

**BRANSTON**

*E-comm strategy & finance*

**Getting our lost  
young athletes  
back into the sport**

# Phil Branston introduction



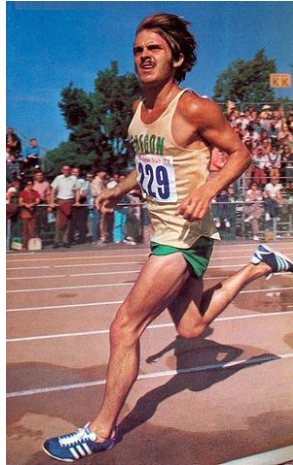
# Great athletes who wavered then returned



Henry  
Rono



Matthew  
Hudson-Smith



Steve  
Prefontaine



Sha'Carri  
Richardson



Roger  
Black



Kelly  
Holmes

# Why does an athlete's commitment falter?

## Physical

Injury  
& illness

Performance  
plateau

Loss of coordination  
during growth

## Pressure

Training  
discipline

Approach to  
competition

Other  
sports

## Social

Social distraction  
/ University

Home &  
work life

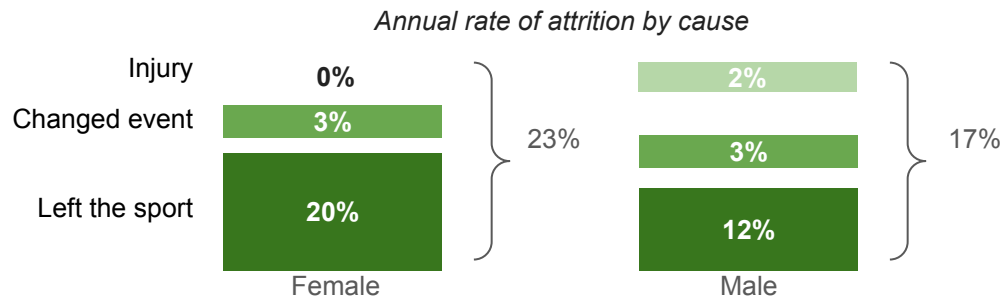
Training group  
dynamics



## A problem worth solving ?



72 athletes  
Ages 11 to 20  
2022 - 2024



# Wavering athletes

## ‘coaching the coaches’ session

### Agenda

**Assess your case studies**     *2 minutes*

**Your coaching actions**     *3 minutes*

**What happened next?**     *1 minute*

**Learning review**     *2 minutes*



### Learning outcomes

**Customise to  
the growth stage**

**Set periodisation  
& progression**

**Fine tune strength  
& conditioning**

**Elicit athlete  
feedback & buy-in**

# Our exercise - three case studies

**1**  
**Illness**

**2**  
**Competitive  
pressure**

**3**  
**What's  
my event ?**

**Now...study your athletes for 1 minute, looking for...**

**Growth stage  
(chrono & body)**

**Strength &  
Coordination**

**Response  
to load**

**Motivation &  
social background**

**Then...recommend actions to respond, including...**

**Feedback &  
consultation**

**Progression &  
periodisation**

**Event &  
technical focus**

**Mix of interval &  
other sessions**

# Case study 1

## Stuttering comeback from glandular fever

### *The Challenge*

Highly committed 1500m & 3000m athlete struggled with growth and illness

Track & country county champion under-13 & -15

Committed to future English Schools success

Growth spurt & glandular fever interrupted training

Coordination weaker now that he is 8 inches taller  
Key track sessions not completed

Returned to training too early

Race results poor and confidence hit

Training  
issues

**Under-  
developed  
basic  
speed**



**Trained  
through  
fatigue**



**Sacrificed  
skateboarding  
& football**



# Case study 2

## International steeplechaser doesn't like racing (female)

### *The Challenge*

**Accomplished female steeplechaser reacted badly to competitive pressure, even while succeeding**

**Steeplechase convert; won under-17 GB vest**

Very good barrier technique and power to weight ratio

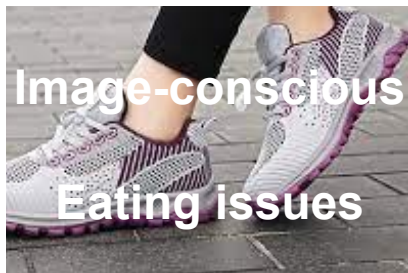
**Heavy racing schedule**

Started dropping out of races; voiced doubts about the event

**Lightweight body ill-suited to heavy training**

Started missing training; poor attendance at long off-road runs

**Training  
issues**





# Case study 3

## Young growing 800m runner, dislikes cross-country (male)

### *The Challenge*

#### Am I in the right event group?

Dominated under-13 schools cross country  
2:06 800 at under-15

Talented football player

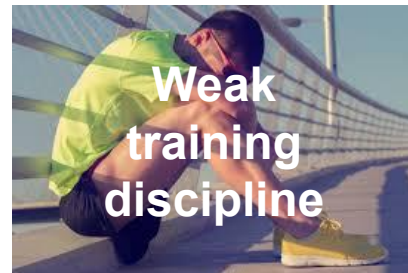
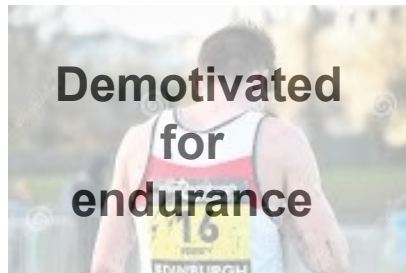
Sporadic attendance and performance at  
long continuous runs and long intervals

Unrivalled sprinting speed...but struggled to complete 8 x 400m  
Poor cross-country results

Late physical development

























Slight build

Training  
issues



# How did we do ?

## Actions we recommended

Case	Event & Technical	Consultation & Feedback	Periodicity, Load & Mix	Strength & Conditioning
1 Illness	 / 	 / 	 / 	 / 
2 Competition	 / 	 / 	 / 	 / 
3 Event	 / 	 / 	 / 	 / 

# What happened next ? # 1

## Stuttering comeback from glandular fever



*Solutions ?*

Coach  
actions

**Reduce  
intensity  
during  
growth spurt**

**Step-forward  
/ step-back  
return  
plan**

**Strength &  
conditioning to  
to rebalance  
new body**



*Update*

*The comeback is still stuttering; athlete is considering longer distances*



Coaches stayed in communication  
during illness breaks



Returned too early  
Growth spurt recognised too late

# What happened next ? # 2

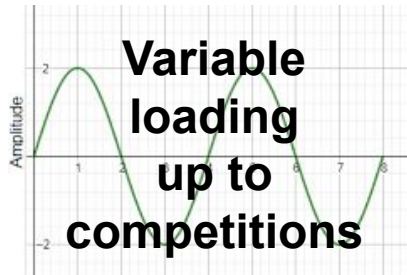
## International steeplechaser dislikes racing (female)



*Solutions ?*

Coach  
actions

Coach time  
on race day  
getting the  
mindset right



Core  
strength:  
medicine ball  
& plyometrics



*Update*

*Started finishing races again but then dropped out of the training group*



Athlete learned  
how to race again



Coaches never confronted  
doubts about the event choice

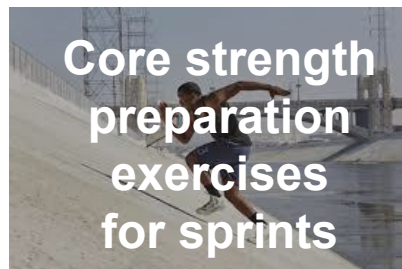
# What happened next ? # 3

Young growing 800m runner, dislikes cross-country (male)



*Solutions ?*

Coach  
actions



*Update*

*Switched to 400m hurdles, changed coach, built core strength*



Built on a great natural sprint technique



Athlete and parents not engaged until late

# **Conclusion: supporting wavering athletes' journeys**

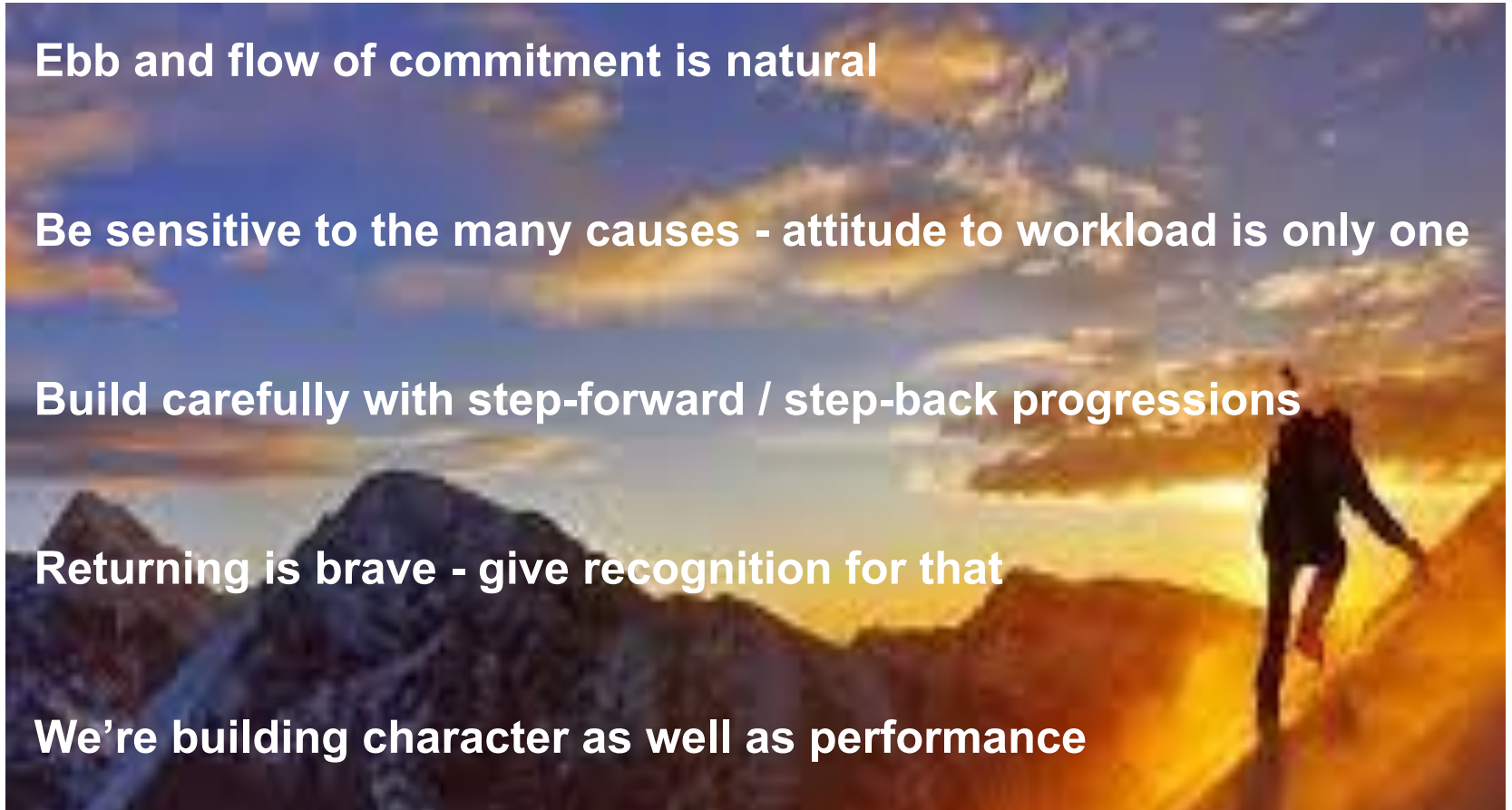
**Ebb and flow of commitment is natural**

**Be sensitive to the many causes - attitude to workload is only one**

**Build carefully with step-forward / step-back progressions**

**Returning is brave - give recognition for that**

**We're building character as well as performance**



# Appendices



# Great athletes who wavered then returned



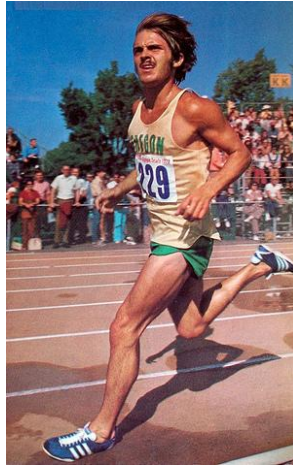
Henry  
Rono

*Social  
distraction*



Matthew  
Hudson-Smith

*Home &  
work life*



Steve  
Prefontaine

*Training  
discipline*



Sha'Carri  
Richardson

*Social  
distraction*



Roger  
Black

*Injury  
& illness*



Kelly  
Holmes

*Home &  
work life*



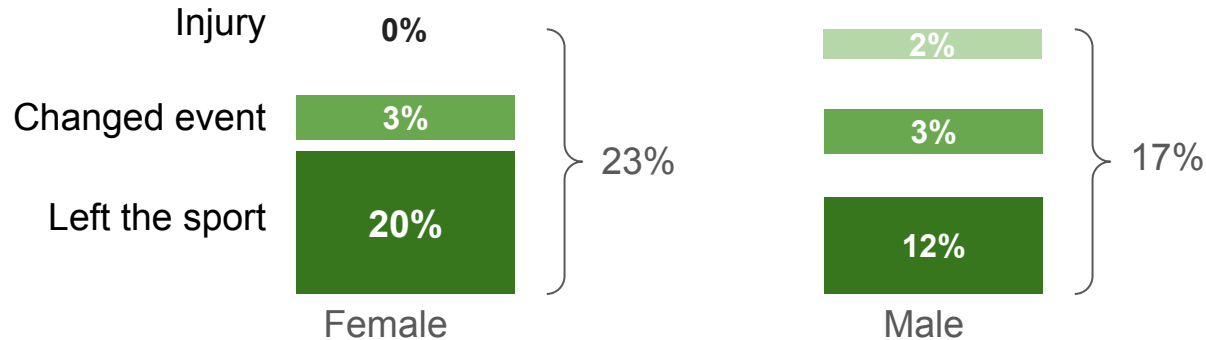
# How big an issue is it? Attrition analysis



Elite youth  
middle distance  
group

72 young athletes  
Ages 11 to 20  
April 2022 to April 2024

## *Annual rate of attrition by cause*



Losing 19% of  
athletes per year

Most without a key  
physical or event factor

Females dropping  
out faster

# Wavering athletes - coaching themes

**Understanding  
the athlete**

**Enabling  
the mindset**

**Orchestrating  
the build back**

**Physical and energy  
system development**

**Nurturing the  
comeback**

**Periodisation  
after lay off**

**Event & event group  
choice**

**Race  
day**

**Background strength  
& conditioning**

# Case Study 4

## Talented but distracted

### *The Challenge*

**800m & 1500m male runner aged 20**

**Fiercely competitive but trained sporadically**

Periodic 'mini-comebacks'

**Also engaged in body building**

Always finishes sessions determinedly but upper body weight brings on fatigue

**Disrupted home life**

Transport not always available

**Training  
issues**

**8 x 300m  
in 45 seconds:  
last 2 would be  
challenging**

**Conflicts with  
'GPE' strength  
& conditioning**

**Missing sessions  
in progression  
to competition**

# Case Study 4

## Talented but distracted

### *The Solution ?*

*Back to background fitness, while living away from the club, until lifestyle stabilises*



Kept involvement in competition  
and 'top group' track sessions



No consultation with athlete  
over availability and attendance

Coaching  
lessons

**Tone down  
strength &  
conditioning**

**Liaise with  
coaches in other  
clubs**

**Liaise with  
parents over  
the appropriate  
time to return**

# A life in athletics



1978



1997



2023