



Henry Ricketts

Name: Henry Ricketts

Born: 29.01.1967

Date Joined Probably 01.04.2004

Personal Bests:

100m 12.3

200m 25.5 (24.5 age 14)

400m 56.8 (55.9 age 15)

800m 2.24.8

1500m 6.07.51 (5.25.2 age 13)

5 mile (did the Vicky Park 5 but can't find the time)

10K road 44.27ish

Half marathon 1hr 43.47ish

First Club Race: Gloucester Park, Basildon Cross Country

Favourite Race: Stubbers Cross Country Upminster

Notable Performances:

Ranked 12th in the UK for Long Jump in my age group in 2012.

3rd placed team in The Southern Counties Vets Final last summer

Biggest Disappointment:

Not being fit enough due to injury to get consistent winter training in to take into the summer track season since 2010. At school age my worst performance finishing 6th in the London Schools Championship 400m - it was cold and miserable but in saying that it was the same for everyone. I ran around 3 seconds slower than my regular time.

Typical Weeks Training at your peak .

Tuesday track joining Dave Jones session.

Thursday track sprint session.



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All other days 2.75m road loop around 7mins per mile. The road runs started to drop off when I started cycling to work which was a 17 mile round trip.

Favourite Sessions: 12 x 150m with walk back recovery aiming for sub 20

Favourite race distance:

200m at school but had to move to 400m because no-one else covered it. As a vet it's 400m although injury has not been kind to run a quality race for some time.

Favourite event - Track, Road or Cross Country: I actually enjoyed cross country when I was able to run them but was better on the track.

What advice would you give our current crop of youngsters.

Any training session that you can complete without injury is a success, even if your times are down. Re-focus, don't be afraid to seek advice and Youtube is a wonderful resource to have a look at the top athletes and their technique.

Who is the most Famous Athlete you Trained with or would like to train with:

Being a 'mature track sprinter' there are not many runners who trained over sprint distances. When running with Dave Jones group Andy Catton was a regular so I would have to say him. As a vet sprinter I did a lot of training by myself because the young athletes were far too quick. I had some sessions laid out by Dave and did have some coaching from Jim McNamee but again solo training. Most recently as a vet I'd say Cliff Warren. I would love to train with Kim Collins (M40 world records holder 9.93s) to get a feel for his motivation to keep going or for explosive starting Asafa Powell (most sub 10s races).

How would you improve the sport:

Have track and field built into the curriculum with the associated awareness/education of nutrition and the impact of enhancement/drugs. I'm not sure that enhanced drug taking will be fully eradicated so maybe mandatory testing from certain competition levels.

Favourite Athlete or Sportsman:

Not an out and out sprinter so may seem a bit weird - 400m hurdler Edwin Moses who won 122 consecutive races. From a sprint perspective although Usain Bolt is an exceptional athlete Michael Johnson because he ran the 400m plus the 200m. Still remember being absolutely stunned when he broke the 200m world record at Atlanta 1996 bringing it down from 19.66 to 19.32. Watched it live around 2:30am. Special mention to Muhammad Ali who transcended his sport.



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What other sports do you follow: Cricket and Rugby League

Best Country Visited: Jamaica – first family holiday

Favourite Food & Drink : Jerk Pork

Favourite TV Shows:

When it was on Big Bang Theory. Now just found that Fear the Walking Dead Season 5 is on Prime so just started watching that season.

Last Film Seen : At the cinema probably Avengers Endgame. I've recently recorded a film called Sprinter about a Jamaican teen and his meteoric rise in track and field – well that's what the synopsis says.

Last Book Read: The Girl who took an Eye for an Eye (Millenium series book 5)

Favourite Band Singer:

Always thought Freddie Mercury was a standout performer and artist. I grew up listening to reggae and R & B/soul so Bob Marley is a constant and although not a band singer Bill Withers.

Last Album Bought or Downloaded:

If anything I have compilation as opposed to single artist/band downloads

Last Concert Attended: A Queen tribute band at Ipswich Regent Theatre

Any Pets: Two cats – hopefully that means no mice

What are your aims for next season?

Recover from my achilles tendonitis to feel confident in putting all the weight through when sprinting, if not it's managing the injury to be competitive.

Tell us a Joke: How many ears does Captain Kirk have? 3 – The left ear, the right ear and the final frontier







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HENRY'S FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS:-

“ What made last year such a successful year for you as vets track & field captain?

A squad covering events coupled with people competing at a very high club standard and even though it is a squad effort I have to highlight the performances of Paul Grange who for a middle distance specialist is not too shabby as a sprinter. There have been matches over the years when there have been 3 of us representing the club across age groups 35, 40, 50 and 60. I'm sure on one occasion there was just 2 of us. Availability and the distance to venues can also be problematic however things have started to improve of late with more people enjoying track competition. Could still do with some field eventers- hint, hint. Also, great to see the shoots of a ladies team.

You jump and you track sprint. you must be a good hurdler?

In no way am I a hurdler although I held the club 200m record. Mainly because I was the first vet to compete over that distance. It's a very technical event and since it's no longer part of the vets program - too many injuries and mishaps caused by the barriers - I don't think I'll be taking it up.

Jerk pork sounds amazing! but what is your favourite cut of pork to make this taste best?

I've never really thought about the cut. I'd say chops would



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be difficult to get the taste right. Other than that any joint where you can be patient enough to marinate for at least 8 hours. There is a history to jerk meats but that's for another time.

What school did you attend and did they encourage your athletic ambitions ?

I was brought up in south London and attended Woolwich Polytechnic Secondary. At that time schools competed against each other in Borough leagues and then the schools had District/Borough championships. Then if you were good enough you were picked for London Schools Champs and got to run at Crystal Palace which was a huge thing. By virtue of the school events my abilities were noticed but I didn't feel confident enough to join a club.

What is your job and how do you fit in training around that ?

I'm a civil servant and can fit training around flexible working hours. At the start of covid I was doing a session at South Park getting there from 6.30 for about 45 mins. It was going well until June when the achilles flared up again.

Favourite and fastest Park Run ?

I think I've only done 2 both at Valentines Park. I can't find the time on the IAC site (just done a google search and it's 20m



50 in 2009)

Greatest Rival and Why ?

I'm going to be cheesy and say myself because I still feel there is more I can do. When I regularly ran cross country Steve Cheal and I used to have a few battles. On the track there is an athlete from Harrow by the name of Barrington King who is also a civil servant, so we do meet at the Civil Service Games. He pipped me by 0.02 last time we ran over 100m for silver. The winner is a GB international so we were always competing for second place.

Favourite Athletics brand of clothing and why ?

Asics - quality clothing and footwear although my spikes are Puma, New Balance and Mizuno.

Favourite Footballer and Cricketer ?

Going back the footballer would be Zinedine Zidane even despite that World Cup aberration. Cricketer would be Michael (Whispering Death) Holding off the long run up. Poetry in motion.

First Single and Album you bought on vinyl ?

Single - Rappers Delight by Sugarhill Gang (quick story - that's



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“what I paid for and when I got home it was The Three Degrees. Had to exchange it the following day but couldn't tell anyone. Far too embarrassing to have a Three Degrees single when you're in secondary school)

Album – I'm not sure. I could only afford singles which later developed into 12 inch singles. I'd have to go through my record collection which is not happening any time soon with them being in the attic.

Do you follow a healthy diet ?

Not really although I try and avoid fried food and limit caffeine. I'm more careful than healthy.

Are you a fan of 'Foam Rolling' and stretching ?

Stretching yes although I now have a foam roller.

Favourite track session ?

12 x 150m aiming for sub 20 and walk back recovery. When I was running well I could run 12 x 400 at sub 80 with 2 minute recovery. That would be an achievement session rather than favourite.

A lot of your PB's were as a schoolboy. Were you in a club at the time or were these when you were competing for your school?



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I never joined a club until Ilford so maybe a missed opportunity. I'll name drop here because I used to compete against John Regis (played football against him too) and regularly beat him at school age until 15. Admittedly he bulked up but shows what dedication and commitment can do. For the youngsters he's still the UK 200m record holder.

Did you ever attend the Muhammad Ali exhibition at the O2 in London?

No. Looks like that one slipped by me.

Who do you think would have won a fight between Ali and Tyson, both at their absolute peak?

Now that's a tough one. Tyson was a fearsome puncher (and from the recent Youtube clips, he still is) but then in his day so was George Foreman who Ali beat. Also, take into consideration that Ali's prime years were spent unable to box due to his license being stripped, I'm going for Ali on that one.

As a sprinter how did you feel when Linford Christie was exposed for taking performance enhancing drugs? Do you think it casts a shadow over all his achievements?

It almost seems a wasted effort by taking the drugs (being found positive) at such a late age, when he was no longer competitive. I'd like to think the testing programmes were capable of catching cheats at that time so for me I'll go with what the science is telling us (very topical with covid-19) in that he



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“wasn’t found to be a drug taker at the height of his running so he was a legitimate athlete. Note that the East German times have not been removed and still stand until beaten....just saying.

You can host a dinner party with 12 fantasy guests, dead or alive - 3 athletes, 3 musicians, 3 other celebrities and 3 friends - Who are you inviting?

Athletes - Arthur Wint, Don Quarrie, Merlene Ottey.
Musicians - Dennis Brown, Beyonce, Luther Vandross. Other celebs - Muhammed Ali, Martin Luther King, Marcus Garvey 3 friends - my schoolmates Harry, Tubbs, Beano

Assuming the Tokyo Olympics happen next year, what athletes are you looking forward to seeing compete? If you could attend the final of one event there, which would it be?

Male - Omar Macleod, Noah Lyles, Wayde van Niekerk, Karsten Warholm, Donovan Brazier, Joseph Cheptegei.
Female - Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, Allyson Felix, Sifan Hassan, Malaika Mihambo. British athletes - Reece Prescod (if fit), Nethaneel Mitchell-Blake, Matt Hudson-Smith, Mo Farah (if he runs), Dina Asher-Smith, Amy Hunt, Laura Muir, Jemma Reekie, KJT

How did you end up with your role at the club managing the vets track team?



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Short story long – Martin Clarke said at the end of a vets season if I would do it. There's one annual meeting to attend and sorting out athletes for the match. Seemed manageable so said yes. Think I'm somewhere close to 10 years in the role – if that's not the case it feels like it.

Do you have a favourite training shoe?

Asics – see spikes comment above

I have met Chris Akabusi over West Ham a few times. If you found out that the seat next to him was available as a Season ticket - Would you buy a season ticket over West Ham so that you could sit next to him and chat about athletics at Half time?

Having met Kriss Akabusi and him being a larger than life character, this is tough with me not being a West Ham fan. I'd have to work out how to have the half-time chat without watching the game.

If the answer to the above is 'yes' and before the first game you got 2 text messages - One from Pam Jones asking if you would meet her for coffee and a wagon wheel at half time, and the other was from Chris Akabusi asking if you'd meet for a Beer and a sausage roll at Half time - Who would be your halftime companion?

The Ilford legend can't be put in second place. It's not a position she's used to. Pam every time.

Nice pictures Henry, everyone looks so young. If you had the chance which decade would you have liked to



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“compete in. Everyone seems to be obsessed with watches and satnav, when would you run just for the joy of running and competition.

If I could go back to the 80s and pursue athletics seriously I'd like to see where that would have taken me. Being a sprinter as long as I had my stopwatch I'd be happy. I did the longer track, road and cross-country running to build strength and stamina for 400m running, so I wasn't too concerned with satnav etc. Saying that my watch has a strava app on it.

Is your real name Henry or Henri (as your email address)

Henry is my name. My mail address is kind of a combination of first and last name.