

HARVEY SLOWS DOWN TO TALK

By George Banker

“My love of staying fit and being competitive is what keeps my fire burning on the roads and on the track. My training obstacles are my heat-intolerance and foot-health issues. I balance my training with family-life, and work easily. Competitive running has been a vital component of my life for years. My family and others are respectful and aware. I handle my injuries quite successfully by utilizing the treatments that I have learned through the dozens of years that I have spent in the sport. The sports tape, bandages, potions, ice, and compression gear are easily accessible and used effectively. I handle my race disappointments by being objective and reviewing the before and during. I usually come to a logical reason for why the poor performance occurs and I just move on”, stated Alisa Harvey.

In the next few pages the words longevity and athletic performance shall be redefined. At the conclusion you may just ask the question how? You will be introduced to Alisa (Hill) Harvey and as you read you can form your own conclusion and you will embrace what it means to have passion and desire tied in with a commitment to family, work as in training. It is a life long commitment to self to seek improvement to stay at the top of your game.

A gentleman should never tell the age of lady but let's use 1965 as the baseline. To fully understand the exception in 1982 at the age of 17 Harvey was a student at Jefferson High School (Alexandria, VA) and participating in the Kenny Footlocker Southeast Regional's (Burke Lake). Harvey was the runner up with a time of 17:38.6 as she was edged out by Andrea Volpe (17:21.2, Lake Braddock). As of 2006 her time was ranked 46th on the top 100 list.

There is enough pressure generated in a classroom and having to achieve the grades. The last thing needed is trying to perform on the track. Would the average student be able to handle both fronts? As noted earlier this was the beginning of the passion. Why does a person make the choices they make?

I had participated in youth track since the age of 10. I ran in the Hershey Hall of Fame summer track series. By middle school I was getting some attention from my Physical Education teachers. I recall running in a middle school cross country race and finishing first. I even beat the boys. The teachers commented that I needed to run track in high school. I had modest success as a sprinter during my freshmen year in outdoor track. I recall finishing top-five in most of my sprint races. It wasn't until I moved up to the 800m at some point during the season did I get my first win. Unfortunately, my freshmen year in track ended during the middle of outdoor track when I developed severe pain in both of my shins.

The racing was beginning to cultivate the competitive spirit both on and off the track.

When I competed as a high school runner I was in it to win it! My nature had always been competitive. No matter if it was a game of Scrabble with my siblings or a race on the track my goal was to figure out how to win or at least do the best that I could.

In order to develop the determination it took devotion and the willingness. Place yourself in her shoes and given choices what would you do?

One of my fondest high school memories is of me saving my babysitting money to purchase One-A-Day vitamins so that I could be healthy and strong. I watched a good deal of television during my school days. I was a sucker for good commercials. All I remember were these healthy looking women taking these tiny yellow/orange vitamins. I think I remember the vitamins costing \$2.50 per bottle. Looking back I remember that I had learned during my high school gymnastics days that you could use vitamin E to help your hands heal from the rips that I would get from performing on the uneven bars. I transferred that knowledge into thinking that if the vitamins can help my hands they must be able to help my insides.

During the summer after my senior year I joined the Pinnacle Track Club. The club was coached by Bill Kamenjar, a former University of Richmond runner and a local reporter from the Fairfax Journal. The team met to train at George Mason University's track on weekday evenings. In the summer heat of Fairfax, Virginia I gathered my gear and water and made the two mile trek from my home each day to the track. After practice I would get a ride home with someone. My club teammates and coaches traveled to successfully compete at multiple track meets on the East Coast. My running and racing progressed naturally from high school to college due to good training guidance from my coaches. I learned quickly that my hard work had pay-offs.

As with any decisions there are tradeoffs and you have to ask yourself how bad do you want something? The answer will take you in the right path.

I didn't really give up anything in high school or college due to my running. I have always preferred to hang-out on my own. I remember walking to the library on more than one occasion just so I could check out a book on gymnastics and/or track & field. There was no Internet back then. Most high school students probably would not have chosen to walk alone to the library let alone check out a book on sports. I did not mind going it solo. My college days were the same. No parties for me. I do recall attending a couple of parties that I got talked into attending. The dancing was fun, but I did not like staying up late and walking in uncomfortable shoes across campus. Even football games were not my cup of tea. Sitting in the stands with thousands of orange clothing wearing Tennessee fans was eventful, but I just could not get into the football frenzy. The fond

college memories that I have involve the various team trips that I took to spring breaks, and NCAA Championships.

Leaving high school and as one progresses up the scale the stakes are a higher along with the competition. The situation changes and plans change.

The greatest challenges that I faced in college and on the national circuit were health related. I did not suffer many injuries throughout my young career. My challenge was my tendency to suffer from allergies and upper respiratory infections. I was always prone to seasonal and indoor allergies even as a child. In high school I was able to trudge through the congestion and perform, though in college I began to develop the more serious side effects of respiratory allergies. I tended to catch viruses often. During the Conference Cross Country Championships of my senior year final cross country I started the race in first, but finished near last. The next day I was at the clinic being diagnosed with strep throat.

One of the main reasons my 1991 Pan American Games performances were so successful was that they took place in Havana, Cuba where the island air was warm and full of ocean breezes. In addition, I happened to just be finishing a bottle of antibiotics due to an infection that developed while racing in Europe weeks earlier. Eventually, my throat infections become so frequent that I had my tonsils removed in 1995. About a year after my tonsillectomy I began getting sinus infections. I regularly took antibiotics throughout most of my 20's, 30's and most of my 40's. In 2013, I had balloon sinuplasty surgery. As of March, 2016 I am thrilled to report that have been free of sinus infections since the surgery.

The experience after college and stepping into the international world brought that new dimension which required a new mindset. The level of competition was raised and more

As soon as my NCAA eligibility was over in 1987, I was picked-up by a former Nike track club called Athletics West. The club gave me a salary, performance bonuses, health insurance, and gear. After graduating from the University of Tennessee I spent a few months in Dallas, Texas training for the Olympic Trials with my then coach, Dr. Robert Vaughn. Dr. Vaughn was a coach that I was introduced to by my former high school club coach, Bill Kamenjar. I finished 11th at the 1988 Trials in the 1500m. After my disappointing first attempt at qualifying for the Olympic Team the Athletics West Track Club dissolved. I moved out to California and joined the Southern California Cheetahs Track Club. I got married to my first husband and changed my name to Alisa Hill; a decision that I learned to regret because of the confusion that it caused to some of my past performances and records. Dr. Ernie Gregoire, a Dean at Mt. San Antonio College in Walnut, California, was my new coach. He was also the head coach of the track club. The team met daily at Mt. SAC for workouts and traveled together to national and

international competitions.

I worked at a local J.C. Penney's in Security. The job was part of the Olympic Job Opportunities Program which allowed Olympic hopefuls to work part-time and be paid full-time wages. I did not receive a salary from the Cheetahs track club. I made extra money on the side from occasional road-race prize money earnings.

Dreams do get realized and the hard work and efforts do pay off. In turning the clock back a few years to experience another land.

The 1991 Pan American Games, in Havana, Cuba, was a major highlight of my track career. I had qualified to compete in the 1500m, but when the team arrived in Florida to fly together to Cuba one of the 800m runners did not show up. I was then given the chance to compete in both the 1500 and 800 meter runs. At the time Cuba was the home of the reigning World Champion 800m runner Anna Fidelia Quirot. Quirot was set to compete at the Games in the 400 and the 800 meter runs.

The weather was hot and tropical. There was an ocean breeze that kept the air humid and clean. I slept in the Athlete Village apartments with fans blowing at the foot of my bed. There was no running hot water so my showers were cold and quick. The U.S. Olympic Committee shipped in cases of Nutrament to help supplement the cafeteria food. I took lots of pictures with teammates. We ventured into Havana and saw the hundreds of 1950's automobiles. I lounged on the beach one day between competitions. The water was as warm as bath water.

The track stadium was not quite complete at the start of the Pan Am Games, but the track was well made and fast. I was expected to medal in my first race the 1500 meter run. A woman from Suriname was a strong challenge for me, but managed to get the gold. I remember talking to a U.S. TV reporter immediately after my race. It was thrilling. I was more relaxed for my second race, the 800 meter run. There were no expectations from me since I was a late entry. The focus was on Cuba's World 800m Champion, Anna Quirot. President Fidel Castro attended the meet on the day of the race to watch Quirot run.

The 800m race went straight to a final which is unusual in international competition. The rumor was that they wanted to avoid having trials in order to keep Quirot fresh for the 4 x 400m Relay which she would anchor. She was also a world class 400 meter runner. The meet officials lined us up on the track in lanes by groups of two. I recall there being at least 14-runners in the race. Quirot was positioned in her own lane up ahead of me. I was sharing one of the first two lanes. At the gun everyone took off like it was a 400m sprint. After rounding the first curve I looked up to see the entire field ahead of me making a break for the inside lane. All that I could do is ride the momentum at the back of the pack. Coming into the home stretch of the first lap I was not able to challenge

anyone. I just recall looking ahead and seeing everyone running single-file ahead of me. At the bell-lap I glanced at the clock to see my split read 1:00. The crowd was cheering as Quirot led the field at the bell-lap. As I passed the clock I made my first move around a runner. I moved around one or two more runners while on the curve. On the back stretch I could once again see what remained of the strung-out field ahead of me. A surge of energy came on me as I made a strong surge down the back stretch. I was passing everyone. The crowd began to cheer loudly as I approached Quirot and began to challenge her. She made a quick glance over her shoulder and changed gears. The race was on. Coming around the final curve I was transfixed on Quirot's power. Her speed was far superior, but my endurance was far better. We battled into the final straight away with the crowd coming to their feet. I kicked and sprinted as fast as I could to the line finishing second to win the silver in 1:59.99. Quirot finished just ahead of me winning the gold in 1:58.71.

The demand on time is great as there are only 24 hours in a day and time management is key. The earlier question remains what are you willing to give up?

My getting married in 1990 did not affect my running career. The stability of owning a condo, going to work, and training daily with my club teammates was a positive for me. I had always been more disciplined and less apt to go out to parties or stay up late with friends. I had some of my best career performances during the early 90's.

The greatest family life challenge that I face was becoming a mother. I gained 60-pounds during my pregnancy with my first child, Virginia Hill, in 1994. In that era most people did not expect me to return to track. After I had lost the baby weight and resumed competing I recall being on a flight with the former American Record Holder in the Mile, Steve Scott. He asked me why I had decided to have a child right in the middle of my career. I didn't have an eloquent response to Scott's question. I simply wanted to have a baby while I was in my late-twenties.

Training and racing became instantly more difficult with the added concern of finding child care. I did use a baby jogger for my distance runs. At the Kentucky Derby Mile in 1995, the meet director arranged for me to have a baby-sitter watch my daughter while I ran the race.

The list of meets can fill pages along with the wins. There were lessons learned from each event. The following are just a few that remain top accomplishments.

1986 – NCAA Division 1 - 1500m Champion

1987 – NCAA Division 1 – 800m 2nd place & 1500m 2nd place

1990 - World Indoor Championship, Seville, Spain – 7th place 1500m

1991 – Pan American Games, Havana, Cuba – 1500m Gold, (1:58.71) 800m Silver (4:13.12)

1998 – Goodwill Games, New York – Mile (4:29.65)

1999 – World Cup, Havana, Cuba – 1500m Bronze

1998, 1999, 2003, & 2006 – Army Ten Miler Champion

2008 – USA Indoor National Championships – 6th (2:05.75 – Masters American Record)

Qualifying for the Olympic trials was an accomplishment that brought me much pride and satisfaction. One of my most satisfying Trials qualifying accomplishments was the 2000 Marathon Trials. It was not a goal of mine when I entered the 1999 Richmond Marathon, but I was thrilled with the outcome. I finished 2nd in 2:49.28. That was my first marathon and most successful.

All athletes are open to injuries no matter how well they are trained. There is no one who can escape the setback. The injuries never hit at the right time. One day you are at the top of your game and few days later you are a spectator asking what went wrong?

I try to be smart about my training in order to avoid injuries. I have become educated and skilled at managing my injuries through the years. After suffering multiple muscle strains through the years I now know what to do and what not to do. Sports tape, compression socks, compression tight and kinesio tape are important components of my daily regimen. I don't dare train or race without using those products. Stretching, body massage, foam rollers and massage tools are part of my regular maintenance routine. Adequate rest and recovery are also a vital part of my success at managing my injuries. If I feel something uncomfortable in my muscles or joints I stop the workout.

I use KT Tape on my feet and calves every time I run track workouts. I wear compression socks on every track workout and long runs. I wear thick-soled high cushioned shoes by Hoka and Altra. I wear compression tights when performing sprint workouts. I keep my core strong with leg-raises, pull-ups, and running drills.

When an injury sets in there are adjustments to be made and performance is affected. There are mental changes to be made.

When I develop an injury I try to learn as much about the injury as possible. I decide if I need medical treatment I ask my training partner, Jackie Gruendel, for advice. She is a Physician's Assistant. I badly sprained my ankle on a run with Jackie about two-years ago. I treated myself back to recovery without needing to get medical treatment. Although, 2-months ago I fell and sprained my ring-finger. After consulting with Jackie I took her advice and sought medical attention. The difference was that while trying to remove my rings the ring band broke and stabbed into my finger in two places.

When I encounter setbacks I brush myself off and keep going. I have qualified for five Olympic Trials. I finished as high as 6th-place in two track events, but I never made

the Olympic Team.

There is a method to the training which Harvey follows in preparation for a race and for trainings. There is always a well thought out plan.

My philosophy is that you are better off training with higher intensity and lower volume. Through the years I have observed runners come and go that followed high volume training no matter what event they were training for. I contribute my longevity in peak performance to my career use of high intensity, low volume training.

Long runs are the foundation of the house. Even an 800m runner needs some form of aerobic conditioning. Speed work is the shingles and paint. You will have a tough time achieving that finishing kick without a few quality speed sessions on the track. You need both in order to achieve the final result. You also need everything that happens in between the pouring of the foundation and the final dressings.

I tend to be routine oriented with my training. I like going to the same track, running similar distance runs, and doing the same strength training. Consistent training regimens allow me to compare my fitness to my past training. The routine also is easier for me to maintain since it is all familiar. I am not big on surprises when I am trying to workout.

The plans and preparation vary between the road and the track and the nutrition is important.

On the road and on the track I assess the wind currents, temperature, precipitation, and competition before the race. This determines what pace I set and what I wear to race in. One difference in tactics occurs when I compete in a road mile verses a track mile. The incline and decline of a road mile makes the event physically more challenging. A hairpin turn in a road mile takes additional energy as well. In addition, you have the potential to run directly into a head wind or tail wind for the entire race. Pacing can be quite tricky. If it is windy I will tuck in behind a runner if possible and feasible until it is time to make a dash for the finish line.

I regularly use my recumbent cycle to replace distance runs. I also use my pull-up bar and hand weights that I have at home. On the rare occasion that I get to a pool I like to aqua jog. I also occasionally jump rope.

When I miss a workout it is usually for a good reason. For years I have held firm to the idea that if I wake-up and I am not feeling energetic enough for a training session I simply do not train. Also, if I don't get a quality night sleep I do not workout. If I miss a workout I never double up to make up for it.

I used my Garmin 220 GPS/heart rate monitor throughout my summer and fall training. I

enjoy the precise recording of my mileage, elevation, and heart rate. I use the information to gauge my rest days or how fast I should be running any given training run. The information also keeps my training reasonable. For instance, on a hot day I can't expect my body to run as fast as it does on a cool day given my increased heart rate due to the heat. The changes in my heart rate as I have aged are note worthy and interesting to me. My max heart rate is 183. When I was in my 20's it was 222. Technically, my max heart rate should be 170 (220 minus 50). I used the heart rate monitor during 5K races last fall in order to discover what my max heart rate was. I am always trying to compare my younger self to my now older self.

Diet and nutrition are critical to my training plan. I drink protein shakes and coconut water regularly. I eat meat and dairy. I take vitamins and minerals daily. Historically, my running has gone downhill every time I lose my mind and get caught-up with some ridiculous nutrition plan. In 2000, I purposely set out to lose 6 lbs. off of my 108 lb body. I had it in my mind that I needed to be 102 lbs in order to run at my best at the Olympic Trials. I did achieve my weight loss goal. Needless to say it was one of the biggest mistakes I had ever made. I was gaunt and weak. My performances were steadily getting slower. I did not make it out of the first round of the Trials 800m races. I keep the photos of my emaciated self handy to use as examples of what not to do. As the saying goes, "a picture is worth a thousand words."

As Harvey began to race more she found that the runners were getting younger as her performance was improving. She has some words for the younger athlete. The younger athlete can be a motivation for improvement. At times in an event a plan can change.

I confess that I am a bit embarrassed when I line-up with women that are less than half my age. I privately vowed that I would stop racing against collegiate athletes once I turned 50, but I broke that vow this past indoor season. I have finally come to the realization that it is all about performance. If my competition is 19 to 22 years of age then so be it. Most of the women just look at me in astonishment. I am sure that it is pretty sobering to line-up to race with a woman that is probably older than your mother. I think most of the young runners are cued in by their coaches who know me from back-in-the-day.

At the start of all of these college races the coeds are aggressive which forces me to work just a bit harder to perform well. I have gotten a few stabs from elbows on the starting line. After this happening a few times this season I was ready for them in my last race. I was lined-up in position two from the inside. When the gun went off the runner to my outside surged with her elbows aimed at my rib-cage. I answered her move with a blasting start and my own elbow swinging. I settled into a brisk pace behind the leader. That is how the race ended. I finished second against the 12-competitors in the race. I admit that it probably is no fun finishing behind a 50-year-old woman, but I ran fair and square from start to finish.

There is no time for self doubt in the 800 meter race. I generally set a pace from the gun. If it turns out that I went out too fast – too bad – I just hang on into the finish. Been there! If I go out too slow I quickly adjust. Going out too slow has never been a problem for me in the 800 meter race. I historically I have gone out too fast. Case in point: At the 1996 Olympic Trials 800m finals. I took off and led the field through the 400m in 56-seconds. I came through the 600m in the lead at 1:26. From there the pack began to gain on me. They passed me on the final straightaway. I finished a disappointing sixth place in 2:01. The top-three made the Olympic Team.

I suggest to athletes to take vitamins. Eat a nutritious diet. Always keep a protein drink handy. Set the goal of having at least 8-hours of sleep per night. Rest when you are tired. Enjoy racing. Don't follow a training program that feels too difficult. Don't be afraid to ask your coach questions. If the coach is professional and confident they will answer your questions. Keep your body strong with supplemental and weight training.

The competitors are the ones who bring out the best and will cause an athlete to push beyond normal limits.

I do focus on my competitors in any given race. I will often check the entries of the race and determine the top competition and those that should be racing at my pace. I want to position myself from the start of the race with those competitors. I also want to avoid fighting to get ahead of a runner who should be ahead of me. This gets tricky when I race against men. In the race where I broke the W50 World Record in the 800m I was racing against an elite female with an entry time of 2:06. In that race were also a few men that were listed at 2:12 and 2:16. At the gun I fought to get in third position behind the elite female and the 2:12 man. By the time we reached the back stretch four men ran ahead of me. By the last lap of the four lap race I had passed the four men and was stalking behind the 2:12 man who was looking over his shoulder and holding back the pace. In the final straightaway he changed gears and beat me to the finish by two seconds. The elite female won the race in 2:08.

No, it is not easy to continue to push myself physically. I do think that since I have been training at a high level for so many reasons it does get mentally tough to motivate myself to hurt once again. This is why I race in frequent bouts at varying distances. I am hopelessly competitive. Competition is a motivator for me. I will hurt for the chance to win!

The training and racing schedule can vary from week to week. The preparation is different for the track and road.

I do race every weekend from time-to-time. I like to go on racing binges in order to enhance my training. For instance, this past summer 2015, began my training for the

2016, Indoor season. I started with weeks of just distance runs. In late summer I spent three back-to-back weeks racing 5k's and at 10k. Two weeks later I ran a road mile. The following weekend I ran the Army Ten Miler. I took 4-weeks off from racing. In early December I ran an indoor track mile. I did not race again until the first of January 2016, in another indoor track mile. I had one weekend off from racing then I was back on the track three weekends in a row. Finally, I took one weekend off and ran an 800m indoor race where I broke the W50 World Indoor Record in the 800m. I ran under the record again the following weekend. Now I am taking another 3-week break.

I generally train on the track two times per week. Sometimes I will get in a light workout on the track of just jogging, drills, and strides. The other days consist of distance runs, stationary biking, or complete rest days.

A typical week for track preparation: Sunday – distance run, pull-ups, leg-raises. Monday – stationary bike, push-ups, crunches. Tuesday – track workout. Wednesday – distance run, push-ups, crunches. Thursday – Off. Friday – pre-race jog and strides. Saturday – track race!

When I am training for the road events I don't run intervals shorter than 300 meters. I also use road racing flats while performing my intervals. During track season I use track spikes to perform my track workouts in. My intervals vary from 50m to 1600m. Everything else is the same. I have rest days. I do distance runs varying from 15-minutes to 45-minutes. I perform running drills and strides.

Right now my running dream is my running faster than the current W50 World Outdoor Record – 2:16.05. I am going to give it a try in a couple of weeks.

I do use races as training for other races. My 10-Mile races help train me for my 5k and 10k races. My 5k and 10k road races help train me for my 1500m/Mile races. My 1500m/Mile races help train me for my 800m races.

The reverse works well for me as well. I use my shorter races to improve my longer races. I believe the true key to my success is that I have been able to use my natural speed to make my longer races more efficient.

Having the American and World Records in my Masters races is satisfying and challenging. Breaking the record is my reward for a job well done. Trying for new records is my much needed motivator as the years tick by. Moving through the ages she has collected indoor world records in the 800 meter for ages 35, 40, and 45. On February 16, 2016 she added age 50 in a time of 2:18.14. The prior world record was set in 2014 by Clare Elms (2:20.09), the American record was set in 2014 by Lorraine Jasper in 2:25.95.

Harvey left her mark at the University of Tennessee. In 2006 Harvey was inducted into the Hall of Fame.

Track & Field /Cross Country, 1984-87

B.A. Speech Communication, 1988

SEC Indoor Champion, 4X880y Relay, 1984

SEC Indoor Champion, 1000y, 1986

SEC Indoor Champion, 1000m, 1987

SEC Indoor Champion, 1500m, 1987

SEC Outdoor Champion, 1500m, 1984, 1985, 1987

SEC Outdoor Champion, 800m, 1986, 1987

SEC Indoor Meet Record, 1000m, 1987 (2:44.33)

SEC Indoor Meet Record, 1500m, 1987 (4:22.05)

NCAA Indoor Champion, 4X800m Relay, 1984 (setting World Record at the time);

NCAA Outdoor Champion, 1500m, 1986

Nine-Time All-America

Holds UT Record in the Indoor Mile, 1986, (4:35.25)

Holds UT Record in the Indoor 1000m, 1987, (2:41.37)

Holds UT Record in the Indoor 1500m, 1985, (4:19.82)

Holds UT Record in the Outdoor 1500m, 1986, (4:08.95)

Holds UT Record in the Outdoor Mile, 1986, (4:33.06)

Shares UT Record in the Outdoor DMR, 1984 (10:53.97)

Shares UT Record in the Outdoor 4X800m Relay, 1984 (8:20.22)

Shares Collegiate Record in the Outdoor 4X800m Relay

SEC Team Champion, Indoor, 1984

SEC Team Champion, Outdoor, 1984

Three-Time All SEC in Cross Country

Viewing Harvey while running around the track you can see the intensity in her eyes. Each step that is taken around the track is with determination. There is another quality which is underneath all of the talent is that of a teacher. Through the years she has been that mentor and continues to do so. The dedication shines through the conversation as there is that ability to make a difference in the lives of those who comes.

It is clear that Harvey commands respect and her performance validates the claim. Harvey welcomes to all competition no matter the age because that is source that brings out her best. It may not always be about winning but putting forth the maximum effort. The future holds excitement as there is no limit to derail any goals.

There is much to be said about the aging process and that is not a reason to not perform. Harvey is always in her moment when there is a track in the picture. It with grace as he moves around the track and what is missing is the music to follow the moves. There is an art to which she moves around the track to give the impression that it is effortless. You need to observe the faces of the athletes that are behind her as they work to maintain the pace.

Harvey will flash a smile to you while in the blocks but when the gun fires it is all business as her mind is into the first turn. Harvey floats around the track as each footstep is light. For one who is self coached there is no question about perfection.

There is much to be said about making choices and this is an example of the right choice and not doubting self and holding onto dreams and putting for forth the effort.

You are challenged to talk to Harvey and not be moved.