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# THE COMEBACK KID

If you think you've been plagued by injuries and had it tough then think again. At just 23 years of age, ELOISE WELLINGS has spent more time out with injuries in the past seven years than most seasoned veterans experience in a lifetime!

by DAVID BYRNE

The Melbourne Commonwealth Games 5000m.

**You were an amazing junior athlete and an incredible talent, but you have always been plagued by injuries. Just to give readers some idea of what you have gone through, can you list the various injuries that have set you back.**

Yeah I have had a few injuries. Mostly stress fractures, which are bad at the time of having them because you have to stop running and all that but they always heal. If you're going to have an injury, I think that a stressie is one of the best because generally you are given 4-6 weeks off and then away you go again. The problem with me was that I have had around six or seven stress fractures, so every time I got going again I was shut down with another. Hopefully now though I have built up enough strength to cope with the demands of training at a high level. I have done a lot of work over the past seven years and made a lot of changes to bring me back up to what I know I'm capable of running. **What do you think has caused you to have so many problems?**

If it's to have a name I would call it "over zealous syndrome". I guess because I was so young when I started to run quite well I wanted to be really good and beat the world as a 16 year old and I had some wrong ideas about what would make me a better runner. I use to think "the lighter the better", and "the more training the better" and it took me years to learn that it doesn't work like this. **How have you managed the various injuries and have they changed the way you approach your lifestyle and training?**

When it comes to mentally managing injuries, since my first injury in 1999 my attitude towards running and my outlook on life has changed a lot. It might seem strange to some but I don't regret having any of my injuries because although it's hard at the time, I have learnt so much about myself

and grown as an athlete. I missed the Sydney Olympics with my first stress fracture but I became a Christian during that time and I wouldn't change that for anything, my faith is what I live for now. The best thing I learnt during this time and am still learning to a certain degree today, is that running is just something that I do... it is not who I am. I use to find my value out of being able to run well and as soon as I couldn't run (due to injury) I was lost and felt like I had lost my identity.

And as far as physically managing all my injuries (all being stress fractures) it was done with rest and a whole lot of cross training. Most stress fractures are the same, they require rest from running but you can do most non weight bearing activities. The best cross training I have done is cross-country skiing. It was actually suppose to be a holiday but once I realised that you could get very fit from doing it I skied up to 30km a day with some of the Australian cross-country team that I met at Thredbo. My style is a little unorthodox and they didn't mind having a laugh at my expense but I could keep up with them because of my running fitness. My training has changed a lot in the past three years, my coach Nic Bideau has me doing base work all year round, we do lots of running but the intensity has changed. His basic philosophy is that you run flat out in a race, you rarely need to run that fast in training, you just need to be strong and build on what you already have. I am enjoying



A happy Eloise post race at the Commonwealth Games.

training more than ever, it's nice to be able to run fast and remain relaxed at the same time.

**What has been your motivation to get back into shape and keep fighting?**

I guess my enjoyment of just simply running

was one motivation. Every time I have been injured I have thought "I want to do something else, another sport, another career path, another focus, one that isn't so difficult and one that doesn't cause so much frustration and pain!" But when I start just jogging around again I get that running "bug" back and I realize that I have unfinished business. I have set goals for myself, long-term ones, and I guess I have a desire to see how far I can actually go.

**Your return to form culminated in a string of fantastic performances throughout the first half of the year, including sensational runs at the Commonwealth Games and World Cross Country Championships. Do you see these races as being the events that completed your comeback?**

Definitely the Commonwealth Games was the major focus for the year. To be honest, World Cross country was a bit of an after thought after the Commonwealth Games, but I was still reasonable happy with my performance there too. I would like to get better and more competitive at cross country. I am a bit of a technical track runner because of

**Full Name:** Eloise Clare Wellings  
**Date of Birth:** 9th November, 1982  
**Place of Birth:** New York, USA  
**Sponsors:** New Balance, Liveit Fitness, Cloud Nine and Endura.  
**Currently Living:** Sydney/London  
**Marital Status:** Married to Jonathan  
**Occupation:** Personal Trainer  
**Height:** 172cm  
**Weight:** 50kg  
**Shoe Size:** 9  
**Hair Colour:** brown  
**Favourite shoe colour:** green/white  
**Most loved pair of runners:** New Balance 1020  
**Favourite Race:** Kerryn McCann's marathon at Commonwealth Games  
**Your top 3 running experiences/performances:** Commonwealth Games 2006, Victorian Champs 2006, World Uni Games 5k 2003.  
**Personal Bests for your favourite distances:**  
 5k: 14.54.11  
 3k: 8.46.34

Always smiling, Eloise is an inspiring and positive person.





R4YL has a chat with Eloise's husband, Jon, to get the low down on what it's like to be married to an elite distance runner.

**Where did you and Eloise meet?**

I first saw her when she came to the church that I go to, but she didn't say much to me, I thought she was a snob but she was probably just shy. Then I gatecrashed her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday party and made her dance with me.

**Did you know she was an athlete?**

I had some idea that she was a runner, but I really had no idea about the sport. The first time I went out running with her I thought she ran a bit slow. I ran in her racing flats and my toes were bleeding at the end.

**Do you run at all?**

I try not to. I have a deal with myself that I have to go for a 25 minute jog to earn a beer while I am here in London. Otherwise I will put on weight. I like to surf every day when we are at home, but it's a little hard to surf when in London.

**Running plays a major part in both of your lives, how do you find the 'distance runner' lifestyle and how do you achieve a balance between each others goals in life?**

I love the distance running lifestyle, I would love for Eloise to be the best in the world and then I could just be a househusband and look after our kids (obviously in the future). I don't miss work at all.

**Does the athlete diet affect what you eat or were you already health conscious?**

Since living with Eloise my diet has improved a fair bit. I need to eat more fruit and less sweets though. We eat the same dinners only 2-3 nights a week. She eats a lot of fish and salad whereas I will have pastas and pizzas. She eats around three times as much as me, ridiculous amounts of healthy, expensive food.

**How do you perceive your role in Eloise's training and life as an athlete?**

I think Eloise benefits a lot from getting 60-90 mins a day of massage as well as emotional support and general help with shopping and cooking. I ride the bike on most runs and call out lap splits at races. It's more like a team effort and I think it works well. I think the massage is vitally important for preventing injury.

**Does watching Eloise race stress you out as much as it does her?**

I have to admit that I have been very nervous before races. But it can also be a big buzz when she runs well. Commonwealth Games was amazing and I still can't believe that she raced in front of so many Australians in what I believe is one of the best stadiums in the world. Thankfully I was not that nervous on the night, because I had seen her in training the week before the race and I knew she was in great shape. She also had an amazing focus on what she wanted to do. Recently Nic told me that I need to relax more about Eloise racing, at the end of the day it is only she out there and there is nothing I can do to change how she performs on the track. I just have to be happy however she does.

**What are your most favoured and least favoured aspects of married life with a distance runner?**

The travel is great and I have been able to see a lot of nice places in the world. I love sport so having a wife who is good enough to represent Australia is satisfying. The worst part is injuries and trying to plan your life around that. It has been hard to know exactly what we are doing in the past, for example you may be all ready to pack up your things and move half way across the world for half the year, but you are stressing, hoping that she doesn't get injured and all the plans are ruined. But I can't complain!

**Playing a support role gives you a different perspective on what it takes to be an elite athlete. Can you explain what a day in life is like for you in Europe travelling with a bunch of athletes?**

It's a lot of fun for me, I am probably not meant to really stay in some of the meet hotels, but we are not made of money right now so I have had to sneak

// Life as an athlete here isn't as glamorous as everyone at home might expect. You don't get to do much sight-seeing at any of the places you go to! //

■ Thursday - Threshold run in the morning and an easy 30mins in evening

■ Friday - 50mins easy plus 1 hour gym

■ Saturday - Hill reps or threshold in the morning and an easy 30mins in the evening

**How frequently do you race? Is it a case of getting into shape by training hard for several months and then race lots but train little while in Europe or do you fit training blocks in between races?**

We generally fit in training blocks between races. I do the same training all year round; there are no "winter base" and "summer speed" seasons. We try to follow the same plan until maybe a week or so before a race when we wind down, do a faster track session, some strides and then race. If you have the base fitness there it doesn't take long to gather some track speed. Nic calls it "topping up", we are constantly going back to "top up our aerobic fitness". I think this is where a lot of people go wrong, they will race really well at the start of the track season because they are coming of a lot of long winter training so they are fit regardless, but then they fail to go back throughout the season and "top up". I do, however, plan to have a holiday

when I get home where I can relax and run casually and eat nice things.

**Outside of running what do you do to keep relaxed and entertain yourself?**

When I am at home in Australia I work in our fitness business, training clients throughout the day, so that keeps me really busy. When I am in London I fill in the days by writing training programs for clients, emailing friends, reading, baking cookies, making pizza dough and reading the paper on the net...basically anything that involves resting and recovering so I can absorb the training.

**Being quite religious, does your faith play an important role in your running?**

I hope I'm not religious! I try to be as non religious as possible! Religion is tied up with rules and regulations. My faith is about having freedom because of what Jesus accomplished and living a life that is not bound by rules and rituals but having a relationship with God through faith in Jesus. It plays a major role in not only running but my whole life. A major reason why I was able to come out of the past seven years of injury and run again is because God placed a desire in my heart to use what ability he had given me and to be an influence to those around me. I am blessed with many people in my life to support me, from my family, friends, my church and my coach and training partners. I am grateful for the opportunities that I have had so far and I am fully enjoying the journey!

**What advice would you offer aspiring distance runners?**

Always take toilet paper on the long run!

**Thanks from R4YL and we look forward to watching your journey continue.**



in and sleep on the couch a few times. We tend to meet heaps of nice people from all around the world and you keep bumping into them all over Europe. Popular topics of conversation are who's cheating? who is making what teams/races and which athletes are getting romantically involved. We have made friends with people from Sweden, New Zealand, England and the U.S. The biggest reward for us from the Commonwealth Games was a road race in Austria; they treated Eloise

like a superstar because she had run 15 minutes for 5k and we spent four days in beautiful Vienna, being chauffeured around, going to dinners and generally treated like royalty. And then they pay you! We love those people!

Also, we live in a house with Mel Rollinson, Vic Mitchell and Adrian Blincoe, so a lot of the time we are here, rather than travelling. It's different to having our own apartment back home but it has been a lot of fun. You have to appreciate that Nic is putting us up here in one of his houses and he is getting a lot less rent off his athletes than what he was getting renting it out normally. He is putting his money where his mouth is, really, to help these guys get to a world-class level, which is pretty good.

**What advice would you offer someone in a relationship with a distance runner?**

I guess it is the same with most relationships; you have to not be selfish and try to put the other person first. Just try to help them do their best and at the end of the day if they do their best then you can both be proud of all your efforts.

**Thanks from R4YL**



>> my style but I plan to do some work to develop strength over cross country courses.

**As an international athlete you are spending a lot of time based in London with Mottram and Nic Bideau. What is life like on the European circuit and how do you balance your running with work and family commitments?**

This is my first year on the circuit and I am loving it and learning a lot. We are living in a house in London with a handful of other Aussie and Kiwi athletes. Life as an athlete here isn't as glamorous as everyone at home might expect. You don't get to do much sight-seeing at any of the places you go to! It is hard being away from my family and I really miss them but every time I call home they all say that nothing much has changed and it will still be the same when I get home. My husband Jony is here with me which is great. He rides the bike when we run and is the house masseur, the water boy, and he cooks most of our meals. As far as work goes, my brothers and I own Liveit Personal Fitness, a personal training studio in Sydney. It's all going well and I do some online coaching but my brothers are looking after the general running of the business. It's great to have such huge support from Ben and Lindsay, because I know that it is tough carrying the business at home but they support me in everything I'm trying to achieve in running and I am blessed by that.

**What does a normal training week look like for you?**

■ Sunday - Long run of 1hour 45min

■ Monday - 2 Easy runs (maybe 50min & 30min) plus 1 hour gym

■ Tuesday - Track in the morning and an easy 30min run in the evening

■ Wednesday - 75mins easy plus 1hour gym



On the start line at the Oslo Golden League.