

Hey Couchies!

Deestridders Running Club starts its 2024 Couch to 5k programme on Tuesday 9th January. In 11 weeks participants, by following the progressive, three session per week programme, could get from the position of not running at all to completing the 5k distance at a local parkrun. It is an ideal opportunity for those looking to start or get back into running after a break.

With the exception of a Covid-enforced break in 2021, Deestridders has organised a Couch to 5k programme every January since 2018. There is no requirement to join Deestridders at the end but most graduates choose to continue their running journey with the club. Most initially move into the Deevelopers group and many former Couchies have gone on to complete much longer events, 10ks up to marathons and have become run leaders or are in the process of so becoming.

Let's hear from some of our graduates from past programmes...

We are family- Vikki Foulkes graduated from Deestridders' 2019 programme. In her late 40s, she was already a runner and was aiming for a 10K PB. However as winter set in, 'running on your own in the dark was just not practical. Deestridders popped up and from the first session I knew it was the club for me. No pressure to join and be a "runner", just to be a part of a "family".'

Graduating at Chester parkrun, she became a club member and, benefitting from the advice of more experienced Deestridders she went on to take six minutes off her previous 10K best.

A core member of Deevelopers, she's looking forward to welcoming graduates who choose to continue with the club. Some of the naturally quicker graduates will move on into faster training groups but there's no pressure for those who go at a steadier pace. Vikki says it's always open to 'just potter along with Deevelopers, no one thinks any less of you.'

Confident and outgoing, she has been selected to undertake the Leadership in Running Fitness course this coming year to join the club's fleet of run leaders.

From Couch to Coach:- Sarah Brown was one of the earliest graduates, completing C25K in 2018. Since then she has gone from strength to strength, running 56:28 at the Chester 10K that year, completing Chester Marathon 2021 in 4hours 47, breaking 2 hours for the half marathon in 2023 and is now in training for the She Ultra in April. She has also served as a run leader for several years, mainly taking the '5s' group which is the next one up from Deevelopers and in 2024 will train to become the club's first female coach.

The Adventures of 'ClaManda'- Friends Claire Harper and Amanda Scotter completed Couch to 5k 2023 together and have gone on to become a prolific double act within the club.

Amanda discovered running during lockdown and loved the freedom it brought. However she wanted to progress and, inspired by her son's cross country participation, she looked for a running group along with Claire.

'We chose Deestridders (for C25K) because they seemed more community focused and we quite fancied helping out in the local area.'

Indeed in 2023 the two would find themselves litterpicking and marshalling with the club, as well as supporting Sean Conway in his record breaking Ironman effort.

Although, unlike many Couchies, Amanda was not a beginner, 'going back to intervals was great for my fitness and I was able to see a difference in my pace in the first few weeks of attending. The support was AMAZING, everyone regrouping regularly, and the focus very much on individual progression, not being compared to others. If you are even thinking of coming along, do it!'

The pair moved quickly into the 5s group post graduation and soon found themselves talked into entering the 50k She Ultra in April 2024 and en route to that, the Warrington half marathon.

'I was convinced I couldn't do it! But along with a bus full of Deestridders, I had the best day out and was chuffed to bits to finish ahead of my target time. It's not often you find a large group of people who

believe in you, I've never known encouragement on this scale before and it's changed me. I've tried so many different events - beach runs, tunnel runs, cow pat runs, ghost runs, Christmas light runs, parkruns, dark runs, halloween runs - so much variety, and 2023 has been the year of trying it all! I entered the cross country too, my son waiting on the finish line to cheer me over was just surreal, I couldn't believe I was doing it! 2024 sees me at the beginning of my training for that SheUltra, the difference a year can make!

By her side throughout was Claire, who

credits Deestridders for 'the support to run consistently, with an amazing group of people.

We're both doing the She Ultra next year (eek!) and I will also be doing the Leadership in Running Fitness course which I am so excited about and grateful to the club.'

Sessions led by the club take place on Tuesday and Thursday nights at 6 pm from Care & Repair car park at the bottom of Rowleys Drive. The third weekly session is to be completed in one's own time. There is a non-refundable charge of £10 per participant, however this is deducted from the membership fee should the participant choose to join Deestridders this year.

For more information there is a public Facebook group, Deestridders Couch to 5k, or email club secretary/head coach Nige at nigeparr@gmail.com.

Photos- Vikki and her mum Diane at the Hawarden Santa Dash in December 2023.

'ClaManda' swapping tops at this winter's cross country! (Claire's blonde and Amanda is the dark haired one)!