

## How did I become an “old jogger”?

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What follows is a personal account which may help to illustrate a number of issues associated with changes to your running status over time, and offer a few tips to help you manage these ‘transitions’.

I never really thought I would get to this point! I am seriously considering quitting regular running. My love affair with running began in earnest at the age of 15. Prior to this, I had been good at running events at school sports days and flirted with competing a few times for the local running club. But at 15 I started to train regularly, re-joined the running club, and regular competing for club and school ensued. Within my first year of ‘serious’ running I had started competing for the county, finishing 12<sup>th</sup> in the English Schools Cross Country Championship at my first attempt and become someone who got regular mentions on a Monday morning in the whole-school assembly (seemed a big deal at the time!).

In the above I was at an age where peer recognition was particularly important; this early emersion in athletics and early successes starting to reshape my identity as ‘an athlete’. This felt a good place to be at the time, although it certainly impacted adversely on my school work in terms of the sacrifices that were made (perhaps reflecting an inability at the time to juggle successfully sport and study roles). However, at this stage in my life, it felt like a ‘net gain’.

From this point I felt I had become a ‘proper’ athlete and many life decisions and indeed my very way of living became centred around running training and competition; my social life also was largely focused on mixing with fellow athletes, and most weekends were spent away racing. Having always assumed I would study something to do with wildlife (such as zoology), at the very last minute I switched my decision of what to study at university to ‘sport’ (in the misbelief that to train seriously for athletics, I’d do best studying sport and hence have my running efforts appropriately recognised, rather than seen as an interference!). From 18-21 years of age I studied sport and competed in middle- and long-distance races with a degree of national ‘success’ (these things are of course subjective!).

So, from 15-21 years old, my life was dominated by the cycle of cross country, road, track, road, cross-country racing and training! Holidays involved packing two sets of clothes, ‘normal’ wear and sports kit, timing of holidays had to be set against competition schedules, girlfriends had to tolerate training runs whilst on holiday. This is a pattern probably recognisable to many runners.

### Commentaries

#### Andrew M Lane

Ageing can be challenging. With ageing and being a runner, having to overcome a major injury is almost inevitable. Having your identity linked to your physical self-worth is positive in so many ways. It means you will be active, and being active has many positive implications for your health. But the process does not feel positive; slowing down and feeling aches are not positive – they say the message; think about what you are doing. However, ageing and slowing does not have to be negative. Chris Sellars offers a fabulous and insightful chapter on how he is going through the ageing process. It is a chapter in which many people who run regularly will see similarities to their own experiences.

#### Wendy Nicholls

The solution to most injuries, health problems, or niggles to simply ‘stop running’ is often met with bewilderment – “but if I can’t run, what will I do?” Chris is talking about a long term and chronic injury and that will be difficult to

deal with and hopefully something we will not have to face. Those of us who have had an injury will be all too familiar with taking on swimming or cycling in an effort to keep fit whilst 'on the bench' with an injury, but it somehow doesn't quite do the same job. Perhaps one reason for this, which Chris highlights in his chapter, is because running is not just what we *do*, it is also *who we are*.

[http://www.amazon.co.uk/runners-guide-sport-psychology-nutrition/dp/1505575753/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1438029104&sr=8-1&keywords=a+runners+guide+andrew+lane](http://www.amazon.co.uk/runners-guide-sport-psychology-nutrition/dp/1505575753/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1438029104&sr=8-1&keywords=a+runners+guide+andrew+lane)