

A running start

Chef Chris Galvin has a lot to thank Antony Worrall Thompson for. When Chris was 15, his father left their Essex home and Chris, his younger brother Jeff and their mother began to struggle.

Chris knocked on the door of the Essex restaurant run by Worrall Thompson and was given work in the kitchen, washing pots. That was how he got his start in life.

These days, he's chef patron of Galvin at Windows on the 28th floor of the Park Lane Hilton and he and Jeff – both of whom have had Michelin stars in their careers – run Galvin Bistrot de Luxe on Baker Street, with another restaurant due to open this year in Spitalfields in the City of London.

"It's like that in a lot of kitchens," Chris says. "If you're good you survive and you're given an opportunity. You have this lovely juxtaposition of people who have done better in life often eating in restaurants, so you get to be close to people who help you aspire to different things."

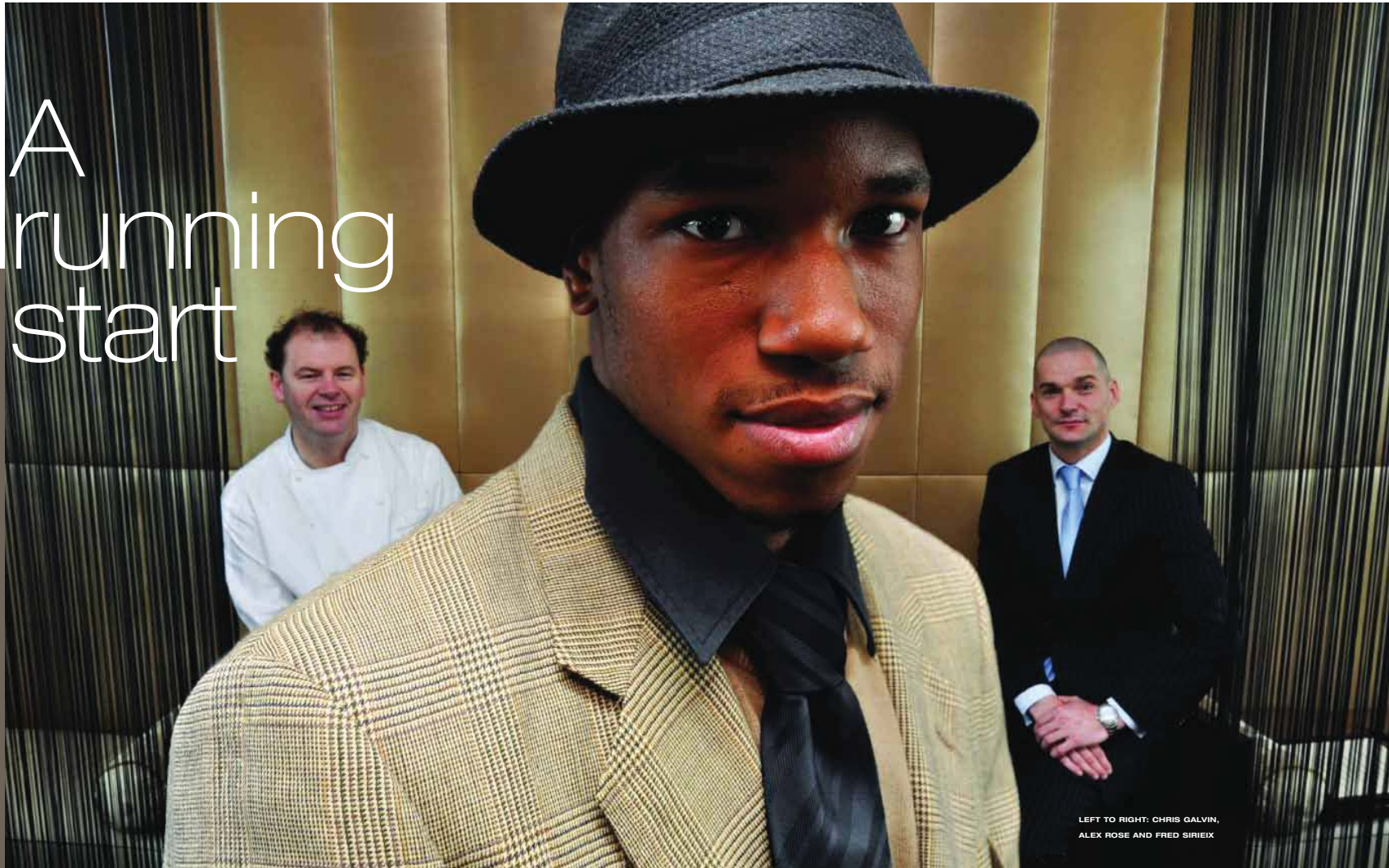
As Chris points out, a lot of kids who haven't had the best start in life are caught in a Catch 22. Without experience they can't get jobs, but without qualifications they can't get experience.

Galvin's Chance, a new project run by the Springboard Charitable Trust, is designed to break that cycle by getting disadvantaged young people onto a fast-track course at Westminster Kingsway College and then into apprenticeships at top London hotels.

The project is being backed by the Hilton in the Community Foundation and is partnering with Alex Rose, a 20-year-old who launched his own campaign against gun and knife crime after his friend, Eugene, was murdered.

CELEBRITIES ARE LINING UP TO RUN AROUND THE SERPENTINE, UNDER PARK LANE AND UP ALL 28 FLOORS OF THE HILTON. WHY? TO GIVE YOUNGSTERS A CHANCE TO TURN THEIR LIVES AROUND. ERIK BROWN REPORTS

LEFT: FRED SIRIEIX (CENTRE) WITH JOANNE MERSH (NÉE FENN), 800M BRONZE MEDALLIST AT THE WORLD INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS, AND GRAEME LE SAUX



LEFT TO RIGHT: CHRIS GALVIN, ALEX ROSE AND FRED SIRIEIX



Alex, now training to be a graphic designer, launched STOP (Stop This Ongoing Problem) when he was still a teenager. He won an Anne Frank Award for people who make a difference and has been called to 10 Downing Street to discuss strategies for dealing with street violence.

Even so, Alex admits that he had fallen prey to the belief that people in central London were distanced from the issues he was putting his heart and soul into. But his first meeting with Fred Sirieix, Galvin at Windows' irreplaceable general manager, changed all that.

"When I spoke to Fred and the team, the passion that came from them – that for me was amazing," Alex says.

"It's really come home to me now just how close the issue is to everyone's hearts, not just the people in my community."

Together, Fred, Alex, Chris Galvin, Springboard's chief

executive Anne Pierce and the Hilton in the Community Foundation came up with the idea for Galvin's Chance. But it nearly collapsed when it emerged that the first phase, for a dozen apprentices, would cost £30,000.

Super-fit Fred Sirieix came up with the answer: The Mayfair Park & Tower Race. And celebrities started to get involved almost straight away. Michelin-starred chef Michel Roux Jr was one of the first to sign up along with former Chelsea and England footballer Graeme Le Saux – officially the celebrity voice of Galvin's Chance. Many more have accepted invitations to run since.

The race will be run on June 17 at 4pm. Full details, including nutritional advice, are now available at <http://mayfairparkandtowerrace.com>.