Obituary

Obituary – Dr. Dan the Marathon Man. Requiescat in Pace. Dr. Dan Tunstall Pedoe, 30 December 1939-13 February 2015

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I met Dan at the LSMI in April 1987. I had moved to the UK in 1985, and was a basic surgical trainee. In 1984, I had spent one year at the Third Department of Physiology at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, and worked with Bjorn Ekblom and Bertil Sjodin on muscle physiology and anaerobic threshold. Dan had a great vision, and had built a Human Performance Laboratory. The Directorship of the lab was advertised, and I applied. A few days after having been shortlisted, I developed chickenpox: I phoned, and asked what I was to do. ‘Attend the interview anyway’: Dr. Tunstall Pedoe determined that, by the interview date, I would not have been infectious anyway. In the panel, Prof. Craig Williams, from Loughborough, and Dan. I thought I had done well, but Dan told me that I was not the right person for the job. He had insight: I wished to be an orthopaedic surgeon, and to exchange ideas in Sports Medicine. More than once, he told me that I was not a typical orthopod, something I am still proud of, and that I should expand my horizons beyond orthopaedic surgery. I did, and ended up collaborating with several sports cardiologists, and still do. I developed a close relationship with the NSMI, and ended up publishing a paper with Dan on the epidemiology of injuries in triathlon.

Dan organised a great series of educational lectures at the NSMI, and I attended them on a regular basis. On one such occasion, I ended up meeting Dr. John Williams, the Author of the first textbook in Sports Medicine in the UK. John lectured on Achilles tendon problems, and at the end put up a quiz worth of a bottle of French champagne. I answered correctly, and my never ending interest in Achilles tendon problems was born. A few years later, the powers that be decided that the NSMI was not worthy of further funding, and a great opportunity was lost.

Dan remained involved in Sports Medicine as Dr. Dan the Marathon Man, and lectured for years at the Centre for Sports and Exercise Medicine at Barts and the London School of Medicine, Queen Mary University of London School of Medicine, Queen Mary University of London; London School of Medicine, Queen Mary University of London; Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry, London, England; Centre for Sports and Exercise Medicine, Mile End Hospital, London, England.

On 21 March 1981, the first London Marathon was run, and Dan was its Medical Director, running quite a few of the London marathons as well. From then on, and for the next 27 years, Dan was ‘Dr. Dan, the Marathon Man’. In that position, Dan made the now defunct Greater London Council appreciate the importance and the need for Sports Medicine. In typical Dan’s fashion, he set himself a great task, and convinced the GLC to fund the London Sports Medicine Institute, in the grounds of Charterhouse Square, within Barts. In 1986 the LSMI was born, no doubt with Dan putting up, as he had done in his NHS life, some of his own money.

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Queen Mary. Dan however had developed Parkinson’s, and the spasms and tremor of the condition greatly affected him. The last time I met him, he told me that he was going to continue to fight the disease, but he would have stopped lecturing. I was saddened: the knowledge and wisdom of a great man was going to be denied to generations of sports physicians. Dan was a man of vision, strength, imagination, resilience, stamina. Without him, Sports Cardiology would have taken a lot longer to be established in the UK, and the seeds of Sports and Exercise Medicine would now have been sown. We shall miss you. Requiescat in pace, Dr. Dan, the Marathon Man.

of London. In the middle of 2007, we met in London, and he told me that he had mentioned my name to the great and the good at the College as a candidate for the soon to be advertised Chair in Sport and Exercise Medicine. I was overjoyed, and thanked him. In his typically pragmatic way, he told me that he had only told the truth to the high powered guys. I was pleased, and positively charged. When the advert came up, I applied, and became the first, and up to now only, competitively appointed Professor of Sports and Exercise Medicine in the UK. Dan continued to lecture with us, continuing a family tradition: his parents had met when both lecturing at