

She'd have run rings around me

Ex-footballer Jim's pride in jet-heeled daughter and memories of nightmare time at Rotherham United

by **BOB WESTERDALE**

PROUD dad Jim Dobbin is first to admit that even at his peak as a professional footballer he wouldn't have been able to catch up with his super-fast daughter Beth.

Jim, who endured a disastrous relegation season with Rotherham United in 1996-97, was a distinguished midfielder for a host of teams including Celtic, Doncaster Rovers and Barnsley.

His own speed from that time would never have matched that of modern-day Beth (28), who has represented Great Britain at a host of major events, including the Tokyo Olympics.

Beth, a 200m sprinter, would certainly show her dad a clean pair of heels now — he is undergoing surgery on both arthritic knees next month!

"Beth is amazing and bursting with pride," he says.

"I was never quick, but I could do long distances and run all day.

"She'd have run rings around me.

"But maybe she did pick up her sense of determination from me — she's always wanted to train hard from being a kid and compete at the highest level."

The difference between fitness levels and sporting experiences between Dad and daughter's varying timelines raises a smile on Jim's face.

"When I joined Rotherham it was one of the worst years of my life" he reflected.

"Archie Gemmill signed me and from that moment I was doomed.

"Training consisted of a game and then we'd be finished by 10.30 am, just so Archie could go and have a game of five-a-side; it was ridiculous," said Jim, who turns 59 this week.

"We never practiced any set pieces or tactics or anything like that.

"Archie must have been one of the worst managers I ever came across.

"He never picked me, which is fair



JIM DOBBIN during his Millers days.
"It was one of the worst years of my life," he says.

enough, but you'd think he'd try something else as we were losing every game!

"The facilities were the big bath all of us jumped in after a game and a gym that wouldn't compare in any way to what there is now."

"When I signed for Doncaster (in 1984) Billy Bremner used to be passing out fags to players who smoked, at half time!

"If there was no midweek, every team's players would go out for a few beers on the town on a Tuesday night," said the 19-game Miller, who hails from Dunfermline.

"Sport is so much more professional now of course.

"What Beth does now is a night and day type of difference.

"All Beth drinks is water, water, water. She

carefully watches her diet, even though she's got a sweet tooth.

"You have to be incredibly dedicated to be in with a chance of even qualifying for tournaments and she has been in World and European championships and the Olympics.

"I'm sure she trains harder than I ever did, it is really intense these days.

"She will be doing everything she can to be in the next World Championships in Budapest next August."

Jim said his Loughborough-based daughter — who credits running with her dad when she was young as part of the reason she became a professional athlete — has had to overcome epileptic seizures aged around 13 and, this season, glandular fever.

But Beth, the eldest of three siblings, had always been hungry to compete on the track.

"She just loves all the hard work and wants to finish the season on a high."

On the current Millers' squad, the old player is full of praise.

"By coincidence, I was on a plane going to Croatia on holiday this year and the team was on the plane, going over for a training camp.

"I was amazed at the number of people in the entourage.

"But Paul Warne has done a good job there. He is a nice, sensible bloke and you don't get that a lot in football..."



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SUPREME ATHLETE ...
Beth Dobbin.
Pic courtesy of Morgan Harlow



THE team in Catalonia, Spain.

Brilliant bronze for racing trio

GREAT Britain was amongst the medals in European competition — and much of their success was down to Rotherham athletes.

Three local men were part of a ten-strong paddling unit that won bronze in the European Dragon Boat Federation National Championships in Banyoles, Catalonia, Spain.

It was their debut at such an exalted, gruelling level — yet they bronze-medalled in each of the 2km, 500m and 200m races.

The crew included Manvers Waterfront Boat Club duo Craig Haslingden (47) and Damian Napper (46) as well as Andrew Hyde (53), from Thurnscoe, who

competes for Yorkshire Sharks in Shipley. Craig said: "I think we really punched above your weight considering it was our first time in a European tournament.

"We didn't know what to expect. The Italian and German teams were very big and powerful but we went into it knowing we could do quite well and we did," said the former Wales High school teacher.

"We had a lot of support from Manvers and it was a fantastic experience."

Craig is now looking for sponsorship to help him compete for GB in the World Championships, this time next year.

●Manvers Boat Club say they are "bursting at the seams" and has applied to Rotherham Council for planning permission to extend their boathouse annex for the storage of canoes, kayaks, dragon boats, paddle boards, and windsurfers.

The work would cost around £300,000.

CRAIG HASLINGDEN (right) and Damian Napper.
Left: Andrew Hyde.

