two bikes. Although it's possible to race triathlon on any roadworthy bike, a fast, light race bike is less than ideal for central London commuting – it's far better to have something with a stronger frame and wheels and better stopping power. However, that fast bike will be so much more fun to go training on, especially if it hasn't been coated in road muck for five days a week. If you were to ask this question in a bike shop the assistant will most likely point you to the new breed of street bikes that have lighter frames and wheels than an equivalently priced mountain bike but with MTB style V brakes. You could make it faster for racing by fitting narrower tyres and a tri bar but it will still be heavier than an equivalent race bike. If you didn't want the bother of changing tyres a step up would be to buy a second set of wheels. If price is the issue then how about buying a race bike for racing and training, and a second hand bike for commuting? If you are concerned that you aren't going to love triathlon then another alternative might be to buy a mid priced bike initially, and sell it at the end of the season with the intention of replacing it with something better next year.

Serpentine Crossword

Compiled by David Knight



Across

- 2 The only thing you'd be pleased to break at the end of a race (4)
- 7 Take it on at Tallylyn (5)
- 8 Instructor (5)
- 9 Race start (4)
- 10 With 33 across – our colours (4)
- 11 Champion triathlete (5)
- 12 None Ron lad, or else you'll be banned (10)
- 15 Sweet and simple (5)
- 16 Sanskrit for "union" (4)
- 18 Anti-libido ail, hurts leg (10,4)
- 21 Royal blocks device (3)
- 22 We all do it! (7)
- 24 Get your shoes from the endurance mob (3,3,6)
- 25 Female winner at London (5)
- 27 Without this you won't do a PB at 26.2 (5)
- 29 6.21 (4)
- 30 Instead of Intel? (9)
- 31 Flying Dutch woman (3)
- 32 Pre-race fuel (5)
- 33 See 10 across (3)

Down

- 1 Lots of these at Himalayan marathon? (7,4)
- 3 A result of 27 across? (4)
- 4 Webmaster (6)
- 5 Beyond a marathon (5)
- 6 Top UK male at London (3,5)
- 8 Where PR set PB (7)
- 10 Posh young lady gets you to the end of race (3)
- 12 Tips evangelist to get faster in race (8,6)
- 13 Put on top of 10 and 33 across (6)
- 14 Essential for exercise (6)
- 17 Do 22 in the swimming pool (4,7)
- 19 Larger bone in lower leg (5)
- 20 Humour carries 14 down (5)
- 23 Heavy chap does 30 across the hard way (7)
- 24 At least once a week (4,3)
- 26 Of particular concern for women runners (7)
- 28 Bear listens closely to your heart (5)

The solution will be published on the Serpentine website

2004 Road Race Club Championships

The Serpentine club championships are a series of 10 road races over distances from 1 km right through to marathon. With three of the club championships already decided and a large number of Serpies running a spring marathon, we have seen some great performances. The overall age-graded table currently has David McGregor in the lead with Sue Lambert in 2nd place and Barbara Yff in 3rd.

The results for the half marathon, 20 mile and 5 mile championships are

Distance	Best	Age-graded	Fastest Woman	Fastest Man
Half Marathon	David McGregor	(84.4%)	Barbara Yff (01:21:21)	Jon Fairs (01:15:06)
20 miles	David McGregor	(87.3%)	Barbara Yff (02:09:34)	David McGregor (01:56:00)
5 miles	Barbara Yff	(81.8%)	Barbara Yff (29:05)	Ben Paviour (27:22)

With summer upon us the next races in the series are the 5km, 3km, 1 mile and 1km, all of which are organised by Serpentine for members only. Don't forget, for each race, we have prizes for the fastest man, fastest woman and the best age-graded performance. Even if you haven't run in a club championship yet this year there are still six left (and that doesn't include the marathon). At the end of the year, the overall age-graded championship is awarded to the first claim member with the highest average percentage from six of the 10 championship races. You must run all events in club colours, with the exception of the marathon, where we ask you to wear club colours if you possibly can. All events must have been entered under your own name.

Distance	Race	Date
Marathon	Any during 2004	Any
5 km	Battersea Park	Tues 29 June – 7.30pm
1 mile	Paddington Track (venue may change)	Wed 7 July – 7pm
1 km	Hyde Park	Sat 17 July – 9am
3 km	Battersea Park	Tues 27 July – 7.30pm
10 km	Middlesex 10k (Victoria Park)	Sun 12 September
10 miles	Cabbage Patch 10 (Twickenham)	Sun 17 October

Richmond Park Runs on Sundays

Sunday morning long runs in Richmond Park are a great way to do your weekly long run. The path round the perimeter of the park is about 7.2 miles. Some people do one lap, some do two (and some do in between). There are a number of groups running at different paces.

We do these runs every Sunday until the end of the autumn marathon season – around the middle to end of October. There will always someone there, so all you need to do is to show up.

We meet in the car park next to Pembroke Lodge, near Richmond Gate. There are toilets and refreshments on

site, and water fountains on the route. The run will start at 9.00am and if you want to join us for a warm-up, please arrive at 8.50am sharp.

Travel to Richmond Station by train (from Waterloo) or tube (District Line). The meeting point in the park is quite a distance from the station, so do leave yourself at least half an hour. Some of us cycle to the park, but quite a few drive and give lifts to other people.

If you want more information, please send an email message to sunday@serpentine.org.uk.

Are You Ready for E-Serpentines?

If you received this copy of Serpentines in the post, you may be interested to know that you can choose to download Serpentines from the website.

If you'd prefer an electronic version of Serpentines (maybe two or more Serpies at the same address would like to share one printed copy), you can log onto SerpieBase,

choose "Edit my personal details" then untick the box beside "Serpentines by post?" This lets the Serpentines team know not to post any future issues to you.

Don't worry though! If you don't make this change on SerpieBase you will continue to receive your copy of Serpentines in the post.

Serpie Success

There have been many notable Serpie successes since the last issue of Serpentimes – far too many to list all of them here. Congratulations are due to all of you, and you can read about some of these achievements elsewhere in this issue of Serpentimes, but here are a few you may not know about:

The team of Barbara Yff, Jamie Felix and Vikki Sercombe were placed 3rd ladies' team in the UKA & AAA Championships held in conjunction with the London marathon.

1st Belgrave Harriers in 8:33:18
2nd Bristol AC in 8:39:35
3rd Serpentine RC in 8:53:38

Adrian Jones' performance at the Lanzarote Ironman means that he has qualified for the world championship Ironman triathlon in Hawaii in October.

Congratulations to the Serpies who have been selected for the GB age group team for the ITU world long

distance triathlon championships: Emmie Gribble, Michael Hanreck, Richard Melik, Chris Hewings and Margaret Sills (who placed 6th in 2003). All five will be competing in Sater in Sweden on 3 July.

In the Hertfordshire County AAA Veterans Championships held on 3 May, David Lipscomb won the gold medal in the M40 category of the discus. David also placed 2nd in the M40 javelin, 3rd in the M40 shot and 3rd in the M40 hammer.

In the National Open Masters Road Relay Championships at Birmingham, the Serpie ladies' 55 team of Pauline Rich, Sue Lambert and Eddie Brocklesby successfully defended their title, beating Coventry Godiva by over a minute with a total time of 1:05:30.

Eddie Brocklesby won silver (W60-64) at the world duathlon championship in Geel, Belgium and Elinor Rest finished 7th in the W30-34 category.

Serpie Sports Injury Clinic

Run by John Sullivan every Wednesday evening in the Serpie club room at the Seymour Centre from 6pm to 9pm

John offers

*Pre and post run massage
Advice on injury prevention and treatment
Remedial therapy for existing injuries
Nutrition, flexibility and conditioning advice*

Consultations are run on a first come, first served basis and although there is no charge, John asks for a charitable donation for Shelter, the charity for homeless people.

Serpentine Pub Quiz

A Serpentine pub quiz is planned for a Sunday evening in the autumn, to be held as a joint event with a New Members' evening.

This quiz will be unlike any you have ever attended. No previous knowledge is required, but a sense of humour is essential! Rounds include The Full Monty, You are the weakest..., Spoonerisms, Aptitude tests for aspiring Serpies and the odd scone or two.

Watch out for details in the Seymour Sentinel weekly newsletter and on the website.

London to Brighton

Join in the final 26 or 13 miles

If you have ever liked the idea of the London to Brighton run but have been put off by the distance, why not think about joining a group of Serpies who are intending to run the final 26 or 13 miles. Who knows, it may inspire you to go and to try the full distance in future years!

The run is on Sunday 3 October. Serpie runners will join the run at the cut-off time at the respective distances, i.e. with five hours remaining for the marathon (12 noon start) and two and a half for the half marathon (2:30pm start) and use a different finish line from the full race. A picnic is planned in Brighton following the run.

Put the date in your diary and contact Eddie Brocklesby or Peter Grecian for more details.

*Eddie – tel: 07976 547717
email: edwina@globalnet.co.uk.*

*Peter – tel: 07702 341851
email: peter-g@moving-picture.co.uk*

Saturday Hill Training in Greenwich Park

Greenwich Park makes a beautiful and inspiring setting for hill training: there are a huge variety of hills to choose from in terms of length, gradient, surface and views from the summit. There are ample clean public toilets, water fountains and a good café for post-training refreshments. We try to make the sessions both enjoyable (by providing plenty of variety) and taxing, and since the group is small, you get plenty of individual coaching attention.

When and where

We meet at the bandstand in Greenwich Park at 10 am on Saturday mornings. The bandstand is near the Blackheath Gate to the Park, at the top of the hill if you enter through St Mary's Gate near the Cutty Sark and walk or cycle straight up The Avenue. The bandstand is clearly visible.

Aims

If you find yourself being overtaken on hills in races, then these sessions are for you. Even if you never plan to race on hilly courses, hill sessions can be speedwork in disguise, since they yield similar improvements in anaerobic efficiency.

Hill sessions build leg-strength (especially the quadriceps and gluteal muscles, i.e. thighs and buttocks); they develop good hill-running technique, increase lactic acid tolerance and, not least – they increase your confidence on hills. They can also provide a refreshing change from doing endless laps of a track. You should begin to notice benefits after about four sessions.

The sessions are not recommended for new runners, those who have never attempted any speedwork before, and/or those with a tendency to suffer from plantar fasciitis (pain under the heel). If in doubt, ask me for advice (details below).

What to expect

The general plan for the session is:

A social warm-up of two to three miles jogging, stretching, strides. Change into spikes/fell shoes and take off warm-up gear.

Then we do three sets of four to six hill efforts, with slower runners setting off first, regrouping at summit, and then we all jog down to the bottom. There is about three to five minutes jog recovery between sets.

We aim to mix and match the hills to give plenty of variety and reduce the risk of injury. Some hills are long (200m); others short and steep, but with a 60m sprint on the flat at the summit. We do them on grass as much as we can, so bring spikes or fell shoes if you have them. If not, trainers are OK.

Last a cool-down jog of one to two miles and stretching.

Afterwards we adjourn to the Tea House for refreshments (optional).

The total distance to write in your training diary is about six to eight miles.

Because we vary the hills, there is no point in timing the hill efforts, so you will need to use your own perceived effort as your guide. The aim is to get your heart working at its maximum on each effort. However, you may find a heart rate monitor useful, if you have one.

Facilities

There are no showers in the park, but you can use the Arches Leisure Centre on Trafalgar Road. You pay £2.65 for a shower (and a swim) + 20p for lockers. However, there are ample clean public toilets and water fountains in the park. There is a good café for refreshments near the bandstand (The Tea House). Parking is available in Greenwich Park, but on Saturdays you need to approach through the Blackheath Gate. I take the family car and park near the bandstand to lock possessions in during the session.

Transport

DLR: to Maritime Greenwich (Cutty Sark).

Car: Parking in Greenwich can be difficult, so I suggest you approach through the Blackheath Gate, to the pay and display parking. Expect to need to park for 90 minutes or so.

Bike: If coming from north of the Thames, come through the Greenwich foot tunnel. You can cycle up to the bandstand through the park.

Bus: the 188 stops near the main entrance to the park. Buses 53, 177, 180, 199, 286 and 386 also stop in Greenwich town centre.

Train: from London Bridge to Maze Hill on the Dartford via Greenwich Line.

Maps are on the club's website at www.serpentine.org.uk/clubruns/sat_hill_training.htm

Please let Karen Hancock know if you plan to join us or if you have any questions about the sessions. Tel: 07970 896440
e-mail: karenhancock@btopenworld.com

Karen Hancock

Multisport Championship 2004

The Serpentine multi-sport championship (new for 2004) is still in its early stages so it's hard to tell who might end up as the champion at the end of the year. So far, we've had the half-marathon, 20 mile and 5 mile road race championships, plus we have the marathon results (to date) and two multi-sport events: the Dragonslayer duathlon and Lanzarote Ironman triathlon.

The current leader board is shown below (scores shown are the total of all eligible races so far, where 100% is the given to the winner of a race (male and female) and everyone else's score is their time as a percentage compared to the winner).

Name	Running		HM	Triathlon	Duathlon	Total to date
	FM	20M		Ironman	Dragon Slayer	
Richard Melik	55.8	87.8	0.0	87.9	95.9	327.4
Adrian Jones	0.0	91.8	0.0	100.0	100.0	291.8
Gavin Edmonds	0.0	76.2	80.2	0.0	78.6	235.0
Michael Hanreck	0.0	80.9	0.0	94.1	0.0	175.0
Edward Hopperton	0.0	0.0	82.5	0.0	81.9	164.4
Steve Attwell	76.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	84.6	161.4
Neil Melville	0.0	0.0	72.3	0.0	87.2	159.5
Mark Hanby	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	94.1	94.1
Piet Hein Scheam	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	93.8	93.8
Phil Withers	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	92.1	92.1
Stephen Hilton	0.0	0.0	0.0	89.7	0.0	89.7
Christopher Hewings	0.0	0.0	0.0	89.3	0.0	89.3
Rasheed Saleuddin	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	87.8	87.8
Stephen Kho	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	79.4	79.4
Teppo Palosaari	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	69.6	69.6

You may have spotted that we haven't had *any* female winners in multi-sport yet this year so come on ladies – let's see some results in the summer triathlons! The next ones are:

Milton Keynes Olympic, Sun 25th July
Concord Sprint, Sun 22nd August
Vitruvian Middle Distance, Mon 6th September

After that, we have a duathlon (yet to be decided as the one we had chosen was cancelled), the BallBuster duathlon and then two cross-country races as well as the remainder of the road race championships. Who will the first Serpentine multi-sport champions be, I wonder?

Ian Hodge

Great North Run Places

The Nehemiah Project, a residential charity which supports and rehabilitates homeless people, has a large team entering the 2004 Great North Run on 26 September and they have a number of places available for Serpies. The charity asks that each runner raises a minimum of £250 and provide a number of perks for runners including hospitality tent, pasta party, results supplement, running vest and on-line donations.

The deadline for applications is 23 July but places are expected to go well before then as the race has been completely sold out for a number of months. If you would like to join the team and help make a difference in an area of desperate need then contact Hugo Lawrence for an application form at The Nehemiah Project, 47 Tooting Bec Gardens, Streatham, London SW16 1RF. Tel: 020 8769 3444, website: www.tnp.org.uk, e-mail: gnr@tnp.org.uk.

Running in Florida

Now that so many people spend their holidays in Orlando, here are a few words of interest to those who are heading there this summer and want to do some running during their stay.

Firstly, given that temperatures are often bakingly hot for running, many might prefer to use a treadmill in a gym, but often a hotel's definition of a fitness centre is laughable. I can, however, recommend the fitness centre at the Florida Hospital in Celebration. This is just off Highway 192 on the road in to Celebration and a 10-minute drive from Junction 64A of the I-4. See more at www.celebrationfitness.com. A week's guest membership cost USD40 – not cheap but the facilities were superb with swimming, spa and therapeutic services all available on site.

For your running shopping, there's a really good store on North Mills Avenue in Winter Park, called the track shack: www.trackshack.com. The people here are very friendly and real runners who have competed in the London marathon as well as Boston, Chicago and others. The shop is just south of Virginia Drive on North Mills Avenue and has parking at the back. Most importantly for visitors to the area, the shop also functions as a running centre, so do go along on your first day to find out about running groups wherever you are staying.

The Orlando Running Club is also very helpful and has a good website www.orlandorunnersclub.org.

They tend to run obscenely early in the morning to avoid the heat, but all visitors are welcome. The Wednesday night runs round downtown Orlando start at 6pm and are probably a good way to see the real Orlando rather than Walt's world.

Florida does seem very runner-friendly. Although Floridians seem to drive everywhere (which is often reflected in their size) and pavements are somewhat rare, I did see a good number of runners along the grass sidewalks throughout the Orlando area. Running in the theme-park area is a little on the dull side, however.

For a tour of "Pleasantville", running in the town of Celebration is recommended. This is a planned community by Disney which resembles Bill Bryson's quest for 1950's amalgam. That said, the lake is beautiful, the sidewalks are wide and flat, the roads are almost bereft of traffic and the area is unquestionably safe.

North of Orlando is Winter Park – real Florida as opposed to Disney. There are several lakes, most notable of which is Ivanhoe. All the lakes have beautiful tracks around them where you can't help but forget that you are running as you inhale the beautiful scenery. For that post-run feed, on the corner of Orange Avenue and Virginia Drive, just east of Lake Ivanhoe, is Bryan's – a diner with an attitude. The food is great and so is the service.

Matt Williams

Hillerød Triathlon, Denmark

Sunday 15 August – A Perfect First Triathlon

The Hillerød triathlon, 40k north of Copenhagen, is a fun event. It's well organised, open to everyone and a great excuse to visit Copenhagen. Last year a group of Serpies, many new to triathlon [*Ed Note: including our illustrious departing chairman*], went along and it was such a success that most seem keen to go back this year. There is a choice of two distances:

Either 500m swim, 39.6k bike and 9.9k run
 Or 1k swim, 77.5k bike and 19.8k run

The swim is a staggered start in a 50m indoor pool, the bike route is typically Danish (i.e. mostly flat) and the run is flat.

Hillerød is within easy reach of Copenhagen Airport. Both Easyjet and SAS fly there and have Sunday night flights back to London.

If you are interested in coming along, please contact Stig Haldan on stig.haldan@db.com or Bo Engelbrechtsen on boengel1@yahoo.com.

Olympic Trivia

With the Summer Olympics only days away, I thought it would be a bit of fun to look back to the early days of the Games and reflect on some of Britain's early Olympic track and field champions.

The first Games of the modern era were, of course, also staged in Athens. The Games were well organised and popular but most of the world's best athletes were absent. In 1896 there were just 75 athletes (we had nearly as many at our home Rosenheim League match in May!) and they competed in only 12 events. No gold medals were awarded. The winners got a silver medal, second place received copper/bronze, while third got nothing. Britain didn't send an official team but four Brits turned up anyway and entered as individuals. The best place was second by Granty Goulding in the 110m hurdles. Two Serpies have already beaten his modest time of 17:7 this season!

The next Games were in Paris in 1900 but they were little more than a sideshow to the great Paris International Exhibition that was taking place at the same time. Sixteen countries took part. Britain fielded a team of five including one Irishman. It wasn't until 1924 that Ireland competed as a separate entity. The star British performer was Charles Bennet, of Finchley Harriers (now Hillingdon AC). He took Britain's first gold medal, in the 1500m. This was followed by gold in the 5000m team race plus silver in the steeplechase, run over a course that included "stone fences." Five runners were required for the 5000m team race. Unfortunately Britain could only field four runners. However, they were allowed to complete the team by including a surplus Australian. He didn't finish the race but in the confusion, Britain was still awarded gold!

In 1904, the Olympics moved to St Louis. Only a handful of European competitors and no Britons made the long sea trip to the USA. The Games turned out to be little more than an American inter-college/club contest with, for instance, relay races where New York AC took on Chicago AA. However, there was one British born winner: Tom Hicks in the marathon. Hicks was a professional clown. The race was 40km and his winning time was 3:28:53. A decathlon was added to the programme but bizarrely this took place two months before the Games officially opened!

The 1908 Games returned to Europe and to London. The Games had originally been awarded to Rome. However the Italians couldn't afford the financial burden and at short notice the International Olympic Committee asked Britain to take over. The White City Stadium in Shepherds Bush was constructed and nearly 50,000 people saw King Edward VII open the Games. However, one leading reporter wrote that "the Olympic Games do not represent anything out of the ordinary and are certainly not as important as the Boat Race."

The Games saw the one and only "walkover." It happened in the 400m. In the final Britain's Wyndham Halswelle (a London-born Scot who was serving in the Highland Light Infantry and was a veteran of the Boer War) was drawn against three Americans. In those days, the 400m was not run in lanes. The result was that something of a free-for-all developed with elbows and arms flying everywhere. Halswelle claimed he was impeded and judges (who were all British!) agreed. A re-run was ordered but the Americans refused to take part. So for the only time in Olympic history the crowd was offered the bizarre sight of one man running the distance alone (in 50:00) to collect the gold medal.

The London Games were the first to use the now standard 42.195km marathon course. It ran from Windsor Castle to White City. The race remains, perhaps, the most famous of all marathons. The winner was Johnny Hayes (USA – in 2:55:19) but the man everyone remembers is Dorando Pietri. He was way out in front when he entered the stadium but collapsed just yards from the finishing line. He struggled to his feet only to collapse again and again. Shocked onlookers (including it is said Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes) went to Pietri's aid and helped him across the line. But then, as now, assisting a competitor was forbidden and Pietri was disqualified. Queen Alexandra, watching from the Royal Box, was so moved by Pietri's courage that she awarded him a special medal.

Despite the plethora of sporting events on at the same time, including the FA Cup Final held at Crystal Palace, the Games were a great success and everyone looked forward to Stockholm in 1912. If you'd like to know more about the history of the Olympic, do take a look at Mel Watman's new book "Olympic Track & Field History."

Malcolm French

London Marathon 2005 Club Places

Want to run the London Marathon, but would like better odds than getting an entry through the big ballot?

Serpentine RC is usually awarded several club places for the London marathon (the number of places is related to the size of the club). A ballot allocates these places to members of the club who have participated in club events. For next year's club places, the committee has adapted the criteria to reflect the growth of the club, the numerous ways in which members participate and the need the club has for fostering volunteers.

Competition in races has been reduced from 16 to 12, or even just 8 using wildcard. Enough mid-week races are available that a member is not required to compete at weekends if they have other commitments.

No written set of criteria could possibly foresee every volunteer effort that would deserve recognition. Nor has there been an attempt to quantify the value of one deed over another, with the exception that season-long activities are marginally differentiated from single efforts in some areas. So, the examples given below are not intended to be exhaustive. A measure of selflessness is also envisaged; i.e. wearing a bib on a Wednesday night run that you would do anyway probably wouldn't earn you a wildcard, whereas regularly collecting the bibs, washing them and returning them for use the next week would be favourably looked upon.

The qualification criteria for club places are set out below.

1. You must
 - a. be a first claim club member,
 - b. have applied through the "normal ballot", and
 - c. have received a rejection slip.
2. In the calendar year prior to the marathon, you must also have
 - a. run in 4 club handicap races, and
 - b. competed in 4 club championship races (at least 3 must be running and 1 may be multi-sport), and
 - c. competed in 4 league events, either track & field, summer league, assembly league, or cross country leagues
 - d. volunteered at 4 events that may include handicaps, LFOTM5K, New Year's Day 10k, and club championship races.

Or in any of 2 a, b or c above, exercise a wildcard (a wildcard will be treated as though you have actually competed). A wildcard is awarded to a volunteer who has:

- captained a team at an event such as Welsh Castles Relay, Round Norfolk Relay, SEAA Relays (this counts as 2 for captaining an entire season)
- qualified as a coach and coached training sessions for members (2 wildcards may be awarded for coaching regularly throughout the entire year)
- organised a non-competition event for the club; eg Christmas party, a trip, etc.
- managed a key operation of the club; i.e. webmaster, kitmaster, etc.

Please check with the Honorary Secretary asap if you are unsure and are relying on a wildcard to meet the qualifications to avoid disappointment.

Finally, all applications, accompanied by a the rejection slip, and a WRITTEN statement of how you meet the criteria must sent to the Hon Secretary by mid December. The names of those applying, who meet 100% of the criteria will go into a hat, and the available places will be offered to the first names drawn, up to the number of spots available. The names of unsuccessful, but qualified applicants will be placed on a waiting list, in the event that someone has to withdraw before the final date, sometime in February. Applicants meeting substantially all of the participation requirements can only be considered after the interests of those who met 100% of the requirements.

Please note that club's places or entry forms must not, in any circumstances, be passed to anyone else. If you are allocated a place but are subsequently unable to run, you MUST advise the Hon Secretary as soon as possible so that a substitution can be arranged. Changes are usually not possible after mid-February.

Phil McCubbins

Cross Country

It seems strange to be writing about next winter when it's the middle of summer. However, a lot of work has been going on behind the scenes to draw up the provisional fixture list for the 2004/5 cross country season – and here it is!

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	COMMENTS
Sat, 2 Oct	Horsenden Relays 54th running of this event	Horsenden Hill, Perivale	Start 2.45pm Men 6x2.25 miles Women 3x2.25 miles
Sat, 9 Oct	Metropolitan League	Ruislip Woods	Women 4k, 1.55pm, Men 8k, 2.15pm
Sun, 24 Oct	Sunday League Hampstead Heath	Parliament Hill Fields,	Women 3 mile Men 5 miles Combined start 11.00am
Sat, 30 Oct	Metropolitan League	Claybury	As for 9 October
Sat, 6 Nov	North London Championship	Trent Park	Advance entry needed. Women 6k, 2pm Men 5 miles, 2.30pm
Sun, 14 Nov	Sunday League	Cassiobury Park, Watford	Combined race. 5 miles 11.00am start
Sat, 20 Nov	London Championship	Parliament Hill Fields, Hampstead Heath	Advance entry needed. Women 3 miles, 2.00pm. Men 6 miles, 2.30pm
Sat, 27 Nov	Metropolitan League	Wormwood Scrubs	As for 9 October
Sat, 4 Dec	Dysart & Ellis Cups	Pembroke Lodge, Richmond Park	Women 4 miles, 2.00pm Men 5 miles, 2.30pm
Sat, 18 Dec	North of the Thames Championship	TBA	Men only 11k, 2.00pm
Sun, 19 Dec	Sunday League	Cheshunt Park, Cheshunt, Herts	As for 24 October
2005			
Sat, 8 Jan	Metropolitan League	St Albans	As for 9 October
Sat, 15 Jan	Middlesex Championship	TBA	Advance entry needed. Women 8k, 1.50pm Men 12k, 2.45pm
Sun, 23 Jan	Sunday League	Digswell	As for 24 October
Sat, 29 Jan	Southern Counties Championship	Parliament Hill Fields, Hampstead Heath	Advance entry needed. Women 8k, 1.50pm Men 15k, 2.50pm
Sat, 5 Feb	Middlesex Veterans Championship	Mad Bess Woods, Ruislip	Advance entry needed. Joint race, 8k, 2.30pm
Sat, 12 February	Metropolitan League	Horsenden Hill, Perivale	As for 9 October
Sun, 13 Feb	Sunday League	Royston	As for 24 October
Sat, 19 Feb	English National Championships	Cofton Park, Birmingham	Advance entry needed. Women 8k, 2.15pm Men 12k, 3.00pm
Sat, 26 Feb	North of the Thames inter-team race	TBA.	Advance entry needed. Women 6k, 1.45pm Men 8k, 2.30pm
Sat, 26 March	Mob Match v Thames Hare & Hounds	Wimbledon Common	Combined race. 5 miles 2.30pm start
TBA	SEAA Veterans Championships	TBA	Advance entry needed. Women 7k. Men 10k

There will be the usual popular mix of league, trophy and championship events. The format of the Metropolitan League races is unchanged. However there will be several important changes to the Sunday League. The League will be strengthened by the inclusion of St Albans Striders and possibly also Harlow RC. We're keen on seeing more women participating. In response to comments from the athletes, we'll be experimenting with the race format for the 2004/5 season. Both men and women will start and run together for the first part of the races. The women will still run a shorter distance (say two laps rather than three for the men) but they should feel less isolated in what has tended to be a rather small women only field. There will also be a new trophy for the top combined men's and women's team. We hope that these changes will stimulate the women's competition.

We'll be co-hosting the opening Sunday League race at Parliament Hill Fields with London Heathside. So apart from hoping that lots of you will turn out to run in this race, we'll also need plenty of Serpies to act as marshals and help set out the course.

The 2005 English National will be at another new venue, Cofton Park, to the south west of Birmingham. It will be interesting to see how this compares with the excellent Temple Newsham site used this year.

The season will again close with a "mob match" against Thames Hare and Hounds. Last season's race proved very popular and I've just had a call for my Thames contact saying they'd like a repeat: Thames are keen on avenging their defeat!

More than 100 Serpies competed in last season's races and I'm sure that they enjoyed the friendly competition and post-race socialising that is so much a part of the cross country scene. If you're a cross country regular I'm sure you'll be putting your favourite races in your diary. If you've never taken part in cross country before, why not give it a go? I'm sure you'll enjoy a new challenge.

Malcolm French

Enduroman Chesil Challenge

20th – 22nd August

Three events over three days will make a fantastic trip and give you the opportunity to push your limits. You have to choose from a 75 or 150 mile bike ride on day one; a half, full or double marathon on day two; and the final day is a 5 or 10k wetsuit swim in sheltered water.

Participants are welcome to participate in all three days, or choose one or two. The full marathon is the Dorset championship race in its own right, and there will be many runners participating in it as a stand-alone race.

The final option is to compete as a relay team. The idea is to get triathletes mixing with single-sport athletes while doing what they love. The distances are varied to allow you to push your personal limits. The run and bike courses are beautiful but tough and will offer a fantastic challenge. Good preparation and a lot of team support should help us all achieve our goals.

Please e-mail Michael@pag1.co.uk for more information or help with finding accommodation. The race website is www.enduroman.com.

New Members' Events

Your club holds regular events specifically designed for new members. These give you the chance to meet other club members and find out more about what's happening. There'll be people there who can answer your questions about all sorts of running and tri-related topics.

Keep an eye on the website, e-groups and Sentinel for details of the next event.

Track and Field

Rosenheim League Track & field for everyone

When you hear the words track & field you probably think about people like Colin Jackson, Aisha Hanson or Jonathan Edwards – real stars in their disciplines. Average Joe or Jane, who you can even see on tv running the London marathon, just aren't featured in track & field. Track & field seems to be for the elite athlete only. I'd like to tell you that this really isn't the case.

The Serpentine Running Club has entered a team in the Rosenheim T&F league and every member of the club is invited to take part. There is no need to be fast, throw far or jump very high. The only thing you have to do is to take your club vest along and have fun.

By the time you have this article in your hand, four out of six meetings (or seven including the final) will already be over and over 40 people will have turned out for the club. At least half of the 40 have competed in track & field for the first time since they left school, or maybe even the first time in their lives. Although the league is for men's teams, women can also take part, although non-scoring. At our home event in Battersea Park we had 11 women participating, both on the track and in the field. Many members tried out new events they had never done before – just ask Justin about the hammer; Robin about the steeple chase; or Rachel about the sprints. Everybody had a different experience, but what they all have in common is that they had fun.

So why don't you join in with the fun and meet other Serpies in a sports stadium instead of Hyde Park? There are only two more chances this season, so don't let them slip away!

All three remaining meetings take place at Tooting Bec and start at 7pm on a Wednesday evening. The meetings last for about two hours. Every meeting includes all track runs, from 100 to 3000 metres, two different jumps, two different throws, one hurdle run and a 4 x 200m relay.

The dates are
12 July
28 July

So keep an eye on the e-group for more details or contact me on 07984 084152. I hope to see you there.

Lars Menken

Southern Men's League and Masters League

The Serpentine Running Club has been remarkably successful in Track & Field competition over the past 10 years: both men's team have won promotion and risen through the southern area league, and the veteran teams (especially the women's team) have performed well, reaching every final since the league's inception. Serpentine also boasts several record holders in the veteran age groups.

Serpentine enters two teams in the South of England men's league, and a men's and women's team in the Southern Veterans' league, in addition to the Rosenheim league (see Lars Menken's article above for details) and various open events and championships. There's scope for all Serpies, women and men, to participate in track and field.

The remaining fixtures for the Southern league and Veterans leagues are

Sat, 10 July	Southern Men's League – D2 St Ives, Cambs First event 1.00pm
Sat, 10 July	Southern Men's League – D4 Horsham First event 1.00pm
Mon, 12 July	Masters League Battersea First event 6.30pm
Sat, 31 July	Serpie Home Event Southern Men's League – D2 & 4 Battersea First event 1.00pm
Sat, 14 Aug	Southern Men's League – D2 Basildon First event 1.00pm
Sat, 14 Aug	Southern Men's League – D4 No match
Sun, 29 Aug or Sun 5 Sept	Masters League Battersea Inter-division Final
Sun, 12 Sept	Middlesex Veterans Championship Barn Elms Advance entry required

For more information, contact

Men's Southern League

Division 2: Robin Kindersley. Tel: 07749 051717
Division 4: Justin Lock. Tel: 07876 644486 or John Walker. Tel: 07766 018175

Masters League

Men: Terry Smith. Tel: 07711 593434
Women: Jan Farmer. Tel: 07957 561065

Lanzarote September 2004

The date for the 2005 Serpentine trip to Lanzarote is 6 March. Full details will be available soon, but in the meantime Serpies who would like a trip to Lanzarote in September this year may be interested in an offer from Barrie Laverick of Athletics Weekly.

Barry is organising the trip as a good way to wind down the season, or prepare for winter duathlons and marathons. There is information about Club la Santa on the Serpie website, or have a look at the Club La Santa website to see what is on offer.

Barry says 'Athletics Weekly has joined forces with Sports Tours International to stage a training camp at the Club La Santa sports complex in Lanzarote from

16 – 23 September 2004. The cost will be £289 per person (based on three people sharing). Usually at that time of year the cost would be in excess of £350 per person.

Supported by Reebok and Powerade, there will be regular coaching sessions organised throughout the week with commonwealth bronze medallist, Jamie Quarry and GB International, Femi Akinsanya. Or maybe you'd like to come along with an organised group and do your own thing: the choice is yours.'

To provisionally book your place or to find out more, contact Barry on barrie.laverick@athletics-weekly.co.uk.

100 Club – You too can be a winner!

How does it work?

Just buy one or more numbers between 1 & 100, at a cost of £1 a week. Your numbers are then entered in a draw which is held after each month's handicap. If your number is picked, you could win one of eight prizes of £100, £50, two prizes of £25 or four prizes of £10. You keep the same number as long as you keep paying, and the odds are good – much better than the lottery – and the tension at the draw is high.

What is the money used for?

The proceeds of the 100 Club are used to meet the costs of Serpentine.

Who have the recent lucky winners been?

	Feb 2004	Apr 2004	May 2004	Jun 2004
£100	Sally Mackay	William Bennington	Peter Taylor	Jan Farmer
£50	Dave Unwin	Gordon Robertson	Robin Adams	Robert Harding
£25	Hilary Walker Matt Hammond	John Sextone Kathleen Broekhof	Monika Mars Peter Noble	Beate Vogt Antonia Okwu
£10	John Huspith Martin Garrett Lois Moore Deidre Dickens	Leslie Ferrar Brian Kaufman Sam Hayter Ken Kwok	Malcolm French Ian Hall Margaret Moran Sally Hodge	David Knight Pat Green Peter Noble Kathleen Broekhof

Committee Meetings

January through April

The first third of 2004 year have seen the end of another cross country season, many Serpies running spring marathons and the beginning of the 2004 track and field season. Also, three packed committee meetings. You can read the unabridged minutes on the website but this is a brief summary of the main issues covered.

The tick boxes for interests on SerpieBase show that cycling interest has increased amongst members and also that there is very little overlap between members participating in triathlon and cross country. It is hoped that the new multi-sport club championship will promote participation in both areas. The two most popular activities are road running and marathons.

The criteria for the club places in the London marathon have been changed (see details elsewhere in this issue of Serpentines and the website).

We moved into our new club room at the Seymour Centre and lockers have been bought and located in the old club room. The club room is now being used as the venue for committee meetings and for monthly brunches, following the Saturday morning club run.

The New Year's Day 10k was very successful, and we received lots of good feedback. The results were avail-

able on race day – many thanks to David Knight. John Walker has already received the first entry for 2005 from an unattached runner who ran this year.

A Presidential task force has been created.

It was agreed that the club needs more running coaches and 100% of fees for club members undertaking UK Level 1 athletics coaching courses will continue to be paid by the club.

Many thanks go to Tony Gould and Nadia Labib for all of their hard work in organising the very successful health weekend in Leeds. Many thanks also go to Eddie Brocklesby for organising the biggest Serpie Lanzarote trip to date.

A box has been added to the front page of the website to attract potential sponsors for club events. The interactive Serpie planner is now live on the website. There is no longer need for anyone to maintain separate tables of events as they can all be pulled straight from the database, also it's easy to add new events. We're looking for a new company to host the website and are aiming too improve speed and service as well as lower cost.

Daniel O'Donohue surveyed members on the website about Wednesday nights.

Assembly League

There are still three assembly league races remaining this summer. These are

5k at the Dome, Greenwich
on Thursday 1 July

3.5 miles at Victoria Park, Hackney
on Thursday 5 August

2.9 miles at Beckenham Tennis Club
on Thursday 2 September.

*The races are inter-club and all begin at 7.15pm.
There is no entry fee.*

Summer League

The summer league is an inter-club competition of races between May and September at various venues around London. The races are 5 miles or 10k, cover all standards, usually start at 10.30am, and are based at a local park. It costs £1 to enter on the day. The events are family-oriented and many participants bring their children. After the 10k there is a tenderfoot race (about 2k) for children and a series of 400m relays. Scoring in the relays is age-graded so five-year old girls with ponytails can beat accomplished adults. Lunch is provided in the form of sandwiches and cakes.

There are two remaining races in the series on 18 July at Headstone Manor in Harrow, and our own Serpie-run event on 15 August in Hyde Park.

Sponsorship

Last Friday of the Month 5k series

The Last Friday of the Month 5k series has been fortunate to enjoy the support of Runner's World magazine for several years. However, their sponsorship agreement came to an end with June's race. We are therefore looking for another business to sponsor the series. Are you involved with a company that would be interested?

Our Last Friday of the Month 5k is one of the few year-round series of open races in the UK. They are popular both with club and unattached runners and, of course, fellow Serpies. About 25% of the runners are women. The majority of the competitors are under the age of 40. Last year the competitors ranged from current UK internationals to people attempting the distance for the very first time: it is an event that aims to reach all runners. For this reason we wish to keep the entry fee as low as possible. Currently it is just £2, thanks to the financial support provided by Runner's World.

The race uses an attractive course designed for us by London Marathon winner Hugh Jones and is entirely within Hyde Park. The race limit is reached in most months, with about 3,000 people in total taking part in the 2003 series. Most of the competitors work in the West End, Victoria or the general vicinity of Hyde Park. However, there are plenty of people who make a special trip in to London for the races.

What can sponsorship of the races offer you?

The races and the comprehensive results service feature prominently on our award winning website. This is one of the most visited sites of its type with more than 50,000 visits a month. The series sponsor would have their details added to the website race publicity. This will give the sponsor an excellent and cost effective way to promote their products or services to a wide audience. Serpentine Running Club alone has a membership of 1,600 people.

The series is also promoted through the more traditional means of running magazines and listings publications. The sponsor's details will also appear on the race numbers and on the medals that are presented to the first three women and men. There will also be an opportunity to enclose publicity material with numbers sent to advance entrants. I should mention here that the Royal Parks Agency, which licences the series, does not allow any form of advertising (eg stalls, banners or handouts) to take place within Hyde Park itself.

I believe that support of the races offers an excellent opportunity to for the sponsor to promote its business to a group of generally young, affluent people, most of whom work or live in central or suburban London. If you would like to become involved in sponsoring the series, please get in touch with me. I would be delighted to hear from you.

*Lynne Maughan
Tel: 020 8870 7797,
or email: lprestegar@serpentine.org.uk*

Christmas Tree Challenge

Christmas? Already?

Every year, many companies have Christmas trees in their reception areas, surrounded by gaily wrapped but empty boxes. The Christmas Tree Challenge involves asking members of staff to buy a present for someone who won't get anything otherwise. The result is a Christmas tree surrounded by real presents for real people. But as with any project, its success lies in the preparation, which is why I am telling you about it in summer.

Firstly, you need to identify recipients for the gifts. Surprisingly, this is the hardest part! Maybe look for a local organisation (or two) such as charities, churches or schools. Then choose your criteria for the recipients, for example, people who won't get presents otherwise. Next ask your chosen organisation(s) for a list of names, If possible including first names and ages. A rule of thumb is to request 40 names per 1,000 members of staff in your company.

Don't forget to ask the organisation about the suitability of presents so you can give guidelines to the buyers. For example, young autistic children should not have jigsaws, while recovering alcoholics should not have alcohol-related gifts. Then you need to buy gift cards. You should leave the cards blank while addressing the envelopes.

Next you need to arrange for staff to buy the gifts. It is a good idea to set a maximum cost, eg £5. Ask each person to choose a recipient from the list and take their card, buy and wrap present, optionally sign the card and then firmly attach it to the present and put under Christmas tree.

The Christmas Tree Challenge has a high feel-good factor. It has been a huge success at the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, HarperCollins and other companies. If you have any questions please contact Gowan Clews.
Email gowan.clews@serpentine.org.uk. Tel 07931 906897

So Long and Thanks for All the Cake

Green Belt Relay Recollections



In early May five Serpie teams set off in minibuses to circumnavigate London in the annual Green Belt Relay. The GBR is always provides unforgettable experiences and this year was no exception. There were, of course the successes. The Serpie ladies' team won by a huge margin and the Serpie name is the first on the new Queen of the Mountains trophy. Out of the 19 new stage records in 2004, Serpentine scooped up five: two each for Barbara Yff and Elinor Rest and one for Theresa Brady. Elinor also moves to joint second in the list of women who have won most individual stages in the relay, with five stage wins. There were many superb performances from the Serpie men too, with numerous top three finishes, but everyone who took part or supported had their own individual memories of the weekend.

My overriding memory of the weekend is mud. It didn't look like the weather was going to be kind to us from first thing in Saturday morning. Our minibus stopped to cheer on the runners on leg two and it soon became apparent that mud was the order of the day. Ruari passed, absolutely covered in the stuff, right the way up his back. As someone who has always refused to take part in cross country due to an aversion to mud, I was getting a little worried about leg four.

Teresa Forgione also ran leg four and recollects "Its seemingly unending hills, the paths through the woods so steep and slippery that it was impossible to even try to run up them, then sliding down them swinging from small trees to keep my balance! The rain was unrelenting but despite all this it was huge fun. Running past huge swathes of bluebells in the woods. The face of the pub landlord when I asked if I could get changed in his pristine white loos was priceless, especially as he spotted the mud spattered up to my knees. I had to sweep up afterwards and my trainers were indescribable. The hysteria of me and my room mate,

Mel in the hotel that night, stuffing newspaper into utterly disgusting trainers to dry them, finding I had left my second set of socks at home and stuffing my muddy socks full of newspaper too!"

Nadya Labib's first memory of the weekend is of getting really excited watching the start of leg one on Saturday morning but then having to wait patiently for her turn to run – an agonising five legs later. She says that she won't forget hearing the words "Go Serpie" echoing in her ears, often shouted out by unrecognised supporters in random places. Nadya says, "I remember running through a field of rape and wondering how tall the plants were going to get – they came to my knees at the edge of the field but ended up as high as my shoulders!"

Miguel also had to wait for six legs before his Saturday run. He recalls, "I couldn't wait to start running. I had a half-marathon ahead of me, had the course map in my head, and was feeling great – ready to do something close to 1h20. Once into the run, all seemed fine. I did most of the race with two other guys, competing for third place, and things were looking great at 11 miles. The course was getting quite hilly and I started feeling tired, but wasn't worried because I had so little left to go. But the other two guys were looking stronger as I quickly had to decrease my pace a lot. Less than a mile away from the finish line I just couldn't run any more. I tried starting to run again several times but felt quite dizzy and ill. Then my legs felt wobbly and I ended up sitting on the road. I couldn't do anything; it was really frustrating. And on my mind that whole time was the team – that I was letting them so down. The diagnosis (mainly made by David Simpson and my brother Tiago) was hypoglycaemia. Apparently I hadn't eaten enough either during the day or on the previous one. To drop down on the floor in a middle of a run is now "to do a Miguel", something that Andrew Reeves came up with – he also states that there are "half-Miguels", but you would need to ask him for details about this.

"The part of the story that is really worth telling starts here – my discovery of the Serpentine spirit. I was given a lift to the finish line and waited at a pub, completely worn out, forcing a glass of water down my throat. Then the Serpie rescue team arrived: with things to eat and drink, worried, telling me that I shouldn't think about the results. After I got some of my strength back, I went back to finish the leg, to avoid disqualification for the team. Nick had the patience to walk with me at a very slow pace, and as we entered the pub again my first view was a table full of Serpies, all cheering my finish."

Unlike in the Welsh Castles or Round Norfolk relays, in the GBR each runner has to run on both days. The mud had taken its toll on many pairs of running shoes by Saturday night. Although I had remembered to pack another set of running clothes, I hadn't thought to pack a second pair of running shoes and wasn't relishing putting on the mud-encrusted pair in the corner of my hotel room.

Teresa ran leg 13 on Sunday. She remembers "lovely sunny weather after a dull start. No toilet facilities in the car park and nearly being stumbled upon by a local whilst in a compromising position behind the shrubs. Skating through (more) mud along a towpath and worrying slightly about ending up in the water. Being overtaken and beeped at by a motorcade of Harley Davidsons on the way to Lullingston Castle. Running through the woods and glancing to my right to see a huge bronze statue of a horseman with a sweeping view of Lullingston Castle through a gap in the trees. Only getting lost once when a marshal went for a wander, leaving me to ask very bemused staff in a visitor centre where on earth I was. People in the street cheering me on through the rain; "keep fighting the good fight" was one of the more peculiar offerings.

"Overall, I was just amazed at having such fun and finding that I could run a half marathon one day and nine miles the next and not feel too bad afterwards. Being immensely proud of being given the team performance award of our mascot, the turbo tortoise."

Miguel's discovered that the Serpie spirit just kept on and one. "The rest of the weekend was just incredible. Everyone knew what had happened, was concerned and took care of me. Nick changed my leg on Sunday to a shorter one; John Greene was "on hold" to run my leg (as well as his hilly 13-mile leg); Sally guaranteed my nutrition on Sunday with her

wonderful brownies and flapjacks – just some examples out of thousands. They also took away most of my thoughts about how the team had been affected by my "manoeuvre". And it wasn't because of those thoughts that I ran my leg as strongly as I could on Sunday – it was to give something back to the Serpies; to thank them and show that I also embrace that spirit. I would not quit. Maybe that fed my legs to take me over the finish line in second place. I surely wouldn't have done it if it weren't for them.

"So, if you asked me today how bad my "incident" was, I would have to talk about how much I gained rather than how ill I felt. I met more people during that weekend than in four months of Wednesday runs and track sessions. So, if you're a shy person like me and want to meet new people, maybe hypoglycaemia is the answer for you! Oh, and Nick: I accept your suggestion of doing leg seven again next year."

Nadya's final memory of the weekend is "The staggering amount of work the organisers, Serpies and of course the Stragglers, undertook to ensure that an event like this can run as well as it did. I can't wait for next year!"

I know that many of us feel the same way.

Sally Hodge

Serpie Women in the mud

The 2003 – 2004 Cross Country Season

Overall the season has been a successful one. Despite a low turnout for some events, we fielded a full ladies team for the vast majority of events and the turn out for major events was very good. The level of support (including extensive cake-baking!) and team atmosphere was excellent and by the end of the season a core of athletes attending most races was apparent. Overall, 40 Serpie women took part in cross country this season with about eight of these representing the club at cross country for the first time.

In the Metropolitan league both the senior ladies and the masters teams came 11th place overall. In the Sunday league the senior women came 6th out of 12 teams and the masters came 10th out of 12 teams.

Despite the slightly depressing surroundings of Wormwood Scrubs for the north London Championships, the Serpentine ladies had a very good race. Barbara Yff came 2nd and the team of Barbara, Theresa Brady, Jeanne Lesniak and Sarah Edmunds took 3rd place in the senior ladies team category. On the strength of her excellent performances throughout the early part of the season, Barbara Yff was selected to represent Middlesex at Cross Country.

Serpentine ladies fielded two teams in the London championships at Parliament Hill on a cold and wet day. Barbara Yff continued a fantastic season by taking 3rd place and the A team finished in 7th place. We were back at Parliament

Hill for the Southern championships where there was again a good turnout the Serpentine women. The course was (as always) a very testing and hilly one. Serpentine ladies took 16th place out of 32 teams.

The course for the national championships in Temple Newsham, Leeds was another challenging one. Undoubtedly, the combining of this event with the health weekend meant that we had greater numbers participating than we would otherwise have enjoyed.

The women vets were very successful at the Middlesex vets championships, where Theresa Brady took the bronze individual V35 medal and the team won the silver team award. The vets' successes continued at the SEAA vets championships in Margate, where Ena Ulrich won the V65 category, Pauline Rich and Sue Lambert came 2nd in the V55 and V65 categories, and Hazel Paterson and Jan Farmer came 3rd in the V45 and V50 categories respectively.

The season ended on a high note with the mob match against Thames Hare and Hounds – the first running of this event. The Serpentine men and women came out in force to run on the beautiful course on Wimbledon Common and the victorious overall score for Serpentine (men and women together) was 550 to 635.

Angie Palin

Serpentine Handicap

As this is my last report to the Serpentine as the club's handicapper, I have decided to reflect on the 22-year history of our monthly race and share some of my experiences as the handicapper for the past three years.

My time as handicapper

In May 2001, when Ros was looking for a person to help her with the monthly handicap, I thought that sounded like fun. Little did I know about the history behind the handicap and how much it means to so many of our members. I knew even less how much work would be involved.

The first – and most wonderful – thing I found that I enjoyed about being the handicapper is that this race celebrates the most improved runner, not the fastest runner. I enjoy so much seeing the winner with a big smile, often saying that he or she has never experienced winning a race before. The great thing about the handicap is that we have winners who may not think they are ever likely to get a place on the winners' podium in any other race.

Second, it has a very diverse range of runners, with ages from 18 to our amazing vets who – even after pauses in their running careers – come back and run age-graded performances in the 70s or more (which is county standard). I have really enjoyed seeing Joyce Smith returning to running and doing so well.

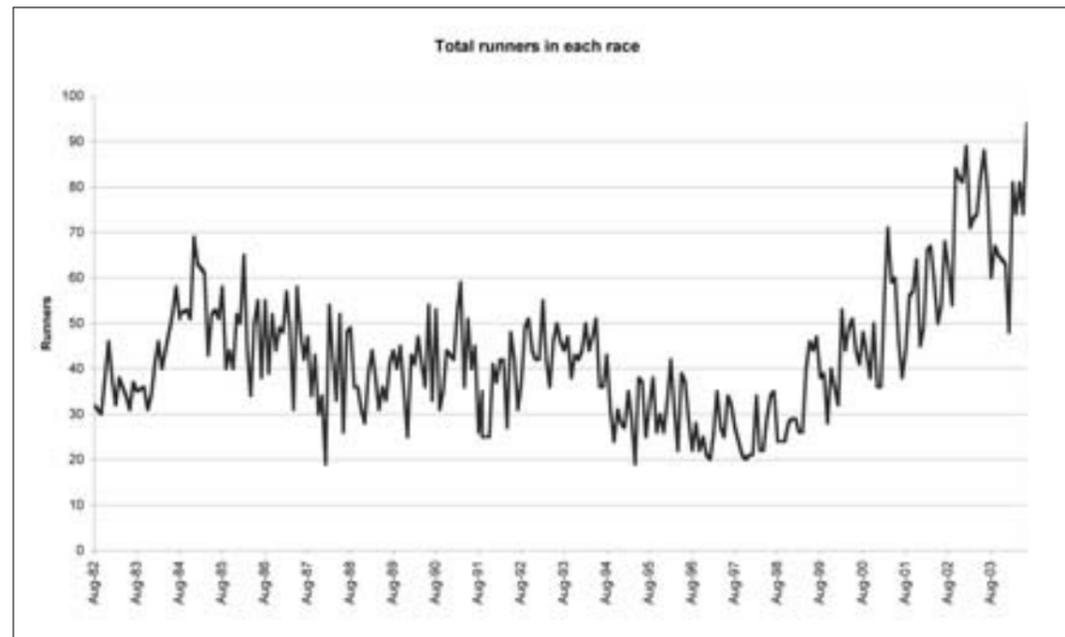
Third, I have really benefited from the interest that lots of runners and members have shown after every race about their (and others, often in friendly competition) handicap start time, splits and points. I liked the way that the results would be checked immediately, and that any mistakes would be rapidly picked up. It made it all the work worthwhile.

Finally, the handicap is a great opportunity to catch up with other members who don't come along to the usual weekly club events but who, every month, make the effort to run the handicap. I will truly miss the atmosphere after each race.

Full results now available

Over the past year, the complete results of ALL the 257 handicap races have been uploaded to the website. Yes, all the races back to the first race in 1982 are now online! It has been a tremendous piece of work by lots of people, in particular by Eamonn Richardson, who manually typed in start and finish times, points, names, etc. for more than 12 years of races. Owen Barder has done all the programming to manage the results online, including the greatly-liked text messages sent directly from the Lido after each race. "We must be the most IT sophisticated running club in the UK" Lars Menken once said; and I think he is right. The online system has certainly helped me doing the results a lot faster and significant reduced the risks of errors.

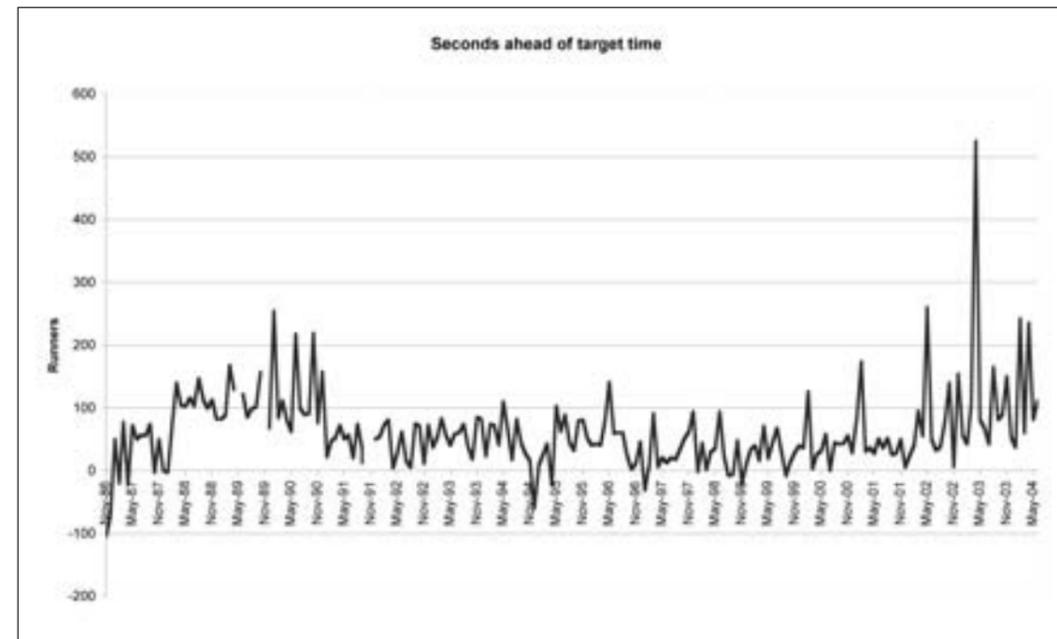
This fantastic work has enabled us to get lots of historical information out of the database. Not only can every runner, including Eamonn who has run 159 races, see all his or her results online but also we can see how the race has evolved over time. The graph below shows that the June 2004 handicap was our largest field ever, with 94 finishers. The race started in 1982 with 30 runners, peaked at the end of 1984 with 70 (those were the days the club only had 200 members, so a third of the club was running the race). In the late 1990s, the race had months with only 20 runners and since then it has steadily increased with the larger membership of the club. Think how many times Beate, Ron and John would have to call out names if suddenly a third of our 1600 members decided to run the July race!



How to win the race

If you want to win the race you need to finish before the "target" finishing time, which for the past year has been 45 minutes after the clock starts. How much faster? If you look at the graph below, you'll see that the winner has, over the last 22 years, finished on average 64 seconds faster than the target time. But with the field getting bigger, the competition is

getting tougher. Leaving aside the April 2003, where the winner knocked nearly 9 minutes of his pb, in the recent past you would need to have finished on average 112 seconds, nearly two minutes, faster than the target time. This means you need to improve by nearly two minutes to win the race.



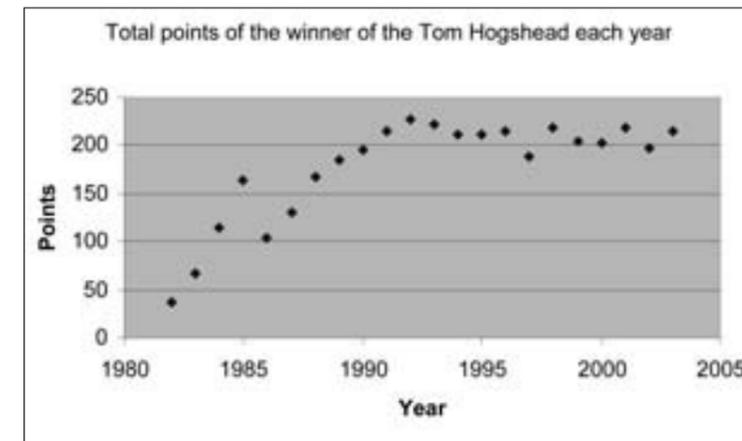
How to win the Tom Hogshead

If you want to win the Tom Hogshead trophy, the annual league, you should be the runner with the maximum points from your eight best races in any one calendar year. You both get points for placing in the race and for your running time relative to your pb. Full details of the points system are available online at http://www.serpentine.org.uk/events/handicap/hc_how.htm

2004 Tom Hogshead with 112 points. Will anybody take up the challenge to challenge her for the trophy?

The big debate is whether the increased number of runners at every race in the future will mean that the overall winner of the Tom Hogshead will get fewer points because of the increased competition, or whether this will be offset by the larger number of runners (which should result in a broader spread of results). I think we can leave this to our resident handicap guru, Anthony Stranger-Jones, and our new handicapper, to resolve!

Over the years, Tom Hogshead winners have, on average, achieved 210 points. Nadya Labib leads the



Thank you

I have thoroughly enjoyed being the Serpie handicapper for the last three years and would like to thank the many loyal helpers who, every month, turn up to make this race possible. I would also like to thank all the runners who in increasing numbers turn up to run the race.

I am sure you will make the new handicapper, Simon Maughan, as welcome as you did me.

*Grethe Petersen
The outgoing Serpentine Handicapper*

JUST DO IT

Or what you can do with the Serpentine Running Club by Lars Menken

When I joined the club a couple of years ago, I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I wanted to do the London marathon and since training on my own wasn't much fun I thought I should find a group. So I looked on the Internet and there was one outstanding result – the Serpentine Running Club.

Like a lot of people I did my first run on a Wednesday evening. When I joined Bev and the beginners group I was greeted with "Oh, we haven't had a bloke for a while". The next week I joined the regular two and three parks run. I kept running one of the parks routes regularly on a Wednesday for a while but didn't really do anything else with the club. Then I discovered a whole range of activities the club offers its members – and I was mad enough to try nearly all of them!

It all began with racing. On the first Saturday of October in 2002 I did my very first race ever – the monthly club handicap. Ron put me in the group with the fast scratch runners and I was delighted, until I found out that all the other runners in this group were aiming for a sub three-hour marathon whereas I was aiming for a sub four. I nearly came in last that day, but it didn't stop me from going back. I have never really come close to winning. In fact I was nearly last several times, but the handicap is still one of the highlights in my monthly race calendar. It isn't easy to explain why it's so much fun, but if you come along once you'll understand.

In addition to the handicap I found out about the Saturday morning club runs. These are similar to the Wednesday evening runs but with fewer people. The run starts with a social jog for one mile and some stretching, then everyone forms a circle and tells each other their name before the main run. After the run there is either tea or brunch in the clubroom. And of course there is John Walker (at some point you might find out what that means).

After some months of running on Wednesdays and Saturdays I felt I wanted to become faster, so I decided I was ready to try a track session. Gemma, Maggie, Robin and Dave were freshly-graduated level two coaches and soon I was a regular at their track sessions. At first I did Thursday sessions in Battersea Park, and then I changed to Tuesdays at the

Paddington track. Not only did I become faster, but sometimes I even had fun. It is a totally different experience from running the parks and it is the best way to improve one's running. Several new coaches have finished their level one and two courses now, so there is always somebody to ask for advice on your running.

My first real running highlight was the London marathon. Nick's long runs on Wednesday nights helped me get ready and on the day Nick started pacing a sub-four hour marathon group. I failed massively and ended up walking a lot of the course after the 10-mile mark, but there were still tons of Serpies cheering for me. Afterwards I remember going to the Paxtons Head and being greeted by many more Serpies who made the day unforgettable.

Now I can imagine many of you reading this article and saying "I know all this and I am planning to do the same things, except for the bit about failing the sub-four marathon, of course". Regardless of how you do, the post-marathon experience can often trip runners up, because they are left not knowing what to do next. But this is where the club has its real strength – there is always something you can do after a marathon.

The weeks or months after the London marathon form the best time for shorter 5k and 10k races. And of course you can do them with your club. Every last Friday of the month there is a 5k race in Hyde Park. I am there whenever I can be – either running or marshalling. It's got to the stage that my boss doesn't expect me to be around on any of these Fridays. The race has a similar course to the handicap, but you probably already know that from Huw's report in the last edition of the Serpentines.

If you prefer to run 10k to 5k, then you can participate in the summer league, a series of 10k races in various London parks competing against other running clubs. You pay a £1 entry fee to your team captain and show up in your Serpie kit. You don't get a race number but collect a disc with your finishing position at the end which you give to your captain. After the main event there is a shorter race for your juniors (if you have any) and this is followed by a relay race, usually around 200 to 400 metres for each leg. The results of all the races are added together and at the end of the season there is a winning team.

Unlike normal road races you don't get a medal or a t-shirt, but you do get the warm welcome from the hosting club which provides a buffet of sandwiches, cake, coffee and tea. Of course, at our own home event you might be asked to try some baking yourself. Maybe you can even match my coconut cake?

If you are a more serious racer and you want a cup instead of cake then there is always a club championship to go for. Even if you are not that serious these races still have something to offer you. The shorter Serpie-only races are good if you are a beginner and don't want to run an open race. But the open races like the "Coombe Hill 5" or the "Cabbage Patch 10" are great too because you get to run with a lot of Serpies and there is usually a lot of support for you due to our big turn-out at these events.

The summer is also the time when the track & field season starts. The club has two teams in the southern men's league, one team in the Rosenheim league for men and women and a male and a female vets' team. Usually all of these teams need athletes and helpers. Last year I joined the southern men's division five team, starting in shot put and long jump, and I ended up doing the sprint and hurdles as well. I will never forget the first time that Justin told me to go to the start line and I saw 110 metres of hurdles ahead of me on the track. I wouldn't describe myself as a hurdle specialist but I completed the distance without getting disqualified, which was more than anyone had expected.

After all of that, the winter returned and the cross country season began. I wish I'd found out about it earlier. Actually people did tell me, I just wish I had listened. Anyway, I invested £40 pounds in some XC shoes last October and I didn't regret it. Like the summer league there is no entry fee, you just need your club vest and some suitable shoes and you will have the time of your life! There are about 18 to 20 races available, with the national XC championships as a highlight not to miss. So, if you like cold, rain, wet, mud and hills, XC is the event for you. If you think you don't like them now, you will probably learn to love them.

If you fancy a weekend away, the club can help you with that as well. During the past year I have spent a weekend with Nick and the gang just outside London, with Ian and friends in Wales, with Nadya and others in Leeds and with even more Serpies in Berlin.

The Green Belt Relay happens every May and it involves running around the outskirts of London. There are 10 people per team and each runner does a 7 to 13 mile leg on the Saturday and then again on the Sunday. The club enters several teams, so there are many Serpies there to meet.

The Welsh Castles Relay from Caernafon to Cardiff takes place every June. If you are one of the faster men, women or vets in the club you can spend it with Ian and his co-organisers and, of course, lots of other Serpies. Each runner only runs once during the weekend. Even if you are slower and maybe only a reserve like I was in 2003, you'll still enjoy going along.

As if that wasn't enough, there's also the annual health weekend. This year Nadya and Tony did a great job organising it in Leeds. About 50 other Serpies went and had a fantastic time. I heard about visualisation, proper training and heart rate monitors, to mention just a few subjects. There were also sessions on yoga, training with the Swiss ball and much more. Lots of other opportunities come up to travel with Serpies, mostly to marathons or other events. And whether you're racing, or you just want to support the club, you're always welcome. Kirsten is currently organising a trip to Davos and Robert recently came back from the Paris marathon. If there's somewhere you want to go and you decide to organise your own trip I'm sure you'll find others who'd enjoy going too. That's what happened to me with the Berlin marathon. I started by talking one friend into it and ended up having about 20 people going for the big day.

I hope I've given you an idea of all the opportunities you have with your running club. I may have forgotten something, but even I am still learning about it all. There's so much available, you just have to pick what you want to do and do it.

Dates For Your Diary

Don't forget that the Round Norfolk Relay will be on 18 & 19 September this year. The 2005 Serpie trip to Lanzarote will depart from the UK on 6 March.

Watch the website, e-groups and future issues of Serpentines for more details of both.

Ironman Lanzarote

This story started for me during the marathon section of my first Ironman triathlon last year in Switzerland. I know it's a cliché but the only way I managed to keep running was by repeating to myself over and over that I would never be so stupid as to do another one of these things.



It didn't take long or much cajoling before I found myself signing up alongside several other Serpies for another one, and not just any old Ironman, but the acclaimed 'toughest Ironman in the world'; Lanzarote. Soon after, it was decided that this would be our club Ironman championship race for the year which encouraged more Serpies to enter and assured that the red and gold Serpentine colours were much in evidence on race day.

My preparation for Switzerland had been very much a solo effort so it was a joy to have so much support this year from fellow racers of all levels and regular six hour training rides or weekly swimming coaching sessions have been great fun and almost always finish with the customary couple of pints of Guinness in a local pub.

The annual Serpie training trip to Lanzarote in March was a wonderful opportunity to split the bike course up and train on the big hills several times reducing them to old friends rather than fearsome enemies and by the time we rode the complete 112 mile course on the penultimate day we were all confident of getting round with no undue concerns.

Returning from that trip seven weeks before race day meant that the key training weeks were just kicking in and we all had our own ideas of the perfect race preparation. For me that meant several weekend trips to Nice for some great cycling in the Alpes Maritimes. Adrian meanwhile was turning up the heat in his living room, putting on two rainjackets and a woolly hat and gloves and spending four hours on the turbo trainer (an indoor cycling machine) getting used to exercising in extreme heat.

Of the eight Serpies racing only Adrian and his brother, Andrew, had raced in more than one previous Ironman, and three of our group, Steve, Chris and Emmie, were attempting the distance for the first time.

An advance party of four of us arrived at Arrecife on the Thursday morning before the race and met up with Adrian's friend from the US, Jeff, at our apartments very close to the start and finish area in Puerto del Carmen. Jeff is a veteran of several Ironman events and has a very flash bike indeed, a Kestrel KM40. Unfortunately being flash didn't stop it getting lost in transit giving him a few worrying moments before he got the call the day before the race to say that it had arrived safely.

For those of us who arrived early, we went straight out and swam one lap of the swim course, which severely knocked my confidence as the sea was very choppy and getting into any sort of rhythm was a nightmare. We then drove the bike course again just to give our nightmares over the next couple of nights a bit more clarity, and we stopped at the half way mark to register and pick up our numbers from Club La Santa.

We returned to the apartments in the early evening to find that Steve, Mike and Emmie had also arrived, meaning the full compliment of racers were now in town. For most of us, Friday was spent trying to relax and think about something else for a few hours before taking our bikes down to be racked in the late afternoon. A light meal back at the apartment and an early night ready for a 4.30am alarm call.

As with all big races the general consensus was that sleep was, at best, fitful on the night before the race. A quick breakfast of toast and honey, porridge or a Turkish Delight depending on your personal preference and we were on our way down to the beach front with our wetsuits slung over our shoulders. It was an eerie scene as 800 competitors quietly checked their bikes and chatted nervously in the darkness, meanwhile Mike was doing a final interview for a National Geographic film crew who had been documenting his training for a future programme on endurance sport. Once the rest of us were bored with standing in the background pulling faces at every opportunity, we pulled on our wetsuits, swim hats and goggles and just had time for a quick chat with official supporters, Kirsten and Brigitte, before wishing each other luck and taking up our start positions on the beach.

The sun had just about come up when the gun went at 7am, and we were away. I was staring at the bottom of the ocean at the time, but I can't imagine there are many more spectacular or emotional sights in sport than that of nearly a thousand pairs of arms thrashing about vying for position on the first leg of a journey that, for some, would continue until just before the midnight cutoff point.

Much to my relief the water was dead calm, unlike the Thursday practice, and conditions were good for a fast swim. Curiously, having trained together for the best part of six months Mike, Chris, Steve, Adrian and myself all exited the 2.4 mile swim within a few seconds of each other which meant the transition tent became like a Serpentine social as we sat down to pull on our bike shoes and helpers covered our shoulders and the backs of our arms with sunblock.

Out on the bike course we were blessed with a perfect cycling day, warm and not too much wind. At several points Emmie's parents and Helen and her friends

popped up to give much needed encouragement. All the winter training paid off and between us we had a puncture free day and no major mishaps although Adrian spent the second half of the bike course constantly tightening by hand his crank bolt (whatever that is) as it had worked loose. This made his bike split of under six hours for 112 miles of hills even more remarkable. Mike reached transition a few minutes later, and Chris, myself and Steve all finished the bike within five minutes of each other. Emmie had a fantastic bike split, and not far behind were Andrew and Bass who was looking good at this stage to achieve his ambition of finishing in daylight.

Chris and I had another chat in the transition tent, more sunblock was applied and Chris toyed with the idea of giving up as his back had been giving him great trouble towards the end of the bike ride. I reassured him that from my previous experience the run gets easier the further you get as the distance mentally becomes more manageable. I could tell by the look in his eye he didn't believe me and the way I was feeling I wasn't sure I believed it myself. Still I left him with the final piece of advice to hang in there, it will get better. About half an hour later I came to regret that as he breezed past me saying he'd had "a bit of a mood swing".



The run course in general could best be described as carnage. The unusually still day that helped us so much on the bike course now worked against us as we were running the marathon in the hottest part of the day with no shade at all. The run course was a four lap out and back course and it was a tremendous boost to see the seven other Serpies on each lap, although the cheery greetings became more strained with each passing kilometre. At the really low points it was reassuring to look around and see the faces of all the other athletes, even the pros, who were hurting with every step. Bass put it well when he described the feeling when you start an Ironman marathon as being similar to the feeling of hitting the wall towards the end of a normal marathon.

Considering the conditions and the seven hours of intense exercise that preceded it, Adrian's marathon time of 3.16 was incredible. Interestingly, he also recorded the fastest transition from bike to run of all 800 athletes including the pros. He was the first Serpie home in 10hrs 23mins to become the club's Ironman champion.

Mike had a slower run than hoped and felt it was a result of maybe pushing too hard on the bike but still finished in an excellent 11hrs 02mins. Steve won the mini battle that developed between him, Chris and myself early in the run and we finished in times varying from 11.35 to 11.49. Andrew, meanwhile, had an excellent run, I think we'll all be looking at those Jones brothers' training techniques for advice on how to run after cycling 112 miles, and he finished in 12hrs 26mins. Emmie was next in, again suffering on the run after a strong bike, but completing her first, and surely not her last, Ironman in 12 hrs 53mins.

It was nearly 10pm and, unfortunately, total darkness greeted Bass at the finish line as he recorded a time of 14 hrs 48 mins before heading (as I had done) straight into the medical tent for a saline drip. It helped our recovery no end and meant that we were all able to reconvene in a beachside restaurant for some pizza and a few beers to watch the final couple of hours unfold before walking down to the finish to cheer in the last finisher and enjoy the midnight fireworks.

The next day (and night) was spent in a blur of celebration at the newly adopted Serpentine clubhouse in Lanzarote, The Spanking Monkey. We had all travelled to Lanzarote with our own personal targets, some hoping for the ultimate goal of Hawaii qualification, others hoping just to finish alive. We all managed that and for the day we all felt like winners, but we were particularly proud to have been there to witness Adrian finally achieve his dream of qualifying for Hawaii after five years of near misses, the race was on his birthday as well, it must have been written in the stars. Based on their performances Mike and Emmie will surely both line up on the beach at Kona one day too.

The weekend was one that will live long in the memory for all of us, from the support we gave each other, to the support from the Serpies around the bike and the run courses, the achievement of finishing the toughest IM in the world and the celebrations the next day.

Never again? You must be joking, most of us have already signed up for IM Florida in November.

Richard Melik



ITU World Championships

Madeira 8th & 9th May

Barely five months after the 2003 world championships, it was the turn of Madeira, and in particular its capital Funchal, to organise the Olympic distance world triathlon championships. With most triathletes arriving quite a few days ahead of Saturday's race, Funchal was buzzing with people in lycra and neoprene. The organisation can be best described as very 'Portuguese' but with some sun, hardly any wind and around 20°C, everyone was looking forward to the race. This year's world championships had three Serpies participating: Jenny Gowans (Kiwi) in the F25-29 age group, Emmie Gribble (UK) (yes, the same Emmie Gribble that did the Lanzarote Ironman two weeks later) in the F30-34 age group and me, Piet Hein Schram (Dutch) in the M30-34 age group.

With registration required on Thursday, the parade of nations on Thursday evening was very well attended, with the 300-strong British team especially impressive in the highly visible UK kit. Canada, the USA and Australia seemed to make up the rest of the field. The 10-man strong Dutch team was difficult to find, despite the orange outfit, so it was surprising that we featured on the local news after the parade!

Friday was a day of bike fiddling, bike racking and a short swim, and for some of us a bus tour to check out the bike course. I am still not sure whether this was a wise thing to do before the race, as I am sure it caused many triathletes to not sleep as well as they would have normally. Our short sea swim was in the sheltered harbour which with hardly any wind and a water temperature of some 19°C, was actually quite refreshing and pleasant – how different would Saturday turn out to be?

An early rise on Saturday was followed by a walk from the hotel to transition to prepare the bikes (blow up your pump, then borrow someone else's pump and blow up your tyre, then replace the tyre all in three minutes is not ideal race preparation!) By the time everyone had finished preparing, it had already been announced that the start of all races had been postponed by 30 minutes in good Portuguese fashion.

After a quick warm up jog and a long walk to the tent, where you had to leave your post-race bag, then a good luck chat with Emmie and Jenny before walking up the ramp, we were all ready to race. On jumping in the water it became very clear that there was considerably more wind than on the days before and, as a result, the pool-like harbour would prove to be quite a challenging swim for many of the triathletes. Sighting also proved to be difficult, with such high waves.

24 minutes after the start I struggled out of the water to start the 500m+ run through transition on my way to the bike course. Whether it was the result of the

adrenaline or whether the hill was as steep as it had appeared to be when being driven up it in the bus, my heart rate never dropped below 180 for the first 10 minutes on the bike. For those of you that have been to Lanzarote: the bike course was 36k of Fire Mountain. For those of you that have not been to Lanzarote: the bike course was a monstrous ride up a number of very steep hills. Luckily the turning point was higher than the start and finish of the bike course which meant that the second half had, relatively speaking, more downhill than the first half. Unfortunately, the race planners forgot that at approx 30k there was a 400m long stretch of some 19% incline!

The only positive thing that I can say of the bike course is that it was some 4k short as a compensation for the hills. For comparison, my fastest-ever bike split in an Olympic distance tri is 1:03. My time here was 1:14 with an average heart rate of 176!

Off the bike another 500m transition and on to the pancake-flat run: three laps of approximately 3,200m along the boulevard. Hundreds of supporters, locals and holidaymakers, combined with sun, 23°C and no wind meant near-perfect running conditions. The run was over before I knew it (especially when compared to a marathon in an Ironman race). No first-aid tent required and a quick transition to see the other Serpies finish in very respectable times and positions.

All in all, it was a great event and a very nice race to do so early in the season. Hopefully we'll have many more Serpies in future ITU world championships!

The details of the Serpie finishers' times are below.

Jenny Gowans (F 25-29): 2:35:53.

Category place 31.

Swim time: 0:25:32, T1: 0:03:26, Bike time: 1:27:30

Bike Cat Place 32, T2: 0:02:12, Run time: 0:37:14, Run Cat Place 25.

Emmie Gribble (F 30-34): 2:39:06.

Category place 39.

Swim time: 0:26:50, T1: 0:03:37, Bike time: 1:28:34

Bike Cat Place 33, T2: 0:02:09, Run time: 0:37:58, Run Cat Place 27.

Piet Hein (M 30-34): 2:19:26.

Category place 48.

Swim time: 0:24:10, T1: 0:03:15, Bike time: 1:14:36

Bike Cat Place 33, T2: 0:01:58, Run time: 0:35:28, Run Cat Place 58.

Plodding the Plod

Robin and Lars take on the Meon Valley Plod

The alarm clock sounded at 4.30am on Sunday morning and as I lay in bed I started to question my sanity. In a previous life, I would have just returned home after a night of liquid poetry and partying. How did I get talked into a race that requires one to get up at such a ludicrous hour?

It was towards the end 2003 when the Meon Valley Plod was mentioned as a possible London marathon training run. 19.5 miles of running in the English countryside in February, of which 16 miles was cross-country running through fields, over stiles, up and down hills with the remaining 3.5 miles along quiet country lanes. The application form clearly stated that 'No wimps' should enter – at this point I should have known better.

Lars Menken, Paul Flood and I had arranged to meet close to Earls Court to head to face the joys of Hampshire's claim to the South Downs. The drive down the A3 to the race HQ in Clanfield, north of Portsmouth, was almost traffic free, so we were virtually the first runners (plodders) to arrive, two hours before the race was due to start, which gave us plenty of time to contemplate the race ahead, warm up, and plan race strategies. But after reviewing the course map, we discarded all of this in favour of a cup of tea.

The event organisers had warned us that temperatures on the top of Butser Hill (the highest point of the course) have been very low in past years, and so hat, gloves and several layers were order of the day. These were packed into our rucksacks and we lined up for the start of the race. The claxon sounded and we were away, immediately running up an incline, which gave very poor footing but was probably one of the flattest parts of the entire course. From the outset Paul was suffering with an old injury and had to stop on several occasions to stretch. This left us at the very rear of the race. For me this was nothing new, however, this is a great position to run from as you receive a motivational boost for each runner you catch and pass.

After three miles, Paul decided to withdraw and make his way back to race HQ. Given what was to come, this was a very wise decision, since we were immediately faced with an almost vertical hill climb, which I named the Eiger. I suggested to Lars that we should prepare for altitude sickness. This was as steep as any mountain I have ever climbed in the Alps and I had never tried to run up anything like this before – in fact nobody was running at this point. I could have sworn the resident sheep at the top were laughing at us. They must have been thinking 'look at these mad people, they choose to run up here'. A fellow runner told us that this was merely a taste of things to come and she wasn't wrong.

After the Eiger came the Matterhorn, Mont Blanc, K2 and then the highest of all, Everest, known locally as Butser Hill. With a name like Butser you just know it is going to be tough and to top it off, this was at the 16-mile point of the race. It was probably a mile in length and very steep. Once at the top you could see a long line of runners in front and a long line of runners to the rear. By this stage of the race I had well and truly lost Lars who had just disappeared, maybe snatched by the beast of Butser Hill? After the summit of Butser Hill, there were just a few miles of steady running left to the finish.

One may think that at least running up tough hills means that there will be some nice downhill stretches – not so. The down hills were so steep that you did well to stay upright, and for good measure, there was the occasional hurdle (or stile) to negotiate. It was very tempting to try and clear the stiles without breaking stride, but the risk of looking a complete fool if I didn't clear one ensured that I carefully climbed over like everybody else. Not only this, but if I had fallen on one of the steep descents, with the momentum someone of my size would pick up, there was the risk of knocking over many runners and even the possibility of some serious damage being done to buildings, trees, walls or anything else in my path.

Even the flat parts of the course did not prove much easier to deal with, because they were either boggy sections or involved running across ploughed fields, negotiating horses and even off-road motorbikes – all previously unforeseen challenges.

So our very tough mental and physical challenge was completed in 3:40 for Lars and 3:30 for me, to much relief. Although these times don't appear to be fast, this was never going to be a race for either of us, but instead, a long training run in a beautiful location. It was an enjoyable experience and great to see Paul and fellow Serpie, Chris Saunders (who also ran the race, albeit a bit quicker) waiting at the finish to cheer us on! The whole event was friendly and very well organised by the Portsmouth Joggers, with excellent jelly babies, fruitcake, Mars bars and oranges at the checkpoints for all, and endless free cups of tea and soup at the finish. There were even women waiting to take runners' muddy running shoes off at the finish (this could certainly catch on).

If you fancy trying this race in the future, I would advise taking a camera since the views from the tops of the hills are stunning. But do be warned: plodding the plod – 'it's not for wimps'.

Robin Gray

Cortina to Dobbiacco

Lynne and Simon tackle 30k in the Italian Dolomites

Dobbiacco in the Italian Dolomites is a fantastic place to travel to for an "outdoor" holiday. Popular for skiing in winter, the rest of the year it provides a great base for road cycling, mountain biking and swimming in Lago Dobbiacco. There are numerous walks and running paths too. This year's Cortina to Dobbiacco 30km race provided a perfect opportunity for Simon and I to go on a camping trip as well as take part in a running event. As many of you will agree, it doesn't matter whether you choose the race or the holiday destination first; it is always quite exciting to take part in an event abroad during a holiday.

Although the Dolomites region is in the north of Italy, because of its proximity to the Austrian border and its historical ties with that country (it was part of the Austria's Tyrol region until 1918), many of the locals speak German. Indeed, many of the local people look more "Austrian" than "Italian". It's possible to eat pizza and pasta every day and wash down each meal with the Austrian beer(s) of your choice.

The 30km race begins in the popular ski resort of Cortina and finishes in Dobbiacco (Toblach is its German name). Runners are transported by bus on the morning of the race from the "Zona Sportiva" finishing arena in Dobbiacco to the start line. A 13km race and 2km fun run are also staged on the same day. Espresso and cappuccinos in the local cafes prior to lining up for the start of the race add to the Italian cultural experience. The race gets underway at 9am and this year there were more than 1,200 participants who completed the 30km.

As you would expect for the Dolomites, the race itself is very hilly, with a continuous and gradual incline for the first 12km. The route follows an old railway line over bridges and through several dark tunnels. The mountain scenery is breathtaking and the air, not surprisingly, fresh, which completes the total experience. For me, running in a beautiful part of the world provides the perfect opportunity to appreciate the basic pleasure and freedom of running, for running's sake.

For 25km, the route winds through a valley surrounded by snow-capped mountains. The final 5km follows a windy but flat trail back to the sports arena just outside Dobbiacco town centre. Since June is such a hot and sunny time of year in the Dolomites, glycogen and fluid replenishment is essential. The race is well marshalled and there are plenty of water and energy stations. There are also plenty of enthusiastic

spectators along the way offering clapping, cheers of "bravo!" and moral support.

The standard of competition is high. Whilst the majority of participants are Italian, this year's race was won by a Kenyan (Elias Kenboi) in a time of 1:42:24. The first woman, Banuelia Mrashani, from Tanzania, finished in 1:57:12. The race is well supported by sponsors. This year, prizes were awarded to the first three finishers in each age group for men and women. The presentations were, in true Italian style, encouraging and inspiring. The first 30 female finishers and the first 50 finishers overall were acknowledged and invited onto the stage (I see room at the presentations at this race for many of our fast and keen Serpies in the future!) After the presentations, participants and spectators relax with their friends and families in a marquee, sampling the local beers and eating strudels and pasta.

There are plenty of other races to choose from in the North of Italy during the summer. You can obtain more information about this 30km race at www.cortina-dobbiacorun.it. Getting to the Dolomites from the UK is quite straightforward. There are frequent flights to Verona in Italy, or Innsbruck in Austria. Both cities have good rail links to Dobbiacco. I can thoroughly recommend the 30km race to anyone who likes running in fresh air through mountains. I can assure you that you won't be disappointed if you choose to travel to the Dolomites for a run during your holiday, or a holiday of running.

Lynne Maughan

"YOUR-NAME-HERE"
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London and Lyon

Two very different marathon experiences in two weeks

The distance was the same, but the marathon experience was totally different, when I ran the London and Lyon marathons this spring.

I didn't plan to do two marathons one week after the other, but as luck would have it that's what happened. I originally thought I'd do the Lyon marathon on 28 March as a 20-mile training run, but because of the French regional elections, the date had to be changed and the new date was 25 April – one week after the London marathon. I decided to go ahead and do them both.

There were more than 150 Serpies among the 30,000-plus people running London, which is a typical big city international marathon. It's comparable with New York, Chicago and Boston in terms of the amazing spectator support. Big city marathons are great for people to watch even if they don't run, or know anything about running. In the London marathon, the numbers of spectators just along The Highway is phenomenal. Around the 13-mile mark and along the last six miles, the crowds are at their loudest.

These locations are obviously not the only parts of the course with large crowds. You also get them in the first half of the marathon, in parts of London no tourist would ever think of going to, and where council taxes must be a pound a month, yet this does not deter the crowds. One nasty stretch is the Isle of Dogs, which is not easy to run through, because the area looks so depressing but the thousands of supporters that turn up here really make a great difference.

Running the London marathon you don't pass many of the city's interesting landmarks – there is no running through Oxford Street, Piccadilly, Regent's Park, or Knightsbridge – but the fantastic crowds make the route exciting. Even the rain didn't stop the crowds from cheering the runners on 18 April.

By contrast, the Lyon marathon was quiet on the crowd front, but with beautiful weather. The race began with blue skies and a temperature of 10°C, which rose to 20°C. I think I might have spotted five clouds by the end of the race. This marathon is very low profile. It starts in the south of Lyon, in Gerland, outside the stadium of Olympique Lyonnais (the current French football champions). About 6,000 people ran the marathon, and there was also a 10k race which started in another location at a different time.

The marathon starts off with a 3k loop back to the start, before it heads off in another direction. The kilometre markers became scarce after 3k and seemed to be placed randomly, at possibly every 5k point until 37k mark where they became more regular again. There are definitely no crowds running this race. In fact, only a few roads are closed to traffic. We ran on the pavements on some busy roads where traffic had priority. The route even went through a few shopping precincts which were not closed off to shoppers. Shoppers carried on going about their business, oblivious to the marathon (and showing much more interest in their shopping than watching the race).

The first 18k of the route was outside central Lyon; then we hit the better known parts of the city before heading out again for the last 6k with the finish back at the Olympique Lyonnais Stadium. Five or six km after the pavements of central Lyon, the race follows a riverside path beside the Rhône which is perfect for running. Next came a few kilometres inside the Park de la Tête d'Or before the 30k marker, when we started heading back south. I got a boost at this stage of race from being able to see kilometre markers again.

So to conclude, the only thing that is the same about the Lyon and the London marathons is the 42.195k distance. Most of the Lyon route is not depressing like it can be in London, but the crowds are not there supporting, although there was the odd "Allez Pierre". Kilometre markers in Lyon only seem to appear where the organisers felt like putting them up. It's also good to note that Lyon starts and finishes in exactly the same place. However, despite some of the Lyon drawbacks, I'd certainly recommend it as a perfect race for a PB. That said, I didn't get one, but of course I had run London the previous week.

An especially important consideration of course is the goody bag at the finish. In Lyon the goody bag contains a free bottle of Côte du Rhône wine, whereas in London you get Uncle Ben's rice and floor cleaner (in case you drop the rice on the floor, perhaps?)

Having done both races, I would suggest that the London marathon should move to Lyon and call itself the Lonyon marathon. Both races would then be perfect!

Huw Keene

Serpie Health Weekend in Leeds

On 20 February, three minibuses several cars and train-spotters made the pilgrimage from London to the chilly Yorkshire city of Leeds for the 2004 Serpentine health weekend. Leeds was chosen as it also provided a base for the English national cross-country championships in the picturesque setting of Temple Newsham.

The final minibus arrived at Weetwood Hall not long after 11.00pm. The hall dates back to the mid 1500s and had most recently provided student accommodation for the nearby university. A couple of sips of people's preferred poison, then a sound night's sleep before the real work began. The beauty of the weekend was that all seminars were optional, so people could pick and choose the sessions they wanted to attend and breaks provided the perfect opportunity for members to introduce themselves.

Saturday morning kicked off with some relaxing yoga led by Alison Barty with the assistance of Sid Wills. It was a bit of a 'stretch' for some of us who found out just how inflexible we were, and I must say the sponge blocks came in mighty handy. But it was the perfect way to start the weekend. Sid continued on with his views on Creative Visualisation. Everyone gave freely of their opinion and all opinions were considered by the group, which I found refreshing and enjoyable. On a personal note Sid, had it not been for what I took out of your session, I would have found it difficult to complete my first half-marathon at Silverstone two weeks later. A big thank you.

Quality athletes Vince Wilson and your chairman Ros Young then talked about the benefits of using heart rate monitors in training and racing. This gave Owen Barder unashamedly free publicity for his book: *Running for Fitness*, available at all good book stores. The session gave invaluable information for those who had ever wondered how a heart rate monitor could possibly benefit them. After lunch the group split into those who were competing in the cross country, those on a suicide mission with coaching guru Frank Horwill, and those content to please themselves. I chose the suicide mission with Frank so will give you a condensed version of the session for a dozen or so gutsy individuals.

The group headed to parklands north of the hall to wide open space and some comfortable hills. Frank's name had preceded him and for those who had never trained with him before there was great apprehension for what was about to be released on our poor souls. I was particularly apprehensive considering Frank's close association with South Africa and the recent training exploits of the South African rugby team in the lead up to the world cup. Thankfully, we all got to keep our clothes on. A quick warm up was followed by some serious strength and mind games, including piggy-back races and sprints up a cheeky



little hill (special mention to Tony Gould who managed to carry all 188cms and 90kgs of me) and a bit of leap frog. Play was eventually halted due to the reaper hanging around a number of the participants.

The evening's main event was a keynote address presented by Frank: 'Five Essentials of Training for Improvement in Performance'. Those who missed it should look at the Training and Advice section of the Serpie website. The remainder of the evening was spent wining, dining and meeting our escorts from the Horsforth Harriers, who would lead our Sunday morning run.

Sunday's run presented a refreshing change for those used to running in the concrete jungle of London. It was a little nippy with a light sprinkling of snow thrown in, but all in all everyone found it enjoyable. Thank you to the Horsforth Harriers who escorted us.

The lectures after lunch centred around looking after our bodies. Osteopath, Liz Morris, presented the benefits of training with the Swiss ball. Essentially, this (it is suggested) is particularly beneficial in developing core strength. A strong core leads to better form and posture which can only lead to more comfortable running. Physiotherapist, Paul Martin, talked about common injuries and ailments associated with running and how best to treat or prevent such injuries. One word people: S-T-R-E-T-C-H.

Paul's lecture concluded the weekend's events, and from what I understand, everyone gave the weekend a big 'thumbs up'. The weekend wouldn't have been possible had it not been for the organisational skills of Nadya Labib and Tony Gould, to whom everyone who went is truly grateful. A big thank you must also go to all those who gave their time willingly to pass on their wisdom in their particular fields of expertise and, of course, to the participants who made the weekend so enjoyable.

Luke Marshall

Lorne Pier to Pub Swim

Simon takes part in the largest open water swim in the world

Lorne is a town close to Melbourne on Victoria's "Surf Coast". Every year, during the second weekend in January, the town's Surf Life Saving Club organises a mass participation swim – the "Pier to Pub". The race was conceived 24 years ago when four lifesavers jumped off Lorne Pier and raced each other the 1.2km across the bay to the pub. The loser had to buy the others their first round of drinks. From those humble beginnings, the race now attracts up to 5,000 swimmers and is the largest open water swim in the world.

Lynne and I decided to take part in the event during our honeymoon earlier this year. I had never swum in the sea before – unless you count a bit of paddling at Whitley Bay – so I was a little apprehensive about how I would fare, not just with the distance but with the added complications of swell, a mass start and open water navigation.

Swimmers were divided into different start waves according to age, sex and proficiency. When my time came, I took a look around at the competition. I had no intention of making a race of it: I just wanted to see how other people were feeling and whether I was completely out of my depth (sic). Fortunately, as I quickly realised, it is very hard to tell good swimmers apart from bad swimmers when everyone is wearing wetsuits and swim caps. Partially reassured, I began to walk into the sea and swim out to the start line just under the Pier.

I had planned to swim to the far side of the pack, both out of the way of the greatest number of kicking feet and also in prime position for allowing the tide to bring me home with the least effort. However, in the 90 seconds we were allowed to take up our starting positions, I only made it as far as the middle of the pack – just where I didn't want to be. Before I could do anything about it, the gun went off and the water turned to froth.

Flailing arms and legs were all around me. I tried to find a swimming rhythm quickly, but every time I put my head under the water, the cold water and the



sheer blackness of the view below made me feel breathless. Then someone swam right over me. Only two minutes into the swim, I wanted it to be over. But the beach and the pub were a distant blur. The only thing to do was keep swimming.

As the leaders moved away, I had more space in which to swim. I began to relax a little and realised I could make it if I just kept going. I reminded myself that thousands of swimmers had completed this course before me, and that I too had managed the distance before, albeit in a pool. There was nothing to fear. I started passing the buoys that marked every 100 metres of the course. Then I began to pass other swimmers, not just those from my wave, but also from the wave ahead of mine. I was finally beginning to enjoy myself.

My only problem was that my navigation was not up to much, so on more than one occasion I found myself swimming into the outer buoys that marked the edge of the swimming channel.

But I was not to be put off now, and, as the end finally came into sight, I put in a little more effort, and tried to pass as many people as I could. Soon the waves were breaking over us. I stayed low in the water as long as I could, and then ran through the surf towards the finish line. I had made it!

The elation I felt at crossing the line compared with completing my first marathon. I was so excited that I almost felt like swimming back to the pier. Common sense got the better of me, however, so I headed to the pub to sample the sponsor's local brew (purely to get rid of the salty taste in my mouth, you understand). And, beer in hand, as I reflected on my first open water swim, I decided it certainly wouldn't be my last.

Simon Maughan



Last Friday of the Month 5km

May saw the first big change to the Serpentine / Runner's World Last Friday of the Month 5k for many years. Ever since the series began in 1992, we have been lucky to have been able to use basically the same course. However, for a number of reasons, the Royal Parks Agency, who are one of the bodies that licence the race and who tell us where we can and can't run, have decided that the race will have to start and finish at the bandstand at the Hyde Park Corner end of the park. This has also meant moving competitors' registration away from the Lido cafe to the bandstand. Fortunately, the race will retain its unique character, as the Royal Parks will still allow us to run around the Serpentine. However, the opening 2km

will be different, taking in paths to the north side of the lake. Hugh Jones has kindly accurately measured a new course. It will be interesting to see how times compare once runners have got used to it.

As this year's races are concerned, many of the best performances in the year so far came in March, when conditions were almost ideal. There were three new event records. Jane Laws not only beat the previous best time for her own age group (W45) but in doing so also took the W35 and W40 records: a superb achievement. Not to be outdone, Sally Musson improved on her own W50 mark, while Keith Newton took the M40 record.

Year's Best Times

Female

Age Group	Date	Name	Club	Time
WU20	26 March	Elizabeth Hall	Herts Phoenix AC	18:38
SL	26 March	Julia Bleasdale	Hillingdon AC	17:00
W35-45	26 March	Jane Laws	Barnet & District AC	17:38
W50	26 March	Sally Musson	Tonbridge AC	19:05
W60-65	26 March	Ena Urich	Serpentine RC	21:49

Male

Age Group	Date	Name	Club	Time
MU17	27 February	Samuel Bradley	Tonbridge AC	19:34
MU20	26 March	Paul Erwood	Vale of Aylesbury	16:04
SM	26 March	Nick Altman	Thames Hare and Hounds	15:21
M40	26 March	Keith Newton	Herne Hill Harriers	15:42
M45	30 April	Barry Broe	Epsom & Ewell Harriers	16:33
M50	26 March	Dave Cox	Woodford Green & Essex Ladies	16:37
M55	27 February	Michael Mann	Dulwich Runners AC	17:55
M60	30 April	Dave Gibson	Aldershot Farnham & District	18:22
M65	30 April	Edmund Simpson	Folkestone AC	19:53
M70	26 March	Jim Leith	Hillingdon AC	23:00

We had a serious problem with the May race. Sadly, too few people came along to help John and me with the organisation. We need a minimum of 22 helpers, including 12 course marshals and only 13 people offered to help in May. We were therefore unable to cover all of the marshalling points. As a consequence, many runners went off course. This demonstrates just how vital the marshals and all the other helpers are to

the successful staging of the race. Please would you consider assisting? We all have to fit organising the race in with our normal "day jobs." If you would like to help, (even just once a year would be great) or would like to know more about what's involved, please contact either Malcolm French or John Walker.

Malcolm French

Advice from the Serpie Coaching Team

Track Pacing – For Beginners

People always ask me what track running is about. What does it do for you? Why will it make me better? And a whole host of other similar questions. People also expect instant results. It's amazing how many people, two to three weeks before the marathon, came to track for the first time saying "I've come along to put a bit of speed work into my schedule before the big day". But it just doesn't work like that. Any training session you do takes up to two weeks to have an effect on your running. It is only consistent training that will really benefit you, and this involves a nasty little thing called a plan.

This brings me on to the topic of this article, and the answer to the question nobody ever asks, which is "How does it work?" The answer to that is pacing, and most importantly your pacing – not anybody else's, not the pacing of the group you are running with, or your best mate's pacing, nobody's but yours; after all, it's only your times you are trying to improve. There are a lot of people who turn up to track sessions and just run in the same group, week in week out. I'm not saying that's a terrible thing to do, just that you are probably not improving as you should be. Others turn up, run themselves into the ground for the first 15 minutes and then have to stop. This is not only not improving you, but it's probably going to injure you at some point. You should be able to complete the whole session at your pace and feel pleasantly shattered at the end.

I feel like I need to put a little disclaimer in here. You don't have to do speed work at the track; you can perform fartleks, or run to a lamp post, walk to a lamp post in the park. The reason I think speed work works best at the track is that it is so measurable. Unfortunately when they put the lamp posts up in the park they didn't take as much care as the guy that laid the track out to put the posts exactly 100m apart. So, because the chappie who laid the track took so much care to measure it accurately, you can use your watch to accurately measure your pace.

Sounds easy....So, just how does it work? How do you work out your pace? And then how do you use it on the track? Almost all of the track sessions that we run at either Paddington or Battersea are based on your 3k, 5k or 10k pace. The most blindingly obvious way to work out your pace is to run a race at one of these distances, preferably a fairly flat one. This will give you your base starting point or current race pace. From there you can work out the rest pretty easily.

Let's concentrate on the 5k pace to start with, and we'll invent a person called Bob, who can run a 5k in 25 minutes. From there we can work out how fast he is running a lap, and it's all easier to do in seconds.

$25 \times 60 = 1,500$ (number of seconds for the 5k)
 $1,500 / 5 = 300$ (number of seconds per 1k)
 $300 / 5 = 60$ (number of seconds per 200m)
 $60 \times 2 = 120$ (number of seconds per lap or 400m)

All easy so far. We now know that Bob will run each lap in 120 seconds (or 2 minutes) at his 5k race pace. The next step is to explain what the session descriptions on the website mean.

6 x 1,000 @ 5k [1']

This session is telling you that you will run six repetitions of 1,000m with a minute's rest in between each. So our friend Bob should run each and every 1,000m in 5 minutes (or 300 seconds). You will notice that he is running more than the 5k distance we measured him over but has a total of 5 minutes rest in between.

Now it is important here to re-stress my point about accuracy, it is key to Bob that he maintains exactly the right pace, in my view it is easier to measure yourself every 200m than every lap, that way you get a much more even track session. As an example of this, should Bob run 57 seconds per 200m instead of the prescribed 60, he will only take 1,425 seconds to complete his 5k – a staggering PB of 23.45 – and way beyond his ability. If he tried this, he would find himself slowing down, or maybe not even finishing the session, and not making the most of his workout.

It's just as important then to plan each session in advance. It's really easy with the times of 60 seconds per 200m to assess yourself and your pace quite easily, but if your pace is not quite such a round number eg 57 seconds per 200m, you will need to work the numbers out in advance. My advice is to write them on your hand. The session we have talked about would look like this

57
 1:54
 2:51
 3:48
 4:47

Write the numbers right beside your watch, so they are easy to read, and buy a watch with large digits which makes that easier to read as well. Whilst I'm on the subject of watches, how can you turn up to a track session without a watch? How are you even going to know what you are doing? You don't have to buy an expensive one – mine was £24 from Argos – it just needs to be able to measure lap times.

Improvements in your performance can only be gained over time. What Bob needs to do is to turn up to the sessions for a few weeks and run at the pace he

can achieve: 60 seconds per 200m in this case. When Bob can quite comfortably complete the sessions each week, he should knock two seconds off his 200m pace, and once he can consistently achieve this new pace, he should repeat the trick taking off another two seconds, until it gets to the point where he can no longer do the very last 200m of the session at the required pace. Bob should spend at least a few weeks at each new milestone.

So what about the 3k and 10k sessions? Broadly speaking, 3k pace is about 5 seconds per lap faster and 10k pace is about 5 seconds slower, therefore you can run your 200m splits at say three seconds faster or slower than your 5k time. The faster and more experienced athletes will be able to adjust their times more accurately

If you have never run a race over one of these three distances, you could ask some of the people that you usually run with what times they can do. However, this is a bit of a risky strategy as they are very likely to quote a PB they set when they were around 18. You are definitely better off booking yourself into a 5k and having a go, that way you get your own PB and a benchmark to improve from. Try the Serpie Last Friday of the Month, or even the club championship at Battersea Park on 29 June.

I'm afraid that there are just too many of you at each track session for us to individually coach you every week, which is why you need to take responsibility for some of your own training, and knowing your own pace is a good start. Should any of you want to have a more detailed discussion about any aspects of track training however, any of the coaches will be more than happy to oblige.

Much of what I have written here is common sense. I also feel that I must add a personal view, which is not necessarily the view of the coaching team as a whole. Part of the reason for writing this article is to express my views and hopefully make what appears to be a tricky subject seem a bit simpler. I would also like to say that track training alone will not improve you. Long runs, fartleks, hill sessions and social runs around the parks are all important, although the beauty of track training is that it is simple to measure and great fun.

I hope to see some of you there in the future.

Terry Smith

The Starter Group

One and a half years ago, the Serpie starter group was responsible for a miracle in my life. It gave me the courage, the strength and the encouragement to run non-stop for four and a half miles. It gave me the kick-start to my new-found running career.

A few months later, when I had progressed through Bev and Sue's groups to Sid's slightly faster group and then on to join Terry (as part of his harem) for the three parks, I thought the Serpie starter group was well and truly behind me. I got so into taking part in races, turning up to track sessions and cruising through long runs with Nick Slade that I didn't feel I could possibly sacrifice my precious running time to assist with the starter group. Whenever I heard Bev and Sue's pleas for help, I just convinced myself that in a club as big as this, someone else would surely help out. That was until the early part of this year.

In March, after three months of copious amounts of tedious physiotherapy for a knee injury I had developed, I needed to get fit again. On strict instructions from my physio, I was to ease myself back in gently. What better way, I thought, than to re-join the starter group!

So, with my tail between my newly aligned legs, I tentatively found Bev and Sid but this time, rather than following, I realised that this could also be an opportunity to help out and give a bit back to the club. What I have since discovered through taking out the 'middle group' on Wednesday nights is that the benefits I reap far outweigh the effort I have to put in. I get a great training session now that I follow Sid's 'fartlek' style approach to rounding up the group. I meet all types of people, have some fascinating conversations, play a part in encouraging newcomers through the difficulties of their first few runs, get to the pub quicker and overall really feel part of the club. So a year and a half after joining, although I would like to say I have done a marathon and won lots of races, I think I have found a different type of satisfaction. I can now be proud of the fact that I am doing my little bit to contribute to the success of an excellent running club. And anyway, there is still plenty of time ahead of me to do that marathon and win the handicap!

Marianne Fryer

The name 'starter group' is something of a misnomer. People's running experience varies widely, from 10 minute ("gentle jog for me") milers to "How far to the bus stop?" One lady came with a rucksack, asthma and gamely completed the two parks. Another had misread the website and was expecting a two-mile run, but she finished with a smile (or was it a grimace!) And so it goes; every week we have complete beginners attempting 7k, and succeeding.

By definition the starter group team run with the club's slowest members. So presumably our own running should suffer. Yet this same team contains the current and former Tom Hogshead winners, plus numerous handicap medal winners. Best of all, we get to run with tomorrow's winners. And the team gets first refusal of the scones!

Gowan Clews

Sudbury Court Report

What's happening in our sister club?

Well, there's really only one place I can start this latest update of the activities at Sudbury Court, and that's with the fifth running of our annual 10k. Firstly, a massive thank you to all those Serpies who turned up to support the race, both on and off course: it, almost literally, wouldn't have been half the event without you. In fact 39 Serpies toed the line (27% of the field), with numerous others, including the ever-dependable Malcolm French and Dave Lipscomb, assisting behind the scenes.

A near perfect day (though one or two of the competitors said they could have done with it being a degree or so cooler) saw a record turnout of just under 150, with the men's race producing easily the closest finish to date. Eric Vamben of Queens Park Harriers (33.48) edged out Peter Stainer of Shaftesbury Barnet (33.51) by just three seconds. Behind the front two, Dave McGregor kept up Serpentine's excellent record in the event, taking third place in 35.26, with Iain Akhurst picking up the veteran's prize.

In the women's race, Daniella Sanderson (Watford Harriers) joined Barbara Yff as a two-time winner of the event, clocking a time of 36.52, to shave 24 seconds off the race best time on our slightly altered course. It would have been interesting to see how things would have panned out if Barbara had been running! Again, the red and gold hoops were well represented at the sharp end of the field, with Theresa Brady (40.48) second lady and Zoe Quinn (44.30) third.

Meanwhile this year, for the first time, we added a 1k fun run to the programme, with 12 youngsters taking up the challenge, and Daniel McCrohan first to breast the tape with our own Rosa and Immi Niewiara in hot pursuit.

There was also, I'm delighted to say, another impressive post-race performance by the Seymour contingent in the bar, where, having commandeered the dart board, Theresa, Richard Smith, Huw Keene and the Greene brothers kept the staff "gainfully employed" late into the afternoon. Sadly, despite repeated exhortations to display his ability on the oche, Malcolm resolutely maintained a limpet-like adherence to his seat (and his Guinness) and managed to slip out while we weren't looking! What price a Serpentine darts championship folks?

After such a successful day, the news the following Tuesday that the local council had apparently finally lost patience with the sports club's financial difficulties, and were looking at taking the facilities back into their own control, came as something of a bombshell. At the time of writing, talks are still ongoing, but it appears likely that we'll be looking for a new base shortly, which obviously gives rise to concern regarding a sixth edition of the race.

Whatever the outcome of the negotiations, Ken and Mary (who have acted as stewards of the club throughout our spell there) will be leaving shortly.

Whether or not we get a further stay of execution, it's safe to say that the place won't be the same without them. The warm welcome extended by the pair and their family (a close-knit and well-drilled "support unit"), has added immeasurably to Tuesday nights, and we wish them both a long and happy retirement.

Away from the 10k, this year we achieved our record representation in the London marathon, with Gerry Stonehouse, Gavin Imrie and Ruth Jackson all "flying the flag" so to speak with distinction. Slightly farther afield, members also tackled the distance in Connemara and on Tresco.

Membership continues to hover just under the 40 mark, though a couple of new members were garnered as a result of the 10k with one or two other tentative expressions of interest being pursued. I must say it's reassuring to note that there are smaller clubs out there (Lyn Lynx Runners, in Devon, apparently numbering 15, per a recent letter in *Athletics Weekly*). Meanwhile, the club is bracing itself for another tilt at the summer league, with a couple of targets set for the season: to break our previous points record, and to climb up to fourth place in one of the fixtures.

On a personal note, my own running has ground to a halt of late due to a bout of plantar fasciitis – my last race being the New Years Day 10k. Although extremely frustrating it's reassuring to note, from trawling the Serpie e-group, that I'm not alone, and at least it's given me something to bore everyone rigid with in the bar on Tuesday nights. It does mean my only active involvement with the sport recently has consisted of shouting numbers into Malcolm's ear at the LFOTM 5k and doing a spot of marshalling. The latter definitely gives you an interesting new insight into our favourite pastime. I found it fairly straightforward marshalling at our 10k, thanks to the assistance of veteran "traffic controller" Eddie Oatley (though a spare pair of eyes in the back of my head would not have come amiss). As for the Imperial College relays on Valentine's Day, they were something else. Marshalling on the bank of the Serpentine, I had the pleasure of trying to guide the runners through a motley collection of skateboarders, cyclists, roller-bladers, and youngsters scattering bread for the birds (which proved so successful that the bank came to resemble a scene from Hitchcock's epic), whilst giving directions to passing tourists ("Hey bud, which is the quickest way to Harrods?" etc.) To add to the fun, a newly-married couple turned up to have photos taken. I should imagine they've got one or two unusual shots in their wedding album!

Well, so much for this Sudbury "soundbite". I'll update you on our continuing trials and tribulations in the next issue. In the meantime, as Spencer Davis would say "keep on running", or in the case of a few of us, hobbling!

Martin Garrett.

In Olden Times

I thought it would be interesting to look back and see what was happening 10 years ago. It was in the summer of 1994 that the Channel Tunnel opened. South Africa was re-admitted to the Commonwealth following the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as President. At the age of 41, Tony Blair was elected as the youngest ever leader of the Labour party. In London, shops opened legally for the first time on a Sunday.

It was a big summer for international sport. Brazil won the World Cup played in the USA, beating Italy on penalties in the final. Pete Sampras and Conchita Martinez were the Wimbledon winners and Miguel Indurain won the Tour de France. In the European Athletics Championships, there were golds for Linford Christie (100m), Sally Gunnell (400H), Steve Backley (javelin) and Colin Jackson (110H).

There were also lots of Serpies in track and field action. The men were competing in divisions six and seven of the Southern league. The division six team was pushing for promotion while the division seven team was heading for relegation. Tony McGahan, Derek Paterson, Robin Kindersley, Barrie Laverick and Danny McIntosh are all still competing for us. Derek and Tony were, and still are, frequent winners in the pole vault with Barrie picking up a lot of points in the horizontal jumps. Robin was having a very successful track season. Amongst his achievements in 1994 was a new club record in the steeplechase, in 9:39:9. Danny had the distinction of scoring more points in the 1994 season than any other Serpie.

At that time, the women competed in the Southern Women's league. Their best performance of the year came in a match at Tooting, where they finished in second place. Our star athlete was Wendy Sutherland, later to become a New Zealand international and marry one of the directors of Athletics Weekly and fellow Serpie, Bob Llewellyn. She set club records at 1500m (4:45:1) and 3000m (9:49:2). In the later race, Wendy lapped all the competitors except for one, three times! Wendy improved her 3000m time to 9:42:55 later in the season.

We fielded a mixed team in the Welsh Castles relay. There was a stage win (stage 5) for Bob Llewellyn and the team finished 15th. We also competed in the 16-stage London to Brighton relay, organised by the North London AC (later to merge with other clubs to form London Heathside). Our women's team won (7:45:09), setting nine stage records along the way. The men came third (6:29:12) and fourth (6:39:23). The men probably would have also won but unfortunately one of our runners went several miles off-course.

The August "Last Friday 5k" race had an international feel about it. There were 45 runners. The winner was J Crane from Hamilton Harriers, New Zealand (15:34) from H Galven from Garon, Spain (15:41). The summer league included races at Sheen and Barking. In the handicap there was a win for the man who still holds the all-time record for the number of races completed, Alan Woodward, in what was then his 123rd race. Tony McGahan was another of the summer handicap winners, this time in his 73rd race. At the halfway point, Graham Johnson narrowly headed the Tom Hogshead trophy competition from Peter Foster and Marianne Morris.

We were planning our annual dinner and dance, which was to be held at the Slug and Lettuce in Putney. Elsewhere in the sport, the South of England Athletic Association was proposing to introduce an athletes' registration scheme. It didn't progress, but guess what, in 2004 they've just proposed the same thing again!

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