



Seb Parris

**Name:** Sebastian “Beardy” Parris

**Born:** 8th may 1983

**Date Joined:** September 2016

**Personal Bests:**

**track**

400m – 69.0

800m – 2.23.2

1500m – 4.50.68

3000m – 10.11.98

5000m – 17.53.9

mile walk – 9.26.17

2000m walk – 9.26.6

3000m walk – 15.12.50

5000m walk – 28.13.86

**road**



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5km - 17.47

5m - 29.27

10km - 37.19

10m - 63.15

Half - 82.46

Marathon - 3.03.39

5m walk - 39.46

7m walk - 64.55

10km walk - 56.57

15km walk - 85.24

**First Club Race:** Joined the club initially as a race walker. First race was the Enfield walking league's 1 hour badge race at lee valley stadium September 2016. I managed to finish 2nd on my debut behind walking legend Graham Chapman and just ahead of my coach and Scottish international, Stuart Bennett. I bettered 6 miles in the hour earning the prestigious badge too.

**Favourite Race:** I've raced for 3 decades now so have many great memories from every year I've been going!

A few highlights....

Badminton Horseless trials 1998 - First dip in to my favourite event, cross country. My first ever race. Running the equestrian route of this famous horse course. I wore jogging bottoms through water jumps! Bad choice!



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New York Marathon 2006. My 2nd marathon. Managed a negative split! Never seen crowds in a marathon like those lining central park. Had to go see the park the next day as I couldn't see an inch of grass due to the atmosphere on the day!

Man vs Horse Marathon 2014 – racing horses over a welsh cross country marathon is very intimidating! The runners get a 15minute head start. I beat 13 of the 50 horses on the day believe it or not!

Hadrian's wall ultra 2014. 78 miles from Carlisle castle to Newcastle upon Tyne along the ancient wall. Its got breath-taking scenery. Took 51st spot.

Southern Cross country at parliament hill in 2017. Honoured to run cross country in this iconic venue. Still get Goosebumps any time I think of that start!

### **Notable Performances:**

5th European Aquathlon Age Group Championship 2019 in Romania representing Great Britain

17th World Aquathlon Age Group Championship 2019 in Spain representing Great Britain.

3 Essex county vests for race walking. Notably a 3rd in the 3000m walk at the southern inter counties championship in Kingston 2017 (Essex men won the championship). This earned me another Essex spot at the England Athletics county championship in Bedford that year. Raced against current Great British Olympic walkers which was incredible. I got disqualified with 100m to go but was on for a huge PB!

Essex 1 mile indoor track walk champion 2016 at Lee Valley.

Twice winner of the iconic Pednor challenge 2017 and 2018. 5 mile hilly race walk followed an hour later by a 5 mile run.

Part of the mens 3rd team at the southern counties vets track final (1st in 2000m race walk)



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**Biggest Disappointment:** Not getting a sub 3 hour marathon at Chicago last year (3.03.39) then failing to qualify for boston this year by 18 seconds off the back of that! My final Abbots marathon major still eludes me!

**Typical Weeks Training at your peak:** juggle a lot of disciplines due to triathlon and athletics is a fun challenge! Most days I double up with at least two triple days a week. 5 runs a week (40+mile) including: speed/tempo/midweek hilly run/long weekend run/brick off the bike. 4 cycles a week (100+miles) including: 3 20miles and a long day in the saddle ride or turbo workout. 3 swims a week (including: long slow swim/speed&technique drills/open water technique session. 3 strength and conditioning session at the gym.

**Favourite Sessions:** never experienced track work until I came to join Ilford. So I love a pyramid now!

**Favourite race distance:** Must be the marathon as I've done 55 now

**Favourite event** – Cross Country all the way!

**What advice would you give our current crop of youngsters:** always remember the support, guidance and help you received when you came into the sport and be available to give this to someone else. Everybody needs a helping hand.

**Who is the most Famous Athlete you Trained with or would like to train with:** Not good enough to train with famous athletes. In my professional career at bbc sport though I



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work alongside some great athletes. Michael Johnson and Colin Jackson are true gentlemen.

**How would you improve the sport?** – more regular televised coverage of athletics outside of the Olympics.

**Favourite Athlete or Sportsman:** Chrissie Wellington (4 times ironman triathlon world champion)

**What other sports do you follow:** I love a lot of other sports. Especially triathlon, rugby, American Football, mixed martial arts, darts and tennis.

**Best Country Visited:** Japan. I love anime and ramen. Ran Tokyo marathon in 2009. Mind blowing, futuristic and so different from the western world. Also Mongolia. Wide open quietness and total isolation. I'd definitely buy a yak on next visit!

**Favourite Food & Drink :** Fajitas and a white Russian. Not necessarily together!

**Favourite TV Shows:** Planet of the apes, 24, the prisoner, Ozark, breaking bad, the office (us version) and Curb your enthusiasm

**Last Film Seen :** The lighthouse with Willem Dafoe



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**Last Book Read :** Mutiny on the bounty

**Favourite Band Singer:** The Cinematic Orchestra or Jurassic Five

**Last Album Bought or Downloaded** – Fourtet ‘sixteen oceans’ released march this year.

**Last Concert Attended:** Electronic and techno whizz Jon Hopkins in march at the Manchester Bridgewater Hall. Was meant to be seeing Soul legend Jocelyn Brown at the Jazz Café last month but covid stopped that!

**Any Pets:** often look after my parents Irish terrier called Eilish

**What are your aims for next season** – Try to medal in the European Aquathlon Age Group Championships.

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Finish line of the jungfrau marathon,Switzerland. 5900ft of climbing to the finish line.





Exiting the swim in 2019 european Aquathlon age group Championships in Romania





On the start line of the euro Aquathlon Championships 2019



I was a piece of art! Featured in martin creeds work 850 at the Tate Britian 2008. I spent a month sprinting 100m through vistors in the main hall with a group of 50 runners continuously for 8 hours a day, 7 days a week



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Race walking the iconic enfield open 7 in 2017. Longest standing 7 mile walk going



Kingsholm stadium 2017 at the southern CAU championships representing Essex







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Mundon house trail 10km. Came 2nd and got very wet



Old club colours of barnes runners. 10km dorney dash in Eton.





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Racing the Westbury white horse 5 mile over the iconice chalk white horse.





Tokyo marathon 2009



Tate britian - martin creed work 850



Blackpool marathon 2006. Running in cotton, oh dear!









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World Aquathlon age group Championships 2019 in Spain









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The Grizzly 2011. 20 mile trail race in seaton,devon. Very popular and always a sell out within hours of opening.my shoe came off in this bog!



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Essex league 2019, great Notley



Inter london club championship walk 2018, Allianz stadium





Representing British triathlon

## **SEB ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS**

### **How did you get into Race walking ?**

About 4 years ago while at work I was working on a programme that interviewed Tom Bosworth (current British champion) and I thought I needed a new hobby! I liked the idea of taking up another endurance sport. I looked up athletics clubs with a race walking section on the internet. Sadly these clubs are dwindling in numbers, but Ilford AC came up and it was local! I got in touch with Ilford's long distance walking star, Ed Shillabeer who kindly pointed me to the brilliant walking coach Stuart Bennett. Stuart coached me for a good 5 months before I let myself loose on a race! The techniques of style are hard to master, believe me!

## **Why the beard - when did you first grow it and does it make you hot in races ?**

Embrace facial hair people! I first grew it when I was 16. Many moons ago! Been running with it ever since! I've never had a problem with it. It makes facing the cold of Horseheath a breeze! It actually has helped. I won the Muddy Movemeber trail race in Swinley forest back in 2011!







### **Why did you join Ilford AC from your other club?**

I've never done anything better in running than joining a club. Improvements are incredible in this setting. I've actually been a member of two previous clubs a lot longer than being at Ilford AC. I started my running career at Sale harriers up north while I lived and worked in Manchester. Once I moved to London for my job I joined Barnes runners because I lived in the area. After moving from west to east I needed a new club. I tried to find the Ilford harriers group one Wednesday but got lost round Melbourne road and gave up looking for them (?!?!). I went for a run and met up with some East London runners and almost joined their club instead!!!

### **Worst Injury?**



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Three compression fractures to my lower lumbar vertebrae when I was 17. I was a passenger in my friend's car. Another car jumped a give way and we hit it at 50mph. Off from college for months. Still get problems with my back nowadays.

### **What is your occupation and how do you fit training around that?**

I work as a television sound engineer for BBC news and sport. The job has always been great for training. The BBC produces output 24 hours a day. I'm a shift worker so up all hours of the day and night for the job. I'm happy to train at any unsociable hour! Actually I love training between 11pm and 5am. London is at its best!

### **What is Your Training during Lockdown?**

With races cancelled there was no pressure to commit to a schedule. I began using the bike turbo trainer indoors with Zwift. I love this training app; it's very motivational and addictive! I just ran for the love of the outdoors and ice lollies! Been doing a lot of hilly cross country routes between 6 and 12 miles, finding beautiful countryside close to us. Never been through so many farmers fields and seen so many stiles! With pools only just reopening I have been doing a lot of open water swimming over in a beautiful Chelmsford lake. I've got to shout out Sharon honey and her brilliant lockdown strength sessions I did. The best thing the club has done in lockdown to motivate and bring people together.

### **Did you do school sports and were you any good?**

I've always been a jack of all trades master of none! I played football for a local club (Stratton Utd) and my school from 5 til 16 years old. Goalkeeper and then left back. Won many league and cup trophies as we were a strong team. A few went on to play for Swindon town and Bristol city. I got selected for Cirencester Football academy which provides players for Manchester Utd youth teams but I didn't fancy becoming a footballer. I played a lot of rugby as fly half and full back. Picked to train with Bath Rugby Union club for a period of time. I played a lot of tennis as a lad in league events and even had a national rating. I was 7 divisions lower than Tim Henman! I was big into volleyball and played in a local league. Most interesting though, I also ten pin bowled for 3 years in a ten pin bowling league! The alley was on the B52s US military base at Fairford. Entry and winnings were always in dollars and the base only served American food products!

### **Favourite Football Team?**





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I regularly used to watch Swindon town, I even held a season ticket. Football not my bag anymore though.

### **First Single and Album you ever bought?**

I used to raid Woolworths for cassette singles all the time growing up! Can't remember my first single but I am proud to have helped get Mr Blobby back to Christmas number one in 1993! First cd was Pete Tong's Essential Selection 1998. I loved this album as really enjoyed listening to high quality digital sound for the first time! Did you know I bought the first Travis album on minidisc from 'our price'! A fond goodbye to both those relics! Nowadays I collect hip hop, funk and soul vinyl. Got over 4000 records.

### **What is your stretching regime?**

Roll around on my mat most nights while I watch the Real Housewives of Orange County. Judge me all you want.

### **You must have been so disappointed when you were disqualified for your race walking race where you were on track to get a great PB. What was the reason they disqualified you?**

Really disappointed! I was in a strong field. I knew I had to walk a PB just to stay with the pack. As I've not been a walker since birth but a runner instead, I have a lot of bad habits that runners bring to the sport! I got a red card from all 4 judges! If you're going to go out, go out in style! All disqualified me for bent knees. A classic runner to walker trait.

### **Your piece of art event, how did you get to be part of this exhibition? What was it like doing it?**

I answered an ad from a sports agency. They needed a pool of 50 runners for this instillation. I love art exhibitions and running so thought I could help! I had to go for an audition in which I had to prove I could run 100 meters in 30 seconds then rest 30 seconds then run again and so on for 30 minutes straight. Martin creed is a big art name (won a Turner prize) so we were all sponsored by puma and had free physio care from British Athletics. It was an amazing piece of timed running as I was in a team of four athletes who needed to start running every 30 seconds continuously. I had 30 seconds to get up the stairs to the hall, then had to look at



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a large stop watch and sprint on a timed cue then I had 1 minute to briskly walk under the Tate Britain through service tunnels back to the stairs to go again! We did 30min shifts for 6 to 8 hours. Here's a link to seeing it in action

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-U8FI45-DFw>

**Your marathons are just amazing. Has your training changed over time preparing for each marathon?**

Yes. A lot! A marathon is a personal battle. No two runners train the same for the mammoth task. You have to mould your prep and can't copy others. I wear more suitable clothes nowadays for a start! Nutrition has developed a lot as races have gone on. I'm a lot more interested and obsessed with in my 'in race' fuelling. I'm very race recovery savvy nowadays to. I can refresh and go again very soon after now.

**How much of a support is your partner (I can remember seeing her carrying your water at some far off ultra?) and where and when did you meet?**

Narinder is very supportive and long suffering! We met 13 years ago at work. She's my own personal photographer at races! She is a very keen and talented photographer and always muscles her way to the front of a crowd shouting my name! We love to travel the world hiking together. We've climbed a lot of mountains. She's fit and a good runner in her own right. She once represented Ilford at the Horseheath XC. She was first Ilford lady home.

**You have 'Planet of the Apes' down as a favourite TV show. What was your opinion of the remake of the original film starring Mark Wahlberg?**

We all know it was terrible but if you are a true sci fi fan you love rotten remakes regardless. Wahlberg is famously quoted saying they 'set the franchise back a bit'!!!!

**The film / series are credited with dealing with both racial and animal rights issues. Do you think it did this well and what is your interpretation of the final scene (spoiler alert) when Charlton Heston discovers that he is in fact on a future Earth rather than another planet?**

That final scene is iconic cinema history. What made Taylor's final plight even more shocking and this scene even more incredible is that the CGI was revolutionary for the



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period. So believable is the image of the statue of liberty, audiences couldn't believe how they could have buried it apparently!

### **Vinyl, CD or download/streaming?**

Vinyl all the way. Feel the groove!

### **I remember your proud Mum introducing herself as 'Sebastian's mother' at the Marathon Water station. Does she get too many of your events and is she the only one that still calls you 'Sebastian' (I assume she doesn't call you beardy!!)**

My mum is a legend. She's never called me Seb or Beardy, always Sebastian! She's not on social media so I doubt she even knows my nick name! Not only has she come to many of my races to support me she along with my partner was my very dedicated support crew during my Norwegian ironman. She is very fit herself and we were meant to run her first 5km earlier in the year but corona halted that. She will be back!

### **Other than Parliament Hill what are your other favourite Cross Country events?**

Really enjoyed the Southern's at Braemar Park, Brighton. It's got everything - large hill climbs and tight turns.

### **Have you ever done a Cross Country that was colder than Horseheath?**

Yes I have! I ran a trail race in early January once over in Guildford where I had to break the ice in the stream crossing. It cut my legs to shreds and came 8th! Also I've climbed Kala Patthar (18,514 feet) in the Himalayas with the temperature at -20c (-32 with wind chill!).

### **You are good at many events. What would you say you are 'best' at?**

That's very kind to say but I'm not the best at any of them! I'm happy with my swim/run game at the moment.

### **With the fact that you do compete at many disciplines, is your training generally 'event specific'?**

Yes training is very event specific. Even though I race alot I have some personal goals so I train to those. I train as much as I can and that usually gives me a good base fitness for



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other events regardless of goals.

**Are you continuing to aim for the Boston Marathon?**

Yes. Focus!

**What is your view on mass participation running events (London 10k, Adidas city runs, Havering Half etc) as opposed to the club focused smaller events?**

Sport is about comradery and praise so mass participation events are a brilliant way to achieve this in the running world. I love small club races nowadays as I've spent many a year doing large scale 40,000 runner races and getting organised is far more exhausting than the race.

**If you could have attended any Olympic event in history and met the winner after what would it be?**

2012 London Olympics men's 800m final. David Rudisha was phenomenal.

**You have Cross Country down as your favourite event. Which Ilford vest is often just in front of you pushing you to hang on (if any?)**

Our friend Gary Coombes! Not only is Gary a lovely chap but he's an incredibly fast, disciplined and decorated runner. It's an honour and pleasure to just watch his calf's every race!

**Seb, well done on your career to date, great achievements . What would you say is your best event?**

I don't feel I'm good at any event, but I feel things are going best presently in aquathlon. My 1km swim and 5km run transition has come on greatly.

**how many times (if ever )have you been disqualified for "lifting" i have seen many action shots of walkers who clearly have both feet off the ground yet still win medals, just how efficient is the judging at Championship events.**

Race walking is a very complex sport and incredibly technical. I've only ever been disqualified once and all cards were for a bent knee, none were for lifting. If an athlete 'lift's', they are generally very quick. Maybe I don't lift because i'm just not quick enough!



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Unfortunately lifting is a commonly judged fault at the front of a championship race as an increase in speed sometimes can't be achieved by some walkers without the feet being airborne, which is wrong. It's so obvious in some photos but very hard to judge to the naked eye by the officials due to the leg cadence in race walking being incredibly high and the judges get no replays of the action. A lot of sports are now using the fourth official for video replays and I can't wait for a new judging Technology to be introduced at the Tokyo Olympics. There will be sensor pads in the athlete's shoes. If both feet leave the ground at the same time, the shoes will light up red to alert the judges the athlete is lifting. Great idea. A lot of fast walkers will be disqualified, and these athletes will need to go away and focus on technique again in their training.