

YOUNG IDEALS, DREAMS

BY BRUCE TULLOH

Without the dreams, nothing is ever achieved. Even the middle-aged marathon runner plodding round the streets has dreams of achieving super-fitness and amazing everybody. The young runner can dream of winning the schoolboy title, running for the county team, maybe even running for his country, going to America, going to the Olympics. Why not?

In every generation there is a new crop of athletes. Nobody starts off famous. Every runner starts alone, unknown, knowing that there are many better runners to beat. It is only the determination to overcome failure that keeps you going. The problem is that the distance between the dream and the reality sometimes seems so great as to be unreachable. This is where the coach comes in.

Pressure

One of the first things a runner has to learn to handle is the pressure of other people's expectations. "Where did you come, then?", say your friends. "Did you win?" "No, I was twelfth or thirteenth." You want to say "but there were sixty in the race and I was a year under age and I nearly caught so-and-so who usually beats me by a long way - so it was quite good really." But you don't, because you know you'll just get a pat response like, "Don't give me your excuses." If you do win, they just say, "I knew you would" and go away feeling pleased with themselves. You will soon learn that there are only a few people whose opinion is worth having and for the rest you can tell them anything you like, because they really know nothing about it.

Pressure from parents and teachers is something different. Obviously, the people who encourage you and support you are going to want you to succeed, for your sake and for theirs. Very often they can see your performances in a better perspective than you can. Sometimes they will insist on you getting out and training when you don't really feel like it. There is nothing wrong with that kind of pressure - up to a point. Excellence is not achieved without effort. Think of the pianist and ballet dancers who are practising three hours a day from the age of eight. Think of the swimmers who have to get up at six in the morning to swim before school. The important thing, though, is that parent, coach and athlete are all on the same wavelength, that they all have a realistic idea of how much talent the runner really has at a particular age. Too high an expectation can be damaging and can take a lot of the fun out of the sport. There is also the

BLOE / BANK OF IRELAND

The array of young, talented athletes who received the Bank of Ireland / BLOE Choice Sports Stars Awards at Bloomfield House Hotel in Mullingar on December 4th was simply stunning. Athletes from 31 counties received these special recognition awards and young high jump star, Brendan Reilly from Corby, was also present to receive his award. The obvious depth of talent is emphasised in the brief profiles of the athletes which we produce on these pages. We wish them all well in their future athletic careers and along the road of life.

This has been a special year for BLOE as it celebrates its 21st anniversary.

ANTRIM

Bryan Conway, St. Malachy's, Belfast, was gold medallist in the U17 1500m Indoor Championships and won bronze in the U17 1500m Track & Field Championships. His PB for 1500m is 3.58.



CLARE

Gerard Nagle, Marian AC won this award in 1985, 1987 and 1988. This year he won the boys U17 Shotput Championship with a throw of 14.99. He also took silver in the discus and bronze in the javelin.



ARMAGH

Emily Purnell from Armagh City Harriers was bronze medallist in the girls U17 100m outdoors, with a time of 13 seconds. She also won silver in the 60m sprint indoors in 7.7. She wins the award for the third successive year.



CORK

John Murray runs with North Cork AC and is the boys national U16 & 17 cross country champion. He also won the U17 National steeplechase title in a time of 5.56.20 and won bronze in the U17 3000m.



CARLOW

Peter Lyons competes with St. Laurence O'Toole Club and won silver medals in the national championship 100m & 200m U17. He has PBs of 11.50 for 100m and 22.5 for 200m. He represented BLOE in the Celtic International.



DERRY

Kevin Donaghy competes for Oak Leaf AC and this year won the national U16 Shotput title with a throw of 14.25. He also won silver in the national indoor U17 championship with a throw of 15.38m.



CAVAN

Arlene Smith from Breffni Harriers collected her third successive award. She won gold in the 60m and 800m indoors U15 and also won the outdoor U15 800m title in 2.13.4. A highly versatile athlete.



DONEGAL

Sharon Foley from Lifford AC is the current national U17 high jump champion, with a championship best performance of 1.77m. She won gold in the high jump and long jump, and also took gold in the U17 100m hurdles.



pressure of school work to be taken into account - the whole life must be considered, not the running in isolation.

Volume

Once you have embarked on serious and regular training, the question is "how

much should I be doing"? You will always hear about someone in the next school who is running twice a day and doing weights in the lunch hour, or someone else who is training with an international and running ten miles every night. You must not let this stampede you into doing something which you are not

AND REALITIES

YOUNG ATHLETE AWARDS '89

BLOE is without doubt the most vibrant and progressive branch of athletics in Ireland and long may the Board continue to flourish.

Close to five hundred people attended the most enjoyable and heart warming awards dinner at Bloomfield House, a fact which underlines the organisational ability of the juvenile board and the support which our young athletes enjoy at juvenile level. We believe that there were many bright stars of the future present in Mullingar on November 4th. Here's hoping that they all get the opportunity to further develop their athletic talents.



DOWN

Darragh Murphy is a member of North Down AC and is U15 national high jump champion, with a best of 1.85m. He is also U15 national long jump champion indoors and won gold for the high jump in these championships.



KERRY

John Horan is a race walker who competes for Moyvane AC. This year he won the U15 national 3000m walk championship in a time of 14.53.7. He also took gold in the national U15 1500m indoor walk championship.



DUBLIN

Michelle Gregg is a regular with West Dublin AC. She is the current national U16 400m and 800m champion. She won the 400m title in 58.54 and the 800m in 2.14.9. She could be a great middle distance star of the future.



KILDARE

Alan Giblin from Naas AC is the current U16 national long jump champion. He jumped 6.38m to win the title. At regional level he was a member of the U17 4 x 400m relay team. His sprinting ability should help his long jump.



FERMANAGH

Donall Burns is the third member of his family to receive this award, his brothers Gareth and Dwayne having been previous winners. He is a member of St. Joseph's AC and this year won bronze in the national U15 triple jump.



KILKENNY

Robert Barry is a hurdler from Kilkenny City Harriers. He is the national U15 200m hurdles champion and a silver medallist in the 100m hurdles championship. He also finished second in the national U15 long jump, with 6.11m.



GALWAY

Colin Casey from South Galway AC was a gold medallist in this year's national U17 triple jump, with a winning leap of 12.03m. He also took silver in the national U17 decathlon and has had much success in the long jump.



LAOIS

Caroline Condon competes for North Laois AC. She is the national U17 3000m women's walk champion, an event for which she holds the national record of 15.57. She also won silver in the British AAAs 3000m.



yond your capabilities you will soon get injured and that is a disaster.

There is another side to this, though, and here I have personal experience. "It's no good being too good too soon", they say, "because you'll never make it at senior level." My own daughters were school internationals at fourteen, ran for the national team at under eighteen level when they were not quite sixteen, and two years later have given up, possibly for ever. They got a lot of confidence and self-reliance from their achievements, as well as the respect of their peers. If they had not taken it up at the age of twelve, they would probably not have done it at all, because they became more and more involved with other things - exams, art, music, social life. For most of us, sport is only a part of life, not the whole thing.

Direction

At least once every year, and the beginning of the year is probably the best time, the athlete and the coach must pause to take stock. Big dreams are fine, but you must look for short-term goals on your journey. You should consider, too, whether you are doing the right event. People change as they get older; some get taller and thinner, some put on extra weight and muscle. Todd Bennett started off as a steeplechaser before finding that 400m was his best event. Paul Ereng ran 200m and 400m as a young athlete, and only turned to 800m in the year he won the Olympic title. My advice is not to specialise before the age of eighteen, to try for a wide range of events which will develop all aspects of your physique. Aerobic sports such as swimming and cycling, and multi-event sports like triathlon and decathlon, will not hinder your chances of eventually becoming a great runner, but will actually improve them, because you will become a tougher athlete both physically and mentally.

Within the context of your general ambitions, you should first of all fix on a few dates in the year when you are going for your best performances - this will probably mean schools or national championship dates. If you have, say, six months to go, you should then divide the time up into *Conditioning Period*, *Pre-Competition Period* and *Competition Period* so that you can make a change in your training plan every two or three months. This will give you something to work for in each period and a sense of really going somewhere. It is very boring to have a weekly pro-

ready for. The amount of training you do at any one time must be related to what you have done in the previous month. If you increase the training too quickly you may over-stress yourself and get ill or injured. For distance runners, a weekly increase of not more than five miles a week is alright, up to the level you can

take. If, at the beginning of a week's training, you still feel tired from the week before, you are doing too much.

The thing to remember is that talent does not go away. If you are not training to your maximum extent, you may take a little longer to reach your peak, but that is not a disaster. If you are training be-

YOUNG IDEALS, DREAMS AND REALITIES

continued

gramme where you do the same thing for week after week.

In each period you should be looking for something to add to what you did last year, as well as a slight improvement in the consistency and total volume of training. In the Conditioning Period there are lots of things which distance runners can do, most of them pretty tough, so don't try all of them at once! Hill running is top of the list for my athletes in importance, if not in popularity! You can do both short, sharp hills for leg strength and long hills for heart/lung training. Then there are various kinds of "resistance work", such as running in heavy boots, running through sand or running with weights, which have much the same effect as hills. If you have the facilities and proper advice, you might consider a period of weight training to improve all round strength and leg power.

"The important thing is to have variety in your training so that it remains challenging."

In the Pre-Competition Period you should be aiming for training which is related to your event, but also include running at speeds above and below that. Start by bringing into your winter training sessions of fast striding over 200m or so. As time goes on you can increase the distance of the fast runs, so that you are running fast bursts of 400m to 600m, preferably on grass. The recovery time should be long enough for your breathing to return completely to normal. At the same time, you will be doing some sessions of fast runs over longer distances. These might be fast runs of two or three miles in the winter, but come down to only a mile or so in the spring.

The important thing is to have variety in your training so that it always remains challenging. As you measure up to each challenge, you become a better athlete, both mentally and physically. The art of good coaching is to increase the challenges at the right rate, so that the athlete always has something to go for, which is possible, but not too easy. Whether the athlete reaches these goals or falls short, the coach and athlete must remember that sport is first of all something to be enjoyed. Every athlete has a few bad runs, but as long as there is support and enthusiasm and companionship, the runner will go on. The next track season lies ahead, and now is the time to look forward to it - so I say to you all, athletes and coaches - onwards!

BLOE / BANK OF IRELAND YOUNG ATHLETE AWARDS '89

LEITRIM

Orla McGuinness from Carrick-on-Shannon AC won the U17 national long jump title, with a leap of 5.52m. She also placed second in the national U17 100m hurdles championship.



SLIGO

Adrian Hampson, competes with Sligo AC, and won silver in the U16 800m in 1.56.54 and gold in the U16 1500m, with a new championship best performance of 4.01.74.



LIMERICK

Breda Gaffney who competes with Corbally AC took the silver medal in the national U16 and U17 3000m championships and won a bronze medal in the U17 1500m.



TIPPERARY

P.J. O'Rourke from Newport AC won gold in the U17 800m when he set a new record of 2.01.23. He also took silver in the U17 1500m national championships.



LOUTH

Niall Durnin from Blackrock Athletic Club, Co. Louth is the boys U16 400m national champion. He won the event in a time of 51.83. Niall shows a lot of promise at this event.



TYRONE

Ciaran Doherty was the 20th Strabane athlete to win a Bank of Ireland award. Ciaran took the gold medal in the boys U14 national pentathlon championships.



MAYO

Natalie Davey, Claremorris AC, the girls U16 national cross country champion and competitor in the World C.C. Championship in Norway won gold in the U17 1500m, in 4.33.5.



WATERFORD

Andrew Monteith, a member of Ferrybank AC, set a new championship best performance in the U17 Octathlon with a score of 4547 points, which added 510 points to the existing record.



MEATH

Adrian Joyce, the youngest award winner this year, from Cushington AC was gold medal winner in the U13 Javelin, with a throw of 33.78. He also took bronze in the U13 discus.



WESTMEATH

Robert Barry throws the Javelin for Mullingar AC and is the boys U15 national champion at the event. He had a throw of 49.45 to win the title



MONAGHAN

Ann Marie Flannery, Monaghan Phoenix AC is the girls U16 Shotputt, Discus and Javelin champion. She is also the U17 indoor Shotputt gold medallist.



WEXFORD

Vanessa Molloy, Shelbourne AC, took the U17 national cross country title and won bronze in the U16 national cross country event. She also took silver medal in the U17 800m & 1500m.



OFFALY

Kevin Darcy from Ferrane AC took the Boys U16 400m hurdles title, with a time of 57.92. He also won the Leinster Schools 400m hurdles and was 4th in the All-Ireland Schools.



WICKLOW

Nigel Brunton of Bray Striders won the U17 3000m title, took bronze in the U16 national cross country championships, silver in the U15 1500m and another bronze in the U17 800m.



ROSCOMMON

Emer Molloy, Lough Ree AC, collected two gold medals in these championships - in the girls U17 800m indoor and outdoor events. Emer was also 800m winner in the Celtic International.



OVERSEAS

Brendan Reilly, Corby AC, UK, was chosen as the Bank of Ireland/BLOE overseas star for 1989. He set a new Irish and BLOE record with a jump of 2.12m in the U17 high jump.

