

STEVE CRAM



Steve Powell/All-Sport

The road to Hebburn runs past the Gateshead International Track Stadium, where some of Britain's finest athletes have fought their hearts out. The place is quiet this day, just a few joggers turning into the structure.

Further to the left runs the River Tyne, silent, dark and deep. Huge shipbuilding cranes tower above the slipways and engineering sheds where many of Britain's greatest warships and merchant vessels have been forged, ready to move into the oceans of the world.

A few miles in the distance rise the high stacks of the Monkton coke works, processing coal gouged from the deep tunnels of nearby mines. And all around is suburban housing, cozy-looking with neat gardens out front.

It all seems so ordinary, part of daily life in Northeast England. As I turn into the Hebburn athletic track, home of the Jarrow & Hebburn Athletic Club, three runners emerge from through the gates and move easily along the road. From their effortless movement, it's easy to tell they are trained athletes.

The center runner is tall and fair-haired and as they pass, he smiles and laughs as the three enjoy a joke. They pass a group talking beside a front garden and the men glance up idly. The men don't stop talking, but recognition of the runners is apparent on their faces. Their expressions show more: a mixture of admiration, respect, approval.

The club track and clubhouse are crowded with children, young men, older men. It all seems very ordinary, but this environment has produced a man—Steve Cram—one of the finest middle-distance talents of all time. There certainly is nothing ordinary about Cram, and Tyneside, Jarrow and Hebburn know it.

Cram was born in Gateshead, just jogging distance from where Gateshead Stadium now stands. Steve and Karen, his wife of 2½ years, still live in Jarrow. Cram's talent was spotted early by friend and coach Jimmy Hedley, who encouraged young Steve to join the local track club, Jarrow & Hebburn. Hedley convinced Steve he could train him to become a top athlete, if Steve was prepared to work hard at it. Steve agreed.

Cram was no instant success, but he worked hard and by 1977, things started to click. Steve set a U.K. age-16 best of 3:47.7 in the 1500; the next year he lowered the age-17 mark to 3:42.7, breaking the record set by another Steve, Ovett by name.

That same year, Cram broke Jim Ryun's longstanding world age-17 mile record with his 3:57.43. It has been success upon success since: making the '80 Olympic 1500 final at age 19; winning the European and Commonwealth 1500s in 1982 and the World Championships gold in Helsinki; overcoming injury to take the silver medal behind Seb Coe's brilliant Olympic defense in Los Angeles.

But nothing has matched the 1985 Steve Cram: three World Records in 20 days over the 1500, mile and 2000. He is only the fourth man ever to hold that trio of records simultaneously, joining Paavo Nurmi, Jules Ladoumeque and Gunder Hagg. Plus Cram has run the No. 2 kilometer ever.

Perhaps what is most notable about Cram's

reaction was that I hadn't broken the record. Nobody was sure until it was checked on the finish photo. Actually, I wasn't too disappointed at all. I hated to miss the record by such a small margin, but I was pleased with the way I had run and was quite happy with my performance. When the finish picture was checked later and I was given the World Record, it was extra pleasing.

John's record was very tough to beat. It was remarkable at the time it was run because the mile record was 3:49 and now it is 3:46. So, theoretically, we should be running the 2000 about three seconds faster.

I do feel we could run a second or so faster with good competition in the race. But, having said that, John didn't really have any competition in his race either.

T&FN: *As a nation, Britain has reached a tremendously high plane in world athletics in the middle distances. There have been Steve Ovett and Seb Coe and now you, as well as many other guys who have kept this country at that high level. Can we keep it up?*

Cram: I feel our tradition in those events will mean we will still have very, very good athletes in the middle distances. Whether or not we will have a period like we have had the past 7-8 years, I don't know.

Steve isn't running as well as he once was. Both of them are talking about moving up to the 5000. Seb is even talking of retiring within a couple of years. At the moment, there isn't anyone you can say will immediately step into their shoes.

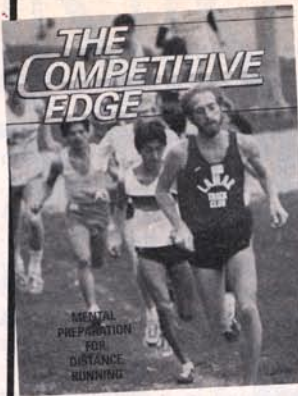
There are a lot of good youngsters around, but they will need a few years to mature. And certainly not all youngsters make it to be Olympic champions and World Record holders. I think it will be a while before we see again another period like we have had, where two or three guys like ourselves are all running well at the same time.

T&FN: *I have watched you perform since your teenage days in the mid-'70s and obviously you have always enjoyed running. With all the pressures which are put on you now, do you find it is still as pleasurable as it has always been?*

Cram: Athletics itself is; the going out and running and training and racing gives great pleasure. When you are running well, obviously, it is even more so.

The other side of it sometimes gets you down a little bit, but it is all part of being successful. If you can't accept that and can't take it, then it probably makes the running that much harder.

I try to have the same attitude toward that side as I do toward some aspects of training: I wouldn't call it a "necessary evil," but it's something which is there and there's no point in getting worked up or



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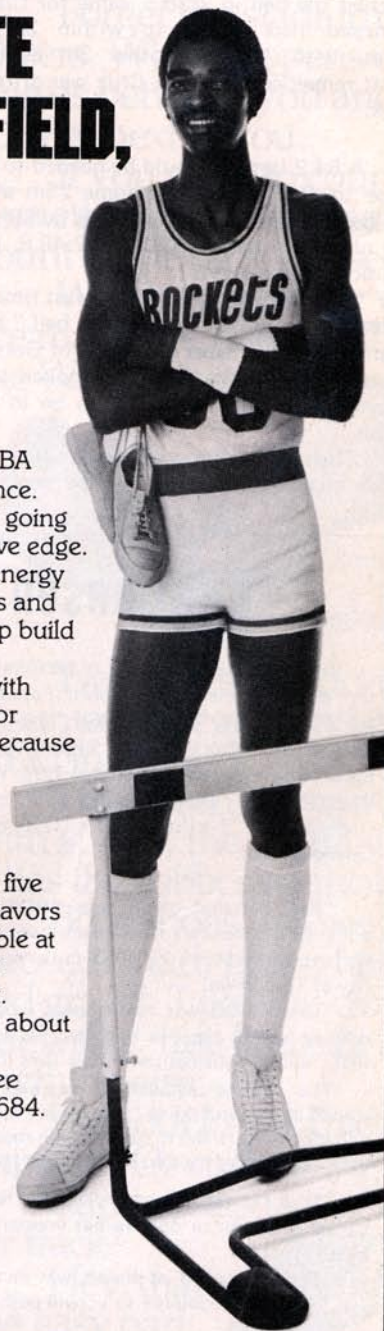
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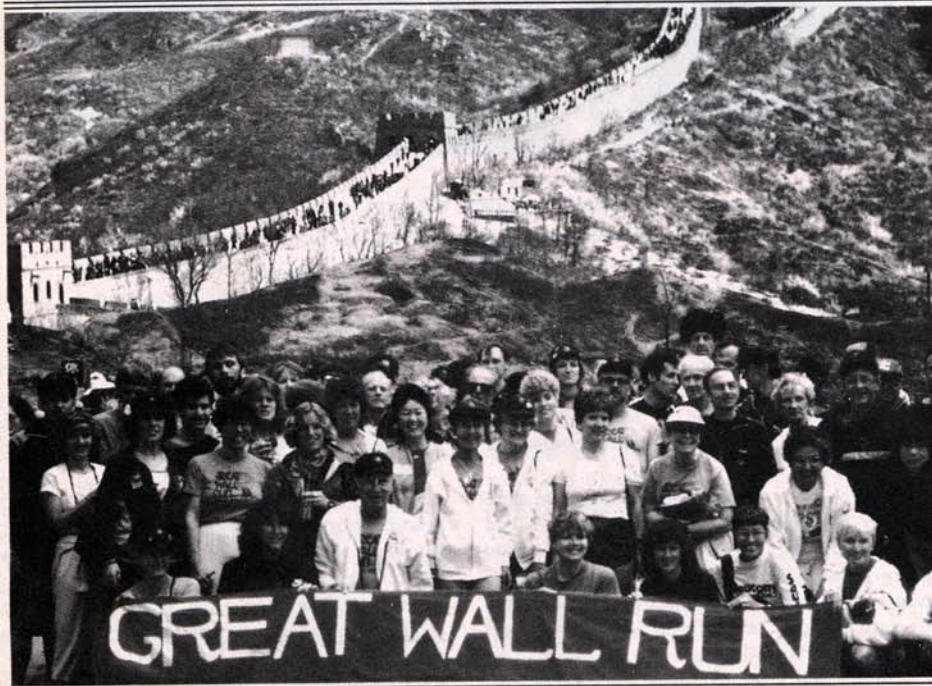
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CRAM INTERVIEW—continued:

worried about it. Doing that just makes it 10 times as bad.

So I try to be friendly, or fairly friendly at least, towards the press and treat things very much in a lighthearted manner if I can. Certainly it makes things a little easier at times.

There *are* times when I get fed up with the press phoning all the time, or people wanting to do articles or wanting to take a photo of this or that. I've tried very much to keep everything tied down to the running side of things. As long as people want to do stories about the running side, fair enough. I don't mind talking to the athletics press.

But when the general press wants to do things on what I like to eat, or my social life or silly things like that, I don't particularly like it.

T&FN: *Now what about the future? Are you looking forward to the 1500 in 1988, or might you have moved up by then?*

Cram: I don't think I will have moved up by then. It's possible, but I feel there is a bit of a void in my record since I didn't win in '84. That's my long-term goal.

My short-term goals are the European, Commonwealth and World Championships coming up in the next couple of years. So I have all those things to deal with before 1988. But the Olympics is always at the back of my mind and I would think I'll still be running 1500s in '88. I'll be 27 then and I should still be capable of running it well.

Certainly there will be new guys coming up and running the distance. But as long as I still consider myself to be improving and running the event well, I'll still do it.

T&FN: *Alright then, thanks very much, Steve. Smashing. □*

Stephen Cram was born October 14, 1960, in Gateshead, England, and is 6- $\frac{3}{4}$ /152. Competes for Jarrow & Hebburn AC and is coached by Jimmy Hedley. Has set 3 World Records this year.

His placings in major 1500 competitions: '78, 9h) Commonwealth Games; '80, 8) Olympics; '81, 3) Euro Cup; '82, 1) Euro Champs, 1) Commonwealth Games; '83, 1) World Champs, 1) Euro Cup; '84, 2) Olympics.

His PRs (with current all-time performer positions in parentheses): 400—49.1 '82, 47.6 relay '84; 800—1:43.61 '83 (8); 1000—2:12.85 '85 (2); 1500—3:29.67 '85 (1); Mile—3:46.31 '85 (1); 2000—4:51.39 '85 (1); 3000—7:43.1 '83; 2-Mile—8:14.93 '83 (5); 5000—13:48.0 '84. His progression (with World Rankings in parentheses):

Year	Age	800	1000	1500	Mile
1973	12			4:31.5	
1974	13	2:11.0		4:22.3	
1975	14	2:07.1		4:13.9	
1976	15	1:59.7		4:07.2	
1977	16	1:56.5		3:47.7	
1978	17	1:53.5		3:40.09	3:57.45
1979	18	1:48.5		3:42.5	3:57.0
1980	19	1:48.41	2:24.5	3:34.74	3:53.8
1981	20	1:46.29	2:18.5	3:34.81 (9)	3:49.95
1982	21	1:44.45	2:15.12	3:33.66 (1)	3:49.90
1983	22	1:43.61 (9)		3:31.66 (1)	3:52.56
1984	23	1:46.0	2:15.98	3:33.13 (3)	3:49.65
1985	24	1:46.46	2:12.85	3:29.67	3:46.31