

60 Seconds with Morpeth Harrier Liam Roarty



Liam Roarty and Jim Alder

Today an athlete who has been at college and then lecturing across the water for the past few years. He is a frequent visitor home to Clonliffe and always fits right back into the training group under Peter McDermott. He is always available for selection for Clonliffe teams, cross country in particular and as you will see is an athlete who loves to “Keep it Country!”.

Bio: Liam Roarty, I run XC, 3000, 5000 and 10K for Clonliffe and Morpeth Harriers in England. Recently finished working as a Sport and Exercise Psychology Lecturer at Sunderland College. Coached by Peter McDermott at Clonliffe and 1966 Commonwealth Gold Medallist, Jim Alder at Morpeth.

What age did you take up the sport of athletics and why?

For most of my childhood, I was in and out of the sport. I ran for Fingallians when I was 9/10 as I was the fastest player on my football team and my dad wanted me to work on my sprints. However, it was a brief stay. When I was 13, I was asked by my PE teacher in Colaiste Choilm to represent the school having won gold in my year in the 100m sprints, hurdles and the high jump in the school sports day. I ran 100m and did the high jump in Santry for my school in April 2009 and it didn't go well. It was a bit of a shock to the system. I decided to pack it in as football was my sport at the time and I always wanted a ball at my feet. I started taking athletics seriously when I left school.

When and why did you join Clonliffe Harriers?

I hung up my football boots as I fell out of love with playing the sport and decided to put on the spikes. I always knew Clonliffe was a very prestigious club so I joined in October 2013 when I was 19 and I have been an active member ever since (time flies)!!

What is your favourite training workout?

I like Fartlek sessions because it is on and off in terms of intervals. At Morpeth, Jim Alder gets myself and the lads to do this 6 mile fartlek session around the town which consists of inclines, declines, flat running, bends and a long sprint to Morpeth train station. It is class!

And your least favourite?

Long Tempo runs – they will always be the death of me!

What's your favourite race / athletics meet?

The English Nationals Cross Country – the brutality and pace of the race is relentless! The atmosphere is incredible and all about mental toughness.

What is your most cherished or proudest moment in athletics? (as athlete and/or coach)

My most cherished moment in athletics is the British Universities XC 2020 at Holyrood Park, Edinburgh in February. For the first time, this year, they had an alumni entry which I pounced on and was able to compete. I came 81st and screamed at the top of my lungs when I hit the finish. Everything fell into place on the day and I felt I could keep going. George Gandy was delighted for me because he knew how much that meant to me and the adversities I went through. I have the vest and number framed and going to put it up on my bedroom wall. Along with that, Jay Rossiter got Dan Jarvis of St. Marys at the

line to get a bronze medal. Two lads from Clonliffe, who left to go to Uni in England around the same time, slayed our demons and achieved what we wanted to achieve.



Exiles Liam Roarty & Jayme Rossiter at BUC XC Holyrood 2020

What was your worst injury – and how did you get over it?

I picked up a knee injury on Christmas Day 2017 (of all days to get injured) whilst running in Raheny with Jay Rossiter and Colm Rooney. I was out for the whole of the 2017-18 season as it took ages to recover due to stress and anxiety. I went through a series of unfortunate events in 2018; not being able to run BUCS XC for Loughborough, the tragic passing of my coach at former club, Sunderland, having to go under the knife ten days after the funeral and trying to finish a Masters. I went to see Olympic racewalker, Colin Griffin who works as an S&C coach in the SSC. He noticed I was adding pressure to my knee while I was running and completely changed my running technique and provided me a programme to strengthen the knee and get ready for the 2018-19 season. If there is one word I could describe Colin, the man is a SAINT! He is very intelligent, knows running and a really nice lad!

(For a coach or seasoned athlete) What piece of advice would you give an aspiring athlete?

1. Time, patience, but most importantly, CONSISTENCY. That was drilled into me the day I met Peter McDermott and has become my motto ever since.

2. Enjoy yourself, focus on your own development rather than others.

Do you have any memorable or funny story from Clonliffe Harriers that you could share? (the censorship board may review!)

April 2019 – We were doing the Howth Hills session and midway through the session, Shaun Conaghan was having a go at Sean Carrigg because he was leading at the top (as instructed by Peter McDermott). At the end of the session, there was handbags between the two parties and a few explicit exchanged. Whilst the two of them were having a go at each other and getting separated, Peter is just standing beside his car, hands in the pockets with a smile on his face and doesn't say anything. We put our kit on, get a snack in and get in Peter and Gerry Cullen's car respectively to go back to the Marine Hotel. Myself, Colm Rooney and Carrigg get in Peter's car with Carrigg sitting in the front. Peter gets in last, looks at Carrigg and says in his Roscommon accent, "I see yourself and Shaun had a little bit of an altercation today." It was so well-timed and said!! Peter being an avid Manchester United supporter then proceeds to tell Carrigg a story about Matt Busby, the Man United manager witnessing a fight between two players on the pitch through his office window. Busby goes to the pitch, grabs the two lads and says "Gentlemen, this is Manchester United! We don't do that here". Peter puts his hand on Carrigg's arm and says "So Sean, in your case, this is Clonliffe Harriers!" Classic Peter!

What's your favourite meal?

A. For competition - Pasta.

B. Outside competition – Indian food, particularly Chicken tikka Masala

Who is your sporting 'hero'? (athletics or other)

A. Irish – John Treacy for his sheer mental toughness. *That* finish against Ovet is my favourite finish of all time. Treacy put a cocky Steve Ovet in his place.

B. International – Jim Alder – One of the most resilient people I have ever met and very fortunate to be coached by him at Morpeth. His father died in the WWII, mother died of tuberculosis, lived in multiple foster homes, moved to Newcastle and bullied in school for having a Scottish accent. He won Commonwealth Gold in the Marathon in Jamaica and European Bronze in Athens '69.

What's your favourite...?

- A. Film – Bohemian Rhapsody
- B. Album – Definitely Maybe by Oasis (I was born the day after it was released)
- C. Book – Please Don't Go by John Hartson

What's your favourite holiday destination?

Sicily and Ghana.

What's your favourite hobby / activity outside athletics?

Socialising, going to the cinema, playing guitar.

If you were Seb Coe what changes would you implement to improve our sport?

I would ban athletes who dope for life. They get away with murder! I would televise more athletics competitions, XC as an Olympic event and athletes who run for an adoptive country should only be allowed if they have been a resident in the country for 3 years.

How would your non-athlete friends describe you? (in 3 words)

Nice, quiet and modest.

What is your next running / athletics goal? (whenever normality returns!)

My next goal is to have a good cross country season to build the strength and stamina for the track.

How are you motivating yourself to continue training at these difficult times?

I have decided to have a break from sessions and am running for enjoyment. It's important to be kind to the mind and body during this time. I will start focusing on competition when the storm passes.

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