

The world at his feet

In September 2006 one of Britain's most exciting talents, 18 year old Alistair Brownlee became the World Junior Triathlon Champion in Lausanne, Switzerland, capping a marvellous day of sport to remember along with Tim Don and Will Clarke they put the **Great back in to Britain.**

To most of you Ali as he is affectionately known, seems a shy retiring kind of guy, until you really get to know him, then his very dry sense of humour and cheeky grin let's him get away with murder. It also hides a very determined and strong willed individual, whose athletic ability is without question.

On the fell running scene he won the Under 16 British title in 2004, finished silver medallist in 2005, won the Black Forest Teenager Games in 2003, second in 2004, (due to argee bargee at the finish), and fourth at the Susa Marco Germanetto Memorial Races, all representing England. In his beloved home county he has amassed six Yorkshire fell running gold medals, winning twice at U14, U16 and U18, and also represented the Yorkshire Inter County senior team twice finishing seventeenth at Wrekin in 2005 helping the team to gold. A year later at Settle Hills he finished an astonishing second overall to Andi Jones to win an individual silver medal to become the youngest ever medallist in this event, and help the Yorkshire lads to team silver medals.

Regarding the World Mountain Running Trophy Ali has never managed to get it right on the day, so far, with **only** seventeenth in Turkey last year being his highest position, Ali does set himself very high standards hence the word **only**, although for someone so young he has been to an amazing four World Trophy events.

Ali's commitment is never in question and nothing emphasises this more than when as a 14 year old he was swimming, cycling and running around Rivington to qualify for the European Youth Triathlon Relay Team for Austria, at 7am in the morning. Then a mere 3 hours later he took part in the Black Forest Teenager Games trials race up Rivington Pike, surprisingly this task was one task too many. Consolation was the England team won gold in Austria.

Recently the British Triathlon Association asked Ali if he could take one thing on to a desert island what would it be, no thought was required as he quickly responded with **'running shoes of course.'**

Now studying medicine at Cambridge University, Ali has had quite an hectic year fitting in such things as; winning the European Duathlon Championships, second in the World Duathlon champs, third in the European Triathlon champs, and winner of the National Triathlon and Duathlon championships. On the cross country scene he won the English Schools, finished fourth in the English National and has now won six Yorkshire cross country titles, plus competing in numerous 'not so' showcase events. One of these was winning the Withins Skyline fell race in October, where he was the surprise guest celebrity, below he gives his slant on the whole day, and later on the World Triathlon Championships.

The Brownlee athletic ability doesn't just centre around Ali, he has two younger brothers, Jonathan is National Duathlon and Triathlon Champion for his age, he finished second junior in the Salford Tri which was a European cup race, won the junior London Triathlon and anchored the European Youth Relay Triathlon Team to gold. On the fells he is the current British and Irish Champion, Yorkshire U16 fells champion and recently won the 2007 Yorkshire U17 cross country title. Then there is Edward, who is just starting out on his career, already last year he became the Bradford Schools Cross Country Champion, and finished 3rd in the Yorkshire Triathlon series of races. Rumour is rife that the Brownlee Bombers are planning a major coup by winning the prestigious Bunny Run Relay title!

For the too young to remember fell runners amongst us, Jack Maitland mentioned in Ali's memoirs is a former British Fell Champion, Scottish Hill Running Champion, International Orienteer and fell runner, plus he won the British Duathlon and Scottish Triathlon Championships, the Everest Marathon and the Mount Cameroon race to name but a few of his achievements.

ALI'S MEMOIRS

Withins Skyline Race, Haworth, England 2006

'I have participated in most of the Haworth Moor races but never in the Withins Skyline. There was a free weekend in my calendar so I thought "why not give it a go" and more importantly I fancied some chocolate. Dave had asked me to turn up early in order to act as his "surprise Guest celebratory" and start the junior races in the quarry. The first job he had me doing on arrival was signing autographs and he bet that I would have more than 100 to do. Thankfully the number barely got into double figures.

A speech wasn't required at the start line, "go" was all that was required. After watching the juniors run and cheering them on I warmed up for my race, happy in the knowledge that my duties were over. Then Dave told me that I also had to start the senior race! After the photographs, I walked forward, said "go" in front of the large field. I'm not known for my speedy starts and it was definitely the first time I've ever left the quarry in first place. I might ask if I can start next year's race!

I ran hard up the Stoop and followed Dave's instructions to run along the boundary ditch until I saw the wooden posts. It was a little strange as this was the first race I had ever been leading that didn't have a flag every few feet and I was very pleased to see the building at top of Withins.

From the top of the waterfalls I ran as fast as I could and fell over my feet just before the road crossing. I couldn't finish a race without being covered in mud!

At the presentation I was given an amazing cake with a picture of myself on it along with a selection of chocolate, beer and Halloween goodies.

Thanks again Dave and Eileen for enough chocolate to last even me a month.'



World Triathlon Champs-Lausanne, Switzerland 2006

I arrived in Lausanne on a Wednesday evening to find out that we were staying in a five-star hotel only metres from the start and finish of the race. Lausanne is a small city on Lake Geneva in Switzerland. At the beginning of September I was there to race in the world junior triathlon championships. I had qualified for the race European triathlon championships by coming third. I was part of the junior boys team that also included my brother Jonathan (the better looking one) and Ritchie Nicholl. We had come to race against 100 other juniors from all over the world in a sprint distance race on the Saturday morning.

In the few days before the race I took time to look at the course. We went swimming in the lake and cycled round the course in a convoy that seemed to include every triathlete in the world. What can I say about a swim course except that it was flat and wet? We had been told that the bike course was very tough with a long climb at about 10% after the first kilometre. I don't know how they measure gradients in Switzerland but it's not the same as they do it in Yorkshire as it was barely a rise but still something for a triathlon course which are not known for their alpine climbs. The run was flatter than a pancake along the side of the lake with the only altitude gain being the climb up a curb half way round.

The team went to the Olympic museum for

the race briefing which managed to make lots of coaches very cross and me very confused. We got lost trying to find the registration and had to climb along a wall to the disgust of many of the customers of the posh restaurant on the other side of the window. The rest of the time was spent bouncing off the walls in enforced rest and relaxation.

The race was at seven o'clock which meant that I got up at four to eat, to make sure that I didn't get a stitch. After a lot of waiting I went down to the start of the race and was given the number tattoos to put on my arms and legs. I put mine on upside down and back to front before Jack Maitland offered to give me a hand. It was dark and six o'clock in the morning! We spent a bit of time discussing team tactics which involved my brother slowing down the pack as I made a bid for glory down the final decent.

I put my wetsuit on and went for a warm-up swim and run. Just before the start I lined up and walked out onto the pontoon. As there was a very large field we had to jump into the water instead of a dive start. At the sound of a horn, 104 athletes attempted to push off the pontoon and you can imagine the carnage that followed. After about ten strokes I was forced underwater for what seemed like an eternity. When I finally surfaced I could see the whole field in front of me. Race over I thought! I put my head down

Photo courtesy of David Brien



A muddy Ali at The Stoop in 2002

and swam as hard as I could. Towards the end I recognised one of the best French athletes coming past me and sprinted to get on his feet. About ten meters from the finish I caught up with my brother (recognisable by his bright yellow goggles) and scrambled out of the water. Fortunately there was a steep uphill to climb to the top of a bridge followed by a steep descent which allowed me to catch a few more athletes. I ran into transition, ripped my wetsuit off and grabbed my bike off the rail. The first few minutes of the bike were very intense as I cycled as hard as possible to try and catch the lead group. Once I had, the rest of the bike was fairly steady. After 5km my brother crashed after a bit of a confrontation with one of the Chinese athletes. About half way round one of the Athletes asked me if I was Alistair or Jonathon. I told them that I was Jonny and they were happy until a coach shouted "go Alistair" at which point there were attacks. I was confident of running faster than all of the athletes around me and I knew last years world champion, a very rapid American had been held up in the swim (a fiver well spent).

I came into second transition in the large front group and ran past my racking point because I saw my shoes some where else. I didn't think anyone else was stupid enough to use bright blue racing shoes.

After leaving transition the last athlete from my bike group I ran very hard for the first kilometre of the run in order to catch up the leaders. At the first turn around I was amazed to have enough in my legs to speed up and pull away from the Russian athlete in second place.

Coming up to the line someone handed me a flag and I realised how lucky I had been and that I was going to win. At the line I was interviewed by the commentator and posed for some photographs. The medal presentation took place soon afterwards, the national anthem was played, the Union Jack rose and I received my medal. It was an amazing experience.

Photo courtesy of Nigel Farrow

