

He's got his Mo-jo back

Marriage, Kenya, and nutrition have given Mo Farah, 27, the boost he needed!
INTERVIEW BY FIONA BUGLER



The Summer of 2010, is proving to be a success for Mo Farah. By the time we go to print, The Somalian-born British athlete, will have competed in the 20th European Athletics Championships, being held in Barcelona between July 26th and August 1st 2010. Four years ago, at Gothenburg, he was distraught to get a Silver medal in the 5000m (missing Gold by half a second). And when I spoke to him – just after his success at the Bupa 10,000m, in May, where he came first, and broke the UK record, running 27:44 – there was no disputing where his focus was; to qualify for the European Championships in Barcelona and get Gold! Driven, but laid back, Mo told me he'd been "rushing about" when we chatted as he sat at Terminal 4, on his way to Marseilles. The previous weekend he'd travelled back from his Kenyan training camp on an eight hour flight, landing in the UK on Sunday. On Monday he travelled to London where he broke the UK record at the Bupa 10,000m, running six seconds

faster than the record he set last year. "Does travelling affect you?" I ask him, "Nah, not really," he says, "And, what about your recovery?" I add. "Yeah, it hurts a bit the day after a race, but I relax with my family, and recover quickly," he says. "And what about this trip – will all this racing have an affect?" I ask. "We'll find out... we'll find out," he laughs.

PERSONAL BESTS

And we did find out. Mo's top form continued, and two days after the interview, he ran another personal best, and gained first place in Marseilles at the 10k championships, which qualified him for the big one in Barcelona. Also, in June, Mo got first place, running 13:46 in the 5000m at the European Team Championships in Bergen, Norway, beating rival Alemayehu Bezabeh of Spain in the final lap.

For most of us mere mortals, it's hard to get our heads around the training regime of elite athletes. Let alone the other commitments: the travel, the interviews, the sponsor's requirements. But talking to Mo,

you can tell he takes it all in his stride, because, as he puts it, "I enjoy what I do."

THE MISSING INGREDIENTS

But, like any runner, there have been lows, as well as highs. At the World Cross Country Championships, earlier in the year, Mo collapsed on the finish line. Hospital tests revealed that he was deficient in iron and magnesium.

Luckily, for him, he's surrounded by a strong team, and Matt Glover, Mo's nutritionist, who he describes, as "England's number one nutritionist," sorted out the problem with supplementation. "I have to watch everything I eat," says Mo. "This doesn't mean I count my calories. I train very hard, and have to eat lots of food – but it's all got to be good," he adds.

But the key ingredient in Mo's winning formula is simple: hard work. "Talent will only get you so far," he says. "I work hard. I run 110 miles per week, including three key sessions, for example fartlek/hills/track, on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday," he explains. "Some of my runs are steady

runs. You can't do tough sessions all the time, or you'll be knackered, but I do work hard in every session and try to get everything out of myself."

And, like anyone who's focussed on success, there's sacrifice. "I got married in April and we went on honeymoon to Zanzibar. The volcanoes meant that fights were disrupted, and I'd had three days of no training. I had to let my wife fly home, whilst I headed off to Kenya for training."

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

Good food, a good woman, hard work... and Kenya! These four things seem to have given Mo, the boost he needed. "I loved it in Kenya. It was great to get up at 6am to

train with the guys. There were around 60 of us, and it's good to be in the middle, instead of leading the pack.

"There's only three or four guys of the same standard in the UK, and we're all spread out across the country," he explains. "In Kenya, I never did a session on my own and it gave me a really big boost.

"I learnt in Kenya that you've got to listen to your body. It tells you everything you need to know," he says.

And as a man who runs 110 miles per week, it's important he listens. But, it's continuous and unrelenting, and, Mo says, mileage works. "The more time you can stay on your feet the fitter you get." And he believes that applies to all runners.

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INSIDE A WINNER'S HEAD

When it comes to the winning formula for races, again, it's simple. "Your mind has to be so strong. You have to tell yourself you feel good, and always keep positive. So for example, when I ran on Monday (the Bupa 10,000m), I tuned into the crowd, who gave me an extra boost, cheering my name. A positive atmosphere makes a difference.

"I concentrate in every race. You can't arrive at the start, thinking, so and so is better than me, or he's got faster, I'm going to be in this position. You can never think like that.

"I have to think I'm number one, I've done my homework, and now I'm just going to go and enjoy it.

"Races can be more enjoyable than the training, as all the weeks and months of hard work are done. And on my times, you sometimes only get 13 minutes to succeed."

WHAT NEXT?

So, even though he might sometimes have to wait for four years to knock off just a couple of seconds, Mo says: "I never look back at anything. I always look forward. I know I'm very lucky and sometimes I wish my mates could have what I have, and achieve what I've achieved," he adds.

Mo doesn't take any of it for granted and he is loving his sport. "Standing on the podium getting Gold... It hits you and it's like, 'Oh my god'..." he says.

He says his path includes "stepping stones," and races he has to do on the way to his future success: "I would love to break the British record for 5k and 10k," he tells me. And he's recently been quoted as saying, "Sub 27 minutes is world standard and I think that is the time we have to be aiming for. A lot of my Kenyan training partners have run 26:35-45 and I would like to get down to those times also."

And beyond that, will he carry on running forever? Will he stop? "I take one day at a time. In four years time I want to be here and I want to be injury-free... I'm going to have a fat belly when I stop running... That's all I know!" **RF**

