



Tom Gardner

**Name:** Tom Gardner

**Born:** 1983

**Date Joined:** 2010

**Personal Bests:**

**800:** 2:02.15

**1500:** 4:03.66

**3000:** 8:40.79

**5000:** 15:22.32

**5m:** 25:48

**First Club Race:** Raphael's Park 5m - Elvis.

**Favourite Race:** Newman Hilly in Hainault forest. There's something about a mid-week, peak summer cross country race which makes this event more pleasurable than others. Really lovely course too.

**Notable Performances:** Winning the Essex 5000m champs in 2015. Essex 5m Road Champion 2016.

**Biggest Disappointment:** Coming second in the Essex 5000m champs in 2016.

**Typical Weeks Training at your peak:** 40/50miles. Three track sessions, mixed with steady road and cross country runs on other days.

**Favourite Sessions:** 12x400

**Favourite race distance:** 5000m

**Favourite event - Track, Road or Cross Country:**

South of England Cross Country Champs at Parliament Hill. Great course - really tough, hilly and usually muddy - and at 15km long, you get value for your entry fee.

**What advice would you give our current crop of youngsters:**

Run more often - and not on a track. Develop that enjoyment for just running, without a stopwatch or lap splits to hit. Do more strength and conditioning training. It will help once they get older and start falling to bits like



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me.

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

I wouldn't choose a runner. It's torture training with most club runners, let alone any pro athlete. I'd love to go cycling with one of the new generation of top level cyclists, such as Wout van Aert. He's just accomplished one of the most extraordinary sporting feats, winning a time trial, mountain stage and Champs-Elysees sprint in the recent Tour de France. I think I'd just about manage a spin with a cafe stop.

**How would you improve the sport:**

At club level, make it easier to organise and hold more races - especially team events. Relays and inter club mob matches would help motivate runners and build some healthy rivalries.

At a professional level, doping and a lack of credibility of athletic performances is one of the biggest issues. Allowing retrospective dope testing would have a big positive impact. Keep samples for 10 years minimum so pro athletes who dope can fear being picked up once testing technology advances. The threat of having a legacy and reputation destroyed should have a strong deterrent effect on anyone tempted to cheat.

**Favourite Athlete or Sportsman:**

I admire athletes who transcend sport and show moral courage in the face of significant adversity or public pressure. People like Muhammad Ali, refusing the draft and being outspoken on other controversial topics, Christophe Bassons, a former professional cyclist, who had his career destroyed because he spoke out about doping in the peloton during Lance Armstrong mania era. They seem to be few and far between these days. But Novak Djokovic, who risked vilification in the corporate media for voicing pro-choice opinions about experimental gene therapy treatments being mandated, comes to mind as having those virtues.

It is a rare ability to reach the top of any sport, but almost unique also to have principles and dignity. Not to be confused with seeking recognition with faux bravery for pushing establishment narratives.

**What other sports do you follow:**

Road cycling. My first and main sporting passion. Few other sporting events match the drama and beautiful scenic backdrops of professional road racing.

**Best Country Visited:** Italy

**Favourite Food & Drink.** Ribeye steak or a burger. Coffee.

**Favourite TV Shows:** The Sopranos

**Last Film Seen:** The Joker

**Last Book Read:** The Anarchist Handbook - Michael Malice.



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**Favourite Band Singer:** Johnny Cash.

**Last Concert Attended:** Chromatics

**Any Pets:** No

**What are your aims for the future**

I'm just starting to explore the benefits of nutrition/diet, resistance training and breathing exercises. I never previously paid much attention to this aspect, but the older I get the more I need to look for every advantage. I'm interested to see if I can hit some pbs over 3000m - sub 8.30, sub 15 for 5000m.



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## **FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS :-**

**Everyone knows your passion for cycling.**

**But the bike you fished out of the river, did you take it to Australia with you?**

You've got good sources - even I'd forgotten about that bike.

A friend spotted a nice bike at the bottom of the Chelmer navigation. After fishing it out and realising it was too small for him, he stripped the components and gave me the frame.

I gave it a bit of TLC, a new paint job and threw on the spare parts I had in the garage. I managed to cobble together a touring bike for a trip I had planned to see the Tour de France. This Frankenstein creation took me over some of the most iconic climbs in the alps - including Alpe d'Huez several times.



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It sounds romantic, but it was far from it. The frame had the frightening feature of developing an almost uncontrollable speed wobble when passing 40mph – I only found this out on the first descent. Fully laden, the panniers would also flex into the wheels. It made the 10-day ride around the alps an adventure – one I'd never do again!

### **When and Why did you start running and Why did you join Ilford AC ?**

My relationship with Ilford AC was pure serendipity. I worked opposite the track at the old Romford Recorder office. I went for a run one day and was collared by Ian Gains. I knew I'd found my ideal coach and kindred spirit when he'd manage to put a positive spin no matter how badly I'd run. And we bonded over a disdain for all running innovations that occurred post 1970.

I've run for and with other clubs, but Ilford has a uniquely welcoming, friendly and supportive atmosphere, coupled with great coaches and athletes.

### **What school did you go to and did you excel at running there?**

I came to running very late. At school and university, I played badminton. I took up cycling in my late teens/early 20s.

I just managed to scrape my 'elite' racing licence which enabled me to come up against the likes of Mark Cavendish, Geraint Thomas at some events. And quickly found out I'd exceeded the limits of my talent.

The burden of training and racing – and the risks of having to clock up so many miles on the roads – finally got too much, so I decided to have a go at running. It was a revelation being able to push myself without the stress of trying not to fall off.

### **What job do you do and how did it affect your training ?**

I was a journalist for a decade, in local and national news, before moving into media and





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communications in the legal industry. Fortunately, I've been able to balance training and work. Running has been a vital antidote to a stressful day in the office.

### **What prompted you to move to Australia and Live The Dream ?**

My partner's Australian and, after seven years of rain, cold and grey sky, she wanted to show me what 'The Lucky Country' had to offer. Unfortunately, our timing is a little off and we arrived just in time for Australia to revive its penal colony status. Ask Novak Djokovic.

### **Where will you be living 'down under' and what job will you be doing ?**

We're staying in what was formerly known as the most liveable city in the world: Melbourne, Victoria. Having secured that title several years running, it's now decided to go after a rather different one... the world's most locked down city.

### **Have you got an Australian running club sorted out for you ?**

My partner's cousin is a running coach here, so I've got in with his group. There are some really strong runners, but most of them are focused on the marathon and less so on middle distance.

### **When can we all come over there and run an Australian Park Run with you ?**

I wouldn't even attempt to answer this question. Again, ask Djokovic. It's like breaking in to prison. Is a park run worth it?

### **Australia is a very sporty/Outdoor country, will you do triathlons or duathlons over there ? Or try Aussie rules football or Surfing ?**

I'm just about coping with running. But I'm hoping to do a bit more swimming while I'm here – more to cope with the heat than as a competitive sport. And a few bike rides. There are some great mountain climbs just outside Melbourne.



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## What will you always remember of your days at Ilford AC ?

I've too many fond memories to count. But I do think back on those gloriously warm, summer evening track training sessions or the Saturday morning runs in Hainault as great days.

## Favourite Australian Animal/Bird ?

The wildlife is extraordinary. I've not come across an eastern brown snake yet, but they've been spotted on lots of the trails I run. You've got to respect the second-most venomous snake in the world - especially when looking for a toilet stop in the brush.

If they don't get you, the magpies will. Or the spiders. So there's plenty of reasons to run... fast.





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