

SARAH JAMIESON

DUAL OLYMPIAN

April 2005

Australian middle – distance runner and dual Olympian, Sarah Jamieson certainly knows the value of perseverance, determination and patience. After many operations on her troublesome legs and feet and much injury down-time, she is now in career best form and keen to take on the best in the world. I was fortunate to catch up with Sarah for a chat as she was putting in the 'hard yards' back in Melbourne in preparation for the up-coming World Athletic Championships in Helsinki.

N.M. Sarah, congratulations on your running accomplishments over the recent Australian domestic season, which have included a front-running win over 1500 metres at the Melbourne Grand Prix (4:06.80), winning the National 1500 metre title in Sydney (4:09.42), representing Australian at the recent World Cross-Country Championships and selection in the Australian Team for this year's World Athletic Championships to be held Helsinki. You're obviously in great form at the moment – what do you put this down to?

S.J. I think it comes from a lot of consistency, just putting together week after week of good, solid training without any interruptions due to injury. I also feel that I've got a well-rounded program that includes a lot of endurance work, a bit of altitude training up at Falls Creek, some good track training and some work in the gym to compliment all the running.

N.M. In regards to your training, after a few major injuries, you now do much of your running on soft surfaces to lessen impact stress. Could you please outline a normal training week in regards to the surfaces you run on?

S.J. Whenever I run, I try to find some grass to run on and make a conscious effort to keep away from hard surfaces. Even for my easy morning runs I'll try to find some grassy ovals or trails to run on. On Tuesdays we run around the Tan, on Thursdays we use the grassy areas of Fawkner Park and on Saturdays I train at Princes Park. So for me, because I'm in a base building stage of training, there's nothing on the track or hard surfaces for me at the moment. And even when I'm in my competition phase of training, I'm only on the track once a week.

N.M. Tonight you're doing a fartlek session around Fawkner Park that consists of: 3 x 3 minutes, 3 x 2 minutes and 3 x 1 minute 'on' with 1 minute 'float' between. Is this the sort of session you regularly complete during this phase of your training?

S.J. Yes, we do a lot of longer repetition fartlek on grass at this time of the year.

N.M. When you do finally hit the track nearer to your competitions, do you feel that the longer fartlek sessions give you a good base and the strength to run on over the last lap of a 1500 metre race?

S.J. I think it really does. A lot of the strength I feel that I have developed this year has come from the longer training and the training up at Falls Creek over summer.

N.M. You mentioned that you complete supplementary training. What sort of training do you do apart from running?

S.J. I don't really do a lot, other than weight training in the gym where I work on strength, especially through the core. I also believe that to be a good runner you need a strong upper-body because it mimics the strength and rhythm of your legs. However, if I have a slight 'niggle' I might jump on the bike or have a swim but generally, I just stick to running and the gym.

N.M. Over the last few years you have become a bit of a Falls Creek regular. What part does Falls Creek play in your preparation for the track season.

S.J. At Falls Creek we do a lot of our base work, where we put in the longer running, threshold runs and longer fartlek sessions that basically gets you fit enough to run fast later in the year. I spent two weeks at Falls Creek just prior to Christmas, and the training then consisted of mostly longer aerobic running but after Christmas I spent another two weeks up at Falls Creek and we would drive down to the track in Albury once a week for some faster, competition specific training as the domestic season approached.

N.M. So you were completing a few "sleep high – train low" sessions.

S.J. Yes.

N.M. You have been up to Falls Creek quite a few times. Do you feel confident in not becoming lost on some of the more remote trails.

S.J. Yes, I'm pretty confident. Every time I go up there I discover something new so each visit to Falls Creek can be a "Discovery Tour". But it's great up there without all the distractions and the extra free-time which means there's plenty of time for stretching and icing our legs in the aqueducts and basically doing all the important little things we might neglect a little when we are back home and very busy.

N.M. Talking of training camps, you are heading down to Moggs Creek, near Anglesea, next week for a training camp. In the future will Moggs Creek be talked of in the same breath as Falls Creek or Laguna Mountain or Flagstaff?

S.J. Ideally we would have headed overseas but the costs involved in travelling overseas to train can be prohibitive so we decided to find somewhere local and it came down to Portsea or Moggs Creek. And because we knew of someone with accommodation at Moggs Creek, we chose there. Portsea would have been fun with all the sand hills and the Cerutti / Elliott connection but Moggs Creek will be great too. Emily Morris is coming down from Sydney and a few of the younger guys will be there as well so it should be fun.

N.M. There is a fair bit of spare time to be had on a training camp. What do you do to fill in the spare hours between sessions?

S.J. We play lots of board games, things like Scrabble and Trivial Pursuit. We also watch lots of DVD's and do lots of just talking.

N.M. Are you a good cook?

S.J. Actually, I'm not the best cook so it's always good to have Ritchie Jeremiah with us because he's an excellent cook. So when Ritchie's there, I let him do most of the work while I help by cutting up the vegetables.

N.M. So you're 'chief chopper'.

S.J. Yes, I suppose you could say that.

N.M. Female endurance athletes have to be particularly careful with their iron stores. Do you take supplements and do you have regular blood tests to monitor your iron stores?

S.J. I don't eat red meat and get my animal protein from chicken and fish so it's very important for me to monitor my blood levels. I take iron supplements but I cycle myself on and off them so that my body does not become too accustomed to the iron in tablet form. I also make sure that I have a good multi-vitamin along with vitamin C to enhance iron absorption. Also, I have regular blood tests every couple of months to check that my iron stores are at optimal levels.

N.M. Why don't you eat red meat?

S.J. At first it was mostly an ethical decision but now it's basically because I don't like it.

N.M. You mentioned before that you've had a few injuries. What were these injuries and how have you managed to overcome them?

S.J. I've had surgery seven times now on various injuries. I've had three lots of surgery to correct compartment syndrome, but whether I really had compartment syndrome, no one really knows. I've had surgery for a perineal nerve release that fixed all my problems in that area. I've had plantar fasciitis pretty badly and tried to struggle through that for a couple of years before having surgery after the Sydney Olympics in 2000. The other major injury was when I tore my hamstring tendon at the knee in 2003. That required pretty major reconstructive surgery in April of 2003.

N.M. Did you have any biomechanical problems that were causing these injuries or were they basically overuse injuries?

S.J. It's pretty hard to say. I have had all of my biomechanics checked-out and the experts tell me that biomechanically, I'm no worse than thousands of other runners. I think I initially tore my hamstring tendon in the gym by overloading my leg a little. The other injuries possibly may have occurred because I was born with a slight weakness that only became evident because I'm an athlete putting my body under a fair amount of stress.

N.M. Do you feel that the way you train now, with most of the running on soft surfaces, has the injuries under control.

S.J. Definitely. I'm also a lot smarter now and I know my body inside and out. If I feel a little tight in a certain area, I know I need to do a certain stretch or have it looked at straight away.

N.M. Are you strong enough to take a day off and not run at all if you felt a niggle that could become serious?

S.J. Yes but I would find it really hard. It would play on my mind all day but I do take days off if I really need a rest. Over the last few years I've learnt to be not so obsessive and to listen to my body.

N.M. As almost a full-time athlete, you alternate between racing during the European summer and our summer. It must be hard to have some 'down-time' where you can recharge the batteries, then begin to rebuild your running base.

S.J. After the Athens Olympics I had three weeks totally off running. I went to the Greek Islands and had a great holiday and my mind wasn't really on running. It gave me a chance to rest and do the type of things I can't really do when I'm in full training. After the holiday, I came back to Melbourne and began base training in preparation for the domestic season and World Cross. I wanted to be selected in the team for the World Championships and run well at the World Cross so I needed to be in good shape and have a good domestic season.

N.M. Let's go back to your junior days. How did you begin as an athlete?

S.J. I started Little Athletics when I was seven but I was always involved in a lot of different sports. I got a scholarship to my Secondary College where I played volleyball, hockey and basketball. My coach back

then, Lyn Foreman, was encouraging me to try lots of different sports. While I was at school I probably only trained three times a week because of all the other sports I was doing. It wasn't until after I left school that I started to train a bit harder. But eventually I realised that I loved running and had some talent, so I went from there. Actually, I was a bit of a long jumper and a javelin thrower when I was younger. In fact, I think I won a state gold medal in triple-jump one year and I went to the National Multi-Event Championships as an Under 15 athlete and won the bronze medal. So as a kid I was a bit of an all-rounder but definitely had more talent as a middle-distance runner.

N.M. Can you remember what sort of times you were running for the middle-distances as a Little Athlete?

S.J. Ah that's a long time ago. I remember I ran about 2.15 for 800 metres when I was 14 or 15. I was always one of the better juniors but I was definitely not the best. I think that's important because there's a lot of kids out there who train really hard and almost run themselves into the ground meaning that they don't have as much room for improvement when they get older. I just wanted to enjoy my childhood and have some fun playing sport.

N.M. When did you say to yourself, "I could be really good at running?"

S.J. I suppose I realised that I had a bit of talent while I was at school but once I left school I started to become more serious about running. But even at Secondary School I was pretty serious and ate the right foods. One of my best friends was Lauren Poetschka and her sister, Renee had been to the Olympics, so she was a bit of a role model for me. I remember watching videos of her racing in Europe and was pretty inspired by her. As it turned out, both Lauren and I were selected for the Sydney Olympics.

N.M. Let's go through your progression as an athletic. As an 18 year old in 1994 you were selected to represent Australia at the World Junior Championships in Lisbon. Your memories of those Championships?

S.J. That was the first time I had actually been away with other athletes. Living in Perth I was pretty isolated and didn't know much about what was happening athletics wise on the other side of Australia. I remember it blew my mind how much training some of the others were doing. Many of the Victorian kids were actually training twice a day, which I found unbelievable. So the trip away was a real 'eye-opener' for me. I'd also had surgery maybe three or four months before the World Juniors on my compartment syndrome problem so I was not really fit. However, it gave me a taste of international competition, just to see that athletes from other countries aren't necessarily better than us.

N.M. Did you come away from the World Junior Championships really focussed and ready to give running your best shot?

S.J. Yes, I did. After rubbing shoulders with all of the Victorian athletes and hearing how much more they were training I was really keen to do some more running. In many ways, it was a turning point for me as I began asking questions of my coach and we started to increase the training.

N.M. The 1994 World Junior Championships is also remembered for Paul Byrne's storming victory over 800 metres in 1:47.42. Paul, being a Geelong boy, certainly created headlines back here - do you remember his race?

S.J. Yes, I do remember his race vividly. We were all standing around waving our Aussie flags for Byrne. It was certainly a thrilling race as he came from near last at the top of the straight to win. I'm not sure if Paul expected to do so well and we were a little surprised but absolutely thrilled with his victory.

N.M. Can you remember who won your races? (Ed. Sarah finished 4th in her heat of the 800m. in 2:10.14 and 7th in her heat of the 1500m. in 4:25.32)

S.J. I'm pretty sure that Anita Weyermann of Switzerland won the 1500 metres. A few years ago she ran 3.57 for 1500 metres. She recently ran at the Canberra Grand Prix but did not finish the 3000 metres and has been struggling lately. Apparently, she trained really hard as a junior and has had a lot of stress fractures and other injuries.

N.M. Your next Australian representative event was the 1999 World University Games in Majorca, Spain. That would have been another step-up in your international running career?

S.J. Definitely. The World University Games are a nice little meet as they are not as big or as scary as a Commonwealth Games or an Olympics but the standard is pretty high. I was in the 1500 metres with Benita Johnson or Willis as she was then. We didn't know many of our competitors and looking back we were both pretty raw. It was my first international competition for five years so it was exciting. I finished fourth, just missing the bronze and thinking that I was capable of bigger and better things if I persevered and kept working hard. During 1999 I was able to bring my 1500 metre personal best down from 4.15 to 4.12 so that gave me the belief that qualifying for the Sydney Olympics was achievable with a little more improvement – the qualifying time for Sydney was 4.08.

N.M. Were you living in Melbourne at this stage?

S.J. Yes, I had moved over from Perth at the start of 1998 and was being coached by Peter Fortune. And with a year of good consistent training under my belt, things were looking really good.

N.M. Why did you make the move from Perth to Melbourne?

S.J. Myself, Jai Thomas – my boyfriend, and Mark Gorski decided that if we were going to give athletics our best shot and make the Sydney Olympics, then we needed to move to Melbourne where we would have regular quality competition and good coaching. Also, Melbourne has a fantastic culture for distance running. So, one night we decided to put all our stuff in the back of our car and drive over.

N.M. You would have had a famous training partner from Peter Fortune's group at that stage?

S.J. Yes, although I did not do all that much training with Cathy but she was definitely in the group. Actually my boyfriend, Jai Thomas went onto become her training partner so I went onto become quite involved in her build-up to the Sydney Olympics.

N.M. Jai features quite a few times in Cathy's biography ("Cathy – Her Own Story" with Scott Gullan). Have you read her book?

S.J. I've read parts of it.

N.M. At the time, was Cathy an influence as far as training and competing goes?

S.J. Yes. In 1999, Jai was training with her and I went overseas with them. I was the only female in the group so I roomed with her at times, went to meets with her and we spent a fair bit of time together. Just seeing the way a champion prepares herself for races and handles all the pressure was certainly a great learning experience for me.

N.M. Arguably Cathy Freeman handles pressure better than most. There would not have been too many people at the Sydney Olympics under more pressure than Cathy Freeman. Is it normal for Cathy to be able to stand in lane 6, exclude all the other things that are going on around her and run fast?

S.J. I think so. Cathy can be pretty single minded when she wants something badly enough, so it wasn't a surprise to me that she was able to handle the pressure.

N.M. In the lead-up to the Sydney Olympics you travelled to Hobart for the Commonwealth Bank Track Classic with Benita Johnson and Georgie Clarke, looking to run fast times. As it turned out, all three of you ran big personal best times and Sydney Olympic qualifying times. What memories do you have of that race?

S.J. I remember Hobart really well. I had raced in New Zealand a few weeks beforehand and had broken 4.10 for the first time, which was a big break-through for me at the time. So, in hindsight, racing in Hobart a few weeks later was perfect timing for me. The organisers had scheduled our race for about 10 or 11 in the morning so the conditions would be favourable. Also, all the coaches got together and made the decision that this was the race for us all to run fast in. We also had one of the Kenyan girls pacing us so everything went really well. I also think that we were not so much worried about our placings but rather how fast we could run. (Ed. 1. Georgie Clarke – 4:06.77 2. Sarah Jamieson – 4:07.45 3. Benita Johnson (Willis) – 4:07.77)

N.M. Did you sneak a glance at the clock as you ran the last 50 metres or were you totally focussed on catching Georgie and holding off Benita?

S.J. No, I was racing. I think I hit the lead with about 100 metres to go and I was trying to stay in front. Then Benita got past me and because I was pretty tired, I was just trying to run as fast as I could.

N.M. A huge break-through for you and the feeling of "almost there?"

S.J. Yes, definitely. At that stage there were three of us who had the Olympic qualifying time of 4.08 so it was just a matter of keeping in good shape because the trials weren't until August. But it also set me up to go the Europe for some high quality races, where I was able to reduce my P.B. to 4.06.

N.M. Your memories of Sydney. It must have been fantastic to be an Olympian in your own country.

S.J. It was totally awesome. Perhaps a bit too much for a first Olympics with all the attention the Australians received. Prior to Sydney I had been in Europe for a couple of months, then arrived home for a training camp in Noosa, then onto another camp in Nudgee. I was away from home a lot that year and it was a pretty surreal experience. Looking back, I can see that perhaps I didn't have my mind totally on the job and was possibly distracted at times from putting in my absolute best performance in my race. Saying all that, I would not take back any of those times or memories. For me, Sydney was a massive step-up and a fantastic learning experience as I'd only ever been to a World Junior Championships and a World University Games.

N.M. Were you standing in the call room, looking around at world famous athletes thinking, "crikey, I'm actually competing in the Olympic Games?"

S.J. At that time I didn't actually take much notice of world athletics so I didn't really know who was who. I didn't know their P.B.'s or what they had done and just concentrated on running my best race. Now that I've been to Europe a few more times and have got to know the athletes that I race against, it is a different story.

N.M. What was the highlight of Sydney for you?

S.J. I think it would have to be the Opening Ceremony. Just walking into the stadium with 90 000 people screaming and waving green and gold flags was pretty special. Just the realization that in a few days I would be back in this stadium and most of these people would be back, the stands would be full and I would be on centre stage, running. It was about then that I started to think about my race and become really nervous.

N.M. How did the race unfold for you?

S.J. I just remember being over-awed as I walked into the stadium with everyone cheering for me. Then the gun went and I just felt as though I was chasing the whole way but I could not have gone any faster. I think being away from home for much of 2000 in the lead-up to the Sydney Games had got the better of me and in many ways I was tired and had run my race before I got to my Olympic event.

N.M. Did you see any of the other events?

S.J. My race was towards the end and because I didn't want to become emotionally drained by with all the hype of others racing, I didn't see all that much. However, I did make sure that I was there for Cathy's race, then after I'd finished competing I went and saw Jai Taurima's long jump silver and Tatiana's Grigorieva's silver in the pole vault.

N.M. Is there a really big 'let-down' after an event as huge as the Olympics, when you train so hard, travel all over the world chasing times and competition, compete on an emotional high, then all of a sudden, it's over?

S.J. Pretty much. That's why I decided to stay in Europe after Athens so I could have a holiday, unwind and get the Olympic experience out of my system before heading home and starting training again. Sydney was an unreal experience because you walk around the Olympic Village or the training camps and you don't pay for a thing. I don't think I once had to take out my purse. Then you arrive home and all of a sudden it's back to the real world of scrubbing floors and doing the washing and cooking. That certainly brings you back to earth with a big thud.

N.M. You had much of 2001 off. What was the problem?

S.J. I'd been struggling with my plantar fascia for quite a while and it got to the point where I was actually hating my running. The first 10 – 15 minutes of every run felt like my foot was going to tear and it was so painful and there was no fun involved in running under those circumstances. So I went and saw my doctor we tried lots of things like massage and orthotics but nothing worked so I had surgery on both feet at the same time. That put me in a wheel chair for quite a few weeks and it ended up being a long recovery period, so 2001 was basically a write-off.

N.M. Did you ever think that this injury might be career ending?

S.J. I suppose anytime you have surgery, those thoughts creep into your mind, especially when you're laying in bed or pushing yourself around in a wheelchair but, they are only fleeting thoughts because I've been able to overcome major surgery before and the setbacks can make you a stronger, more resilient person.

N.M. In 2002 you began your rehabilitation by travelling to Falls Creek under Chris Wardlaw's guidance. Was this the start of your comeback and what has helped set you up for what you're achieving now?

S.J. In many ways. Teaming up with 'Rab' and being introduced to the traditional distance running philosophy certainly helped. Growing up in Perth I was only running 25 – 30 kilometres a week, then moving over to 'Fort' and lifting the training volume and intensity was part of my development as an athlete. Then doing 'Rab's' training I got really strong and was able to 4.06 off his training.

N.M. What are the basic philosophies of Peter Fortune, Chris Wardlaw and your present coach, Bruce Scriven.

S.J. There are many similarities between the three coaches. 'Fort' was probably more track and speed orientated in his approach and he had some speedy girls in his group like Tamsyn Lewis and Cathy Freeman, plus Jai, Mark Gorski and Paul Cleary. However, "Fort' also let me go off and do some longer stuff. My mileage under "Fort' was about 80 - 100 kilometres a week, which was probably appropriate for me at that stage of my development after coming off about 50 - 60 kilometres a week back in Perth. Then stepping up to Chris Wardlaw's training was initially a shock to the system. 'Rab', of course, emphasises a lot of miles and getting stronger and under him I was running about 140 kilometres a week. Looking back, 'Rab's' longer running gave me a great base to move onto Scrivo's training. I suppose 'Scrivo' is almost in between 'Fort' and 'Rab' in that he likes us to do the longer stuff but he also has us completing faster, 'track specific' work. 'Scrivo' is very widely read and often will incorporate different bits and pieces from other coaches. He's also had a lot of great athletes who have run some great times so he has a wealth of knowledge and experience.

N.M. To emphasize each coaches' approach, if you were to run an important 1500 metre race next Saturday, what quality sessions would Peter Fortune, Chris Wardlaw and Bruce Scriven be likely to set for you this week?

S.J. For Peter, that's going back a while and is really testing my memory For all three I would probably do something like 6 - 10 x 200 metres with a jog across recovery on the Thursday night. With "Fort' I might do something like 3 minute reps around the Tan or a track session like 600 metres, 500 metres, 400 metres, 300 metres, 200 metres on the Tuesday. 'Rab' liked to do an old Steve Ovett session which was 2 sets of 3 x 300 metres with a 100 metre jog between reps and a reasonable rest between sets. 'Scrivo' might set some fast 400's or 300's with 100 metres jog recovery between.

N.M. You dabbled with the Aouita Program when Said first came to Australia? I can remember you, Mark Fountain, Richard Jeremiah and Daniel Quin completing a session of 400 metre reps at Landy Field one Saturday afternoon – the men completed 25 x 400 metres while you ran 15 x 400 metres. What sessions from the Aouita Program did you find beneficial?

S.J. Said was pretty controversial when he came to Australia but we managed to make use of some of what he had to offer. Some of his sessions were interesting and we've managed to adapt some of them to suit us, especially some of his race preparation sessions. One pre-race session that we occasionally do is: 2 x 400 metres, 3 x 300 metres, 4 x 200 metres with 3 minutes recovery between each repetition and that is pretty 'Aouita-ish'. We still occasionally do multiple 400's – it makes you mentally tough to complete sessions with a high number of reps. In many ways Aouita's Program was not that different from many of the programs you read about from the past. The main difference was Aouita's Program had us doing heavy weights the day of a hard track session and I found that really tough. Heavy weights probably didn't suit me and could have contributed to me tearing my hamstring. Also, my legs felt really dead from the weight sessions and I struggled to run well. Now I don't do any leg weights and my weights sessions concentrate on the core and upper body.

N.M. In the lead-up to the Athen's Olympics you were in great shape with a time of 8:49.46 (P.B.) for 3000 metres in Madrid on July 17 and 2:03.16 for 800 metres in Leverkusen on August 1 so both your strength and speed were going well. However, you also had some shin soreness that had to be managed. How tough was that, knowing you were in great shape but you might break-down?

S.J. Yes, it was really tough because I was in great shape. I have never had a stress fracture but this felt very much like one. It felt like my shin was a piece of honeycomb ready to snap. It hurt for the first ten minutes of every run. Also, I was in Ireland and did not have my usual medical and physio back-up around me. I tried everything, including Chinese medicine but nothing seemed to work. In the end, we made the decision that the Lucerne Meet was going to be an all-out attempt on running fast, sore shin or not, because I desperately needed two weeks off running to rest my shin. Anyway, the conditions were really good and I managed to run 4:04.83.

N.M. Did the shin hurt every step of the way?

S.J. Not really. Once I started racing it was fine but it hurt while I was warming-up and cooling-down and I could hardly walk the next day.

N.M. What cross-training did you complete for the next two weeks?

S.J. We were in Ireland and each morning we would head to the pool for a pool session, then straight into the gym, then onto the bike for a heavy session. 'Scrive' really killed me but it certainly helped me maintain my fitness while I couldn't run.

N.M. Was the shin OK after the two weeks off running?

S.J. Yes. But it wasn't until I got to Italy that the Australian Team physios were able to treat it with lots of massage. Anyway, the soreness was gone and probably not a stress fracture but rather a tight muscle.

N.M. At the Athens Olympics you were in the third and last heat and knew roughly what you had to do to qualify for the final.

S.J. Yes, but I think I may have been a little complacent, thinking that the other runners would know what time was required and set off at a decent pace. However, the early pace was not fast (Ed. the splits were: 66.71 69.25 65.55 45.17 for a 4:06.68 win to Maria Cioncan of Romania) and I just sat in but didn't have the kick with 200 metres to go that was required. (Ed. Sarah ran 11th in 4:09.25 but needed to run faster than 4:07.73 to qualify) So, overall Athens was a disappointing result considering the form I was in.

N.M. It seems to be in top class women's 1500 metre racing that off a slow pace or a fast pace, you need to be able to run about 44 - 45 seconds for the last 300 metres. (Ed. the splits in the Olympic Final were: 63.59 65.05 64.18 45.08 for a 3:57.90 win to Kelly Holmes of Great Britain) Do you think you're gaining the strength necessary to regularly finish off your races at this pace?

S.J. Yes, I think so, especially with the last two years training base behind me. It's certainly something that we have worked on in training in the lead-up to the Olympics and it's something I have to improve on if I'm going to do well in Championship races.

N.M. What sessions do you complete to work on this change of pace?

S.J. We do 800 metres where we change the pace at each 200 metre mark or I might have a training partner who 'Scrive' has told to 'kick it down' and I have to go with them. I don't know when the kick will happen to it's pretty race specific.

N.M. In the lead-up to Athens one of your training partners was Australian Pentathlon representative, Jeremy Thompson. Apparently you and he had a pretty intensive time-trial over 800 metres.

S.J. Yes, it was just a morning track session in Italy about ten or twelve days before my Olympic race. We had been looking for an 800 metre race but couldn't find one so decided to run a time-trial. It was just Jeremy, myself and Scrive, who was holding the stop watch. We ran 2:02.2 – taking a second off my P.B. which was a great confidence boost going into Athens. It's a pity it wasn't a race so I could claim it as a P.B.

N.M. Was the 800 metre time-trial the session or did you finish off with a little more while still on a high?

S.J. I had a reasonable recovery then ran some 200 metre reps.

N.M. You also ran the Rome Golden Gala. In contrast to the Championship races, this race had a couple of Russian pace-makers and the aim was to run fast times with three Russians filling the first three places (1. Olga Yegorova - 4:01.15 2. Yelena Zadorozhnay - 4:01.38 3. Tatyana Tomashova - 4:01.69) You ran a P.B. of 4:04.73. In these races are you told what splits the pace-makers have been asked to run?

S.J. Yes, you are told that the pace-makers are going to get to 800 metres or 1000 metres in a certain time. Usually, this means that I'd be running a little faster than I'm capable of – probably under 4 minute 1500 metre pace. But you know that if you can position yourself in the top third of the pack and hang-on, you can run fast times.

N.M. Earlier this year you ran the World Cross-Country Short-Course Race in St. Etienne / St. Galmier. The first few hundred metres of those races must be an absolute sprint, much like you'd experience in a top class 1500 metre race.

S.J. It is pretty crazy and you could compare the pace to the start of a 1500 metre race on the track. There's lots of runners in the field and everyone is trying to get into a good position so you have to go off really hard. Fortunately, this year the course was a little wider so it wasn't such a mad crush. I also think we're advantaged coming out of a track season because we're used to using our elbows to protect our space and getting off to a quick start.

N.M. This year you finished 13th in 13.44 behind Tirunesh Dibaba of Ethiopia (13.15) and last year in Brussels you were 15th in 13.40 behind Edith Masai of Kenya (13.07) Are you hoping to go back next year and finish in the top six or seven?

S.J. Definitely. Next year is the last year that they are going to hold the 4 kilometre short course race so it's certainly a goal. This year I was hoping for top ten and was a bit disappointed to miss out.

N.M. To underline how competitive the World Cross-Country can be, you finished only 3 seconds away from 9th place.

S.J. Yes, but that's World Cross. It can be frustrating to finish so close but on the day, I wasn't quite good enough.

N.M. Edith Masai, a multiple winner of the World Cross-Country Short Course title (Ed. Masai won in 2002, 2003 and 2004), won the Hamburg Marathon over the weekend in 2 hours 27.06. Do you have any desire to one day run a marathon?

S.J. No, definitely not. You can quote me as saying that I'll never run a marathon but I suppose one day I might run a 5 k., just not at the moment. For the time being and for next year's Commonwealth Games, I'm concentrating on the 1500 metres.

N.M. Marg Crowley's Australian Record is 4:01.34 for 1500 metres. Is that something you believe is achievable over the next twelve months?

S.J. Yes, it is something we have focussed on this winter and it's a goal for Europe this year. I ran 4.04 in Rome last year and I know that I can improve on that time. If I get into the right race, feel good and hang on, I'm sure I can do it.

N.M. What are your plans in the lead-up to the Helsinki World Championships?

S.J. At the moment we are in heavy base-training phase, just getting plenty of miles in the legs and getting as fit as possible. Then, I head over to Europe in June and start racing on about the 14th of June. I will probably have about six or seven races before Helsinki, including a few quick 1500's where I have a chance to run under that 4.01.

N.M. Have you pencilled-in which races you hope to do?

S.J. I'll speak about it with my agent but you never really know until you get over there.

N.M. Sarah, thank you very much for your time and all the very best for this year and in the lead-up to the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne.

S.J. Thanks Neil.

RUNNER PROFILE

Sarah Jamieson

Occupation Athlete

Age 30 Date of Birth 24 / 5 / 75

Height 172 cm. Weight 58 kg.

Married / Single Boyfriend Jai

Coach Bruce Scriven

Personal Bests

400m.	56.5
800m.	2:03.16
1500m.	4:04.73
3000m.	8:49.46
5000 m.	15:42.17

Favourite Food Lollies
Food Eaten Before a Race Toast and banana
Favourite Drink Coffee
Favourite Movie "Snatch"
Favourite Book "Papillon" by Henri Charriere
Favourite Music / Band "Scissor Sisters"
Favourite TV Show "The Office"
Favourite Night Spot The couch
Favourite Holiday Spot The Greek Isles

A Normal Base Training Week.

Mon. am. 40 minute easy run and weights
 pm. 35 minute easy run.

Tues. am. 35 minute easy run.
 pm. Fartlek Session. ie. 8 mins. / 6 mins. / 4 mins. 'on' with 3 mins. and 2 mins. 'off' between

Wed. am. 60 minute easy run and weights.

Thur. am. 35 minute easy run.
 pm. Shorter Fartlek Reps Session. (ie. 6 x 3 mins. 'on' with 1 min. 'off' between)
 or
 Track Session. (ie. 8 x 300 metres with 100 metre jog between)

Fri. am. 40 minute easy run.

Sat. am. Threshold Run (10 – 20 minutes @ threshold pace) or Race

Sun. am. 60 - 90 minute run.

Note: Most of the non session runs are completed at 4:00 – 4:20 kilometre pace.

Other Training / Recovery Sessions.

"Massage twice a week, weights three times a week."

Favourite Training Session "Anything on the track."

Favourite Race "1500 metres"

Best Ever Performances "Running my 1500 metre and 3000 metre P.B.'s in Rome and Madrid respectively."

Favourite Place To Train "Studley Park and Noosa."

Toughest Ever Training Session "5 x 2000 metres with 2 minutes recovery between."

Most Admired Runners / People "Sonia O'Sullivan."

Advice to Other Runners "Believe in yourself."

Goals for the Future

"To break Margaret Crowley's National 1500 metre record (4:01.34) and to win a medal at the 2006 Commonwealth Games."

Sarah also allowed us a peak inside her Training Diary for the ten days leading up to the 2004 Athens Olympic Games.

Sun 15th August am. 60 minute run
 pm. Rest

Mon 16th August am. 50 minute run

	pm.	35 minute run
Tues 17th August	am.	10 minute threshold run
	pm.	35 minute run
Wed 18th August	am.	Travel to Athens
	pm.	35 minute run
Thur 19th August	am.	1 x 1200m. (1 lap jog recovery) 6 x 200m. (jog across recovery)
	pm.	35 minute run
Fri 20th August	am.	50 minute run
	pm.	35 minute run
Sat 21st August	am.	35 minute run
	pm.	2 sets of 4 x 200 metres on track (jog across recovery between reps / lap jog recovery between sets)
Sun 22nd August	am.	35 minute run
	pm.	35 minute run
Mon 23rd August	am.	Rest
	pm.	35 minute run / strides
Tues 24th August	am.	20 minute jog / strides / stretch
	8:46 pm.	Athens Olympic Games 1500 metre heat. (11 th place in 4:09.25)
Wed 25th August		The start of three weeks of total rest.