

# A Y E A R O F J A S M I N



## Interview: Matt Maynard

In 2016 Jasmin Paris ran the UK's three great 24-hour running challenges – the Bob Graham Round, the Ramsay Round and the Paddy Buckley Round. Her success was extraordinary. She slotted these in around training for the 100mile Ultra-Trail du Mont Blanc, winning the World Extreme Sky Running Championship, oh, and getting married. Not bad for a full time PhD student. And she didn't just run the fastest women's times for all three Rounds, but – as she wrote rather dryly on her Scottish Ramsay Round report – “today I set a new record (not ladies' record) just record.”

As any ultra runner knows, one particular moment on any endurance journey doesn't tell the full story. So there's a two-part interview below. The first is from early January 2017, immediately following her break-out onto the world stage. The second is six months later in July 2017, where she reflects on the changes it brought and the places it led. Together, they give an insight into a year of Jasmin.

### January 2017 – Early mountains, motivation and the British Rounds

**I grew up in a fell-running mecca.** I come from Hadfield near Glossop. There's a real accumulation of runners there in the Dark Peak, but I didn't start until I left university. Instead I went hiking. Ever since I was 17 my brother and I went away to mountains all over the world. Typically we'd go for 10 days. The aim was not to see anyone the entire time. Often we couldn't get proper maps and we'd do scrambly stuff with rucksacks. I also then climbed a bit at university, and I'm now completely at home in that sort of terrain.

**I began running with Glossopdale Harriers in 2008.** I'd recently graduated as a vet and was working in a local Peak District practice. That only lasted last nine months because I went to Minnesota for a year. I still wasn't running very seriously. I couldn't get out of the city as I didn't have a car. It was more to just keep myself sane. I've never really enjoyed running on roads.

**The change came in 2010 when I moved to Edinburgh and started running in the hills.** It was fantastic. I live a bit outside the city, at the base of the Moorfoot Hills and am now beginning the third year of a PhD. I still mostly run from home, I prefer to run before work because by the time I get home I'm usually tired and hungry. Last year I ran most days at five or six in the morning for one to one-and-a-half hours. I usually take breakfast to work, and I'm first in the queue for the cake bake sale.

← Jasmin on her record Bob Graham Round, paced by Alex McVey, Neil Talbott, Julien Minshull and Shane Ohly. Photo: Alex McVey





**I consider myself a fell runner, not an ultra runner.** In 2015 it was all about the fell racing. What I did that year doesn't get so much attention, but I managed to come first in both the British and Scottish fell running championships; the Lakeland and Scottish Long Classics; the Dragons's Back and then came third in the seven-day Transalpine-Run with my partner Konrad, despite his injury. The last few weeks of 2015 I ran three 100km races in just six weeks to gain the necessary nine UTMB points. I was happy to have achieved my immediate fell-racing goals, and so turned my attention to the Rounds in 2016

**People always ask me about training. I feel a bit of a fraud.** What I do is really ad hoc. In the 2015 /2016 winter I sort of intensified it while training for a fast Bob Graham. I was fittest around April 2016 when I ran it (new women's record 15h:24m). But after the Ramsay Round (new record 16h:13m) in June, my training definitely dropped and I would just go out and jog around on hills to recover. I was also swimming in the reservoir outside my house in a wetsuit. I haven't had any injury problems in the last few years. I'm more careful when I increase my training now, and tend to mix up running with cycling and swimming.

**The Paddy Buckley was definitely the hardest thing I have done.** The first two rounds I sort of flew round, it just felt easy. I felt like I was riding a crest from the start of the season. But by that Paddy Buckley in October (new women's record 18h:33m) I was really pushing it, and had to pull things from places I've never been before. I was still able to appreciate how beautiful the mountains were, but it really cost something. Afterwards I was stunned, and felt for a few days like I was in a separate world to everyone else.

**The longer the distance, the more even the performance between men and women.** The rougher and tougher the terrain, the less I think a runner's speed makes a difference. It then becomes about how good you are at moving over technical ground, and I often don't have a problem keeping up with a man who has the edge on the flat. Races like the UTMB are a bit "traily." It's all right I suppose, [laughs] but it could be a bit harder really. Yeah, UTMB is a bit easy really isn't it?

**Fell running was traditionally a man's sport.** I had a chat with Billy Bland recently (Bob Graham record holder – 13h:53m, since 1982). He seemed delighted I ran such a fast women's record. The fast men don't want to run a slower time than me [big smile and grin]. It's put the pressure on them big time, and it's quite funny to sit back and watch them go after it. Light-heartedness aside, I think it's helped revive interest in the Rounds. There was a big group of people helping support me, and there's a real buzz in the UK at the moment about long-distance running and mountain challenges.

**We got married in the middle of everything in July 2016.** We had loads of family and friends together and had a wedding day fell race on the island of Jura in Scotland. We got married on the Saturday and I stayed until the following Thursday. On the Friday I flew to Spain, and then exactly a week after the ceremony I ran the World Sky Running Championships. Sunday I flew back again. That's just the way we do it. We got a puppy shortly after. He's a border collie and is going to be an amazing training partner. There's a chance Moss could be the first dog to do the three Rounds.

**I'm definitely competitive.** Not so much that I'd be gutted to lose a race. More that I just want to do my best and give it my all. And it's like that with work as well. I probably actually work too hard. But if I've decided I'm doing something, I do it full on. What would it say about me if I gave up?

**I made a lot of friends on these Rounds.** When it gets really difficult and they offer you the millionth Jelly Baby, you want to tell them where to stick it. But I still kind of grunted, and still tried to say thank you. Rather than teaching you who you are, perhaps these big efforts in the mountains teach you who you want to be. Mainly though, they just make me feel alive. And happy.

#### July 2017 – Family, Aspirations and Adventures

Six months on and Jasmin Paris has been ski mountaineering in Switzerland with her husband; competed for 42 hours in the Scottish Islands Peak Race and recently run the multi-day orienteering event – the LAMM – with her mum. And yet throughout all these adventures, there's an even bigger project she's been nurturing...

**I'm now five months pregnant.** This was part of the plan last year. It was something I wanted, and it was an added incentive to get the three big Rounds done as I knew I wouldn't be running hard this year. Maybe subconsciously I was thinking about being a mother when I gave those answers back in January. I had already cut back on training while trying to get pregnant

**Three weeks ago I ran the 24-mile Buttermere Classic.** My best time is 4h:36m, but this year I was just under six. I started at the back and hiked the up hills. But towards the end I just wasn't tired at all and began overtaking all these people. It was quite funny – I was just walking past them and they were like, "ah I thought I was going to beat you for once!" Don't get me wrong, it wasn't like I was near the front, but I definitely wasn't anywhere near the back either.

← Another Bob Graham shot. Photo: Jon Gay







Being a girl rather than a boy just wasn't an issue when I was growing up. My parents are forward thinking and liberal, and there was no gender stereotyping. There are other more segregated sports, and people might bring that preconception to fell running. But it's quite hard for me to say because I've always had this attitude that I can do anything a boy can. When I race I rarely look at the person next to me and consider if they are a man or a woman. If they're moving at the same speed as me, I'll be racing them. That's sort of been my own outlook on life and work in general. You could say that being a woman in science is more difficult. But I just don't view it as a hurdle for my career – the same goes for this pregnancy.

I want to breastfeed the baby, so 24-hour efforts will have to be towards the back end of next season. By looking at my friends, it seems the timeframe for getting back to running after giving birth can vary massively. I'm ready for that. But I definitely would like to do the Trofeo Kima SkyRace next year, or the 180-mile PTL. We hope to have the baby weaned by then, and mum has offered to babysit.

I have no qualms about running in the hills on my own. The chances of a murderer waiting for you on the top of Blackhope Scar are absolutely minimal compared to the centre of Edinburgh. I'm not nervous about the dark. But I realise other people might be.

When the alarm went off, I used to get straight out of bed. Last year I either ran or slept or worked. (It's lucky Konrad and I have a common hobby that makes this feasible). I would sometimes compromise on sleep to run more, but I'm not advocating that. I probably could have run better if I'd slept more. Recently it's been a lot harder, and I've started turning the alarm off. It'll be interesting to see what's its like when I get back into serious running. I reckon I'll just return to that mentality of – right you go now or you don't get to go.

The world record for pushing a baby in a pram looks pretty doable. I think this baby will get used to this adventurous life from an early stage. Last week Konrad and I headed out to Italy for him to run the Gran Paradiso Skyrace. My brother (who I used to do all those trips with) also joined us and we hiked and wild camped for seven days. At the end of it, we sat around thinking how we could possibly do this next year with the baby. We decided we'd just have to make it happen.

I would like a GB vest, but I'm not very good at limiting my running. In 2018 I would like to run the qualifying race for the Long Distance Mountain Running team. I just love running and racing though, so I might not fit with the system if I am expected to focus my whole year on just one race.

I'm beginning to get itchy feet. Currently I'm swimming two kilometers three times a week in the reservoir by our house. I've got quite enchanted by these swim/run events, so I think I'd quite like to qualify for Ötillö (65-km ultramarathon with 10km of swimming between 26 islands in the Baltic Sea.) I also had this realisation that I want to run the Hardrock 100, so I'll have to complete a qualifying race for that. I'm definitely not stuck for ideas right now.

Our dog Moss is now petty amazing. He runs like we all wish to run, barely touching the ground as if he is making no effort. There was a time over the spring where he was running twice a day, once with me and once with Konrad. He's becoming impossible to wear out. When I got pregnant we joked about a family Bob Graham with Moss and the baby. It would be a bit of a niche record, but I reckon we could have done a pretty fast time.

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Matt Maynard is a freelance writer and environmentalist based in South America.  
matthewnmaynard@gmail.com

[matt-maynard.com](http://matt-maynard.com)

1 With Nicky Spinks at UTMB.  
Photo: inov-8.com/James MacKeddie

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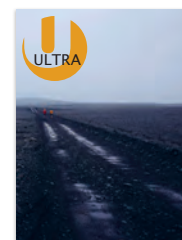
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