



## THE SIMMER OF '89

Looking back, the summer of '89 recalls days of endless sunshine followed by nights of sheetless slumber. Out on the streets no self-respecting teenager could be seen without knee length psychedelic Bermudas topped by baggy teeshirts and gawdy 'shades'. Dogs' tongues assumed the 'I've just sucked a whole tube of Victory-Vs' look. Park benches were littered with somnolent geriatrics, a few of whom looked to be alive. For the athlete, however, it didn't do to take liberties in such swelteringly legless weather.

The heat exploited any weaknesses and reduced you to the ranks of a mere mortal, albeit a sleek and glistening one. Unaware that there were any flaws in the body beautiful, I set off one blazing Sunday afternoon in August for a sixteen mile run around the Wychwood Forest. Donning my tiniest orange shorts, plus the orange string vest with sole chest hair protruding defiantly, I fairly skimmed along the lanes. All went well until half way when I began to slow listlessly. Sod's Law that I still had eight miles to go. Head no longer held confidently erect but staring wide-eyed at the ground, I shuffled painfully along rustic bridleways. Pride stopped me begging a squirt of water from one lady's hosepipe in Westcote. Tottering down into Chilson I submerged my scalding skull in a cattle trough which revived me instantly....for all of 200 yards. Three miles to go and I felt like death roasted up. Almost down to walking pace I was passed by two horse riders; had they never heard the story of the Good Samaritan? I felt like crying out those familiar words 'A hearse, a hearse, my kingdom for a hearse'.

After nearly two and a half hours I fell indoors and crawled up to the shower. With a pint mug of tea propped on the bath rim I sat lifelessly having a shower, with not the strength to stand. Next day's diagnosis of a viral infection did nothing to cheer me up, though it did unshackle me from the rigours of the chalk face for two days.

Generally, though, training in the outdoor oven was a joy. Sweltering fields, plus near fatal doses of ultra-violet rays lead to a feeling of oneness with yourself, your sport and the earth. Such eulogy cannot conceal other memories which remain stuck in the brain of every athletic Adonis in the land.

For a start he began to sweat on the way upstairs to get changed...that is assuming he needed to get changed. At races, fellow competitors swaggered up in cutaway shorts,

He-man, bust-a-pectoral vests and a pair of flip-flops, so all they needed was a change of footwear. But as he started to sweat (sorry, ladies, I mean 'glow') he shrugged into the bare minimum of all-purpose sauna kit. Trainers and diminutive loin covers were essential, even for the head cases from Woodstock Harriers, but vests were an optional extra; and the vests seemed to be composed of every possible combination of colours, swooshes, logos, holes and meshes. The two essentials in this world of fair vanity were to look good and feel good. Skull wear ranged from sun visors for the new breed to headbands for the hippy generation, while those cute little round-your-fist water containers stigmatised the real joggers.

And how did the great British public view our straining tearaway? This multi-

coloured blur of athletic prowess seemed to have one of two possible effects on the fat and flabby entrails of society. Nobody was sure whether to be incredibly impressed by his defiance of the heat wave or equally depressed by his total absence of little grey cells. Gardeners would straighten stiffly from their mowers to admire this fleeting facade of fitness. More indolent householders would lower their long cooling glasses and look pityingly at him over the tops of their Guardians. For them it's only 'mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun'. Impervious to their glances, Superman A.C. purrs down the road.

It was a pity that I should choose this particular summer to make a complete male hen-up of my racing plans, but that is a story for a later issue, owing to lack of space.

But now such hot-blooded memories are a thing of the past. It's back to thermal shirts, rainproof gear and the reflective strips. Even the suntan's washing off. Now there's just two months of training in the dark, popping up in amazed headlamps like Banquo's ghost. Once that's over, our leached and bleached nocturnal runner will emerge blinking into the sunlight; roll on, those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer.



(Copyright) Bob Forster.

\*\*\*\*\*

Bob Forster has written a book entitled "Confessions of a brain-damaged runner".

It is available at an inclusive price of £2.50 from him at: 10, Tothill, Shipton-u-Wychwood, Oxford, OX7 6BX.



#### OXFORD

111, Walton Street,  
Oxford OX2 6AJ.  
Telephone (0865) 57454

#### READING

84, London Street,  
Reading RG1 4SJ.  
Telephone (0734) 581575

#### SWINDON

7, Bath Road,  
Swindon SN1 4AS  
Telephone (0793) 31437

#### HIGH WYCOMBE

264, Desborough Road,  
High Wycombe HP11 2QR  
Telephone (0256) 27975

#### BASINGSTOKE

Telephone (0256) 469478

#### Clive Drewett

Telephone:  
Shipton-u-Wychwood  
831072

- All types of keys cut
- Grills, Bars and Shutters
- Fire and Thief resisting Safes
- D.I.Y. Alarms
- Fire resisting Cabinets and Files
- Master Keyed Suites
- Locks to BSI and insurance specifications
- Telephone, Card and Digital Entry Systems

**SUPPLY - INSTALLATION - SERVICE**