

“BART”

ON THE PHYSIO’S COUCH.

August 2001

Andrew “Bart” Lambart is well known to Geelong Region athletes as the man from the Geelong Physiotherapy Centre who will get you off the injured list and back running. However, he has also been a class athlete in his own right.

Last Saturday I was fortunate to catch up with “Bart” for a chat.

N.M. Andrew, congratulations on your selection as Team Physio for the recent World Athletic Championships in Edmonton. Professionally that must have been a great highlight?

A.L. Yes, it certainly was. I guess it was the culmination of putting in a bit of work over the last few years going to National Junior and Senior Championships as a physio. It was great that Athletics Australia was able to give me that position and I’m very appreciative. It certainly was a fantastic experience.

N.M. Does the fact that you were a quality athlete as a junior give you a little more credibility when dealing with the elite?

A.L. Yes, I think so. It also gives you a better insight into how athletes think. I’ve spoken to Scervo on this subject on quite a few occasions and I believe you’re sometimes massaging their mind as well as massaging their body. So the fact that I’ve competed at a reasonably high level as a junior has got to help. With many elite athletes, if they get an injury, their world tends to fall down around them, particularly if they’re injured before a major competition. Some of them also become a little bit hyper-sensitive with injuries and worry themselves sick rather than keeping calm, doing the right things and letting their body heal.

N.M. I suppose with many of the elite you’d be trying to hold them back in their rehabilitation?

A.L. Yeah, often that’s correct, especially with the distance runners who always want to do that little bit extra. However, once athletes are at the elite level they’re very aware of their bodies and can tell you how any little niggles are going.

N.M. What was a normal day for you as a physio while overseas for the World Championships?

A.L. It varied a little bit because early on there were morning sessions so that involved at least one physio, one doctor and one masseur going to the track. The other physio and doctor stayed back at the hotel and treated the non-competing athletes. My day usually started at about 8 o’clock and then mid afternoon I’d head back to the hotel to treat athletes there. Sometimes we were treating athletes well into the night. It was pretty constant. Also, the athletes were under pressure so that increased the intensity level and stress for them and thus the stress levels for the medical staff treating them.

N.M. Which athletes did you work with?

A.L. When I was in London prior to the Worlds I was set up in a house in Hampton Hill. All the athletes who were in Europe for the Grand Prix Series were based in London sometime so I treated the sprinters like Matt Shirvington right through to the distance guys like Buster. I didn’t treat many throwers, mainly because I didn’t know them at that stage, but I worked with most of the track athletes and the relay team.

N.M. Dmitri Markov, what injury did he have at the World Championships?

A.L. In hindsight that was quite a funny incident. He’d been carrying a bit of a foot problem around for about three months prior and hadn’t had much treatment on it. He competed in the qualifying rounds then that night he bumped his toe on a table and that’s what the media picked up on. They thought his problem was caused by hurting his toe rather the foot problem he was carrying. The morning before his competition he couldn’t walk into the medical room, couldn’t take weight through his foot, couldn’t go up onto his toes. There was no way known he was going to run. His problem was that he’d inflamed the joint between his cuboid bone (a bone on the outside of the foot) and the metatarsals (the bones that form the toes). So we got to work on him, although I didn’t have a great deal to do with his treatment. One of the other physios mobilised and strapped his foot. Then one of the doctors injected the joint with cortisone. However, on injecting the joint with cortisone a lot of blood and inflammatory cells came out of the joint. The doctor tried to inject a little cortisone into the joint which he was able to do. Before the injection Dmitri was able to just walk with a limp but after the injection he could not walk at all. Then we tried lots of icing, strapping, compression and acupuncture. Fortunately he was able to jump on the day but even then there was a bit of drama. He was meant to have his foot taped just prior to competing but the officials would not let a physio out onto the track. Eventually, after much mucking around he was allowed to come back off the track to be strapped. Obviously he was stressed while all this was going on and when he did jump he missed his first two attempts. We were over on the warm-up track thinking the worst but he cleared his third attempt at 5.75 by about 30 centimetres and went onto win the gold, clearing 6.05!

N.M. He must have incredible mental toughness and application to bounce back from all those problems prior to competition?

A.L. He was amazing. I've never seen an athlete able to put aside adversity then come out so focused on the task at hand.

N.M. The medical staff almost deserve a gold medal for resurrecting an injured athlete.

A.L. I think we were a little bit lucky in that we were able to get onto it as soon as possible and we only did the things we knew how to do. Fortunately, it all worked on the day but that's what we are there for. Sometimes the media builds these things up a little too much.

N.M. How was his foot the day after?

A.L. It had actually settled down a fair bit but I think the celebratory drinks that night might have dulled a bit of foot soreness.

N.M. You also worked with Jamaican 400 metre runner, Greg Haughton. How did that come about?

A.L. A lot of the American athletes, and he's based in America even though he runs for Jamaica, don't have the same level of medical cover that we have so Sandy Richards (Jamaican 400 metre runner and current World Indoor Champion), who I've treated before, told him to give me a call. He was actually in a bit of strife with nerval related hamstring tension and was disappointed in how he ran at the World Championships after thinking that he should have won. Anyway, I went to work on him but time was a factor. At the Goodwill Games four weeks later he was able to defeat the World Champion so he'd had obviously been working on the areas I'd started on. It was great experience to meet him - he was a great fellow. I think he's coming over to Australia later this year to run our Grand Prix circuit over 100 and 200 metres.

N.M. Which of the Australian athletes really impressed you in that they got the most out of their ability?

A.L. I think when you get to that level you're an amazing athlete anyway but there were a few examples of athletes who did perform pretty well. I think Tamsyn Lewis ran above the form she had shown leading into the Championships by making the semi-finals. Lauren Hewitt was another one who ran above her form. I think someone like Georgie Clarke, who hadn't been able to train much at all in the lead-up for various reasons, ran pretty well. Then you've got an athlete like Buster who, initially I thought was an outside chance to make the final, he ran pretty well to make the semi-final.

Shirvington appears to be a guy who always performs well in the big competitions. I think we'll see a lot more of Shirvo - I think he's a very good athlete who's had a few injury problems and at the moment is not as fit as he could be. Hopefully, if all goes well for him in the lead-up to the next Commonwealth Games, he could be pushing the likes of Dwain Chambers and Christian Malcolm.

N.M. What about the International athletes at the World Championships? Who really impressed you?

A.L. I think the best performance of the meet was Andre Bucher in the 800 metres. It was just incredible how he went to the front and said "catch me if you can!" He's an incredible athlete to do that then change tactics in the Grand Prix Final where he slowed the pace and let Borzakovskiy go past him then run him down.

N.M. What happened after dark at the World Championships? Are there any tales you can tell that won't embarrass too many people? Did you have a few quiet reds with Scrivo?

A.L. Hah Hah! Yes, we consumed a few ordinary Californian reds. When I joined up with the medical team in Canada there were a few visits to after hours establishments (nightclubs) purely to check out the Canadian nightlife. However, there was only one big night out and that was when we had spent the day treating Dmitri Markov and there was a chance that he wouldn't be able to compete the next day. We were all a bit stressed and concerned, as you can imagine, so we went around the corner to have a few beers that eventually turned into quite a long night.

N.M. How did your own physical fitness cope with the work and the play?

A.L. When I was in London, prior to the Worlds, I was running once a day and was quite fit. During the last three weeks in Canada there just wasn't the time available because we were treating athletes constantly. Anyway, I wasn't over there for my training, I was there to treat them. When I arrived back in Australia, I had lost a bit of fitness.

N.M. Georgie Clarke and Craig Mottram have made fantastic progress under Bruce Scriven's guidance. You would remember them as junior athletes. What were your impressions when they first arrived at training?

A.L. There was no doubt that even at first sight you could see both of them had ability. And to Scrivo's credit and Georgie's and Craig's credit, they have been able to develop that ability. Scrivo has got an incredible knack for spotting athletic talent whereas I'm only a novice in that field. Early on I probably didn't think they could have gone as far as they've gone but I've got no doubt now that they will go a lot further. They're both amazingly committed athletes. Also, to look at how they've both matured as athletes is quite incredible. The present level of professionalism that they both have is fantastic, especially Buster, who perhaps was a little rude and a conceited fellow when he first arrived on the track but is now quite a gentleman.

N.M. Early on you were a training partner for both Georgie and Craig. How would you go these days - could you keep up?

A.L. Yes, I was originally Buster's training partner and I used to cut back on work so I could train with him. I think Buster eventually realised that I was holding him back so he gave me the flick and then I moved onto Georgie for a little while and tried to help her out but soon she was too quick as well. Now I just do my own thing.

N.M. Sounds like you had a taper in the days leading up to running with Georgie and Craig?

A.L. Yeah. When there was a track session coming up I rested the day before and basically treated it like a race.

N.M. What regular sports medicine do Georgie and Craig have?

A.L. I see Georgie on a weekly basis and sometimes twice a week. At one stage, when Buster was having a few injury problems, I was seeing him 2 - 3 times a week. Ritchie Jeremiah is the same, I catch up with him once a week. All of them are really good at letting me know if there's a slight problem so we can get stuck into any little problems straight away. These days, if everything is going well I just see them once a week for maintenance which is a massage plus whatever else needs looking at. Georgie, Craig and Ritchie are three athletes I've massaged for quite a while. Because I know them so well I can pick up any tight spots before they become problems.

N.M. I know Georgie is doing regular Pilates sessions and Craig does some core-stability work as well. How important are these sessions?

A.L. I think that they are the extra things that guys like Georgie and Buster do to make themselves great athletes. Certainly your core-stability and the stability through your mid line is extremely important for all athletes. Pilates and Swiss Ball exercises are very good at giving a stable core to work your extremities.

N.M. You have been doing some work with the V.I.S. What does this involve?

A.L. I do some screening for the V.I.S. I travel with the V.I.S. to National Championships like the National Cross-Country, the National Track and Field Championships and the Selection Trials. From all of that I've now moved onto working for Athletics Australia just like what's happened with Scervo. His early involvement with the V.I.S. has led to his present position with Athletics Australia.

I also work two days a week at the Olympic Park Sports Medicine Centre just to look after some of the Melbourne athletes I came into contact with while overseas. Athletics Australia suggested that it would be a good idea if I do some work in Melbourne.

N.M. You're living with Troopy at the moment. With the injury problems he's had over the last two years, he couldn't have picked a better person to move in with.

A.L. Yeah..... There's two ways of looking at that, I suppose. Perhaps I haven't been a great house mate because I haven't prevented some of these injuries. Unfortunately, with Troopy he's had a few problems and because he's such a mentally strong athlete and so tough with his training and so tough on himself, he can sometimes push himself too hard. He can also be quite stubborn at times. The other problem is that he's had race deadlines to meet over the last few years which has meant that he has had to rush training rather than let his body get slowly fit and healthy. I think now he has realised that and will go back to the drawing board for six months to get fit and healthy again so that he can pick races to do when he's ready. That's sensible for him at the moment. I've got no doubt that he will be back bigger and better than ever before.

N.M. Your own running career - you were Australian Junior Champion over 800 metres. What year was that and what time did you run?

A.L. That was 1990 and I was Under 16. I ran 1:54.64 for 800 metres as a 15 year old. As a junior I was placed in every Australian 800 metre Championship until 1994. In 1993 I went overseas and did an Australian Junior Tour through the U.K. Then, and Scervo will confirm this, my socialising probably took precedence over training. However, I like to believe that I was a little too busy with University studies and was not able to be as committed to training as I once was. From there I rapidly deteriorated into a 'has been' and a 'plodder' living on past glories.

N.M. Geelong has a pretty handy Under 16 800 metre runner at the moment. How do you think you would have fared against Tyson Mahon at his, and your, best?

A.L. I'd have to look more closely at his times. Do you know what he's run?

N.M. About 1:54.

A.L. I think he may have been a little younger than I was but being the arrogant person that I am I have got no doubt that I could have beaten him. But it's pretty easy to say that now and pump myself up. I think that Tyson is a fantastic athlete and has shown that he has a bit more ability than I've got in the sense that he's been able to win a National Cross-Country Championship. Scervo has always said that a great 800 metre runner should be able to run a great 1500 and a great 3k. I think that Tyson has got that ability. He just needs to keep working hard and to stay dedicated because it would be a shame to see someone of his ability peter out like I did.

N.M. What was your training regime as a junior when you were training under Rudi Hochreiter?

A.L. A lot of track work. I played football over winter so I came to track athletics each year with a fair base. I also did a bit of longer running - when I say long, I mean up to 30 minutes but I did everything at a very high intensity. Basically it was a lot of speed work. I know the guys who were training with Scervo at the time, guys like Cam Hardham and Joe Crabbe and Stewie McGregor used to laugh at me because I sometimes did 20's and 30's and 40's which was one of my speed sessions. On that type of training I was able to run 11 seconds flat for 100 metres, 22.1 for 200 metres and 48.5 for 400 metres.

N.M. What was a 'bread and butter' track session for you back then?

A.L. I remember we used to do 3 sets of 30, 60, 80, 100, 120, 250 metres with a walk back recovery. All of them were very quick.

N.M. You progressed through the ranks with Scott Peterson.

A.L. I did. Scottie and I used to race against each other all through our junior days. He probably raced more over 1500 but

he obviously kicked on a lot better than I did. He was a good junior but a much better senior athlete. Now he's doing Modern Pentathlon and has a career as a Massage Therapist.

N.M. What is your current training regime?

A.L. At the moment I train just once a day. I try to make sure that I do three hard sessions a week. Tuesday is a track session, Thursday is a fartlek or a threshold session and Saturday is either a track session or fartlek/threshold session. On the other days I do one longish run of 45 minutes and the rest are a little quicker 30 minute runs.

N.M. If you had 6 months of good, solid training behind you, what do you think you could run for 800 metres?

A.L. Ummm.... In 98, after I finished Uni, I had six months of solid training behind me and I ran 1:50.4. That was when Matty Prior was still running so I decided to move back to Geelong to train with Matty and Paul Byrne. But as soon as I moved down, Matty got injured and Paul moved to Melbourne so I guess my physio work took priority. Then Buster and Georgie came on the scene so I guess I withdrew from my serious training.

N.M. What have the been the changes in Sports Medicine over the last few years. What are the elite doing now to legally help performance?

A.L. At the elite level they are doing a lot more core-stability work. There's also a lot more regular massage, physio, just lots of maintenance stuff to prevent rather than treat injuries. There's a lot better scans and diagnostic tools these days too so that we're a lot better equipped to diagnose problems sooner so that management plans can be put in place.

N.M. You were saying before that Greg Haughton was not able to get the necessary treatment in America. Do we lead the world in Sports Medicine?

A.L. In many ways we do. In America the physios are known as Physical Therapists and their degrees are very different to ours. They specialise in electro-therapy and it's the Oestopaths and Chiropractors who lead the way in America. They're the ones who use a lot of the techniques that we use. There are still a lot of great people overseas, it's just that it's set up differently.

Also, the really good guys can be hard to see. For example, Greg Haughton trained with the 'great' Michael Johnson but Johnson wouldn't let Greg use his own Chiropractor because he didn't want to give up what he thought was an advantage to another athlete.

N.M. Some advice for distance runners. What are some "Physio Commandments" to reduce the chances of injury?

A.L. I think a slow build up is very important if you want to reduce the chances of injuries like stress fractures. Also, you need to make sure that you're biomechanically sound so that you can avoid the 'overuse injuries' such as achilles tendonitis, iliotibial band friction syndrome, shin splints etc. I'd recommend a video assessment to check out biomechanical function and perhaps some orthotics if needed. You need to be 'in tune' with your body so that if you do have any problems you seek advice straight away rather than trying to push through.

Regular maintenance work is extremely important to keep the muscles supple and to make sure there aren't any tight areas building up.

Good shoes are really important. However, because the shoes are so good these days, people with some biomechanical problems are OK and might not need orthotics if they get into the right shoes. The people in at "The Athlete's Foot" are great at analysing feet and suggesting the correct shoe for you but if you have any doubts a sports podiatrist can help.

N.M. The other day we were talking about doing some speed work year round so that there's not a shock to the body when you suddenly start running fast. Would you like to expand on that strategy?

A.L. You need to condition your muscles to the stresses they will go through. So for example, if you're an 800 metre runner you need to use quite a lot of fast twitch fibres while racing so during the winter, although you need to do a lot of your base work and longer work, you do need to get into your spikes occasionally to make sure that you're getting the strength through the calf muscles. We all know if we

haven't been in the spikes for a while the first few times wearing them can hurt a lot. I also find that if I haven't done a speed session for a while I can get quite tight in the hamstrings. That's just because they haven't been put through the forces quicker running generates.

In the off season you might only need one session a week or one session every two weeks of quicker strides to keep your body in good shape for faster running in the middle distance events.

N.M. Andrew, thank you very much for your time. Hopefully you'll be able to get down close to 1:50 again.

A.L. My pleasure, Neil. But no predictions as far as my running goes.

N.M. Well, how about aiming for two minutes flat?

A.L. Yeah... We'll start at two and if that's successful we can reduce the time from there.