

Everyone ♥ a Bunny

its long ears, twitchy nose, little whiskers, bright eyes, fluffy fur and of course its cute bob tail ...



Bunnies come in all shapes and sizes. There is one SPECIAL bunny though and whether you are young, old, a serious athlete or a fun runner there is only one bunny to chase in the month of April – the chocolate one. On average 250 runners come along to join in the spectacle and race every Tuesday evening in the thrilling challenge and chocolate drama, that are the **BUNNY RUNS.**

BR 1 – The Slowest winner ever! Three records were set: The first incredibly by the oldest competitor, Brian Leathley, at a young 76 years he recorded 32-31 to set a new over 70's record. The second was in the record number of ladies taking part – a fab and inspiring 94 runners.

The final record was set by road running superstar 29 year old Andi Jones, the race winner, who recorded the slowest ever winning time of 16-05 – over a minute outside Ian Holmes' course record of 15 minutes dead, set last year. A waterlogged course and fierce strong winds did Andi, fresh from running in the Great Britain team in the World X-Country Championships in Edinburgh two days previous, no favours what so ever. He led throughout, winning the prime Egg Stage in 3-45 – another slowest ever time – before virtually sliding into

the finish funnel, due to possibly the wrong choice of shoes. 25 times winner Ian Holmes finished second and first V40 only 23 seconds behind, with England junior International Rob Shaw, only 18, third. Rob just loves the fells, especially the climbing aspect and is realising he has a real talent here, just like his dad David, who finished third V40.

Bingley Harrier Sharon Taylor, second in the British Championships last year, won the Egg Stage in 4-56, just having the edge over 14 year old Mel Hyder from Helm Hill, and won in 19-15 from 22 year old Emily Klee of Leeds City. This was Sharon's second BR win, the first one being in 2005 at BR3. Mel, twice now the U14 English champion took third, only 5 seconds behind Emily, but did win the FU16's. Another England junior International, Anna Anderson in

Bunny Two – they're off and running!!!



Photo courtesy of Dave Beett



A mud covered Hannah Topham of Hyndburn AC, 5th FU14 at BR1

Photos courtesy of Paul Wood

fourth, led home the Pendle AC ladies winning team, with Emma Spencer sixth and first FU14 and anchor lady Melissa Berry 11th, second FU14. Pendle also supplied the first BU16 in Daniel Evans, who finished just ahead of Joseph Crossfield, the second BU16. Holmfirth Harriers dominated the BU14 category with Tom Halton first in 20-10 from Declan McGivern, with Wharfedale's Kendal Winter Fell League winner, Ben Johnstone, only one second behind Declan.

The yummy Belgian 2kilo chocolate egg prize draw was won by Andrew Biddle. What's the bet this was polished off with the grateful help of Kyle, Grace, Naomi and Faith - did mum and dad get a look in! No chance!

BR 2 - William the Conqueror - makes history!

32 year old Willy Smith a Director of Keighley's Sport Camps achieved one of his sporting ambitions, and entered the history books by becoming the first ever Keighley and Craven athlete to win a BR in the races 17 years. Willy has been competing in these races for the last 9 years, and has always featured highly, but here he stormed up the last climb to beat European Junior Triathlon Champion Jonathan Brownlee and 25 BR winner Ian Holmes to conquer in 15-33. Jonathan, 17, finished 5 seconds behind, and probably paid the price for battling it out for the Egg Stage prize with Rob Shaw, who triumphed in 3-35 - a mere second in front of Jonathan.

'I have so much respect for Ian Holmes, and all he has achieved so to finally beat him is a fantastic feeling. I gave it everything up the last climb, after a great battle with Jonnie, Ian, Rob and Tim Midgely. What a great race it was!' said a jubilant William the Conqueror.

On the dry cool night two records were broken, and one equalled. 61 year old Dave Tait who just missed the V60 record the previous

A new beginning

Bunny virgin - Debbie Cox
of Keighley & Craven AC

It's April Fools day, and I am a 39 year old mother of three, two of which run regularly for Keighley & Craven AC, standing on the top of a hill on Haworth Moor with 250 other people asking myself "why" am I doing this. The answer is it's the first Bunny Run of 2008 and my friend Lynda Hargreaves and I decided we would have a go.

The weather is cold and windy, but I am determined to start and hopefully finish. I am not a runner in any way shape or form, but after bringing my daughter Charlotte, 12, up to the Bunnies last year for five weeks in a row, and standing there watching her for the most part shivering, I started to think I might like to have a go.

So here I am at the start having lost a few pounds, and started to run a little, not really knowing what to expect, but everyone around me is really encouraging and full of excitement.

We set off, I was at the back from the start just trying to keep someone in sight so I had some idea of where I was going. It seemed to go on forever, I found myself walking up most of the hills and doing my best not to be blown away or disappear in a puddle of mud. Finally I reached the top of the last big climb, and to the shouts of "come on mum" from my daughter I made it to the finish.

I was only ever going to take part in one bunny, but I had such a great time I found myself at the start of Bunny Two. The weather was kinder, and I felt more confident knowing what to expect this time. The Woodentops arrived in their little home from home, and it was time go. There were 272 runners taking part, and again I was at the back, but that didn't deter me. I just wanted to run faster than last week, it was starting to become a challenge. I still couldn't catch any of the youngsters, and again my daughter was at the finish cheering me on as I came down the hill trying my best to stay on my feet.

Bunny Three, what can I say except it was an absolute triumph that anyone started, never mind finished, we were bombarded with hail, sleet, snow, rain and everything else the Yorkshire weather wanted to throw at us. There was mud everywhere, and trying to run and stay in an upright position was a challenge.

week, took 11 seconds off the old record. V70 Brian Leathley once again showed age is no excuse, as he shaved 50 seconds off his own record, and with 272 runners competing, this equalled the existing record, showing everybody loves the Bunnies - or maybe it's all that chocolate!

Medical rep. Sharon Taylor returned to clinch a hat trick of victories. Running 20 seconds faster to finish in 18-45 and incredibly running 44



Photos courtesy of Dave Woodhead

Virgin Bunny runner Debbie Cox with family Emily aged 7, Charlotte aged 12, Katherine aged 5 holding a chocolate smelling bunny

I've never laughed so much in my life or been covered in more mud than my kids, although I think it was some hours later before I finally felt my fingers again.

Another Tuesday soon arrived, and with it came Bunny Four, I had been so excited about it all day mainly due to the fact that for the first time the weather was dry and a little warmer. I tried to give it my all this week, and for the most part I actually managed to keep the tail end of the main pack in sight, I found I ran more of the hills, although the last climb before the finish still beats me - just wait 'til next year!

The bunnies have to be the most fun you can have on a Tuesday night in April, when asked if I would do it again the answer is "oh yes" without hesitation. The best part for me is the encouragement and support you get from the runners and spectators alike, and that there are runners of all ages and abilities setting off together heading up the hill towards the skyline. To top it off there is chocolate, lots of chocolate to look forward to in the pub afterwards, that's of course if you can beat the kids to it!

For you the anoraks:

BR1	175th Charlotte	26-01
	245th Debbie	36-28
BR2	188th Charlotte	24-24
	263rd Debbie	33-26
BR3	170th Charlotte	24-39
	242nd Debbie	34-40
BR4	150th Charlotte	24-09
	212th Debbie	32-18

So Charlotte improved by 1-52, but mum, Debbie ran an impressive 4-10 faster.

seconds faster than the previous week to win the Egg Stage in 4-12.

Improving from 4th place, England junior international Anna Anderson, 18, finished second improving her time by 76 seconds, while Helen Glover, Willy's partner, finished third, 4 seconds behind. Despite running 44 seconds faster Mel Hyder dropped a place, but still finished first FU16 with Michaela Brolly second and Amy MacGivern third. Pendle

ladies once again conquered all, with first and second FU14 girls Emma Spencer and Jade Lord backing up Anna's performance. A fierce battle was witnessed between great rivals Jonathan Bradshaw and Tom Sessford, with Tom just having the edge by one second to finish 14th and 15th overall respectively, second and third BU16's behind winner Ashley Kay. BU14 Tom Halton of Holmfirth dominated again, scaring the first V50 Brian Goodison and senior athletes, Paul Mitchell, Robin Bradbury, Colin Moses and Paul Crabtree to name but a few, as he improved his time by 110 seconds.

One of the biggest smiles of the night was to be found on young Harry Sessford's beaming face when European junior Triathlon Champion Jonathan Brownlee pulled Harry's name out of the prize draw for the yummy Belgian 2kilo chocolate egg. Harry could just about see over the top of it as he staggered his way home with it. Will any of the other family see the chocolate? No chance!

BR 3 - Oh what a night! From an organisers point of view it was a nightmare, but the feedback from you, the runners, was that you loved the hail, sleet and rain that hammered down on you all. Are you all mad? It was atrocious weather, which had you all covered in mud and shaking uncontrollably at the finish, which resembled a big muddy puddle. How 258 runners survived with no serious injuries to themselves we'll never know! From the organisational side of things - what a nightmare! Numbers disintegrated, mainly due to the plastic bags which were provided not being used, this caused problems at the finish. How our recorders managed to do their difficult job and keep order is beyond us - imagine runners finishing virtually every 2 seconds, some with numbers, some without. All the ones without numbers then had to be identified by asking them their name and then quickly jotting it down. Of course the rain was still lashing down, the runners still frozen, yet the finish funnel kept flowing, not an easy task! So a big up for Michael and Carol Fryer, Shirley, Paul and Sam Wood.

Next came the challenge of translating that information on to wet result sheets - using the sticky labels proved a sticky situation in itself. So sorry only minimum results appeared at the soggy finish area on the night, but Emily Wood and her little assistant Eileen did manage to produce full results at the Old Sun Hotel pub prize giving, where everybody took welcome refuge, watching that nights race on the big screen. This was another fun nightmare for Robert and Maxine Adamson, but they did a fantastic video, encapsulating that nights mud fest.

In the race, showing a clean pair of heels for the second week running, Willy 'Sport Camps' Smith, conquered again finishing in 15-54 - again taking Ian Holmes' scalp. Ian did win the V40's, again finishing 22 seconds behind, with teenager Rob Shaw 3rd only 5 seconds behind Ian. Rob won his second Egg Stage in 3-35, exactly the same time as last week. Willy a recent winner of two 5k road races in Lancashire commented, 'those conditions were horrible. It was not only wet, it was freezing. I was really

Grunts & groans of ecstasy

Granny, Lyn Eden, Nidd Valley Harriers

'Bunny One was run against a gale force wind, Bunny Two in almost ideal conditions against a setting sun casting a red glow over the lovely Haworth moors. Bunny Three really excelled, the heavens opened with perfect timing as everyone was making their way to the start, as we watched the many puddles getting deeper and deeper, and muddier and muddier.

The race started, the rain pelted as we waded through mud uphill and down round the first lap of the course. By the time I started the big lap the rain had turned to sleet and hail, and by the time I reached the moorland the puddles were bigger and deeper and the mud muddier and muddier. The hail by now had turned to snow, race numbers were flying off vests, people were slipping and sliding and some losing their shoes. The downhill finish provided an amusing spectacle for those watching as it was so muddy and slippery. Some slalomed down, some walked, some very gingerly, some even on their backsides (not always their preferred choice).

At the time I thought it was the greatest experience I have had for a long time. However the best was yet to come, once we were changed and in the car on our way back to Harrogate we started on our creme eggs. Wow!!! The car was full of sighs, grunts and groans of ecstasy as we licked and sucked our creme eggs, making them last for as long as possible. It sounded as if we were all in the middle of a great sexual experience. It was orgasmic!!! The race may have been an organiser's nightmare considering the conditions but



Granny Lyn Eden and Sue Narey (96) enjoy 'rabbiting' round the Bunnies.

for us runners, it was a brilliant experience and explains why we all love running in the fells. It also emphasised how even in April conditions may change dramatically in such a short time, a sharp reminder to me that I must always have with me appropriate gear for all conditions when running on the fells. It also showed me that even at my age I can still find the child in me and experience the thrill of running, and splashing through muddy puddles, and charging downhill attempting not to join those already on their backsides!



l-r 18 Jim Towers, 109 Helen Pettit, 185 Tony hart, 235 Sue Bickerdyke, 71 Alison Fowler, Sue Foulton, 246 Gordon Weight

worried about Ian and his fell running ability, but I was very confident on the climbs which made the difference. My fitness has really improved since Helen and I acquired 2 springer spaniels, Bella and Earl – they always want exercising, morning, noon and night!

Recent April birthday boy Bingley's Jon Cordingley ran 18-13 to win the V50 prize, while Dave Tait completed a hat trick of wins in the V60's.

Sharon Taylor also made it 3 straight wins this series, winning in 19-01 from Anna Anderson 19-28 and Helen Glover 19-55. This despite finishing 5th lady in 2 hours 43 minutes and showing the souvenir cuts and bruises from the ultra rough and steep 13m/5000ft Irish Mourne Mountain Peaks race two days previous. England international Anna won the Egg Stage in 4-21, and again led Pendle ladies to the team chocolate eggs with GU14 winner Emma Spencer 6th and 2nd GU14 Jade Lord in 7th.

Cor, whilst last weekend thousands travelled to London for the marathon, the Wilson family came the other way to run a Bunny. Lynn Wilson even won the FV50's in 22-55, whilst son Robert finished 44th in 19-23 and Martin just enjoyed hostile Yorkshire weather.

The yummy Belgian 2 kilo chocolate egg was won by Tim Midgley who finished in 4th overall, so his chocolate haul was enhanced dramatically. This prize is for everybody, and it's the luck of the draw who wins, next time it could be you!

BR 4 – It's chocolate mayhem! 223 chased even more chocolate on the warmest, brightest and sunniest evening of the series – a total turn about from BR3's diabolical condition's. Guest celebrity, Commonwealth Games silver medallist, Lisa Brambani got in to the spirit of the Bunnies by adopting Bunny ears and tail in her first ever competitive running event. Lisa, was a renowned international road race cyclist and represented Great Britain in the Olympics, was the National Champion four times and ruled the roost in domestic competition in the late eighties. Nowadays Lisa keeps fit running and working out in the gym and only occasionally gets her bike out. She finished 11th lady in 22-24, so maybe this will be the start of her running career? Daughter Abbey Mae, the current Yorkshire swimming and Cross Country Champion is already proving to be pretty nippy!

Willy Smith and Sharon Taylor were crowned King and Queen of the series, and will now be immortalised on next years Bunny Beer label, the same way 2007 winners Ian Holmes and Jo Buckley were. Willy is in the form of his life with seven wins in recent races, including victory at the Bradford 10K in just under 32 minutes just two days previous. At BR4 Willy led all the way, winning in 15-25, and also taking the Egg Stage in 3-30 His tactics paid dividends as he told team mate and twice Egg Stage winner Rob Shaw to lay off the early pace this week - nice one Willy! 18 year old Rob finished second in 15-47, with Tom Adams 3rd in his fastest time of 16-14, previously having finished 5th and 6th twice in the series.

Having just finished second BU16 in the first



104, Philip Done, 163, Simon Farrar, 116, Derek Donohue, 166, Ray Hawksby with the lake behind

Photo courtesy of Dave Birt



Series winner Willy Smith chased by twice Egg Stage winner Rob Shaw both of Keighley & Craven

Photo courtesy of Paul Wood

FRA Junior English championships in the Lake District at Anniversary Wa to 2007 U14 English champion Jamie Crompton, Thomas Sessford showed no fatigue, finishing a super 6th overall and breaking the first BU16 record by 8 seconds. Ashley Kay, 2nd, was also inside Marc Scott's record and Jonathan Bradshaw finished 3rd.

Showing just how talented youngsters are, Pendle AC's posse of young FU14's dominated the ladies category, with ever smiling Emma Spencer winning in 20-07, from Jade Lord and Melissa Berry. All excelled to beat senior lady, Bingley's Mary Green. Thus Pendle AC won the ladies team again, to make it a clean sweep of team

victories in the series – these girls must really love chocolate! 16 year old Michaela Brolly emerged as the new Egg Stage winner in 4-29, and excitedly enjoyed the Crackerjack style prize experience.

At the other end of the age scale, two new records were set with V70 Brian Leathley fresh from warm weather training in Devon knocking 27 seconds off his existing record and more importantly getting increasingly nearer his wife Christine. The other record was set by new recruit to the FV50's category, Mary Green who could change her name to evergreen now, as she reduced Linda Bostock's old record by two minutes eight seconds.

Chocolate mayhem ensued at the Old Sun Hotel prize giving, where BR4 prizes and then the overall prizes were awarded by celebrity Lisa. This included the much sought after Bunny Beer. Finally, Lisa drew FV50 Jenny Vesey's name out of the prize draw box for the yummy Belgian 2 kilo chocolate egg. Jenny finished in 154th in 24-22. Finally as is customary in all the Bunnies, after the prize giving the real chocolate mayhem begins, with literally chocolate showering the eager chanting crowd. Just remember though you have to be quick, because some young whipper-snapper will snatch that choc right out of your hands.

A whole years worth of seasons in one race!

Matthew Jones, aged 13 of Spenborough AC

I go to Castle Hall School in Mirfield and run for Spenborough AC. My hobbies include running (surprise, surprise), playing the trumpet and as a matter of interest my favourite food is pizza!

I first got into running when I was 7 when my Dad (Chris) took me down to the track where I joined the junior group on a Saturday morning (he was probably sick of me running around the house!). I went down there until I was 9, and old enough to join Spenborough AC

I did all the usual sort of stuff like track and cross country for a few years before I discovered fell running. I thought at first that people must be absolutely insane (no offence) to do something like that. But I enjoyed my first fell race, the Stoop Curly Wurlly Quarry Run so much, that I've been doing it ever since.

I did my first Bunny Runs last year and I really enjoyed them. It's nice to get a chance to compete with the adults and you also get a cadbury's creme egg! (I have a weakness)

Bunny 1

Last year we had dry conditions for the whole series, but that was not the case for Bunny 1 this year. It was wet, muddy, and blowing a gale.

A record number of April fools on the course made it a very congested start. It was so windy and muddy up there, it was one step forward, two steps back all the way around. Just to tell you how muddy it was, on the downhill at the start of the second lap I passed a half-buried Walsh shoe that somebody had lost in the mud.

My time was also a lot slower than last year probably due to the conditions.

Bunny 2

This week even more people turned up! Funny really, after the conditions last week I thought there would be less. So we had another stampede at the start (I wonder how Dave gets out of the way). Although it wasn't raining the course had not really dried out so



Matthew Jones of Spenboro'

Photo courtesy of David Brent

well. In fact it was still slippy enough for me to injure my knee at the beginning of the second lap. That one kept me up all night Wednesday. Despite my knee I still managed to improve my time from the week before. As I left I hoped the weather would improve further next week. I hoped in vain...

Bunny 3

It rained, it hailed and it even snowed! A whole years worth of seasons in one race! The weather even deceived some people because, as it was nice weather at the start, people took the plastic off their numbers and as soon as it started raining, the numbers fell straight off. Disaster! Numbers all over the course. It was like running through a mud bath! Some nasty falls happened too with people falling over and sliding on to their backs. It was absolute carnage! Probably the most interesting Bunny Run we had. My hopes of a Bunny PB were foiled by the atrocious weather.

Bunny 4

Hallelujah! Finally the, Bunny that was sunny! The closest Bunny Run we got to last year

where the weather was great. The course had not totally dried out, but it was good enough for me because despite feeling like a sack of potatoes all the way around, I still managed to pull off my fastest time of the year, 22-48. My Dad also told me to put in that he got a PB. (Show off).

Bunny Relay

The conditions at the relay were pretty much the same as Bunny Run 4, meaning that it was a nice night. I formed a team with my Dad and Tim Wragg. We came up with what we thought was a good name "The Wragg and Jones Men". My Dad ran the first leg, Tim ran the second leg and I ran the last leg. I looked at my time the night after and found that I'd done a brilliant run finishing 2 minutes faster than last year. Later that evening I found that the individual times didn't add up to the total. (Dave blames Eileen, Eileen blames Dave). That meant that my actual time was almost 2 minutes slower (sob) equalling Tim's time, but it was still a really good run for me.

So that's it for another year. We've had the good, the bad and the ugly this year and I'm really looking forward to next year!

The two girls in the Jones family have yet to grace the Bunnies with their presence, but Sarah aged 10 can't wait, while mum Sue is still being egged on to run one, maybe more chocolate is the temptation that just might do the trick.



Matthew Jones and relay partner 96, Tim Wragg both of Spenboro' in amongst it at BR4

Photo courtesy of David Brent



Bunny girl Lisa Brambani finished 11th lady in 22-23, while daughter Abby-Mae finished 7th FU14 in 24-02

Bunny run was the hardest!!!

Bunny Girl Lisa Brambani

Lisa was a renowned international stage race rider and some of her greatest wins were in gruelling races on the continent against tough competition and she spent the 1989 and 1990 seasons racing in America with the top all girls Weight Watcher Team.

She represented Great Britain at the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul, South Korea. Highly tipped to bring home a medal after the previous year's world ranking of 4th, Lisa finished a disappointing 11th place.

The Olympic disappointment was quickly overshadowed by a fantastic ride in the 1990 Commonwealth Games in Auckland where Lisa took a fantastic silver only a millimetre away from gold!!

On the home front, Lisa was National Road Race Champion four times and National 10 Mile Time Trial Champion twice. Although Lisa ruled the roost in domestic competition, the cut and thrust of international events was always her first love!!

Nowadays Lisa keeps fit running and working out in the gym, occasionally getting her bike out, but only during the warmer summer months!!

I have ridden in the Olympics, Commonwealth Games, World & National Title Events, and I can honestly say the Bunny Run was the hardest!!!!... Well, it probably wasn't...that's the thing about pain during sport, it's very quickly forgotten and then you are left wondering why you didn't do better!!!

It all seemed like a good idea when Dave (the man of many hats) approached me to be "Celebrity Starter"...No problem, "Oh and the "Celebrity" usually runs too"...no problem, "We can let you have a start on the rest of the field"...No way!!!! Well, how hard could it be, jog round a quarry, up and down a few hills, across a moorland...and how can anyone say no to Dave...he's such a nice guy!!!

The "Bunny Outfit" wasn't mentioned during the initial brief, discussed in secret between Dave and my young daughter Abby - Mae, who thought it was a great idea to witness her mum suffer whilst dressed up as a rabbit. What more could a child wish for!!!!?

The night of the race arrived, and what a beautiful evening it was, clear skies, warm setting sun, perfect conditions...BIG field. These people looked good, professional even, what had I agreed to do!!!! Upon closer inspection the field was made up of a complete mix of different types even a few kids and OAP's, I was still in with a chance. Feeling buoyant I donned the Bunny garb and took my place on the front row. Official starter duties over and the race began...fast doesn't really

adequately describe the speed of the start, in fact I didn't know people could go so quick from a standing start. "Got to keep up, stick with them, come on, come on", BANG!! I hit the "wall", big time, my legs and arms felt like lead, my heart and chest were burning, I couldn't breathe and I'd only done 200 metres!! OH MY GOD, what had I let myself in for???? As the field swallowed me up, I felt myself drifting quickly backwards, the kids and OAP's were coming past and I couldn't react. I couldn't go any faster, I felt like I was crawling, surely they would all slow down soon. They didn't. I did. I got slower and slower, I did contemplate giving up...but how can the "Celebrity" give up? "Run your own race" it's not advise a competitive athlete listens to, but I'm afraid I did... and once settled into my own steady pace, things did get better...slightly. My legs came round, but my lungs were on fire and that bl***y rabbit kit was very identifiable, no hiding...was everyone out to beat the bunny??? and where was the finish line???

I think the rock to the right hand side of the finish channel has, over many years, been shaped to accommodate the weary runners bottom because it was ideal. Had it not been for the fact that I was freezing, I would have gladly sat there for a couple of hours recovering. Looking around at the finishers I spied the OAP's and the kids I thought were easy game on the start line...how wrong I was. I did contemplate congratulating the small boy who looked about nine years old, but thought better of it...I'd been beaten, the humiliation!!

No...Fell Running isn't my thing. No, no, no definitely not, never again...but hang on, did I smell chocolate?? I can only describe the prize presentation as a cross between "Crackerjack" and a chocolate lovers idea of heaven. I have never seen an award ceremony like this before...anywhere (and I've been all over the world getting prizes). Amazing!! Did the Woodentops drain the entire Easter Egg quota for the whole of West Yorkshire? Did young children go without eggs because they had bought them all? Well it certainly seemed that way, the table was staggering with the weight of all the chocolate. The first man and woman home were piled high with goodies, and chocolate treats and this continued down through the field... in fact I don't think anyone went home without a prize. Absolutely Fantastic! All credit to everyone involved for making the event so incredibly enjoyable and different, even if 50% of the field only do it for the chocolate!!

Will I do another fell race....can I skip the racing malarkey, and go straight to the prize giving?

Pendle AC & the Bunnies

A coaches impressions

My name is Noel Finucane. Recently I received a telephone call from a guy named Dave Treetops, Woodentops or perhaps Woodenhead. He was difficult to understand, but I think he is from the Keighley area, enough said. Through the help of an interpreter, I understood he wanted me to write a piece about my athletes, my club and myself.

My club can be found in Lancashire at the end of the M65 and is called Pendle Athletic Club – a track, field and cross country club where I am Vice Chairman, young athletics team manager and endurance coach. Like all small clubs we are always short of athletes and at senior level we have amalgamated with our neighbouring town Burnley. I am employed by England Athletics part-time as head coach for the North West Endurance talent squad, meeting once a month during the winter. The

format has proved so successful that other areas are using our training template. Twice a year we have North of England weekends which are available for the most talented under twenty endurance members funded by the Great North Run.

About eight years ago I was looking for a variation in training routine and heard about the 'Bunnies'. I ventured out into the unknown, over the border, with my daughter Laura and two other athletes, and we arrived at Keighley to attend our first ever 'Bunny Run'. The athletes enjoyed the run, but what followed was something else. I was standing about twenty feet away from the 'trophy' table, minding my own business, when a missile struck me on the head. Once I had recovered my daughter informed me that I had been struck by a 'chocolate egg'. The evidence had been

devoured by a boy in the corner. I decided there and then that the 'Bunnies' were for my group and have been a devout follower since that day.

Two of my athletes, Ben Lindsay and Anna Anderson, due to their progress at the 'Bunnies' have become junior fell internationals. As I do not have a great deal of fell training knowledge, their accomplishments have been due to their own talent.

My latest young group of runners absolutely love the 'Bunnies' – so much that for one month in the year I have to re-schedule Monday/Wednesday training. The young girls in particular are a very talented and hardy bunch. They won the the Lancashire Schools Cross Country and came joint second in the Mid Lancashire Cross Series at Under Fifteen. They are also all eligible for the same age group next year and I have high hopes for them. They managed to win the ladies team prize in all four 'Bunnies' this year and as coach I received ten per cent of all chocolate won.

In my dreams ...

It is my opinion that any series of races that generate such enthusiasm and enjoyment are certainly doing their job in retaining youngsters in athletics.

I can only thank Dave and Eileen Woodhead for their infectious, enthusiastic dedication to the sport. By the way, where did he get that voice?

Pendle Athletic Club training is on Monday & Wednesday at 7pm from Seedhill track near Nelson town centre.

Pendle AC's finest athletes



Pendle's Number One?

Jack Thompson, age 17 of Pendle AC

"Six years ago I can remember the hustle and bustle as I lined up for my first ever bunny run. A baby faced eleven year old, I can remember being barged all over the place like a human pinball by all the "big people" as Dave set us off, but I can remember loving the whole experience of racing the adults, especially beating my dad, and also the substantial amount of chocolate was a huge positive looking back! I have done the Bunnies every year ever since.

In those six years a lot has changed and I am no longer the baby faced scrawny little boy any more, although some would disagree, and I am now taking my running a lot more seriously. I have made great progress since then and have won quite a few fell races, mainly in the BOFRA league. In cross country I have gained Lancashire vests at Lancashire schools and also Lancashire championships, and I also came 3rd in the mid Lancs under 17 league last year and 4th in the under 20 equivalent this year. On the track my main aim this year is to win the 3k at Lancashire schools and also I want to go under two minutes for the 800m, if I can.

I put a lot of this improvement down to hard work and of course the excellent coaching of Mr Noel Finucane, who is chuffed at finally improving my once ragged running technique! Also the training group I am in at the moment is amazing, with many having achieved county and even international honours. The lads I train with like Skippy (Ben White), Lil Foot (Donald Evans), Ray Mears (Ross Inglis), Girth (Garth Beckwith) and of course the mighty Gerbil (Sam Richards) means that training is fun. Yet I have to work very hard to maintain my status as Pendle's number one, especially on the sprints where Ben still believes he is the English version of Asafa Powell. Also me and the rest of the lads are convinced that 'Dan or is it Don' is putting something in his drink that he shouldn't - I'm going to have to raise the issue of a "random" drugs test to be taken come the next AGM I'm thinking.

As I lined up for the first Bunny this year, donning my Lancashire strip as a laugh to annoy some of my team mates that narrowly missed out, the atmosphere was electric. I stood ready on the start line, next to a certain Ian Holmes (who is actually quite short isn't he?), and before I knew it we was running. I got my usual fast start that took me to the fore of the field and after the first lap I was in about 5th, still tracking Ian Holmes, but then he quickly sped away and left me in his wake. But I held on for the rest of the course, despite losing a lot time on the drag up to the quarry, to finish in a respectable 11th place which I was fairly pleased about.

Unfortunately I developed shin splints after this race, and trying to run through it in the next few Bunnies really didn't help looking back, my position in the races slowly got worse, as did my injury. But still the great atmosphere in the pub afterwards, having a laugh with my team mates and also the abundance of chocolate all helped in cheering me up and made this years bunnies a great event for me, and I am sure I am not the only one who had a great time.'



Photo courtesy of Paul Wood

Pendle's number one Jack 'the lad' Thompson



Minnie Mouse, Emma Spencer just loves chocolate

Photo courtesy of Stuart James



Photo courtesy of Paul Wood

Pendle girls – Emma Spencer (52), Melissa Berry (71), Jade Lord (29), along with Ben Johnstone (188) and 3 times 3 Peaks winner Ian Ferguson (268)

The fells are great - the countryside & family days out

Bunny 4 Ladies winner - Emma Spencer, Age 14 of Pendle AC.

Also known as 'Minnie Mouse'

'Up to when I started running my life was just normal a bit boring! My hobby's were ballet and horse riding, which I wasn't very good at. Sometimes I go beating with my dad, brother and sometimes sister and we also take our dogs. This involves walking lots, and making lots of noise. My favourite foods are my mums roast chicken dinner, noodles, tuna pasta bake and chocolate spread with bread, and I live near Earby and go to West Craven High School in Barnoldswick.

I first started running at school on sports day and when we did athletics and cross country in P.E. I did a 1500m on sports day and came 1st, so my teacher, Mrs. Keebell, asked me if I would represent the school in the Pendle inter schools held at Seedhill track, home to Pendle AC. This is where it all starts - by the way I came 4th in the 1500m in some old marks and Spencer's trainers which were hanging off my feet. A parent of a child who used to run for Pendle AC said I should come down and train, and that's what I did! April 2006, Age 12. I started competing straight away for Pendle in my first mid Lancs track season. Now my dad, David, had to buy me some spikes and proper trainers. I mainly did 1500m my P.B then was 5.53 (Rubbish), and I also did long jump, I was not very good at that.

Then my first taste of cross country, competing in the mid Lancs league 2006/2007 season, I did ok in the under 13's and came 4th overall. I got my first Lancashire vest when I came 4th in the Lancs champs. Then I ran at Nottingham and came 3rd girl back for the Lancs team, I was really pleased as it was my first year of running. I also represented Lancashire in the indoor sports hall athletics, 6 lap event and standing high jump. I didn't really like the indoor so I haven't done one since. In 2007 I ran at the English Schools held at Leeds, 3rd girl back for Lancs, and was 126th out of 330 runners.

The chairman of Pendle AC, Paul Wilson suggested to my parents I should try fell running, so I joined BOFRA in June 2007. Kettlewell, my first race was probably the best because we had to cross the river. I did 9 out of the 15 races and came 2nd overall in the under 14 girls championship. The fells are great with the countryside and family days out. Even my dad's started running again, it has been 25 years since he last run as a school boy, then he was quite good. My brother Oliver has also started running about 1 year ago and is showing some talent. My older sister, Abby, and mum, Gina, don't run. Also in 2007 I did 3 FRA championship races out of the 6. Then came my second cross country season and I did better this time, and came 2nd overall representing Lancashire again at Nottingham. This year I didn't get in to the

English schools because I was full of a cold. In my second track season I started doing 3000m and my P.B is 11.39, and my new 1500m P.B is 5.14. I don't really enjoy the track because there is more pressure on you to do well, unlike fell running.

I love doing the Bunny Runs on a Tuesday night, it's a good course about 3 miles and you get all sorts of runners, from internationals to grandmas and granddads and kids. The great thing is everyone gets a prize. We always go back to the pub after for the presentation of eggs (Yum Yum) and it's a great atmosphere. I did well this year winning all four U14 races, and my U14 team mates did really well too: Melissa, Holly and Jade. We also won all the ladies team prizes with a little help from Anna Anderson at the first 3 races.

In the future I would love to earn a place in the Great Britain team for fell or cross country, and I would like to go and run the Marco in Italy, may be I can do it one year soon, it will be good to meet other young runners from other countries.

P.S. Thanks for my eggs (YUM.)!

Jack 'the lad' Thompson claims to be Pendle's number one, but if you went on the amount of chocolate won at the Bunnies then Emma is the true number one! This youngster even recently won Lothersdale and Farnhill ladies races outright - come on, try and keep up Jack.

A great passion for running

Jade Lord, aged 13 of Pendle AC

'Hi it's Jade, I am an athlete at Pendle Athletics Club and I attend Fishermore High School, I live with my brother Sam (who is still trying to find where I hid my chocolate from the Bunnies), and my mum Donna who makes the best pasta dishes ever, my favourite!

I started running for Pendle AC last year in April. I had my first ever race in year 4, 2004; the Pendle primary schools annual cross country run. I achieved 2nd in the girls year 3 and 4 category, doing much better than I had expected.

This was when I was first asked to run for Pendle by Noel Finucane, my now trainer. I declined this offer at first and decided to stick with football instead. At that time, football was one of my favourite sports and my coach thought I was very talented at it. I played football in the midfield for Burnley girls U13 football club in 2006, achieving player of the match on numerous occasions, and obviously support

them, but the best footballer is Ronaldo of Manchester United.

Then in late 2006, the Pendle primary schools annual cross country run came around and again Noel asked me if I would like to join Pendle AC. After considering continuing both sports, I decided that I would have to choose between athletics and football. For a few months I continued playing football, up until March 2007 when I finally quit this sport and joined athletics.

Whilst at Pendle AC I have competed in cross country, track and fell races gaining certificates, medals and trophies. My highest achievements are from when I was selected to run for Lancashire in the ESAA Sainsbury's Schools' 48th Boys and 40th Girls Cross Country Championships on Saturday, 8th of March 2008. The other, from being selected to run for Lancashire in the 2008 UK Inter-Counties Cross Country Championships, where I finished 91st. Both these events, I achieved in my first season and I am

overwhelmed to have been a part of them.

I also have a personal best of 2:30.2 in the 800m race which I achieved at Wigan on the 12th of April.

Recently, I ran in the Bunny Runs at Haworth which was great fun. I really enjoyed it because me and my team had a good laugh and we came first, winning lots and lots of chocolate (which I am still eating now..Yum Yum!). Also in this event I achieved individual awards for second place in three runs in the U14 girls category.

At first, I realised that I had started running because I was chosen by my teachers to do this, but as the months progressed I recognised that I had a great passion for running and a strong determination to win and achieve more and more.

My ambitions are to progress further in running and eventually represent England!



Photo courtesy of Alexis Woods

What is it about fell running & chocolate?

Melissa Berry aged 14 of Pendle AC Also known as 'Mints'

'I started running when I was just 8. This was because my brothers had joined a club at Park High School near Colne called Park High AC, and I, being the little, (faster I thought) sister, decided to join in and embarrass my big brothers, Philip (then 12) and Daniel (10), by beating them, yet I don't think that plan really worked! In 2002 my eldest brother, Philip, was Lancashire champion for X Country, and Daniel was quite unstoppable when the ground was muddy and heavy going, the worse conditions the better he seemed to do (he would probably make a brilliant fell runner).

The club was run by a fantastic coach, Mr. Hindle. Whilst running in this team I achieved many awards from track & X Country events. Most of these being just 600m & 800m, as these were the furthest I could run at my age, as I was still struggling to find spikes that would fit my tiny feet, I still do now! But the awards I am mostly proud of would be; Winning the Red Rose League (X Country) and finishing 2nd in the Reebok Challenge (X Country) both in 2006.

Mike Hindle became ill and the club ceased. I thought I had finished with running until Noel Finucane approached and offered to let me

train with Pendle until Mike was well enough to take up the reigns again. I knew Noel well from my time with Mike so the move was a comfortable one. When I made this move, I made some great friends & even greater running competitors, Holly Crabtree, Emma Spencer & Jade Lord, all being in the same age group as me, except Jade thought she would be moving up next year, but isn't. But one friend of mine, Alice Garnett, moved with me to Pendle AC from Park AC. I had known Alice most of the time I was running, because she also joined Mike after the influences of her older sister, Carla, joining him. It was great to move to a new club with a friend, although it was a struggle at first to get her to come along!!

My other interests besides running is swimming and drama, which I really enjoy because it's warmer than running! I have done a few performances - James and the giant peach, Summer in the park and the school cabaret besides the normal primary school stuff before. If I had the choice between being an actress or a runner, I'd choose acting for the money BUT running because I love it!!

It wasn't until I joined Pendle that I discovered the "Bunny Runs". What can I say, these are the highlight of the year. Hosted from

a pub that serves Timothy Taylors is my mum and dad's best reason for coming to watch. But for me the real reason for turning up to run in hail, sleet and bitter cold winds would have to be the chocolate!! Lots and lots of chocolate. Just about everyone goes home with some. My poor mum doesn't know what to do with her Tuesday night now that April is over.

My brothers don't run anymore they prefer to play football for Colne Clarets, but after seeing me arrive home with armfuls of chocolate, I think they may be joining me next year.

Doing the Bunnies, has opened a whole new field of running to me, as I usually do X Country or track events. But now I have an interest in fell running, I did a junior race at Pendle Hill and thoroughly enjoyed it. What is it about fell running and chocolate? I received yet more chocolate for coming third there. The one thing I don't like is Jamie Oliver, he's taken away our chocolate, fizzy pop, crisps in fact all the nice stuff and replaced it with fruit, cereal bars and water...it's just not right! My favourite foods are vegetables, with a drizzle of chocolate, ha ha. I will definitely be taking part in more fell runs this year, they are so different from what I have done before and loads of fun, so thanks to the Bunnies for introducing me to fell running!