

BENITA JOHNSON.

AUSTRALIA'S RISING STAR.

January 2003

Whether it be on the track, road or cross - country, Benita Johnson is the new rising star of Australian athletics. And after an outstanding 2002, when she gave notice to the athletics' world that she was a force to be reckoned with, Benita was back in full training at Falls Creek in preparation for the 2003 season.

N.M. Benita, this is your first visit to Falls Creek. How are you enjoying the Victorian high country so far?

B.J. Yes, I'm really having a great time. I've been here a week now and I am enjoying all of the runs. I'm also really motivated running with so many good runners. Running is not a huge sport in Australia so to have so many top runners here at the one time is really great.

N.M. Why Falls Creek at this time of the year?

B.J. Ummm I want to get in three stints at altitude this year which is something I haven't done before. So three weeks at Falls Creek now works out really well. Then I'll travel straight down to Melbourne for the World Cross - Country Trials. Hopefully the work I do up here will set me up really well for big races at the World Cross - Country and World Indoors in March.

(Ed. Benita won the 6km. World Cross - Country Trial at Bundoora by a minute!)

N.M. Where else do you plan to do altitude training?

B.J. After the World Cross - Country we're going to Laguna Mountain in America for three weeks in April then onto St. Moritz in June for another three weeks. I think both Laguna Mountain and St. Moritz are higher than Falls Creek so that will be slightly different but still very beneficial.

N.M. Have you been to altitude before?

B.J. No, this is my first time so it will be interesting to see how my body responds and the results I get. I've been to Thredbo before but that's not super high. We went there mainly for the group training effect.

N.M. How are you enjoying the runs over the various terrain that Falls Creek has to offer?

B.J. Oh yeah I'm really enjoying them all because everything's different and I really love cross-country running, especially on the Sunday run through Pretty Valley. It's also been great talking to lots of different people while we're training.

N.M. You've been covering a bit more ground than most others because you're new to the tracks and trails.

B.J. Yes, that's right. On Sunday's long run I took a few wrong turns but luckily there were plenty of groups running behind yelling out the correct way. I'm really thankful that everyone looks out for each other up here otherwise I could have become pretty well lost.

N.M. Your 2002 started with a fantastic fourth placing at the World Cross - Country in Ireland. Your memories of that race.

B.J. World Cross was definitely one of my best races for 2002. My memories are of the frantic start where I fell back a bit early on and let three girls get a bit too far ahead, which was a mistake, but I was gaining on the Kenyan who came third, over the last part of the race and could have won a medal if only I'd gone a little harder earlier. This year I'm hoping to get a medal but fourth place last year was unbelievable in only my second World Cross - Country.

(Results 2002 World Cross - Country 4.27 km. Short Course:

1. Edith Masai (Kenya) 13.30 2. Werknesh Kidane (Ethiopia) 13.36 3. Isabella Ochichi (Kenya) 13.39 4. Benita Johnson (Australia) 13.42)

N.M. In your first World Cross - Country in the mud of Ostend during 2001 you finished sixth in the short course race. Have you always excelled at cross - country running?

B.J. I've always liked cross - country. As a kid I ran a bit of cross - country but I only went to one Junior State Championship and did not go to Nationals. Actually, I really enjoy track and road and cross - country as it keeps me motivated and interested.

N.M. And your season finished with another fantastic performance when you smashed the Australian 5000 metre record, running 14:47.60 at the Berlin Golden League Grand Prix.

B.J. That was definitely my best race. Leading up to Berlin I ran a 5 km. Road Race in Hyde Park and broke 15 minutes so I knew I was in shape to go under 14.50 on the track. That Hyde Park race really turned my season around. Interestingly, I was coming last at the 3 km. mark in Berlin but I still went through in about 8.56 so I knew I was going OK. Then I picked it up and ran the last 2 km. in 5.50 so I was really pegging people back and was gaining ground on the leaders and eventually finished third. It was great for me to be in contention at a Golden League Meeting and hopefully this year I can be a little more consistent and regularly finish in the top few placings rather than having a good race then a mediocre race.

N.M. Who were first and second in Berlin?

B.J. First was Berhane Adere in 14:41.43, then Werknesh Kidane. Both girls are from Ethiopia. Adere was really dominant during the European season but I was able to beat Kidane quite a few times. I'm really looking forward to this year as I'll be a year older and a year stronger so I know I can be up there with those girls.

N.M. It must give your confidence a huge boost to turn in a performance like that?

B.J. Oh yeah. When you're younger you look at the top runners and think, "will I ever be up there?" Also, most of the top runners I race against are 27 / 28 so I'm the youngest by about five years. I know that with time I will continue to improve so I can't be too greedy or impatient right now.

N.M. In between your great performances at the World Cross - Country and Berlin you had the Commonwealth Games, where you didn't perform so well?

B.J. Yes, it was really disappointing. I should have been up much higher than I was in the Commonwealth Games 5000 metres. I fell over in the first lap and that's never happened to me before. But I was not running well at the time so regardless of whether I fell or not, I would still have been a fair way back. It took me a fair while to regroup after that. But I went to London and started training really hard and got myself together for the last few races for the year. I'm really happy that I went to London and turned my season around because I knew that I was running better than 15.20.

N.M. Leading into the Commonwealth Games you were also suffering from slight anaemia.

B.J. Yes, although it wasn't too bad. We went to France for five weeks in the lead-up to the Commonwealth Games and it was 40 degrees every day which wasn't the best training environment. Unfortunately, the heat and the training environment meant that my iron levels dropped although we didn't find that out until after the Commonwealth Games, when I had a blood test. But I've learnt from that and will not make that mistake again because the heat and slight altitude flattened me a little. Instead, I'll make London my base in the lead-up to big European races. But I'm young and I'm still learning all the time what works best for me.

N.M. What did you do to quickly get over the anaemia?

B.J. I ate a lot of red meat and liver, probably four or five nights a week. Also, I took some iron supplements. I generally eat red meat three times a week anyway. The anaemia was partly to blame for my poor Commonwealth Games performance but there were a lot of other factors as well - I had quite a few stresses in my life at the time but I was able to get rid of all those when I went to London.

N.M. Are you particular about your diet?

B.J. I am to an extent. I have a pretty well rounded diet and I really enjoy cooking for myself but with travelling that is not always easy. However, in the future I'll make sure that even when I'm overseas, I'll cook the type of food that I eat at home. My husband, Cameron is right into cooking so he often prepares meals. We eat a lot of very different and tasty meals so I'm very lucky. I also think that athletes need treats every now and then. You can't just eat low fat foods all the time because your body needs some fat to function at its best. You have to enjoy your food.

N.M. A balance in your diet as well as a balance in your life?

B.J. For sure. You can't be just a runner. I've got a great husband and a really supportive family so I'm really lucky. I tend to be a happy, positive person and when I'm not happy, I don't run well.

N.M. What do you like to do when you're not running?

B.J. At the moment I'm completing a Post - Graduate Sports Nutrition Course so I do a lot of study. I also like going to the movies, going shopping and going out to dinner. We have a few nice restaurants in Canberra so Cameron and I enjoy dining out. I also like to socialise with friends. While I have been at Falls Creek I have been doing a little bit of study, spending some time most days at the Milch Coffee Shop and watching the cricket and tennis on TV - I love to watch sport.

N.M. After the Commonwealth Games you did some training with Sonia O'Sullivan. What benefits did you gain from those sessions?

B.J. Sonia is a world class athlete and I did a lot of my training with her and Craig Mottram. They are both very motivated athletes. Sonia has been really good to me and she has a great group in London. At the Tuesday track session in London we were training with 20 or 30 guys so that was good.

N.M. What sports did you play when you were growing up?

B.J. I didn't just do running. In fact, I hardly did running at all actually - I probably only ran for about three months of the year but I played just about every sport I could when I was growing up. Hockey was my major sport so I'd travel away a lot to tournaments. Running was just something that I did in summer. As a kid I played lots of sports but I didn't take any of them all that seriously - I just had fun. I came from a family that were very sport orientated, very supportive but never pushy. It's always been my decision as to what sports I've wanted to do. Now I've decided that running is my sport and I'm really happy to just concentrate on that.

N.M. Growing up in Mackay in country Queensland, I suppose sport was pretty important?

B.J. I had two brothers and a sister and we used to play sport everyday after school and the games only finished when it was too dark to see the ball or Mum was calling us for dinner. We were all so competitive so there were a few fights but we had some great times and many big 'do or die' games in the front yard.

N.M. And eventually you became very good at hockey.

B.J. I was in the Q.A.S. for hockey and athletics. I was also in the Sydney 2000 Hockey Squad and represented Australia in hockey at junior level in 1995 and 1996. I really did enjoy it and it was my main sport until I was 18. Then in 1997 I was offered a running scholarship to the A.I.S. in Canberra. So I decided to give running a go even though I'd never done it seriously before. I had to move away from Mackay for university anyway so I thought Canberra and running at the Australian Institute of Sport would be good.

N.M. Do you miss playing hockey?

B.J. No, not really. I played A Grade in Canberra during my first year in '97' and we actually won the Premiership and I did enjoy that and I enjoy watching hockey but I don't really miss it because I'm really enjoying the challenge of an individual sport. There's about seven girls in the current Australian Senior Team that I used to play with in the Australian Under 18 Team in 1996 and I enjoy following their progress.

N.M. Were you selected for a running scholarship after 'Talent Identification Testing' or did they just look at your results?

B.J. No, I was selected on my results at the National All-Schools. I won a few National Titles although my P.B.'s at school weren't sensational. However, Dick Telford thought I had a bit of potential and he was the one responsible for getting me down to the Institute. When I was younger I was not as good as many of the other juniors.

N.M. It's not always the champion junior athlete that goes on to become the champion senior athlete.

B.J. Yeah, that's right. Time and time again champion juniors burn out so I'm really thankful that I was not pushed too hard when I was younger and can now push myself to achieve my goals rather than what others may have expected me to do.

N.M. Did you have any injuries when you were young?

B.J. No. The first injury I got was a stress fracture in 1997 and I think that was a result of training a lot more that year than I had before. I was also still playing hockey then so it was probably a combination of a lot of factors. Then in 1998 I stopped playing hockey and have been pretty much injury free since then.

N.M. You have had a long association with Dick Telford. Your thoughts on his coaching?

B.J. Dick has been a great influence on my running. He's got me to where I was before the Commonwealth Games. He didn't push me too hard in the early years and I didn't train nearly as hard as the boys in our group, so I'm really thankful that he held me back early on rather than trying to make me a world champion at 19. Also, all the boys in his group have been like big brothers to me. When I first moved to Canberra I was the youngest and there were no girls around so the boys and Dick always looked after me.

N.M. Initially, did you get homesick?

B.J. Yes. In 1997 I was pretty homesick because I'm from a very close family and I'd moved so far away from home. Also, everything was so different with me starting university and beginning to run twice a day. Then I met Cameron and I grew to really love what I was doing.

N.M. The sports medicine back-up and facilities at the A.I.S. would also be fantastic for a runner.

B.J. Oh yes. The set-up at the Institute is fantastic with everything a runner could want just a five minute drive away from where I live. And even though I'm no longer with Dick, I still see the A.I.S. physio regularly. All the sports medicine guys at the A.I.S. have become really good friends and have kept my body ticking over smoothly since 1997.

N.M. With you running at such a high level, recovery is very important. Do you have a regular massage?

B.J. Yes, I generally have two massages a week. I'm not very flexible and can get tight muscles so the massage really helps me keep on top of things and stops little niggles appearing.

N.M. What about other supplementary exercise like Pilates, Swiss Ball and weights?

B.J. I do a bit of Swiss Ball but I'm not really into Pilates. I also find that some core strengthening work and gym work helps. However, I don't want to get big muscles but I do need to do some strengthening work to avoid injuries.

N.M. You have recently changed coaches and are now working with Nick Bideau and Alan Storey. Why the change?

B.J. There were a few reasons for the change. As I mentioned before, Dick has played a huge role in my development as a runner and he will continue to have a part to play but I feel that I need to step up to another level if I'm to mix it with the top girls and I think that Nick and Alan have the expertise to help me to race well at the Golden League Meetings. I also want to win major Championship medals and I feel that I haven't been running particularly well at the Championship level. The Sydney Olympics were my first major Championship and I came 17th and ran a P.B. so I was fairly happy with that but I haven't performed all that well at the major Championships since then. Also, tactically I need to learn a lot so with the help of Nick and Alan, I can improve in that area too.

N.M. Have you noticed any difference in the training you have been doing under Nick and Alan?

B.J. Yes, there are a few differences. Under Nick we do a lot more change of pace work in track sessions which I think is really important for racing at Championship level. I remember at the World

Championship in 2001 the final had lots of surging, slowing down, then surging again and I was not strong enough to cope with the change of pace. But I think that I would be better able to run that sort of race now.

N.M. Have you completed any of Alan Storey's sessions?

B.J. When I was in London last year I did but not recently. But I will be joining in with his group when I head back to London in March. He's got a great group, especially his Tuesday track session. There's always a lot fast guys who are great to run with and are always keen to take us on. It's also really enjoyable, which makes the training a little easier.

N.M. Has your volume increased?

B.J. No, not really. I only have to race for fifteen minutes so I don't need to be running 160 or 170 kilometres a week. A normal training week for me is about 120 - 130 kilometres. In the future I would like to step up to the ten k. and even the marathon when I'm nearing 30, so my mileage will increase then, but for now, I'm doing enough.

N.M. What is a key session you like to run in the lead-up to an important race?

B.J. I don't have a key session but I like to have a lead-up race that goes well. However, if I have a track session and I feel really good and the reps are fast, then I know I'm ready to run well.

N.M. You ran the "quarters" session at Langfords West this morning. Have you done "quarters" before?

B.J. I've done "quarters" on the track once before about two years ago. However, I really enjoyed the session this morning, especially with people running past all the time. At one stage I was running by myself and was getting a bit tired but I was trying to catch the runners in front. Actually, I liked it better here than on the track because on the track you only see the fast guys when they're lapping you.

N.M. It does look like organised chaos but it does work.

B.J. Yeah, I thought there would be quite a few collisions. I think there was only one fall at the turn-around (Rod De Highden) and a near miss (Dean Cavuoto almost shirt-fronted Scott Westcott) but apart from that, it worked out really well.

N.M. What time did you run?

B.J. I did 16.15. I don't know if that's good or not?

N.M. That's very good for up here. I think Kerryn McCann may have held the old Falls Creek record at about 16.30 so, congratulations!

B.J. Thanks. Generally up here I'm just getting the training done and I haven't really been pushing myself super-hard - I'd rather save that for races.

N.M. Did you hear that Troopy also ran a Falls Creek record for 'quarters' when he clocked 14.41?

B.J. Yes. 14.41 is pretty amazing. After the session, Troopy was standing in the freezing water pool near the Falls Creek sign and he stayed in for exactly fourteen minutes. He was really happy with his run this morning, especially considering he did a two hour run yesterday and he's in hard training for his upcoming marathon.

N.M. Was fourteen minutes in the water symbolic?

B.J. He was timing it so I suppose it was.

N.M. He should have stayed in for 14.41 then, although, with the temperature of that water, an extra 41 seconds could cause hypothermia!

B.J. Yes, that water is freezing but it's good for recovery!

N.M. Troopy also took two seconds off Craig Mottram's old Falls Creek record.

B.J. OK, so there might be a bit of friendly rivalry next year between the two Geelong boys.

N.M. What do you think is your best distance?

B.J. Definitely the 5000 metres. Eventually, I think I'll concentrate more on the 5 and 10 rather than the 1500 and the 5 k. However, at the moment, because I'm only 23, I'll still do a lot of 1500's because you need to be able to race well above and below your chosen distance. Coming off my 14.47 I know I can run a fast lap if I need to and if you can't kick it down at the end, you're not going to win major Championships. However, you've also got to have the endurance so I need to keep doing some 10 k. work too. So I'll be concentrating on the 5000 metres until Athens, then we'll see what happens.

N.M. You have raced the New Balance Bolt in Noosa the last few years. Have you enjoyed racing on the roads?

B.J. For sure. They usually come in my off-season so I'm not particularly fit but I like to support the Australian running season. However, I ran better at last year's Bolt than I expected to. I had a few family members at the race to cheer me on so that was great, too. (Ed. Benita won the 5 km. New Balance Bolt in 15.22 - a new course record) The Burnie 10 km. Road Race was also fun. (Ed. Benita won in 31.45) I really enjoy the road and would love to run the Hyde Park Road Race again if I have the opportunity as I feel that race turned my season around last year.

N.M. You also raced over ten kilometres on the road in Doha where a huge amount of money was on offer for a World Record.

B.J. That's right. It was an interesting race and as everyone probably knows, Gebrselassie broke the World Record and won \$US 1 000 000. He had eleven pace-makers to help him! None of the girls were

really going for the World Record but it was a good race for me to be in because I was up there until about 500 metres to go. It was quite a tactical race and I was in front from 7 to 9.5 kilometres which was into the wind so that probably wasn't the best tactical move. I enjoyed the race but I wasn't in peak form at that stage of the year. The whole crowd were mainly there to see Gebrselassie. We had to do a drug test after the race and Gebrselassie and myself were the last two athletes to give samples and over a hundred people were crowded around us, just to be near Gebrselassie.

N.M. Did you get to talk to the 'great man'?

B.J. Yes. His English is pretty good. After the race he was flying out to shoot an adidas commercial in New York so I asked him if he was going to wear make-up for the shoot but he just laughed and said, "no". He also told everyone at a press-conference that the reason he runs with a straight right arm is that as a child he carried his books in that arm as he ran the 10 kilometres to and from school each day. But it's not bad money for breaking a World Record - \$US 1 000 000 for under 30 minutes work!
(Ed. Gebrselassie ran 27.02 - a New World Record for 10 km. on the road - loop course)

N.M. What were the results of the Women's Race?

B.J. Derartu Tulu won in 32.23 from Gete Wami (32.27) and Kutre Dulecha (32.29). All three girls were from Ethiopia. I was fourth in 32.30 and beat a lot of good runners. So overall, I was pretty happy, especially considering that we only arrived two days prior to the race after an 18 hour flight and an 8 hour time difference.

N.M. I also heard that the race was a little "Mickey Mouse" with it's organization.

B.J. Yes, the starting line was a huge balloon and it was only erected about ten minutes before the race. Deadlines don't seem to matter much over there. There was also a false start in the men's race because Gebrselassie's eleven pace-makers were so keen to get moving. Then there was a truck that acted as a pace-maker and a shield into the wind over the last three kilometres of the race when the other pace-makers dropped out. At one stage Gebrselassie was so close to the truck, I thought he was going to jump in next to his manager, Jos Hermens, who was directing the driver. So, everything considered, it was a pretty interesting event.

N.M. I wonder if the truck driver got a cut of the million dollars?

B.J. He probably deserved a bit.

N.M. Did you have pace-makers or a truck to help with the pace?

B.J. No. None of the women were going for the record.

(Ed. The Women's World Record for 10 km. on the Road is 30.39)

N.M. The Sydney Olympics must have been a great thrill for you. Your memories?

B.J. Yes. That was the first time I had represented Australia as a senior athlete - I had been to World Juniors and World Student Games before but the Olympics was a fantastic experience. Being in the Olympic Village was a huge eye-opener and I enjoyed every minute of it. I roomed with Kerryn McCann, an athlete I have always looked up to because she is such a well balanced person and a great role model. I was also really thankful to meet Anne Cross and Marg Crowley who were great to be around. Hopefully, Athens will be another great experience with me in contention instead of being just a competitor like I was in Sydney.

N.M. Your memories of the Olympic 5000 metre heat?

B.J. I remember going to the front and getting a huge roar from the crowd.

N.M. At that stage you'd be running on pure adrenaline!

B.J. Oh yeah it was fantastic but I got a bit tired at the end. However, I was pretty happy to run a P.B. (15:21.37) at an Olympics even though I just missed the final by a few places. At Athens I will be aiming for top 5 and a medal is not out of the question even though I'm trying to put that out of my mind and just concentrating on what I have coming up. The Olympics are a fantastic reward for all the training.

N.M. When you were in the call room at the Olympics and you were looking around at athletes you'd probably only read about or seen on TV, what were you thinking?

B.J. I was really nervous. Sonia (O'Sullivan) was in my heat but I didn't know her at all then even though I'd looked up to her and read all about her. She ran the heat in racing flats because she was so confident of qualifying while I had to run my hardest and still couldn't make the final.

N.M. Was there a race at the Olympics that you found particularly memorable?

B.J. The men's 10 000 metres with Gebrselassie and Tergat was just phenomenal. I was going for Tergat but he couldn't quite get there. I also loved Sonia and Szabo's final where I just wanted Sonia to win but it didn't happen. The Olympics was so inspiring - it gives me goose bumps just thinking about it and how the champions can perform when they really need to.

N.M. You have a teaching qualification. Is it completed?

B.J. Yes. I did a P.E. Secondary Education Human Movement Course at the University of Canberra and completed that mid way through 2001 and now I have almost completed a Post Grad in Sports Nutrition - I have just one exam to go which I'm studying for up here at the moment and will sit the exam in February. Then I might go on to complete a Masters, possibly studying the dietary habits of elite Kenyan runners?

N.M. You'll be able to sample the ugali and chai that helps them run so fast.

(Ed. ugali is a stiff porridge made from water and ground maize and chai is weak tea, boiled with milk and sugar)

B.J. I've had the chai. My husband is a physio and he treats a lot of the Kenyans over in London so they always make some for us. They're all lovely guys and there is nothing they would not do for you. Actually, the chai is really sweet and milky but they drink it all the time so it must work.

N.M. Benita, thank you very much for your time and I hope you enjoy your time at Falls Creek. Also, all the very best for the up-coming year.

B.J. No worries, Neil. I have two weeks to go at Falls Creek and I'm sure I'll have a great time.

Note: Unfortunately, devastating bushfires started by lightning strikes burnt huge portions of the Alpine National Park, causing Benita and her running group to leave Falls Creek prematurely.

In early February, Benita travelled to Bali, where she won the 10 kilometre Solidarity Run in 31.39, comfortably defeating Leah Memeli Mallot (Kenya) and Elana Meyer (South Africa). Benita's win earned her a rather nice \$10 000 pay-day.

Benita finished seventh in 8:51.62 at the Birmingham World Indoor Championship 3000 metres behind Berhane Adere of Ethiopia, who won in 8:40.25.

At the World Cross - Country Championships Short Course Race in Avenches, Switzerland, Benita was running third just 30 metres from the finish, when two Kenyans edged past her. Despite finishing a very creditable fifth in the 4030 metre race and being the only non-African in the top seven, Benita again just missed out on a medal by a few seconds.

(Results 2003 World Cross - Country Short Course (4030 m.):

1. Edith Masai (Kenya) 12:43
2. Werknesh Kidane (Ethiopia) 12:44
3. Jane Gakunyi (Kenya) 12:46
4. Isabella Ochichi (Kenya) 12:48
5. Benita Johnson (Australia) 12:48

RUNNER PROFILE

Benita Johnson

Occupation Athlete / Student - Human Movement with a Secondary Education Degree. Post Graduate Degree in Sports Nutrition (final year)

Age 23 **Date of Birth** 6 / 5 / 79

Height 166 cm. **Weight** 52 kg.

Married / Single Married to Cameron on 2 / 2 / 2002.

Coach Nick Bideau

Personal Bests

800m.	2:05.4
1500 m.	4:07.05
3000m. (indoors)	8:42.75 (Australian Record)
5000m.	14:47.60 (Australian Record)
5000 m. (road)	14.58 (Australian Record)
10 000m. (road)	31.45

Favourite Food Apples, Dark Chocolate, Sushi, Gloria Jeans Cappachinos

Food Eaten Before a Race Crumpets and Honey

Favourite Drink Hot Chocolate

Favourite Movie "Happy Gilmore"

Favourite Book Lance Armstrong's "It's Not About The Bike"

Favourite Music / Band "Lots of Different Stuff!"

Favourite TV Show Sport - (ie. Cricket or Tennis or ?)

Favourite Night Spot "Canberra's are pretty average!" Favourite Restaurant - "First Floor"

Favourite Holiday Spot Cairns / Perth.

A Normal Training Week.

Mon. am. 50 - 60 mins. easy
pm. 30 mins. easy plus sprints (ie. 4 - 6 x 100 metres 'fast' with a walk back recovery)

Tues. am. 30 mins. easy.
 pm. Track Session: This varies but something like 4 x 1600 metres in 5 minutes with 2 mins. recovery b/w.

Wed. am. 50 - 60 mins. easy
 pm. 30 mins. easy

Thur. am. Fartlek Session: This varies but something like 6 x 3 minutes with 1 min. recovery b/w.
 pm. 30 mins. easy

Fri. am. 50 mins. easy
 pm. REST

Sat. am. Long Surge: 20 mins. warm-up.
 Surge - could be 20 - 30 minutes hard.
 20 mins. cool-down
 pm. 30 mins easy

Sun. am. 90 mins. over hills.
 pm. REST

Other Training / Recovery Sessions.

A bit of Swiss Ball work and stretching.

Favourite Training Session 30 minute surge in bush.

Favourite Races 3000 metres indoors - had fun with the curves!

Best Ever Performances Running 14:47.60 (3rd place) at Berlin Golden League Meeting in 2002. 4th at World Cross - Country Short Course in 2002.

Favourite Place To Train Black Mountain bush in Canberra.

Toughest Ever Training Session A 13 minute surge up Stromlo Hill, Canberra in cold (-6 degree celsius!), wet and windy conditions in July 1999.

Most Admired Runners / People Marg Crowley, Kerryn McCann and Sonia O'Sullivan

Advice to Other Runners

"Keep a balance in your life - have other interests besides running and make sure you enjoy what you do!"

Goals for the Future "To be more consistent in 2003."

"To perform at a higher level in major championships and to keep learning new things all the time."

Anything else ???

I don't have any funny running stories but the boys in Canberra (Clint Mackevicius, Simon Hurt, Mark Thompson, Trent Munson, Wayne Bristo and Martin Dent) have always kept me entertained during warm-ups and cool-downs with their funny stories!

THE TWENTY FIVE DAYS LEADING UP TO BERLIN. HOW BENITA JOHNSON RAN AN AUSTRALIAN RECORD.

In Issue No. 13 (April 2002), we were most fortunate to sneak a peak into Craig Mottram's Training Diary in the 25 days leading up to his fabulous Australian 5000 metres Record at Olympic Park, Melbourne. Well, don't say we're not an equal opportunity Newsletter, so here's the final 25 days training that Benita Johnson completed on the way to her stunning Australian 5000 metre Record in Berlin. (Benita took a remarkable 14 seconds off the old record!) Note, that even the elite have good and bad sessions, feel tired on occasions and have to do the hard work to reach their potential.

Tues. am. 14 minute easy jog.
 13/8 pm. 3000 metre Race - Helsinki Grand Prix II.
 Felt very average! Lead for most of the way in windy conditions. Slow race. Finished 7th in 8.58.

Wed. am. 40 minute easy jog.

14/8 **pm.** 25 minute easy jog plus
4 x 80 metre stride - through runs.

Thur. **am.** 30 minute easy jog plus
15/8 4 x 80 metre stride - through runs.
pm. 20 minute easy jog plus travel to Zurich.

Fri. **am.** 17 minute easy jog with Craig Mottram. Felt OK
16/8 although I think I've picked up a bit of a head cold.
pm. 3000 metre Race - Zurich Golden League
Felt weak, not strong at all the whole way.
Nothing left at the end! Finished 10th in 8.56.

Sat. **am.** 14 minute warm - up (still in Zurich)
17/8 2 x 12 minute efforts on dirt track partly with Sonia O'Sullivan and Craig Mottram.
5 minute recovery b/w efforts. Felt OK and will be fine.
17 minute warm - down
pm. Rest. Travelled to London.

Sun. **am.** 90 minute run over hills in Richmond Park with
18/8 Cam (Benita's husband) on bike.
pm. Rest and Swiss Ball exercises.

Mon. **am.** 60 minute run with Cam including 15 minutes up - tempo. Feeling heaps better. Great
19/8 weather here in London too!
pm. 46 minute run in Bushy Park with Cam plus circuits / drills.

Tues. **am.** 30 minute easy run in Bushy Park.
20/8 **pm.** Track Session at Kingston Track with Craig,
Sonia and about 20 other UK guys.
20 minute warm - up.
1 x 1200 metres (3:36)
Lap jog recovery.
3 x 400 metres (67, 67, 67) with 30 secs rec. b/w
Lap jog recovery.
1 x 1200 metres (3:34.9)
Lap jog recovery.
3 x 400 metres (68, 66, 67) with 30 secs rec.
Lap jog recovery.
1 x 1200 metres (3:31)
21 minute warm - down.

Wed. **am.** 66 minute run with Craig. Massage.
21/8 **pm.** 30 minute run plus 4 x 80 metre strides in
Bushy Park. Felt 'stuffed!' Ran very easy.

Thur. **am.** Session in Bushy Park on grass in flats with
22/8 Cam on bike.
20 minute warm - up.
5 x 5 minute efforts (1 minute recovery b/w)
21 minute warm - down.
Felt strong in this session although I have been feeling a bit tired.
pm. 30 minute easy run plus foot mobilization and physio.

Fri. **am.** 46 minute. easy run with Craig plus body
23/8 exercises.
pm. Rest. Went to watch London Grand Prix at Crystal Palace. Spent all day in London - too
many people for me!

Sat. **am.** Session in Hills at Richmond Park with Cam on bike.
24/8 20 minute warm - up.
11.40 minute surge along dirt track over a few hills. (3 minute recovery)

3 x Hill Loop (3.25, 3.17, 3.15) with approx. 80 seconds recovery b/w.
 2 minute recovery.
 6 x 30 seconds 'on' / 30 seconds 'off'
 22 minute warm - down.
pm. 31 minute run with Craig. Felt very good this afternoon and picked it up a bit at the end.

Sun. **am.** 90 minute run over hills at Richmond Park
 25/8 with Craig and Sonia. (Cam and Nick Bideau on bikes)
pm. Rest

Mon. **am.** 64 minute run on grass in Bushy Park with Sonia plus Body Exercises.
 26/8 **pm.** 32 minute run plus drills and 8 x 80 metre sprints on grass concentrating on fast leg speed off the mark. Felt good today.

Tues. **am.** 30 minutes easy run with Cam on bike.
 27/8 **pm.** Track Session at Kingston Track with Sonia and local UK guys. Started at 7:30 pm.
 Wore racing flats.
 20 minute warm - up.
 7 x 800 metres with every second rep. faster. (2.22, 2.16, 2.23, 2.16, 2.22, 2.16, 2.21) 200 metre jog recoveries in approx. 75 seconds.
 23 minute warm - down jog home plus stretch.
 Felt very good. Have never done a session of varying pace like this before!

Wed. **am.** 65 minute easy run with Sonia, Craig and Cam (on bike)
 28/8 **pm.** 30 minute easy run

Thur. **am.** Session on trails at Bushy Park with Cam.
 29/8 20 minute warm - up.
 1 x 2000 metres in 5.55
 8.40 minute jog.
 8 x 1 minute efforts with 1 minute recovery between.
 20 minute warm - down.
pm. 30 minute easy run.

Fri. **am.** 50 minute easy run.
 30/8 **pm.** 30 minute easy run.

Sat. **am.** 30 minute easy run.
 31/8 **pm.** 26 minute easy run over Hyde Park Road Race Course. Finished with 4 x 50 metre strides.
 Felt a bit lethargic - not sure how I'll run in tomorrow's race.

Sun. **am.** 5000 metre Road Race - Hyde Park, London. Finished 2nd in 14.58 - a P.B.
 1/9 (behind Sonia who ran 14.56). Felt very strong and finished well. First time under 15 minutes!
pm. 30 minute easy jog.

Mon. **am.** 57 minute easy run with Craig and Sonia.
 2/9 **pm.** 30 minute jog plus 4 x 80 metre strides.
 Massage.

Tues. **am.** 30 minute easy run.
 3/9 **pm.** Track Session at Kingston Track.
 20 minute warm - up.
 2 x 1200 metres (3.25, 3.31) with a lap jog between.
 20 minute warm - down.

Wed. **am.** 40 minute easy run.
 4/9 **pm.** 30 minute easy run.

Thur. **am.** 30 minute easy run.

5/9 **pm.** Travel to Berlin.
25 minute easy jog with Craig.

Fri. **am.** 14 minute easy jog plus stretching.
6/9 **pm.** 5000 metre Race - Berlin Golden League
Finished 3rd in 14:47.60 (P.B.!!!)
AUSTRALIAN RECORD!!!
Went out conservatively, 8.56 through 3 km. (was last!) Came home well and felt strong. Really happy!!!

Well done, Benita and thank you very much for sharing your Training Diary with us.