



"Pavey started as a 1500m runner and in 1988 set the under 15 record for the distance running 4:27.9"

over the longer distance and she subsequently lost her lottery funding. After missing the 2010 European Championships and Commonwealth Games due to a stress fracture she seemed to be making a comeback in 2011, with an amazing debut marathon of 2:28.24 in London in April. In May she ran a cracking time at the Bupa London 10,000m, where she beat Paula Radcliffe, herself returning to form after time out from giving birth and injuries. The marathon time qualified her for the World Championships held in Deagu in August, and the Olympics.

Making progress

With the highs, once again came the lows, and the pattern that's peppered her career meant that sadly, Jo had to pull out of this summer's World Championships due to familiar problems with her foot. But when I spoke to her in July she was optimistic about her future. "I'm making progress. One of the bones in my foot was a bit bruised and irritable and if I carried on it would have ended up as another stress fracture. I had to pull out as I just wasn't able to put in the training that's needed to run a good marathon.

"It was disappointing. You always want to run in the Great Britain team if you can. But now I'm doing a lot of pool work and have turned my attention to running an Autumn marathon," she adds, showing her characteristic focus on the positive.

Water baby

It's clear she has the mind-set of a winner. Her approach to the rehabilitating aqua jogging was that she would continue to stick to her usual daily routine. "I don't get down, I re-focus," she explains. So she allowed the same amount of time, and put in as much effort to her aqua jogging

sessions as she did when she was running 120 miles per week in the run up to London. "I like to train twice a day, so if I couldn't run at all, I'd go to the pool in the morning and do a hard session like 10 x 3 minutes, then I'd get onto the cross-trainer in the evening." And for anyone thinking working out in water is an easy option think again. "I often felt I'd worked harder after a hard aqua session than a run. I think it's the best form of cross-training," says Jo.

"To get the best from an aqua session I just go as hard as I can and don't worry too much about technique. Some people say you should have a higher knee lift, but I find that if I do that I don't get out of breath."

Mileage matters

Like virtually every athlete I've spoken to about training over the last 18 months, Jo says mileage matters. However, like many virgin marathon runners, too much too soon can cause problems and this may have caused her current foot problems. "I rushed the training for London, and possibly did too much too fast."

But inserting Sole footbeds into her trusty Nike shoes, her husband, coach and himself a distance runner, Gavin tells me has been the solution to her gait problems and they hope will help to avoid future stress fractures.

Gavin is Jo's coach. "We sit down together and plan my training schedules. Gavin also does my physio and of course looks after Jacob," she says. A typical marathon menu for Jo includes the following: 70 to 80 minutes tempo run; 2.5 hours long run; one or two interval sessions per week; and a staple diet of steady runs. "For anyone starting marathon training you wonder, what's the most important session of the week? After doing London, Gavin and I decided that for me, it was the 70 to 80

minute, hard, long tempo run which I ran at marathon pace or faster."

Jo's diet needs to be carefully attended to. She says she has the "typical athlete's diet" giving the body everything it needs to recover so she can keep training hard. "I've always made sure I have a recovery drink within 15 minutes and a meal within 90 minutes." But she also allows herself to occasionally indulge in red wine and chocolate.

Starting marathon running meant she was faced with a new nutrition challenge. She's had to re-learn everything she's been taught as a track runner. "You've got to train your body to get used to running with fluid in your stomach and to drink during training. I'm used to going to the track and taking on fluid after the session"

When it comes to her 2.5 hour long runs, she's turned to the routine of many less elite marathon runners and hides drinks along her course. "I put one on the garden wall, one in a bush, one behind a fence! Once I'd hidden one along the canal and when I got there a couple were doing their litter duty and about to throw it away!"

The marathon virgin

Now Jo's about to tackle the marathon in what will be her third Olympics, "If I am to guarantee running in the Olympics, I need more experience of running 26.2 miles," she says. "I've only done one and I've still got a lot to learn. The marathon is a different sport to the track," she adds. "I really loved London but I got my pacing wrong, going off too fast at the start. It was so amazing, so it was hard to not get carried away. I spoke to lots of people, and got as much information as I could, but until you run a marathon, you don't know what it's going to be like."

Like many virgin marathon runners it was at 18-miles where the going got tough. "It was like flicking a switch," she laughs, "I struggled, but I took on more sports drink and a gel and somehow kept some kind of pace going."

And another unexpected aspect of marathon running, "I didn't realise how bad I could feel for the rest of the day after a 2.5 hour run," she says. "But at this stage in my career I've found it's great to take on a new challenge."