

WE'RE TALKING TO...

JO PAVEY MBE

The British long-distance runner talks Olympic training during lockdown and the importance of staying active

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE APPROACHING YOUR SIXTH OLYMPIC GAMES?

'I feel very fortunate having already been to five Olympics. Going to a sixth is a big ask, especially as it's been moved forwards another year. I know I'm getting older and I don't want people to think I'm delusional but I still love running, and I was training as hard as I could going into March to prepare for the qualifying trials. Years ago, I thought that I'd be retired by now, but when I won gold in the European Championships in 2014 at the age of 40, it taught me that it's important not to set any limitations. Setting new goals is what's kept me going all these years!'

HAS LOCKDOWN IMPACTED YOUR TRAINING?

'My training has been curtailed as the tracks and quality flat trails that I normally train at have been closed. I've taken to running locally on very hilly areas which is tiring on the legs but it has toughened them up, and I've also been doing treadmill sessions, trying to crank up the pace and set some new PBs. I've actually had more time to work on some of my weaknesses with strength and conditioning training, so my flexibility and agility has improved. I'm not in racing shape but I'm keeping things ticking over.'



Jo enjoys family time on her training runs

HOW IMPORTANT IS NUTRITION FOR YOUR PERFORMANCE?

'Nutrition is essential. It's not just what you eat, it's about eating at the right times as well. After you've finished a hard training session there's a window of time where your body is more receptive to taking up fuel to replace lost glycogen stores and to aid recovery so that you are ready for the next training session. I'm not one to weigh out my food, but I do make sure that I get a good balanced diet. I think that taking in the fuel I need to do my sport is one of the reasons that I've been able to keep going for so long.'



Jo is looking forward to returning to the track

IS IT TRUE YOUR TRAINING IS QUITE A FAMILY AFFAIR?

'My husband is my coach and my children come out with me on their bikes when I run. It's another reason that I haven't retired as soon as I thought I would. Being a mum is so important to me and I didn't want running to impact on family life, but keeping active as a family gives us quality time. We've had a lot of fun recently playing tag, bouncing on the trampoline and taking up virtual challenges to stay active. It's definitely helping keep me fit!'

HOW ELSE HAVE YOU BEEN KEEPING BUSY?

'I've had the honour of taking part in lots of initiatives to encourage others to enjoy the mental and physical benefits of exercise, including Sport England's #StayInWorkOut campaign and Premiership Rugby's #MakeThatCall initiative. Amidst the tragedy of the virus, it's been an uplifting experience helping to unite the country through fitness and support the amazing work of NHS and key workers.'

WORDS: Joanna Ebsworth