

Health & Fitness Journal of Canada

Copyright © 2020 The Authors. Journal Compilation Copyright © 2020 Health & Fitness Society of BC

Volume 13

December 30, 2020

Number 4

COMMENTARY

Tribute: Dr. Jack Taunton and Cheryl Taunton

Colin O'Brien*

*Corresponding Author: colinjgb@netspace.net.au

Abstract

Jack Taunton has spent his adult life working in sports medicine and administration, event organization, and fundraising. With his wife, Cheryl always by his side, lifelong success and achievements have not changed him. He remains humble, always helpful, and a true friend. **Health & Fitness Journal of Canada 2020;13(4):26-28.**

<https://doi.org/10.14288/hfjc.v13i4.341>

Keywords: Friendship, Drive, Determination, Committed, Partnership

Introduction

Jack and Cheryl Taunton have been part of my life for almost 50 years, having first met them in the summer of 1972 when I moved to Vancouver to attend Simon Fraser University (SFU). Sharing a common interest and passion for distance running, we would frequently cross paths at summer track meetings. During the fall, Jack and I would go on long runs at SFU around Joe's trail, through Stanley Park, and on some occasions, around and around the underground concrete parking lot to avoid the snow.

In subsequent years, long Sunday runs with Jack and other distance runners commencing from Stanley Park, became a regular and much enjoyed routine for everyone.

We also trained together regularly at Richmond's Minoru track under the guidance of Doug Clement, later to be one of Jack's partners in establishing the Allan McGavin Sports Medicine Centre at UBC, the first of its kind in Canada. It is one of the

foundations for Vancouver's explosion in exercise participation, distance running, and sports medicine excellence.

It is well known that the Vancouver Sun Run, Vancouver Marathon, and UBC Grand Prix bike race were some of the events that Jack and Cheryl co-founded. From just 46 entrants in Vancouver's first marathon in 1972 through Stanley Park, the marathon grew to be Canada's largest with thousands of runners. The inaugural race with Tom Howard's excellent winning time of 2.24 was a befitting reward for their efforts... Tom then represented Canada in the Montreal Olympics and ran fourth at Boston in 2.13.

Jack's perseverance with his own running training eventually enabled him to run a superb 2.25 for the marathon... and to have completed 62 in total is testament to his determination.

Some of my favourite memories of Jack from our early running days reflect his drive, motivation, and desire for achievement and excellence. During the fall

A Tribute

of 1972, we had just returned to SFU after a long run. We were about to change and shower but before I had even untied my shoe laces Jack had showered, dried, dressed, and was out the door to drive across town for lectures at UBC during his first year at medical school. A man in a hurry.

Later that same year, Jack supported my selection to compete for BC in the Culver City Marathon in LA. I needed advice on the then brutal but popular carbohydrate loading diet for endurance competition. Jack was incredibly helpful as he patiently stepped me through the detailed process and dietary regime required.

In 1975, the SFU track and field team was travelling to Mexico for two weeks to train and compete at altitude against other universities. Reflecting Jack's interest in sports medicine research and performance, he arranged for me to undergo a VO₂ max and blood test to observe changes incurred from exposure to the altitude.

Three days after my return, Jack wanted another blood sample for comparative purposes to be taken immediately after a 5,000-metre track race. His instructions were unambiguous... "as soon as you finish, I want you to lie down on the grass and I will take a sample." Jack was competing in the same race and 30 seconds after finishing, he was kneeling beside me syringe in hand while we were both still in race recovery mode. I was watching nervously and thinking to myself... "Geez Jack, don't miss that vein!" He didn't, it was perfect! His research interests continued and include studies to help understand the impact of heart arrhythmia in masters athletes.

In the years that followed when I was back in Australia, there was a time when there was no contact between us. The next

occasion we saw each other in Vancouver it was as though no time had passed. I value Jack's medical opinion very highly and sometimes I would phone him from Australia or email to discuss specific matters. As always, he was generous with his advice and exceedingly helpful.

Jack's drive and determination are legendary, even when experiencing his own health challenges. When he and Cheryl stayed with us in Melbourne in 2010 soon after his successful role as Chief Medical Officer at the Vancouver Olympics, he wasted no time. Immediately after their non-stop 16-hour flight from Vancouver, he took off on a 16km run. Two days later, after celebrating our friend, Rob Taylor's 70th birthday celebrations late into the evening, Jack was up before sunrise the following morning, completing a 1.5 hour run before party guests had awakened.

In recent times, Jack and I always meet up for dinner when I am in Vancouver. When not babysitting their growing grandchildren, Cheryl sometimes joins us. Over dinner and a glass of wine the conversation flows on to topics of mutual interest which includes friends, running, and listening to Jack's latest ventures such as establishing a state-of-the-art sports precinct, fundraising, or perhaps another sports medicine appointment. I am always overwhelmed by what they are achieving. Sometimes we take a relaxed path and just reminisce about the earlier days of running and sharing anecdotes about former training colleagues.

Being Chief Medical Officer for the Olympic Games in 2010 must rate as one of Jack's greatest achievements. But even after this and his many other accomplishments, accolades, and awards, he is remarkably unassuming.

I have known him as a friend, outstanding sports medicine physician,

A Tribute

running colleague, competitor, confidant, and advisor. I am inspired by his dedication, drive, and achievements, but especially impressed that he remains true to who he is. With Cheryl by his side, I continue to be in awe. Jack is a remarkable man and the most inspirational friend I have ever known.

Author's Qualifications

The author's qualifications are as follows: Colin O'Brien BA (Econ), Graduate Diploma in Ed. Admin.