

Masters Feature

PHIL COLEMAN

Tunbridge Wells Half Marathon
1994



I joined TAC in the summer of 1980 aged 16 in the wake of the Moscow Olympics and the Coe v Ovett rivalry. But my interest in distance running started in my first year at secondary school when I found I was good at cross country running. However, I then developed a passion for cycling, joined Southborough Wheelers and dreamt of becoming a Tour de France cyclist only to return to running which seemed a simpler sport.

Going to the Tonbridge track I was introduced to a coach, the late Dave Arnold. Through Dave's expertise I was guided in the middle distances where I became quite successful at 800m and 1500m in the U20s.

In the training group was a runner called Kevin Stewart who was the same age as me. We became great friends and rivals and complemented each other perfectly in training – he had better stamina than me but I had the edge over speed. Kevin is no longer running but whenever we meet we still reminisce about the training and races we did. He was a little taken aback when I recently mentioned that Ben Reynolds was the M50 World 5000m Champion – “I used to beat him at school matches!” came the response.

Somerhill 1993



Favourite TAC Memories

The training weekends in the Peak District were always a highlight. I was quite late being involved so I remember the shock at how hard the training was and training twice a day was a new concept to me. The hills were so severe that it almost became altitude training. And then it was down to the pub in the evening, a marathon game of darts followed by fish and chips late into the night, to get up early the next day for another hard run.

I also always enjoyed running in the track county championships at Crystal Palace and the county cross country race in early January always ensured you kept training over the Christmas period.

As a junior, I remember spending a weekend away at RAF Cosford in 1983, the only indoor track in the UK at the time, to do the AAAs 3000m. It was a novel experience running indoors which seemed like running around an overheated bowl.

Best Performances and Biggest Disappointment

My strongest asset has always been my basic speed and running 1:55.1 for 800m as a junior in a Southern League event was my best run but a race that sticks in my mind was in the 1982 club championships junior 1500 metres on the old grass track at Swanmead. I was renowned for using my finishing kick in races but for a change I

decided to front run it. This took everyone by surprise as the other runners kept trying to pass me but I simply put my head down and ran faster to hold on to win.

As a senior finishing 3rd in the 1994 Tunbridge Wells half marathon as this was a distance that I would normally struggle with and was the closest I came to beating Steve Keywood in a distance race!

As a master, breaking the club's over 40s 1500m record that had been set by Mike Rowbottom 31 years previously. It didn't last long as Graeme Saker soon knocked a chunk off!

Unfortunately I didn't carry my success on the track to senior level as I lost my focus – I should have got well under 4 minutes for 1500m. And I have never run a good marathon – may be some day! It would have been nice to have experienced the English Schools too.

Injuries

The only injuries I have had have been calf strains and achilles tendinopathy, now resolved. Being a physiotherapist I can self-manage well and I devised my own programme to treat my achilles.

I have always been quite a light trainer (probably too light!) but I still believe the maxim that it's better to be 100% healthy and 90% fit than vice versa.

Personal Bests

U20

300m	37.7
400m	53.0
800m	1:55.1
1500m	4:01.9
3000m (indoors)	9:05

Senior

5000m	16:16
10K (Road)	33:07
10 miles	53:30
Half marathon	74:19

Southampton 10K
2016 3rd Place



Closing Thoughts

Like most runners of my era I cannot help thinking how the general level of competition has dropped since the 1980s. For example, when I ran my best 10 miles (53:30) in the Tonbridge 10 in 1985 I was about 30th whilst today that time would win some races. The reasons for this are probably complex.

One advantage of getting older is becoming wiser, so today I train smarter. I am not a great believer in rigid programmes but it is always good to have some sort of plan and with each run to have a purpose. I am a fan of the late coach and BMC founder Frank Horwill and loosely apply his training principles, especially multi-paced training.

Today my main focus is to stay healthy and enjoy running and to have realistic goals and if I didn't run I would be about 2 stone heavier!

I am always amused when I hear about the latest fitness trend such as High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) and think, "That's not new, I was doing that down the running track 35 years ago!." *Plus ca change.*