

SEX AFTER 70: WHY YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD TO GET IT ON

# Good Weekend

FEBRUARY 12, 2022

SATURDAY AGE



## Hitting his stride

He shot to household fame at the Tokyo Olympics. Now Peter Bol is running for more than just medals.

BY *Konrad Marshall*



WHEN PETER Bol wakes up this morning, something feels off. A weakness in his right foot. The need to favour his left. Almost as though he's rolled an ankle.

The discomfort is barely discernible – so slight most of us would just go about our day. But in Bol's world – a world that requires him to run 50 kilometres a week at breathless speed, a world in which his lithe frame can cover 800 metres faster than any Australian ever has – this everyday ailment is a real problem.

A trivial tweak of a muscle is an issue that Bol, 27, needs to consider with more than a little warranted care. And on this Saturday morning in January at George Knott Reserve in Clifton Hill – a running track in Melbourne's inner north – it means Bol cannot cruise around the orange rubber-crumbs turf with his training partners, but instead must remain cautiously hobbled by this fleeting, familiar affliction.

Peter Bol has a niggle.

There's a famous article – said to be the best magazine story ever written – called "Frank Sinatra Has A Cold". It was penned for *Esquire* in 1965 by Gay Talese, and based on the following thesis ... *Sinatra with a cold is Picasso without paint, Ferrari without fuel – only worse. For the common cold robs Sinatra of that uninsurable jewel, his voice, cutting into the core of his confidence, and it affects not only his own psyche but also seems to cause a kind of psychosomatic nasal drip within dozens of people who work for him, drink with him, love him, depend on him for their own welfare and stability.*

Now, Bol with a niggle is obviously different to Sinatra with a cold. You could argue, for instance, that Bol is not in the same stratosphere of public recognition as the Chairman of the Board – but consider the context. Consider Bol's Tokyo Olympics moment, in which three million Australians – *one in eight* of us – tuned in to watch his daring fourth-placed run in the men's 800 metres final, the best Olympic track finish by an Australian male since Darren Clark came fourth in the 400 metres at Seoul, 33 years ago.

You could also say that Bol doesn't carry the same dutiful entourage as Ol' Blue Eyes, but that seems flimsy, too. Think of everyone invested in Bol's cause,

from his extended family in Perth – beyond father Abdalla Bol, mother Hanan Kuku, brothers Mohieldin, Badreldin, Shamseldin and Izeldin, and baby sister Nyibol – to the "Triple Js" (running mate Joseph Deng, coach Justin Rinaldi and manager James Templeton), not to mention the entire Australian-Sudanese community inspired by his run.

The real difference, then, is in the way they cope with their afflictions. Sinatra was surly. Bol is buoyant. Our man shows no hint of despondence, or even annoyance. He's standing by this running track, in fact, with a Bluetooth speaker on his shoulder, playing tunes by the Atlanta rapper Lil Baby and the Chicago rapper Lil Durk, and he's grinnin' and dancin' and, frankly, lookin' like he's got no niggle at all.

It's one of those sweltering summery Saturdays in the middle of a minor Melbourne heatwave, when people from northern states sweetly say "at least it's a dry heat", as if that makes any difference, as if the hot northerly wind isn't worse, as if anyone enjoys the dry heat inside a fan-forced oven.

Maybe that's why sneaky Pete seems pleased to sit this session out. A Little Athletics meeting is just finishing up, and after the competitors have had their sausage sizzle they're headed his way. "I did Little Aths for a few weeks as a kid, but I *hated* it," Bol says, laughing, before the kids arrive. "It was *sooooo* boring. You had to stay the whole day. I used to just leave."

Oliver and Jacob and Leo wander over first, sharing a can of Sunkist and hoping for an autograph. He signs them all with "Pete Bol – 1:44.11 😊" – his Australian record, set in the semi-final at the Tokyo Olympics. "Bye guys. Keep running. And stop drinking soft drinks!" Bol pauses. "Unless you offer me one!"

Young Belinda walks straight up to him and declares: "You're Peter Bol."

"No, I'm Joseph Deng – *that's* Peter Bol," says Bol, pointing at his mate on the track. Belinda is confused, so Bol quits his tease: "I'm kidding, I'm kidding – I am Peter. I'm sorry."

Ruby wanders up last, and Bol enthusiastically greets the youngster: "What's up, Ruby?" Her eyes widen and her voice lowers to a whisper: "How do you know my name?"

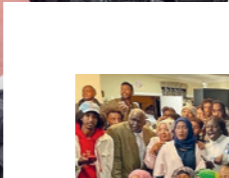
*"I started running late in life, so I'm not obsessed with it," says Bol, who has a degree in construction management and economics. "I don't want to be so single-minded that I forget the rest of the world."*

# FULL STRETCH

It took less than two minutes – 1.44.11 to be exact – for the nation to fall in love with Peter Bol, the first Aussie runner to compete in an 800-metres Olympics final in more than half a century. The optimistic, can-do spirit that got him to Tokyo last year also steers his life off the track, which is more about exploration than destination.

STORY BY *Konrad Marshall* PHOTOGRAPHY BY *Kristoffer Paulsen*





"I guessed!" Bol jokes, again with an evil grin. "Nah, it's written on your bib!"

Signing session over, Bol wanders away, bouncing alone to the melodious hip-hop of Chance the Rapper, doing his thing. You see, after he became the first Australian male to run in an 800-metres Olympics final in more than 50 years – since Ralph Doubell won gold in Mexico City in 1968 – Bol decided that the flood of attention would not change him one jot. At one point his face illuminated the Sydney Opera House, but Bol made a conscious choice that his head would never grow that big.

"It's important to keep your voice," he says. "I'm not going to change the way I speak, or who I am, or how I conduct myself. I think that's how you go backwards in life. You've gotta be true to you, yeah."

YOU MIGHT imagine Peter Bol works out in some state-of-the-art, federally sponsored, private training bunker. He's actually a member of a bog-standard gym chain, Crunch Fitness in Richmond, that's walking distance from his inner-eastern place in Burnley.

Meeting him there one Thursday afternoon, I see a drill sergeant with a top-knot taking a boot-camp, big blokes throwing kettlebells in the air and thin women in Lululemon doing dead-lifts underneath slogans like *HUSTLE FOR THE MUSCLE*.

Bol's muscles stand out, for the absence of fat. Have you ever seen those anatomical drawings of a human, with every stringy ligament and sinewy muscle drawn onto the frame? Doing squat-thrusts with an 82-kilogram barbell, Bol's taut frame looks exactly like that. "It's a little bit about power, but more injury prevention," he says, huffing and sweating, of the exercise. "It gives you enough strength to cope with the training."

He's incredibly thin, too. My forearms are thicker than his calves (and my forearms are *not* thick). He's not really working those calves anyway, so much as his bum. Runners need a prodigious arse. "The stronger the glutes, the more you can drive through with your legs," he explains, finishing a set. "Phew! I'm knackered."

He trains six days a week, at least two hours a day across the gym, treadmill and track. Then it's recovery and eating. Rest is everything. "Which is almost a bigger pain in the arse," he says. "You have to do it, conserve your energy, but it's pretty boring."

Bol shows me what that looks like right now, at his tiny apartment, which he shares

with Joseph Deng, a fellow middle-distance runner who held the national 800-metres record before Bol. There are no decorations to speak of in their bachelor pad. An old queen mattress leans up against one wall, another on the little balcony, while they upgrade their beds. We sit side-by-side on an Ikea love-seat and face their big television, only two metres away.

That's when Bol switches on his PlayStation and loads FIFA 2022. He starts playing the game, as Manchester United against Chelsea, and honestly, "pbol800" doesn't seem very good. (To be fair, I suppose he's trying to give an interview, too.)

I ask how he passes his time beyond gaming, or bingeing the supernatural drama *Manifest* on Netflix. "I read a lot," Bol says, tracking the soccer ball on screen. "Right now I'm reading *Lost Connections*. You know it?"

It's a book about rethinking the source of depression and anxiety, and the possibility of Prozac as a placebo. Bol doesn't have any mental-health problems, but he came across an interesting TED Talk by the book's British-Swiss author, Johann Hari, and needed something new after finishing *How the World Thinks* by British philosopher Julian Baggini – the latter a history of philosophy around the globe. Bol hated reading as a kid but now loves it. No novels, though.

"Anything to do with learning about different cultures, different worlds, how people do things and why. Anything to do with race," he says, briefly turning to face me. "But books about race can get quite dark, yeah? You have to be careful of the times you're reading them, because you can get quite worked up – *quite worked up* – and you don't want to be upset all the time."

While training in Leuven, Belgium, two years ago, he read *Blood River: A Journey to Africa's Broken Heart*, in which English journalist Tim Butcher travels through the Congo, noting the scars left on the country by generations of colonial abuse. "I remember wondering why there were so many black people in Leuven. And then I read this history, and it goes into what the Belgians did to colonise the Congolese, forcing them to work, cutting off limbs, killing their families, and it's just sad. And then you see their descendants in Belgium and they're *still* disadvantaged. You don't want to resent the country you're visiting."

When it comes to the country he lives in today, racism isn't something that slaps him

in the face every day, but it's always there, flickering in his peripheral vision, sometimes flaring in his direct line of sight. "If you walk into a shop and you look dark, you can see people fearing you. If you go out at night and want to come into an event, they often say, 'You can't', then they find out who you are and they say, 'You can'. That happened recently, and it just ruined the night. I didn't want to go out anymore."

After sounding so happy earlier, Bol now sounds understandably sad. Something about him reminds me of the *Ted Lasso* character Sam Obisanya, a fictional Nigerian soccer player of such loveliness and consideration. It only takes a moment, however, and Bol is back into the escapism of FIFA, laughing with anguish as his Chelsea opponent scores again.

"Man, I am getting done up! This guy is *killing* me," he marvels, pointing to the screen. "Lukaku. Romelu Lukaku. He's from Belgium. He's Congolese, too."

WE SHOULD do the crib notes of Bol's origin story, but not dwell there too long. (He'll explain why later.) His father Abdalla Bol is from the Dinka tribe of South Sudan and his mother, Hanan Kuku, from the Nuba tribe to the north. They fled the second Sudanese civil war when Bol was six, moving to Egypt. "I don't remember much," he says. "But there was a lot of racism in Egypt –

it's huge there. My big brothers and parents felt it. Heaps of fights, although I wouldn't call them 'fights' because it was always self-defence."

After four years in Egypt – never in a refugee camp, as has been erroneously reported – they came to Australia on humanitarian visas and landed in Toowoomba, in southern Queensland. From there they moved to Perth, where Bol won a basketball scholarship to Catholic high school St Norbert College. He famously stumbled into running when the school couldn't fill spots for the 400 metres in an athletics carnival. His teacher, Helen Leahy, was searching for competitors when a kid piped up: "Miss, Peter can run."

Bol was given a crash course in what to do – *400 metres is once around the track* – and won by a street. He tried the 800 next, and trounced all comers by the length of the straight. Leahy's father, Brian Moore, saw this and found Bol some running shoes and an athletics club. His first serious coach, Bernie Catley, turned him into a junior Australian champion. "They were all key," Bol says. "There's a lot of people that go into that 1 minute and 44 seconds at the games."

He moved to Melbourne in 2015 to be coached by Justin Rinaldi. It was tough, moving away from family at 21. The daily menu at his flat often involved a few dishes of two-minute noodles with a can of tuna, but he persevered and succeeded, and this is when people began to lean on and overstate his background.

Nyadol Nyuon, a human-rights advocate and lawyer, wrote with clarity about this very trope – about wanting to "untie and yet maintain" the image of Peter Bol as a symbol that binds us. Having watched the African-gangs hysteria unfold in Melbourne in 2018, Nyuon asked us to consider the risk of clinging too tightly to Bol's "refugee story" – of letting his extraordinary achievement somehow act as "proof" that migrants of colour deserve a place in this country. Such narratives set an impossible standard.

Bol knows exactly what she means. He thinks, too, of the simple question he always gets asked: *Where are you from?* "That question is kind of annoying, right? Like, why should I be asked? I'm proud of where I'm from, of course, but why doesn't everyone get asked that? It's repetitive and tiring."

Yet it was always going to be asked, especially after that footage of the Sudanese-Australian community in Perth, coming together at his family home in Thornlie, became one of the indelible images of the 2021 Olympic Games. The house was literally bursting apart, a door and a wall broken by the crush of visitors. Bol posted a pic of it on Instagram: "Mama's house on a Sunday night. Energy."

"But you know what? They had a party bigger than that one after Rio, when I got knocked out in the heats. That's the point: they invest in me as a person, not a performer," Bol says. "I guess it is hard being away from that in Melbourne, but it's also necessary, and a strengthener – because you have to make an effort to contact each person, calling and texting. It's more intentional."

Rinaldi well remembers Rio in 2016. Bol wasn't any less fit then. He just lacked belief, which affects the way a runner moves. If Bol is nervous, his shoulders come up and stiffen, and his core wobbles. If Bol is confident, his arms flow freely and his hips lock into an energy-efficient sway. "I look at his jaw," Rinaldi says. "If Pete's jaw is bouncing around as he runs, it's a good sign he's nice and loose."

Rinaldi could talk about VO2 max testing and altitude training to explain Bol's growth, but the key has been Bol *knowing* he belongs, even owning "a quiet arrogance". He sees it when the training group tries to keep up with Bol and Deng, and then something unspoken happens between that pair, and they decide to drop everyone. "It's actually kind of funny," Rinaldi says, laughing. "But I also have to make sure the other guys' egos don't get blown up."

Deng and Bol have been living and training together since 2018, when Deng set his Australian record in Monaco. "I ran 1:44.21, and Pete ran 1:44.56," says Deng, who's four years younger. "Maybe I can catch him again. We'll see what happens in training, and if we stay motivated."

Motivation will have to come from within, because running certainly isn't a sport for external validation. Rinaldi can't even afford to coach full-time. His email address has an @anz.com suffix; his main gig is managing the hardship and deceased-estates teams for Australia's third-largest bank.

Bol has a potential fallback career, too. He finished a Curtin University degree in construction management and economics in 2017, and has worked as an engineer doing tenders and costings for building projects and civic works. He recently finished a business course at the University of Melbourne and is enrolled in a course with the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

But as much as he enjoyed studying those building-industry concepts, he doesn't really want to work in that field. He would happily end his running career at the Paris Olympics – one more shot at gold – with the possible exception of pushing that timeline out to 2026, when Victoria might host the Commonwealth Games. Ultimately, he sees himself working in a high-performance space within sport, perhaps running his own foundation. He really only worked as an engineer in 2018 because he needed the money. He didn't stay more than a year. Not after landing a sponsorship with Adidas, allowing him to run full-time.

The latter was the work of James Templeton, his manager since 2018, who laments the paltry remuneration for aspiring runners. "Before the Olympics, a company came to me wanting to sponsor Pete, and I told them \$10,000 would be good," he says. "They said, 'We were thinking \$2000.' It just makes you shake your head." Templeton reserves the most scorn for



Athletics Australia, and the Byzantine formula it uses for assessing "podium potential" and doling out dollars. "Peter got \$6000 over six years at one point, total, when he was an *Olympian*. Tokyo changed that. He's moved on to better funding now. But he doesn't need it *now* – he f...ing needed it four years ago."

Tokyo has certainly been a windfall. Bol's Adidas sponsorship went up. Commercial talent manager Nick Fordham came on board, too, and more lucrative corporate speaking gigs started rolling in, whether talking online to Brownes Dairy or Westpac. New partnerships are in the works, with everyone from global transport companies and coffee manufacturers to a Swiss watchmaker suddenly interested in aligning themselves with Bol. "Legit sponsors," Templeton says. "People often come back from the Olympics and get signed by some protein-powder company or fresh food delivery service – but this is the real deal."

Bol doesn't wade too deeply into the topic, but says not having to worry about paying his rent makes training much simpler. He notes that Australian swimmers – through an annual \$2 million donation from Gina Rinehart – are far better off than runners. "I think if athletics had that kind of support, you'd see more of us pushing barriers. I'm just trying to find a number for Andrew Forrest!"

There was a time when Bol and Deng struggled to find a place to live. On that topic I call a perhaps unlikely subject for an athletics story – Bill Shorten – and let the former leader of the Australian Labor Party know who I'm profiling. "F... that's good news!" Shorten barks. "So bloody good!" Shorten met Bol and Deng maybe five years ago, at an AFL grand final week event. "If there's ever anything I can do," Shorten told them, "give us a ring."

The best two 800-metre runners in the country had just spent a desperate month submitting 14 rental applications without a single call back. The following week, a flurry of calls involving Templeton and one-time ALP "faceless man" Mark Arbib (then president of Athletics Australia) led back to Shorten. "They were couch-surfing," Shorten says. "It just struck me as ridiculous – there had to be subconscious bias at play."

The member for Maribyrnong ultimately helped the guys find a place in nearby Niddrie. Then he began bumping into them at his local coffee shop, Phat Milk in Travancore. When Shorten's daughter was nervous about her school cross-country competition, Bol took her out for a few training laps. Shorten helped Bol and Deng get a car, too.

When Bol was asked by a reporter in Tokyo if he had a message for the Sudanese community back home, Shorten loved Bol's response: that he wanted to thank *everyone* back home. "He's proud of his background and heritage and people, but *everyone* is his people," Shorten says. "Put it this way: it showed a classiness I don't often see in Canberra."

That class is part of what people love about Bol – the ease with which he carries himself, and the sense that Shorten loved Bol's response: that he wanted to thank *everyone* back home. "He's proud of his background and heritage and people, but *everyone* is his people," Shorten says. "Put it this way: it showed a classiness I don't often see in Canberra."

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He drove around town in a rented car, meeting people and sharing meals. "What stayed with me was the link between talent and opportunity. I saw so many talented people, and if you could give them a single opportunity it could change their whole life.



Above: Bol (at far left), aged 10, with his family shortly before they moved to Australia. Below: with flatmate and fellow runner Joseph Deng and Bill Shorten, who helped the pair find a rental flat.

Some people don't have the funds, or the chance, and we have everything here, and that gap was so obvious."

Potchefstroom is a high-altitude city – 1.3 kilometres above sea level – making the air so thin it's hard to breathe. Bol remembers a long jog one day, an impromptu session out behind his accommodation. "I felt like I was on safari," he says. "I saw zebras, springboks, herds of these animals running. Running doesn't really ever get any easier, because you can always push harder, but when you're fit and in the right place, it's

lovely. When you're fit you can endure the pain – you *want* to endure it – because if you're not enjoying yourself, not relaxed, you go backwards out there."

He had every right to be tense and distracted in Tokyo last year, whether tracking the rise of his Instagram followers from 10,000 to 40,000 (now at 46,600 and counting), or the crowd holding aloft bad puns printed on A4 paper, like *BOL IS READY TO com-PETE!* and *UN-BOL-LIEVABLE!* and my personal favourite, *TURN UP THE PETE!*

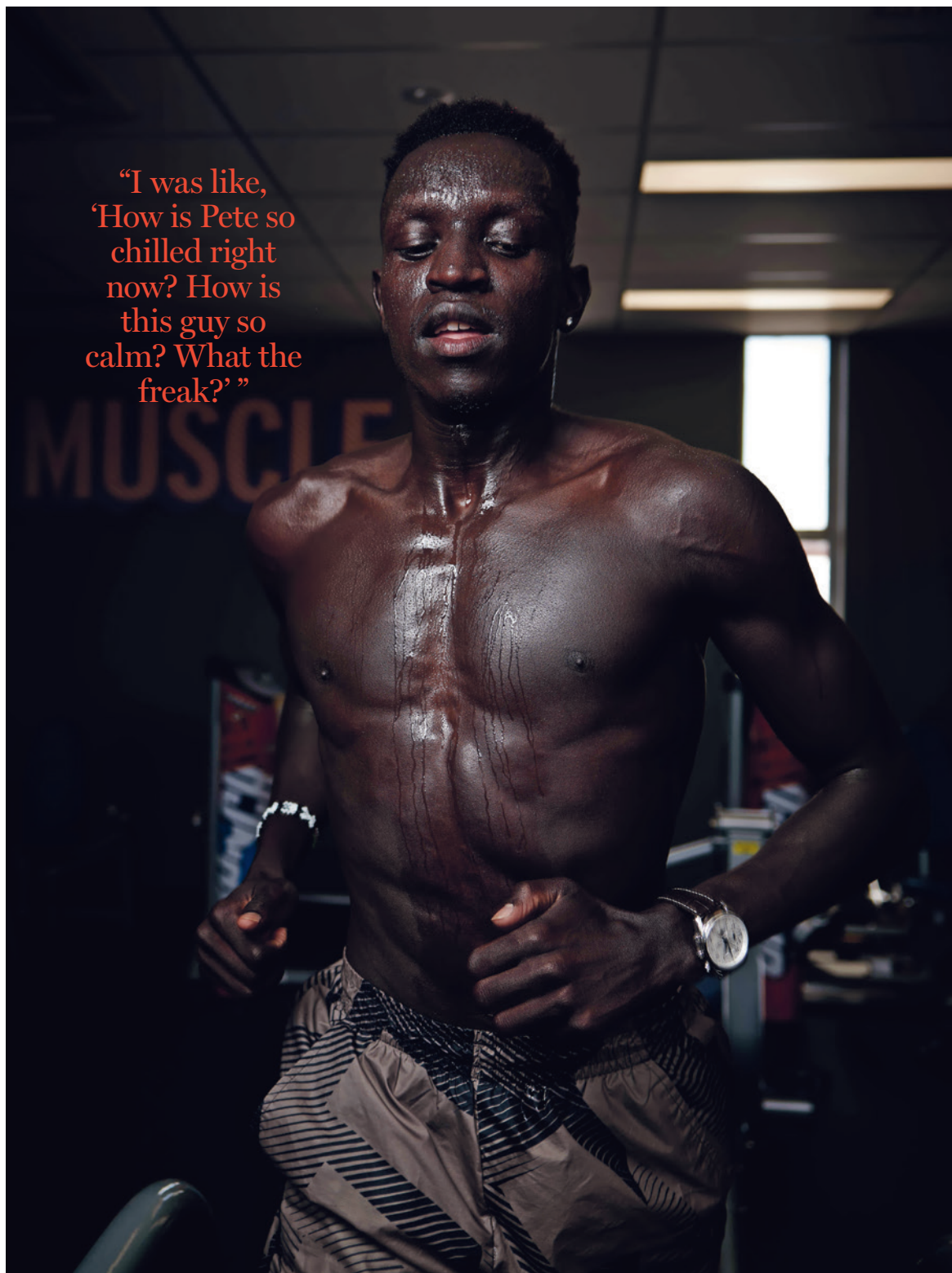
But Bendere Oboya, 21, a breathtaking young runner of Ethiopian descent who lives down the street from Bol and Deng, has an abiding memory of how unaffected her friend seemed throughout it all. "You know those people who just do whatever, and they're funny? That's Pete," she says. "I was like, 'How is he so chilled right now? How is this guy so calm? *What the freak?*'"

Tamsyn Manou, a former champion athlete who commented the Olympics track events alongside Bruce McAvaney for the Seven Network, saw in Bol a mature competitor in a uniquely tactical race. "It's not like other events," Manou says. "The 800 is big-time racing. Heats are nothing like semis, and semis are nothing like finals. Favourites fall all the time."

Based on Rinaldi's pre-games assessment, for instance, the two best runners Bol would face in Tokyo were Nijel Amos from Botswana and Marco Arop from Canada. Amos finished second-last in the final. Arop didn't even *make* the final. That's how unpredictable big races can be. (Had Bol run as fast in the final as he did in the semi-final, for instance, he would have won gold.)

Bol's strategy was risky, too. Leading from the front in the final was an all-or-nothing bet. "If Pete *just* wanted to get a medal – any medal – there was another way he could run," says Rinaldi. "Basically he could sit in the middle of the pack, let others do all the work, and





“I was like, ‘How is Pete so chilled right now? How is this guy so calm? What the freak?’”

then try to sneak in for a place. But it’s almost impossible to win *gold* that way, and Pete wants to *win*. That’s why he goes to the front and hopes it’s a quick race, and hopes he can hold on in the last 100.”

Over the next two years, Rinaldi wants Bol practising other tactics – trying to pick off runners one by one, or kick late from the scrum. “You want to be aware of what to do *whatever* the situation, if you’re trapped in the middle, or stuck at the very back. Pete can do that, but he has to learn how.”

He needs to improve his time, too. All the composure in the world won’t help if he doesn’t get faster. Rinaldi wants both Bol and Deng to aim for a new 800-metres Australian record of about 1:42.5 – a second-and-a-half faster than they’ve ever run. The world record is a stunning two seconds faster again – 1:40.91 – and was set in 2012 by Templeton’s former client, Kenyan runner David Rudisha.

Bol and Deng don’t need to go that fast to challenge at the next Olympics, but if they can get their time down to 1:42.5, then *their* best would match the best of the guys they’re sure to face in Paris in 2024, like Botswana’s Amos, America’s Donovan Brazier, Ethiopia’s Mohammed Aman and Kenya’s Emmanuel Korir, all of whom have already run that fast.

“There are 15 guys in the world right now who’ve run faster than Pete and Joe,” Rinaldi explains. “The Australian record is the 34th-fastest national record in the world. Yeah, it sounds good to have it, but it’s kinda rubbish.”

Complacency isn’t a worry. Templeton sees in his client the hunger of an old friend, former middle-distance champion Bernard Lagat, a Kenyan-American who could win a world championship one week and immediately reset. “Lagat would say, ‘My training begins again, and none of this has happened,’” Templeton says. “Pete’s plan is to hit every year like the last one doesn’t exist.”

Bol turns 28 later this month – prime age for a middle-distance runner, with plenty left. (The silver medallist in Tokyo, Kenya’s Ferguson Rotich, is 32.) Does he ever wonder if Tokyo *was* his moment, if others won’t arise? He’s surprisingly open to the possibility. “Honestly, you never know. That’s why you can set as many goals as you want but it’s better to take things day by day,” he says. “I don’t lay there looking at the ceiling thinking about the next Olympics: Paris, Paris, Paris. Yes, I’ll do all I can to get there and do my best, but you could be sick on the day. You could be injured. You could be off a little. Or some guys could come along who are better.”

I ask former champion Tamsyn Manou about this particular moment in the life of a track athlete, coming off the high of global acclaim in international competition, then competing on the more anonymous local circuit. The adjustment isn’t as hard as you might think. “Runners don’t train alone,” she points out. “Pete is surrounded by people who are highly competitive. They’ll push him, and he’ll push them, because if he takes his foot off the pedal, he’ll get beaten, and he won’t like that.”

The public pays attention to running at every summer Olympics, then we look away, but the runners themselves don’t hibernate for four years. Running is their vocation. Their talent. Their choice. “You’re not doing it for fame,” says Manou. “It’s honestly never, ever about that superficial side: ‘How much will I get out of this? How many people will notice?’”

One other notion to temper or dispel is that of “the grind”. We see only the glamorous pinnacle expression of what runners do, so we imagine all the other stuff as dreary and repetitive, sapping and stoic. But let’s look at 2022 for Peter Bol, and how it might unfold. It starts today – Saturday February 12, in the Adelaide Invitational, his first race back in Australia. Next is the Sydney Track Classic, then the Melbourne Track Classic, then the 2022 Australian Track and Field Championships in Sydney.

Then he goes overseas to a massive race meet in Doha, then the World Athletics Championships in Oregon and, finally, the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham in late July. He’ll compete all over Europe in the Diamond League, from Zurich to Brussels.

Back in Australia the following summer, there’ll be handicap gift races in 2023, where Bol will be paid to run and draw a crowd. Then the World Athletics Championships in Budapest, and before you know it two years will have passed, and the 2024 Paris Olympics will be upon us, when he’ll be even more fit and focused.

If you think that sounds like a hard life, I invite you to inspect Bol’s Instagram feed. Jumping off rocks into the sea in Lisbon. Ice-creams and Vespas in Florence. Exploring ancient ruins in Cologne. Jogging in his favourite place to jog, the university town of Tübingen in southern Germany, wandering cobblestone streets and

*“You can set as many goals as you want, but it’s better to take things day by day,” says Bol of his preparation for the Paris 2024 Olympics.*

running through the Schönbuch forest while listening to woodpeckers in beech trees. The guy’s had a pretty decent pandemic.

“The travel is great. We never travelled as a kid – there weren’t no family holidays,” Bol says, smiling. “There are definitely people who are super-serious – who

compete and that’s literally all they do. I explore.”

Running itself can be boring, and hard, but he finds enjoyment in progress. PBs are fun. Winning is quite nice. He finds pleasure in the physical chase, too, craving that flow state.

He wants it now, as the sun beats down on us in the air-fryer that Melbourne has today become. Despite the niggle in Bol’s right foot, he wishes he was wearing spikes and sprinting with his mates, feeling the way he usually does with less than a lap to go.

“Everything around you is blurred, and the focus is on you. You feel unstoppable. It’s peaceful, like meditating,” he says. “You’re not even thinking about anything, and that’s when you run your best, when you’re so present, and you’re seeing the world around you. It’s quite beautiful, really.” ■

## PODCAST



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