1. Provide me with some background information on growing up and how to get into your sport...

Growing up I was basically always into sports right from the word go. From nursery I was always arranging races and racing against people and sort of always being competitive and wanting to win but during primary school I virtually tried every single sport. I was really lucky and we had a really good primary school teacher who was mad on sport (really big on football and rugby) so we just played loads of sport. That obviously got me in a decent frame of mind. We didn’t have much cash when we were younger so we would go down to local clubs and try and get in with the games there. For example, going down to Saint Marys to play football and stuff like that and I found that I was really good at the athletics side but also really good at other sports as well so I should have known at a really early stage to get into the athletics and the running side more because then I would have been more focused. I still did well but could have done much better if I’d have focused on the running aspects probably instead of playing football other sports more.

1. What is Cannonball Events?

Cannonball Events is an innovative running events company which is aimed at getting as many people running as possible but also about people achieving success through their running. We have things like improvement prizes in terms of times over a series, so it’s not just about people finishing first, second and third in a race, it’s actually like a race within a race almost.

1. What do you do to prepare for an event?

If it’s something major then I’m finding that the preparation is something more and more important the older you get. Then basically if it’s a large event, like a marathon or ultra marathon, I will be looking at my diet intake weeks and weeks in advance to try and get the balance right and keep my weight down.

Most of the time I do have a good diet. We do a lot of home cooking and my supplements are coming a lot more into it now depending on the type of training I’ve done. For weight training I will take Serious Whey Protein stuff and for any sort of running based activity where I am going to need to get energy fast and to recover quickly I am going to be using Serious Stamina. Then what I have found really useful, especially after marathons training or particularly long runs, is the Glutamine. Basically taking that along with other sort of recovery foods, such as nuts, cereals and fish, or foods that are high in protein. I am trying to get the balance right. I’m nearly there with it but occasionally I slip into eating too much but I’m burning lots of calories so it’s not too much of an issue.

1. What has been your biggest achievement?

To be honest my biggest achievement was probably getting my education really. It was really hard because I was very focused on my sport when I was younger. I was at football clubs which meant that I was missing a lot of school. Sometimes by choice and other times not by choice and just being told I need to be at a match at a certain time and it meant me missing school. Once I realised I wasn’t quite good enough with the football I really just had to get my head down but I was starting back from other people so it made it quite hard and to be sat here saying I’ve got a good degree in Sports Psychology is an achievement. I went to the University of Chester and lived over there. It was fantastic. I’d have stayed over there if I had a bigger wedge of money because obviously it’s an expensive place to live.

1. What has been your biggest disappointment?

The time period where I let myself go in terms of my weight really. It was a progressive deterioration if you like after University and once I started working full time in 2001-2005. I was still playing sport but it wasn’t structured and I was eating and drinking the wrong foods and in the wrong amounts. My lifestyle was just shocking really. Once I decided to sort myself out it took me awhile to get myself to where I wanted to be really. The point when I wanted to turn things around was when I got on the scales and I was 99 kilograms and I thought I’m not getting into three figures!! Although in some sports it’s a good thing to be getting into three figures it’s definitely not for me. That was the realisation point and I have never looked back ever since that day really since the end of 2005.

1. Do you have a hero? If so, who and why?

I have heroes within my family if you like. My grandma is my hero really. She passed away in December last year but growing up without a great deal of cash she still always made sure she provided for us and her morals and principles are something that I still stick to today even if I didn’t really understand them when I were younger. She had all the daft sayings that people at her age have really. They’re all relevant and I try and apply them now. A lot of them are about working hard and not moaning or complaining. Just basically getting on with life, being polite and treating people correctly. All basic rules really and we applied them when we were younger but I think a lot of people miss them now which I think is quite sad.

1. When are you at your most nervous when you are competing?

I do get nervous. It’s probably about two or three days before. It’s more nervous energy especially before a big event. It’s the anticipation but it’s a good thing yeah. It’s like the anticipation of not knowing whether you have done enough even though I probably know I have. Also, I’m not good when I’m not able to train. You’re supposed to rest but then you start feeling nervous about your weight worrying about if you’re putting weight on. For me, I have that kind of metabolism where I can’t really ever stop because I feel like I just put on weight.

1. How many hours do you spend training a week? Talk me through your routine....

Some people won’t believe me when I say I’m actually planning on doing a lot more. I’d say I run most days but there are different categories of runs. Firsty, speed way which is short sharp 30-40 minutes session. Then there’s medium/easy runs for approximately one hour or sometimes one long run for a couple of hours a week but in between the runs I’m trying to start getting back into a lot more is circuits (weight based). I’ve changed weight program a lot lighter weights and sort of focusing on my core. I still see that as massively important but had hasn’t been a priority because of my running.

1. Do you have time for any other hobbies? If so, what are they?

I have been known to do quite a few things but not at the moment. I’ve done loads of stuff. Up until the last year I was still playing cricket for a club. I was also still playing football to a high level three years ago but obviously this takes up all my time. I do enjoy cycling but it’s a case of having the time to do it.

1. How do you motivate yourself to train on the days when you really don’t want to? Or do you even get days like that?

I am very motivated but I am human at the end of the day. It’s sometimes difficult for people to see that you are a person and can suffer from a lack of motivation. I just try and look at the bigger picture and the goal really and I know that running is fantastic in the sense that it suits me because hard work means good results as long as its structured hard work. That’s the beauty of running and training will get you good results. Yeah there is some tactical involvement but the be all and end all of it is hard work will get you good results.

1. What keeps you motivated when things get really tough?

When I was working full time I felt like I was running to prove a point really showing what you can actually achieve if you put your mind to it and try and be a positive role model. I still work part time in school and try and do a little bit with local running clubs. I P.E teach in my wife’s primary school part time Olympic legacy funding come in so do a full day. We do loads of clubs during the day.

1. What do you eat? Do you have a strict diet? Do you have a cheat day?

No not really. A cheat day is probably a good idea actually it might help me. I’ve set up my business so I’m keeping weird hours at the moment with meals. Only one bad thing about my diet is eating really late at night. I’m finding it benefits me eating later though because then I won’t have another meal. If I eat earlier I will end up having chicken then a bowl of cereal etc later on. It’s about balancing the calories out. The serious whey protein could be the way forward as a meal replacement.

1. What is your latest challenge?

I’ve got a crazy couple of week and a crazy month. I ran Chester marathon and I got cramp at the back end of it. I had to run the last 7 mile with cramp. I suffer with cramp. I try to pinpoint it and it’s to do with the balance of getting the right level of electrolytes in my body. I’m going to use supplements, look at my fluid intake and I’m reducing the amount of coffee I drink. I’m looking at replacing that with a Serious Stamina drink. It’s got enough caffeine in it to get me that perk but its a products that are going to be good for my body really. It’s got electrolytes in it too so it’s not going to leave me feeling dehydrated.

1. What music do you listen to?

I’ve got a really varied taste. If I’m training I listen to funky house music, something that’s got a decent beat to it. I like strong female vocals (maybe it’s like being shouted at!). I always like fast and steady beats. I like Chasing Status because that’s got more bass to it. I love indie music too. It’s all about the lyrics and a catchy simple beat. I catch up on words and it seems to stick with me

1. Do you have a particular song of genre of music that keeps you motivated throughout your training?

There are certain songs as well like there’s a Nina Simone. Songs that if you listen to the lyrics it’s about being free and it tends to come on my ipod when I am in the middle of a moor or something like that and there’s no one around. I’m pretty lucky I can enjoy that and de stress.

1. What goes through your mind before you compete in competitions?

Part of the reason I have changed my career is when I was working full time teaching I’d have lesson plans going through my head or what am I doing on monday morning. My head wasn’t focused just on running. This has helped shift my career to do my events. I’m still very busy and think: When can I get a race organised? Will this make money? Will people enjoy it? Will it make money for charity? There are a lot of variables but fewer variables than there ever was with teaching. Running is important for my business now. I put myself on a pedestal and to some extent I’m there to be knocked off.

1. How long has Cannonballs been up and running?

6 months. I registered last April. 99% secure on a Clitheroe 10 mile race. It’s going to be on closed roads. It will be huge for getting other people’s businesses out there with being local. I’m putting the final pieces together for that. Should be great that.

1. What would be your ultimate achievement?

I think it’s just driving your times down when you do any road running or enter any sort of race. Unless you’re right at the top end there’s always going to be someone on your shoulders and a time to beat. For me it’s under 2 hours 40 minutes for the marathons. Watch this space because I’m hoping to get under 2 hours 45 minutes. My best time is 2 hours 47 minutes. It’s a case of driving all my other times down as well. I do the fell running as well and that’s taken a whole new meaning over the last few years because of the English and British championships and the standard is pretty amazing now.

1. What would be the most important piece of advice about training that you could give to a beginner?

I just think when you are trying to lose weight it has to be a combination of factors. Weight training/resistance work as well as cardiovascular workouts. Depending on what weight you are when you start depends on what you can and can’t do. The more caloric burning sports like running and swimming is better than something like cycling. Cycling doesn’t burn anywhere as near as many calories. Just going at a steady pace on a bike is nowhere near the same; you would burn two thirds less calories. So basically you could go out and do a 30 min run and you’d have to do an hour and a half on a bike to burn the same calories. An hour and a half exercise is a lot to ask of someone who is just starting out exercising. It’s about slotting it around your lifestyle. Find something that fits in with you and what you enjoy. You might not enjoy it at first but you will when you start to lose weight because the enjoyment factor will come into it a lot more. It’s just about matching your exercise to your lifestyle really. It’s about finding something that is sustainable. If cycling is the only thing that is then great do it but going to have to be doing1 hours 30 minute sessions at least. It kills me when see people reading a magazine on a bike. You’re clearly not going fast enough if you can read or text. When you’re working out your bringing your pulse and your energy levels up to a certain level and you’re trying to sustain it there and it allows you to burn more calories. If you allow your body to rest too much and start again you can’t get the same results as if you minimised and managed your rests. You need to manage your rests.