

Paul Sanders



For those of us who've been members of the running club for less than 15 years, we know Paul as a key support for training on Tuesdays and helpful company for the back of the pack runners on a Thursday evening from his bike, often with interesting stories about hard core cycling trips. He also appears out of the blue on race routes to cheer us on. Those a bit longer in the tooth will know that he's really a beast for pushing himself to the limits.

Paul went to school in Hulme in Manchester then attended Didsbury Tech. He found it hard to play football because of his glasses, so he swam and ran for the school instead. He enjoyed PE and excelled at sprinting and cross-country. He was encouraged by Mr. Red Shaw, "a brilliant PE teacher" who took his classes rock climbing at canoeing at Whaley Bridge. At 15 years old, Paul already weighed 11 stones and had big strong legs. He was good at athletics, bagging 1st or 2nd position in most events for the 800m, 1500m and the javelin.

He always had a bike and from early on enjoyed events like Manchester to Blackpool. When he was 17 he took up weight lifting, which felt a natural sport to get into because he was strong. Within a year, he weighed 14 stones and started competing in power lifting: bench presses, squats and deadlifts. At that time, he was training at a gym in Levenshulme and later helped set up a gym in Wilmslow called the Barbell Club, with Bruce McNulty. This was his main sport for over 15 years, into his early 30's.

Claim to fame.... when he was 21 he met Arnold Schwarzenegger, who is the same age as him. As well as power lifting, he took up judo but suffered lots of injuries "from not giving in". He took it as far as blue belt. We're talking hard man here!

Paul has always had a physically tough outdoor job. In addition to that he was cycling to work, training 7 days a week and coaching too. His diet matched his tough schedule: up to 24 eggs a day, 8 yoghurts a day, "pints" of milk, tuna and meat. Fortunately, he "had a mate who worked at Healds dairy and saw him right with end of life product at a cheap price." Even then it was an expensive diet!

Around this lifestyle, he managed to fit in Christine and a family. They were just 16 and 18 when they met and the rest is history. When he was 35, his daughter Sarah was 10 and started running at Handforth running Club. She was a promising runner, having won the under 11's cross country championships, so Paul ran and coached at the Club to support her. Christine was also Club Secretary so it was a family affair. Soon, his own running career also took off.

From '85 to '89 Paul remained a member at Handforth but trained at Manchester Harriers and Altrincham. It was an era of "superstars", including Jimmy Newnes, who could run 10 miles on the track in 49 minutes. "At the rep sessions some of the lads would run 4 x 1 mile reps at 4.18 min per mile."

Paul's training week when he was at peak was full on:

Monday - 10k alone or with Rob Dunkley.

Tuesday - At Gatley, the Manchester Harrier's track, trained by Wilf Richards, who was 80 then and still on the ball, writing every result down. Paul sometimes switched Tuesdays and Thursdays between Altrincham and Gatley to get two interval sessions in, on the cinder tracks. Typical sessions would be 16 x 400m, with the first 100m in an exact time and then the last flat out OR 2 x 5000m.

Wednesday - Easy 5 or 6 miles with Rob Dunkley (did Rob think they were easy?!)

Thursday - If not reps at John Lee Park in Altrincham or with Manchester Harriers at Gatley, then a fast ten miles in 64 minutes.

Friday - easy run with Tony, doing what they called "active rest", 5 miles in 40 minutes, stopping on the bridge to watch the Bollin.

Saturday - Alderley Edge killer session, which lasted 2 hours and consisted of a 4 mile warm up then running up and down every hill on Alderley Edge, including from bottom to top of Stormy Point, then finishing on Artists Lane. Cecilia would also join these sessions.

Sunday - Long 15 mile fast run on his own.

Paul's fastest times:

5k Road - 16.16 min

5k Track - 17.05 min

4 mile - 22.07 min (V.45)

5 mile - 26.40 min

10k Road - 33 min (Manchester City 10k from Maine Road)

10k Track - 35 min

10 mile - 56.35 min (Llandudno 10 mile)

Half Marathon - 77.16 min (finished 95th in Wilmslow but would be in top 30 today)

Marathon - 3.20 (only ran one)

JUDO
BLUE

WILMSLOW RUNNING CLUB



DO OR
DIE

Paul's favourite races:

Paul's first road race was Langley 7, around 1985, when he ran it in 54 minutes. A year later, he ran it in 41 minutes, with his fastest run still to come at 39.25 mins. He loved the hills and enjoyed the Bollington series. He remembers once running 9 miles from home to take part in the Cock and Pheasant race, which he ran hard to complete in 54 minutes, then he ran back home again, "thinking I was going to die on the way". He is human after all!

What made him such a good runner? He tells me he wasn't talented but was hard working and strong. He was also tactically good in races. His mileage was high at 60 to 70 miles a week and he "didn't leave training for racing". If there were 20 races that he wanted to run over the season, he'd run half of them seriously but wouldn't ease off the training for the others. If he got beaten in these races he didn't let it bother him. That doesn't mean to say he didn't battle every race out to the end.

He describes himself as a "do or die runner, like Malcolm or Diane McVey, never giving up and always fancying my chances on the sprint".

If he had his time again?

"I wouldn't do much different. I've always had a good appetite to train and suffer. If you want to be successful, you've got to learn to suffer". Paul recounts doing 10 mile circuits in Styal Woods, sometimes training until they threw up. He remembers Malcolm almost fainting and having to dash back to his car to get him mince pies to recover.

"You've just got to plan your time and your eating to get the training in. It only needs to take an hour." Paul's a big fan of Park Run - run a mile, race 5k and do a couple of easy miles at the end.

How did Wilmslow Running Club come about?

Handforth was focussed on youths and had little interest in the 6 senior members: Paul, Malcolm, Tony, Rob, Dave, Les Rayner, Arabella and Richard Woodrow. "Besides the vest was rubbish. When you finished it was a foot longer than when you started. So, it all started by wanting to change the vest."

The breakaway group wanted to start a road running club for over 18's and whilst they parted on good terms, "it was still a divorce".

From Day 1 in 1989, Paul was Club Secretary, Tony was coach and Dave was Membership Secretary. They met at Wilmslow Leisure Centre for the first year and then, with about 40 members, moved to the Rugby Club. The rhythm of the week was set from the start: Tuesdays for interval training, Thursdays for a longer testing run and Sundays for a long and easy run.

In the early days there were more Club races than there are now, with 4 miles and 10 miles featuring more prominently. There were also fewer women training and racing with the clubs. WRC had just a couple of ladies out of the 40 members.

From 1996 Paul got more into cycling. That year he did 320km Orday in 28 hours, then the following day ran the Birchwood 10k in 40 minutes, in the heat still dehydrated from his ride.

At the age of 50 Paul had cartilage problems and had to give up running at 51 after an operation that failed to resolve the issue. "Being a fast descender on the roads like Langley didn't help preserve my knees!"

He cycled more and more, joining the Altrincham Ravens in Macclesfield:

1400 kms in 4 days London to Edinburgh to London

1200 kms in 84 hours Paris to Brest to Paris (an event with 5000 riders every 4 years)

In 2010 he cycled 11,000 miles in the year, including 978 in 8 days from Lands End to John O'Groats with Malcolm and Paul Ayres. Two months later he cycled to Spain, arriving in Benidorm 2 days earlier than planned to surprise Christine. He covered 290km in one day, only getting off the bike once!

Today at 68 he's still super-fit and rides about 200 miles a week. "I'm 6kgs over-weight because I enjoy my real ale and I've got more of a balance in life".

Still a big supporter and helper of the Club and still very much appreciated.