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women in sport

News & information from the Womens Sports Foundation Autumn 2003

Read all about it...

Join our campaign
to get more
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sportswomen

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SPORTS
FOUNDATION

The voice of women's sport

News from the world of women's sport. Any news stories should be addressed to the Editor at wsfnews@yahoo.co.uk



In brief...



The first SAQ Women and Sport conference brought together coaches, teachers and trainers from all over the UK to discuss and attempt modern training techniques. The highlights included an active warm-up session by Sue Lopez, head of women's football at Southampton FC, who led delegates through a dynamic flex warm-up and drills designed by SAQ for sportswomen.

Teachers Hazel McSweeney and Jenny Smith demonstrated how the SAQ schools programme worked in action while teachers from Wright Robinson Sports College, Manchester explained how they had managed to increase participation in girls PE.

Gaynor Nash's highly charged presentation 'The invisible sportswoman' focused on the media portrayal of women in sport and fuelled a discussion on the lack of coverage and appropriate role models for female athletes.

Guin Batten, Olympic silver medallist ended the conference with a personal account of her road to Sydney. After experiencing her ups and downs you could have heard a pin drop in the conference centre as delegates relived her finest moment.

■ To contact SAQ email Brian, brian@saqinternational.com or call 01664 810101

'Netball world championships - the inside story' following England's progress in the world championships in August.

■ **The Badminton Association** of England have selected 10 female promising players to train alongside senior internationals as part of a project to fast-track talented players.

medical science room.

■ **Olympic** rowing silver medallist Guin Batten's attempt to become the first woman to make a solo crossing of the English channel had to be postponed due to poor weather.

■ **Channel 4** broadcast a three-part fly-on-the-wall documentary called

the one-day series 2-1.

On the domestic scene Sussex have ended Yorkshire's three-year reign as county champions. Yorkshire, who had not lost a championship match since 1999, were bowled out for 95 by Sussex. Despite losing their final match to Surrey, Sussex finished top of the table by half a point. Berkshire, runners-up last year, were relegated.

■ **Sue Campbell**, chief executive of the Youth Sport Trust, has been appointed interim chair of UK Sport, taking over from Sir Rodney Walker. Campbell, a former junior international athlete and netball player, said: "I am looking forward with huge excitement to the task of reforming UK Sport."

■ **Australian** Margaret Caldwell has succeeded Waimarama Taumanau as national performance director of English netball.

■ **Loughborough** graduates Olivia Murphy, the England netball captain, and badminton star Donna Kellogg returned to their university to open the £3 million netball and badminton centre in August. The centre consists of two sports halls plus an analysis room and sports

Welsh cyclist Nicole Cooke, 20, has become the youngest rider to win the women's World Road Cup.

The Commonwealth champion won three of the nine races over the season to finish 98 points clear of second place.

Victories in Holland, Belgium and France put her in pole position for the overall title before she clinched the crown by finishing fifth in the penultimate round in Germany.

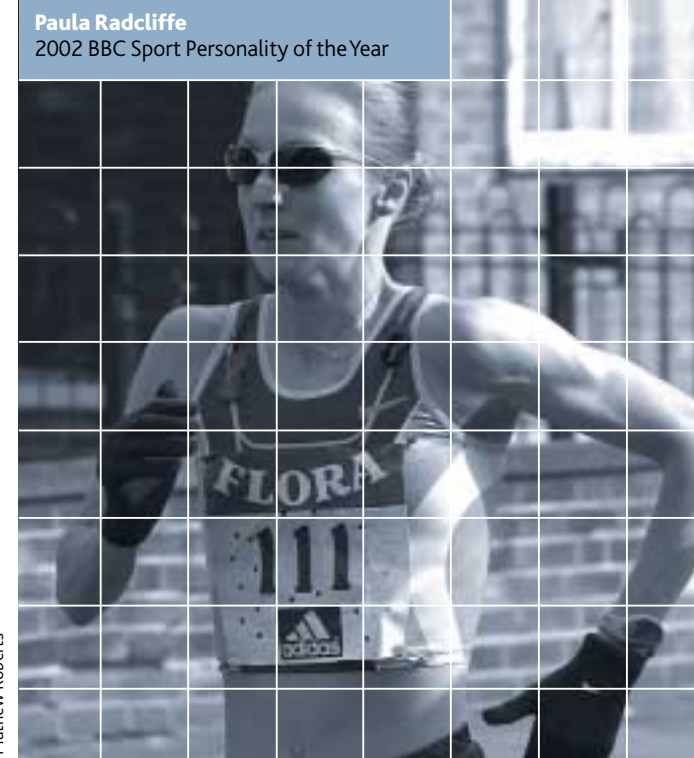
Cooke, who is the first Brit to win the title, is now focused on winning the world championships in Canada in October. "I know the course in Hamilton will suit me and I should have top form then so I hope to round off the season with another success," she said.

Cooke's memorable summer also included victory in the British women's road race for the fourth time in five years.

■ **England's cricketers** won their first Test series on home soil since 1979 when they thrashed South Africa at Taunton by an innings and 96 runs to take the rubber 1-0. Clare Connor's team also won



Sports awards for women: do we still need them?



Mathew Roberts

WSF's Alex Russell investigates whether women-only awards marginalise or publicise

'Only four females have won the BBC's Sports Personality of the Year award in the last 30 years.'

As another year draws to a close, sports fans are once again being urged to vote for the outstanding performers of the past 12 months.

The Sportswomen of the Year Awards, which mark the success of British sportswomen, was launched earlier this summer by *The Sunday Times*. They aim to celebrate the dedication of sportswomen and publicly demonstrate the success and achievements of women who are not recognised by mainstream sports awards.

Last year's winner Paula Radcliffe was held as an inspiration to sportswomen across the globe. However, women-only sports awards have come in for criticism in the last few years as many people think whilst they provide some recognition they also marginalise women from mainstream sport.

Women and people from minority groups are underrepresented in mainstream sports award ceremonies to an appalling extent. Only four females have won the *BBC's Sports*

Personality of the Year Award in the last 30 years. Furthermore, in the last 12 years, apart from the Helen Rollason award women have only won 4.6% of the five major BBC sports awards.

The statistics are slightly better for international sports awards with women winning 14% of the accolades over the last 4 years. A gross underrepresentation across sport is nonetheless evident.

Other underrepresented people such as those from ethnic and black minority groups and people with disabilities have also sought separate, independent recognition. *Race in the Media Awards* is an example of an equivalent award campaign achieving huge media success, attracting high profile support while at the same time highlighting excellence.

Within sport *Crickets World* and *Disability Now* teamed up to launch a *Disabled in Cricket Award* to successfully raise the level of interest in and profile of cricket for people with disabilities.

While the imbalance between the recognition of successful sportswomen and sportsmen remains so profound the need for complementary forms of acknowledgement for women will remain.

The key goal is a balanced approach that encompasses several types of specialist rewards across the varied sections of sport but which ensures that mainstream sports awards understand the need for real integration and inclusion of all successful competitors across sport, regardless of their gender.

We believe *Sportswomen of the Year Awards* achieve this balance without marginalizing women in sport and therefore we urge you to go online, support the need for greater publicity for women in sport and vote for your favourite sportswomen of 2003.

■ To vote go to www.timesonline.co.uk/section/0,,7315,00.html

Up close...

Sue Gilroy, 30, won the silver medal in class 4 at the European disabled table tennis championships in Croatia in August. She also won gold at last year's Commonwealth Games in Manchester. She has a degenerative muscle disease and severe back problems. Her home is in Barnsley, South Yorkshire.



How well is women's disability sport covered in the media?
The only sports that seem to get much coverage are athletics and swimming. There's very little table tennis coverage, which is a shame because it's such a great sport. The BBC did show a bit of my final at the Commonwealth Games and the reaction was unbelievable, I had hundreds of people come up to me in the street.

How frustrating is the lack of coverage?
I think it's a disgrace and it reflects the funding situation. Of the £200,000 that came into the sport

to prepare for the Commonwealth Games, as far as I'm aware none of the disabled players received a penny and we're far more successful than the able-bodied players. We have got European and world champions. In Manchester I was the only English table tennis player to win an individual gold yet I have to pay for all my own coaching.

Does any media cover the sport well?
Not really - even Table Tennis News is all about able-bodied players. When I won the Commonwealth gold I did get a brief mention but

that was it. The internet hasn't made any difference. It's very disappointing.

What can be done to improve the situation?
That's a difficult question because table tennis is dying out in some places even among able-bodied players. I think it just comes down to promotion. After people saw me at the Commonwealth Games they said they were amazed by the speed of the game and told me they didn't realise it was so fantastic to watch, which shows people do like it if they get the chance to see it. ■

Womens SPORTS FOUNDATION

"Women in Sport" is a Womens Sports Foundation (WSF) magazine. WSF is the only organisation solely committed to promoting women and girl's sport in the UK. The magazine is published 4 times a year.

WSF provides access to a host of information and support materials for those involved in participating in or delivering sport for women and girls.

To subscribe to Women in Sport or to receive more copies of Women in Sport, please contact Alex Russell at WSF National Office on 020 86975370 or email a.russell@wsf.org.uk Visit our website at www.wsf.org.uk or write to us at 305-315 Hither Green Lane, Lewisham, London SE13 6TJ

WSF Chief executive Deborah Potts

WSF Marketing/ Administration Officer Alex Russell

WSF National Development Manager Cathy Hughes

WSF Policy and Research Manager Helen Donohoe

North East Regional Manager Ruth Lewis

Editor John Plummer wsfnews@yahoo.co.uk

Design Tracey Radnall tracey.radnall@virgin.net

Contributors Helen Donohoe, Alex Russell, Deborah Potts, Sue Gilroy, Margaret Talbot, Ruth Lewis, Diann Eley, Yaccine Kabbage, Karen Martin and Helen Gorman

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Printers Simply Print
Unit 1, Royal Way, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 5XR
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Women's sport, undercover

WSF is launching a Campaign for Coverage in November to address the appalling gender imbalance of sports coverage

The under representation of sportswomen in the media, together with the under representation of women who bring us the news about sport has long been a concern to those trying to increase the visibility of women's sport.

Research by the Womens Sports Foundation and Sport England reveals that an astoundingly low average of between 1% and 6% of media coverage of UK sport is dedicated to women. The problem persists despite the explosion in print and broadcast media opportunities and an unprecedented number of dedicated sports broadcasters and the presence of public service broadcasting.

TV, radio and the print media play a central role in informing our knowledge, opinions and attitudes about women and sport and informing perceptions that influence its development. Poor media coverage means poor levels of sponsorship and perpetuates the dearth of visible role models.

We also know that some of the media coverage that does exist is derogatory towards women, focussing excessively on physical appearance, personal life or lifestyle. Failing to highlight the athleticism, skill and achievements of our top competitors further undermines the status of women in sport.

The situation is reflected in other parts of the world. Research conducted by the Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles in 1999, the largest study of its

kind, found that women in the United States receive 8.7% of total sports coverage. A study in Australia in 1996 showed that television coverage of women's sport for the period sampled was just 2%. Radio coverage was also surveyed and showed a total figure of 1.4% of total sports broadcasting dedicated to women's sport.

These grim facts have spurred the Womens Sports Foundation to launch a Campaign for Coverage in November 2003.

The campaign will be formally launched during a day of high profile debate in London where we will gather together key decision-makers and opinion formers from the world of sport, sports media and government. Alongside the day of debate we will publish our research report that will throw fresh light on the current situation and highlight the prospects for going forward.

The campaign will provide an

opportunity to raise the issue in parliament and for activism across the UK. In addition to the day of debate and the publication of our research the campaign will work at grassroots level to mobilise support as we recognise the most powerful voice comes from real experiences around the country. To help achieve this we will be relaunching our website in November so that it will provide an opportunity for every member or supporter of WSF and women's sport in general to take action for greater coverage for women's sport.

The figures outlined above are depressing but there is scope for optimism. As the figures in the box illustrate newspaper reportage of women's sport in Australia has doubled since 1992 and has in fact benefited from a 500% increase since the first survey in 1980. The Womens Sports Foundation campaign wants to kick-start a similar trend in the UK.

Women's sports coverage in Australia

year	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996
% of coverage dedicated to women's sport	2%	1.3%	2.5%	4.5%	10.7%

Source: Menzies 1989, Gordon 1989, Stoddart 1994.

Britain hosts global event

One of the most important events of the year for gender equity in sport takes place in London on November 8 and 9 when the International Working Group on Women and Sport meets. Co-chair **Yacine Kabbage** discusses why it matters



What is the significance of the International Working Group?

The IWG was created after the first world conference on women and sport in Brighton in 1994. It was the first international conference on women and sport and the 282 participants from 83 countries asked for it to be a stepping stone and not a one shot event. The IWG was created to sustain the momentum and monitor progress in the four years between each international conference. After Brighton the international conference was held in Windhoek, Namibia in 1998 and in Montreal, Canada in 2002. The next one will be in Kumamoto, Japan in 2006. The IWG acts as a contact for organisations, focusing on international developments in women and sport and facilitating the exchange of information.

Why has London been chosen to host the event?

The IWG meets at least once a year to discuss issues and strategies and to decide what action needs to be taken globally to move the women and sport agenda forward. As we are an international group we try to establish a rotation for the location. UK Sport has been a supporter of the IWG since its inception at the Brighton Conference and invited us to meet in the UK in 2003. UK Sport is launching its strategy on women and sport, and believes the IWG's presence can add profile to this event.

What do you hope to achieve?

We will be reviewing our action plan. We will monitor and suggest more ways of interacting with the International Olympic Committee, the International Paralympic Committee, international sports federations and international organisations such as the United Nations, UNESCO and the World Health Organisation. We will be looking forward to hearing about developments in gender mainstreaming in sport. Although the IWG is about more than just the preparation of the world conference it is important to lay the grounds for the preparation of the conference contents, i.e. theme, programme, speakers.

What are the key issues for the global women's sport movement?

To continue to raise awareness of women and sport issues in all countries and international sports organisations. To work towards gaining commitment to implementing women and sport policies and programmes and ensuring that major sports events adequately provide for women's sports.

There is the problem of harassment and abuse in sport, media coverage, women's health and wellbeing and the lack of women in leadership positions. Another topical issue is women, sport and Islam. How to provide for Muslim women's participation in sport without conflicting with their culture and religion?

How can the IWG drive the key issues forward?

The network created amongst the members of the IWG, the extended members, and many other people involved in women and sport is absolutely fantastic. Members are able to influence key people and whole organisations. This is of course thanks to serious work, a set rationale, and strong support.

What is the IWG doing to address the issue of the lack of women in sport in leadership positions?

Once again networking is the key. We encourage individuals and organisations to nurture the leaders of the future. Governments, the IOC, international sport

federations hold seminars and clinics. Our members are often asked to present at these events. Otherwise, they push for these events to take place within their regions. Promoting women's leadership in sport in our circle is one thing but talking about its importance in wider sport conferences and congresses is crucial to raise the awareness of people who might not realise the importance of equity and diversity in their organisations. The IOC's recommendation of a minimum of 20% women in executive positions by Dec. 31 2005 is an interesting step. So is the International Hockey Federation, which has set in its statutes minimum numbers for both women and men in positions of leadership.

Why is the IWG trying to link the women's sports movement closer to the women's movement in general?

The IWG stands for international working group on Women AND Sport. The use of 'and' was deliberate, so the group could work towards the development of sport and the development of women. It is clear that the inclusion of women at all levels benefits sport by bringing an extra set of qualities and vision, and that sport clearly benefits women as it does with any human being. A gender equitable society needs to be achieved in all sectors and at all levels. Achieving this in sport, a traditionally male bastion, can do much to help the overall movement. That is why we are working with the Department for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations. A special issue of the UN publication Woman 2000 on women and sport is being prepared as a joint project of the IWG and UN. ■

For more information visit...

- The IWG website at www.iwg-gti.org
- Brighton Declaration www.iwg-gti.org/e/brighton/index.htm
- Windhoek Call for Action www.iwg-gti.org/e/windhoek/call.htm
- Montreal Communiqué www.canada2002.org/e/communique/index.htm
- Tool Kit www.canada2002.org/e/toolkit/index.htm

Breaking the Mould

Jane Couch's victory over the British Boxing Board of Control was heralded as an end to discrimination. But as **Karen Martin**, an American boxer who moved to England reveals, women's boxing remains pitifully small



Karen "The Natural Born Thriller" Martin

Karen Martin moved last year from California to England, and has been ranked as high as fourth in the world as a featherweight. She chronicles her experiences as a female boxer in the UK for the Women's Boxing Archive Network (WBAN) www.womenboxing.com

As a girl growing up in North America

I needed little encouragement to participate in sports that involved running, jumping, kicking – anything that built muscle. My mother, who called them 'boys' sports', made sure that I knew what was lady-like – and these sports were not. I assume from my experiences in women's boxing in the UK that women over here face a similar dilemma today.

I never imagined not being involved in some kind of sport, whether athletics, hockey or bodybuilding, and I have always looked for more challenges each step of the way.

My passion for boxing started at an early age from the "Black Superman" songs for Muhammad Ali, to the middleweight era featuring the Duran-Hagler-Leonard duels, through the Tyson years up to the present day. Boxing has always epitomized the ultimate in individual competition. Boxing is a sport which requires that you be at the top of your game every second of every match,

for survival let alone success. It challenges its participants both mentally and physically and in the ring only they can determine the outcome.

Yet for all that it has meant to me boxing could never be described as a champion for women's participation anywhere in the world. In North America women boxers are some way down the road to being acknowledged as legitimate athletes. In the United Kingdom the war has barely begun.

Jane Couch, a pioneer for women's boxing in the United Kingdom, claimed a monumental victory by convincing the British Boxing Board of Control (BBBC) through the courts to sanction professional women's boxing on November 25, 1998, much later than happened in many other western countries.

The legal victory was a start but the cultural and social pressures are proving difficult to surmount. Despite reports from local boxing gym owners of an immediate surge in female membership after the Couch decision, interest and participation waned dramatically thereafter. Societal influences seemed to have quelled the fire of enthusiasm in women no sooner than they had felt it.

I have been in the UK for over a year and have been unable to secure matches, even as an established boxer. Firstly, there are no opponents with whom I can be matched. When I contacted the BBBC in

October 2002 I was told that one woman fitted the bill, and she had no professional record.

The amateur circuit for women's boxing in the UK suffers from a severe lack of participation. So gaining a base of experience from competition is extremely difficult. As a result the ranks of professional boxers in the British Isles include very few women. To make matters worse, most promoters and managers will not even consider putting a woman on their cards – despite the new law sanctioning their participation. Most of the stakeholders in the boxing community consider women to be a 'difficult sell' and as in many other arenas this group is comprised almost exclusively of men – an 'old boys' fraternity.

The outlook for women's boxing in the UK is not all doom and gloom. I have personally met several women (and men in various positions in amateur and professional boxing) who continue to break the mould. To those women and to all of you who participate in and encourage women's sport across the UK I commend you and support your efforts. I have another reason to be optimistic: my mother adjusted her outlook on women in sport and now not only supports my efforts but those of sporting women all over the world. I have to believe that the same can be true for the United Kingdom. ■

You want to be a boxer?

The requirements for a license as a professional boxer in the UK must be fulfilled annually, and are the same for males and females. They are:

- Boxer's fee (£35)
- Secure the services of a BBBC approved manager
- Brain scan (Magnetic Resonance Imaging – MRI). (£300 with the possibility of a £200 subsidy from BBBC)
- Full medical (including ophthalmic and HIV tests, plus 3 Hepatitis B shots over three 90-day periods)
- Interview with BBBC representatives and a trial bout if deemed necessary by the BBBC
- Three passport photos and birth certificate or passport, with licence application

For more information on women's boxing visit www.womenboxing.com
www.geocities.com/ringrrrlz/
www.insidewomensboxing.com



Calendar of Women's Sporting Events

OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2003

OCTOBER			
2 - 13	Hockey	Women's Great Britain 4 Nations Tournament, USA	English Hockey Association www.hockeyonline.co.uk 01908 544624
4	Athletics	World half marathon championships, Portugal	UK Athletics 0121 456 5098 www.ukathletics.org
4	Judo	Welsh senior international open championships, Cardiff	British Judo Association 0116 255 9669 www.britishjudo.org.uk
5	Squash	Women's over 50 inter-county championships, venue tba	Squash Rackets Association www.squash.co.uk
5	Netball	Celebrity netball sevens, Crystal Palace	All England Netball Assoc. Ltd www.england-netball.co.uk
7 - 12	Cycling	World road championships, Canada	British Cycling Federation 0161 230 2301 www.bcf.uk.com
11	Fencing	British junior championships	British Fencing Association www.britishfencing.com
11 - 12	Gymnastics	British sports aerobics championships, Stoke-on-Trent	British Gymnastics 01952 820 330 www.baga.co.uk
12	Athletics	BUPA Great South Run, Portsmouth	UK Athletics 0121 456 5098 www.ukathletics.org
12	Triathlon	Powerman, Malaysia	British Triathlon Association 01509 228321 www.britishtriathlon.org
17 - 19	Gymnastics	World trampolining championships, Hanover, Germany	British Gymnastics 01952 820 330 www.baga.co.uk
17 - 19	Table Tennis	Women's world cup	English Table Tennis Association www.etta.co.uk
18	Triathlon	Ironman, Hawaii	British Triathlon Association 01509 228321 www.britishtriathlon.org
24 - 26	Swimming	ASA national masters championships, Sheffield	Amateur Swimming Association 01509 618 700 www.britishswimming.org
27 - 02 Nov	Tennis	WTA Tour, Quebec, Canada	British Women's Tennis www.lta.org.uk/bwta 020 8993 3397
31	Volleyball	Guernsey Open	English Volleyball Association www.volleyballengland.org

NOVEMBER			
1	Fencing	English junior championships, Shropshire	British Fencing Association www.britishfencing.com
1 - 2	Swimming	British synchronised swimming championships, venue tbc	Amateur Swimming Association 01509 618 700 www.britishswimming.org
2	Triathlon	ITU world cup, Cancun, Mexico	British Triathlon Association 01509 228321 www.britishtriathlon.org
2	Rowing	Indoor rowing championships, Bideford	Amateur Rowing Association www.ara-rowing.org
3 - 9	Tennis	WTA Tour, Los Angeles	British Women's Tennis www.lta.org.uk/bwta 020 8993 3397
15	Diving	English schools diving championships, venue tbc	Amateur Swimming Association 01509 618 700 www.britishswimming.org
15 - 16	Water Polo	Women's district championships, venue Tbc	Amateur Swimming Association 01509 618 700 www.britishswimming.org
16	Squash	Women's Inter-county Championships, venue tbc	Squash Rackets Association www.squash.co.uk
16 - 17	Modern Pentathlon	National championships, Sheffield	0118 981 6618 www.mpagb.org.uk
21 - 23	Judo	Senior women's European championships, Sarajevo	British Judo Association 0116 255 9669 www.britishjudo.org.uk
22	Netball	National youth finals, Venue tba	All England Netball Assoc. Ltd www.england-netball.co.uk
23	Triathlon	World cup, Geelong, Australia	British Triathlon Association 01509 228321 www.britishtriathlon.org
23	Athletics	International Ekiden Relay, Chiba, Japan	UK Athletics 0121 456 5098 www.ukathletics.org
28 - 30	Tennis	Davis Cup final	British Women's Tennis www.lta.org.uk/bwta 020 8993 3397
29 - 7 Dec	Hockey	Women's championship trophy, Sydney, Australia	English Hockey Association www.hockeyonline.co.uk 01908 544624
30	Squash	Women's over 40 inter-county championships, venue tba	Squash Rackets Association www.squash.co.uk
30 - 7 Dec	Squash	Women's world open championships, venue tba	Squash Rackets Association www.squash.co.uk

DECEMBER			
1	Judo	Fukuoka women's international tournament, Japan	British Judo Association 0116 255 9669 www.britishjudo.org.uk
3 - 4	Gymnastics	British Rythmic Gymnastic championships, Burton on Trent	British Gymnastics 01952 820 330 www.baga.co.uk
5 - 7	Squash	Women's Grand Prix Open, Lincoln	Squash Rackets Association www.squash.co.uk
5 - 7	Fencing	BUSA individual championships, Venue tbc	British Fencing Association www.britishfencing.com
6 - 7	Triathlon	World championships, Queenstown, New Zealand	British Triathlon Association 01509 228321 www.britishtriathlon.org
11 - 14	Table Tennis	Pro Grand Tour finals	English Table Tennis Association www.etta.co.uk
12 - 14	Diving	FINA World Cup trials, Sheffield	Amateur Swimming Association 01509 618 700 www.britishswimming.org
14	Athletics	10th European Cross Country Championships, Edinburgh	UK Athletics 0121 456 5098 www.ukathletics.org

welcome...



A great deal of our work over the last year has focused on strengthening our infrastructure and developing a clear focus for the organisation.

It has been an immensely busy time, with lots of changes but the bulk of these have been internal. I often think that people outside our office must be wondering what is different. Well, it's all about to happen.

We are redesigning our logo and all of our communications materials to have a consistent, modern, professional identity. We want to have an image that reflects our position as an advocacy organisation with vision, offering professional support and expertise.

Our website is undergoing an extensive overhaul and when relaunched in November will provide visitors with lots more focused information plus more opportunities to become involved.

We are conducting market research with members on what we offer and will be developing an up to date range of products and services that meet the needs of those involved in women's sport development. You can help us with this by emailing us your thoughts on areas of information/support that would be useful to you. Write to us at info@wsf.org.uk. As, always, your feedback is appreciated.

The Wimbledon media coverage of women's sport over the summer fuelled the fire behind our soon-to-be-launched media campaign. The 'match the totty with the botty' campaign of one well known tabloid offered a particularly choice example of the need to improve the quality of media coverage. Details of our 'campaign for coverage' can be found in Helen's feature on page 5.

At a policy level, in June 2003 the European Parliament adopted a resolution on women's sport. While it was an 'own initiative' report, which means it is not legislative, it is worth keeping an eye on and may be of use to you in your advocacy work. To read the resolution and the WSF briefing paper log on to our website at www.wsf.org.uk.

Our AGM takes place on November 25 and all members of WSF will be formally invited to attend.

This week our first regional manager, Ruth Lewis began work in the North-East. We have long lamented our lack of regional infrastructure and while we still have a long way to go the fact that we have started is exciting. Welcome, Ruth.

So it's been a busy 3 months and things are set to get even busier. I hope that you are starting to see and feel the differences and look forward to receiving your comments on the website after its launch in November.

Deborah Potts, WSF chief executive

Opinion:

"Inequality today is more subtle and happens higher up the structures than 20 years ago"



At times over the last three decades working to increase opportunities for women in sport has seemed to follow a pattern of limited progress followed by setbacks. But I would not have missed the experience for anything. Without it I would not fully appreciate the challenges of working from the margins. Nor would I understand how powerful sport is and how resistant to change.

This was illustrated by the arguments I used to have with the college chaplain when I was working as a lecturer. Father David was a wonderful man, much loved by students and staff alike. He ran the college cricket team and although we had two women who were county players he refused to let them play for the team. During one argument he said: "Margaret, I'm all for women in the priesthood, but this is sport!" His remark shows the power of the sport culture and its insulation from examination on the grounds of social justice and equity.

Father David also taught me the power of male-dominated networks and the limitations of rational argument. As head of department for physical education and recreation, I argued for new facilities for two years. But for Father David it took only an evening chat over a bottle of wine with the chair of governors for cash to be made available.

Dealing with such a strong culture means that to be effective we have had to develop a whole repertoire of skills for advocacy, and ways of managing disappointment and setbacks. The kinds of network provided by WSF, the international organisations and informal contacts in women and sport have been invaluable.

I worry about whether younger people working for sports equity are prepared adequately because the inequalities they face are more subtle and happen later or higher up the structures than was the case 20 years ago. Do they face the same challenges, which made it imperative for us to lean on each other? Have we done enough to support younger people coming into the sports equity movement? And do we do enough to link the work between those working for opportunities for women, ethnic minorities, people of all abilities and backgrounds? Sport still does not cater adequately for the whole range of the population and its institutions still are not led or represented by people from across that range. As equity policies disappear in favour of equity being 'permeated' through strategies and procedures, how will those interests be adequately promoted?

My mother has never trivialised her own, or others' difficulties but she knows the value of a sense of perspective. I remember attending a dinner at which I was awarded a magnum of champagne for voluntary work in sport. I like champagne! But after the dinner, the speaker was so grossly offensive – homophobic, racist and misogynist – that a friend said she was leaving. I said I would follow after telling the organisers what I thought, but I then made the terrible error of dumping the magnum of champagne on the top table as I left, as a grand gesture.

We ended up paying a fortune for drinks in a bar round the corner, to calm our furious and shattered nerves. Grand gestures can be expensive while hanging on to acquired territory can be necessary, despite the people inhabiting it. At least the passion is still there, even when the judgement is flawed...

■ Margaret Talbot, chief executive of the Central Council of Physical Recreation

"There is a myth that women are better at working with children or novices"



Tracey Radhall

The coaching dilemma

A new university initiative aims to address the shortfall of women coaches

Coaches are the mainstay of sport.

Community clubs, regional teams and international athletes all rely on the people who choose to give up their time, often unpaid, to help them fulfil their potential.

No surprise then that in a society where women are under-represented in all aspects of sport that there are low proportions of females in coaching, particularly at the higher levels.

Nowhere was this more evident than the 2000 Sydney Olympics where only 9% of coaches with the British team were female and only one of the 25 Olympic team managers was a woman.

The reasons are clear. Coaches are generally attracted to coaching because of their own participation in their chosen sport. Lower rates of participation inevitably mean fewer coaches.

Women tend to have less leisure time to give to such activities than men have, largely because they shoulder the bulk of child and other family caring responsibilities.

There are myths, held by some women as well as men, that men make better coaches and women are better at working with children or novices. Such ideas create barriers to women's participation in coaching at high

levels of sport, which in turn means that there are few models for women considering a career in coaching.

The Government has identified coaching as a key area of concern. The Coaching Task Force will invest some of its £28million budget in establishing 3,000 paid qualified coaches by 2006. But there's a danger that this will benefit only those who are already qualified, which will be predominantly men. How can we make sure that we see an increase in the proportion of qualified, paid women coaches?

An innovative scheme being tested at the University of Northumbria could provide an answer. The action research project offers subsidised courses in return for coaching after qualifying.

It provides the chance for women to become qualified in sports coaching, administration and officiating in return for a voluntary commitment to 40 hours of sports development in the community.

The research, which is funded by the European Social Fund and being conducted in partnership with the Regional Development Agency and the WSF, aims to identify barriers to women's involvement in coaching and how to overcome them.

Programme co-ordinator Sue Vout says:

"Women into Sport is the first of its kind in the country. As well as providing valuable research findings it's also benefiting 60 women. We hope women completing the course will manage to get paid employment in sports initiatives or at the very least become valued sports volunteers."

Research published this month will focus on employment opportunities for women in sport. Using the North-East region to provide a detailed picture, the results will identify the barriers women face in sports employment. It's hoped that schemes such as Women into Sport will address the particular barriers faced by women coaches.

It's clear that despite recent progress women are under-represented in all roles in sports leadership. From coaches to administrators to board members to sports scientists, the statistics consistently reveal inequality.

Without developing and supporting women coaches from grassroots to elite levels, this situation will not change. No change means our future athletes, female and male, will not benefit from the untapped potential of women coaches.

Ruth Lewis, WSF North-East regional manager

British women reap a golden harvest in the pool

After **Katy Sexton** became the first world swimming champion from these shores our girls hinted at the European junior championships that even greater glory beckons



'Britain is being hailed as the most improved swimming nation'

British Swimming has thrown off the stigma of failure since winning no medals at the Sydney Olympics with a resurgence of success not seen since David Wilkie's era in the 1970s. But this time it's the women who are leading the way.

Portsmouth's Katy Sexton became the first British woman to win a world championship title when she took gold in the 200m backstroke in Barcelona in July.

Sexton had already secured silver in the 100m backstroke before her amazing late burst for gold. On the final evening there were bronze medals for 20-year-old Rebecca Cooke in the 800m freestyle and Zoe Baker in the 50m breast stroke. For Baker bronze was something of a disappointment following her world record swim at last year's Commonwealth Games.

The British squad ended the final day of competition with a record eight medals, and was being hailed as the most improved swimming nation.

Days later, at the Dianasport European Junior Championships in Glasgow, Britain won 20 medals, eight more than ever before and more than any other team at the meet.

The European Juniors is the key junior event in the swimming calendar. It attracts the cream of boys aged 16-18 and girls aged 14-16, many of whom are poised for Olympic success next year.

The British team won six gold medals. Leading the way were team captains David Davies, who won the 1500m freestyle and Kate Haywood, who retained her 50m breast stroke title.

There seems to be something about the short sprint that inspires Britain's female breast stroke swimmers. While Baker shines at senior level Haywood is dominating the juniors while the girls' silver medal at the same event in Glasgow went to Coventry 15-year-old Grace Callaghan.

Unfortunately the 50m breast stroke does not feature on the Olympic

programme. But it might not be an insurmountable problem for the two juniors who swam impressive times in the 100m breast stroke to once again take gold and silver, only this time it was Callaghan who finished first.

Katy Sexton will need to watch her back every time 14-year-old Stephanie Proud gets in the pool. The Durham teenager won the 200m backstroke and still claimed to be disappointed with her time. Britain's final junior female winner was Gemma Spofforth, another Portsmouth backstroke swimmer, who at 6ft 1in tall has an obvious advantage.

Britain also won two silver medals at the diving events in Edinburgh. Seventeen-year-old Stacie Powell, who placed second on the 10m highboard, is one of Britain's brightest hopes for female success at Olympic level. With Athens just a year away these are exciting times for British women's swimming. ■

Swimming against the tide



Few female coaches get the opportunity to shine so **Eleanor Walsh**, who guided one of Britain's most promising young swimmers to gold in the European junior championships, is something of an exception: particularly as she is also disabled

Coaching swimmers has been a way of life for Eleanor Walsh since she left Dartmouth PE college in 1964.

After an accident left her in a wheelchair she was forced to retire from a local authority coaching position. Ever since then she has been head coach at Cockermouth Swimming Club in Cumbria where she works on a purely voluntary basis.

The small club of under 100 members has enjoyed remarkable success, despite Eleanor often having to fit her swimmers into one lane of their four-lane 25m pool during public sessions. The latest success is 17-year-old Michael Stephenson, who won a bronze medal at the European juniors in Glasgow.

Eleanor and the Cockermouth club have seen many British junior international, and a few senior ones come through, including her own children Helen and Kevin in the 1980s and 90s. The club is in the Premier Division of the regional Speedo League

where it has finished as high as third behind Liverpool and Salford.

However, once swimmers get to 18 they tend to move away to university when others take over the coaching reins. "I really enjoy seeing kids achieve their potential, I have a lot of kids who come through right from learning to swim," says Eleanor. "When they get to 18 they have to move on. They can't stay here for University; that's just the way it goes and I'm quite happy with that. The club also knows that's what happens and we look forward to them coming back during holidays."

Eleanor's job is to ensure that when they leave Cumbria her swimmers have been given the best start to their sport as possible. "We have the pool for 16 hours a week and they do land training as well," she explains.

Her swimmers do primarily body weight resistance work on land and frequently use Swiss Balls. "I really believe this is

important for body awareness and core stability but it's difficult to get young kids to take it seriously until they go off to a training camp and see that all the top swimmers are doing it," she says.

Being a woman in swimming coaching Eleanor remains very much in the minority. The elite side of the sport continues to be dominated by men although there are some younger female coaches, such as Kirsty Ashworth at the City of Birmingham coming through.

Her wheelchair also presents some challenges. "At the modern pools it's really not too bad but at some of the older ones, such as Crystal Palace or Wigan, it's a real nightmare with steps and different levels to navigate," she says.

At 60 Eleanor intends to stay in coaching for at least another two years and there is little doubt that the club will find her difficult to replace, especially as she is paid nothing for her time other than expenses. ■



The Sports Council for Wales has a reputation for taking gender issues seriously. Chief executive Huw Jones discusses how they are meeting difficult challenges head on

"if we went into Cardiff today most people would have heard of Tanni Grey-Thompson and Nicole Cooke"

What is driving your proactive approach to sport and gender?

Originally the drive came from the Welsh Assembly. Over 40% of the assembly and over half of the cabinet are women. In 2000 based on the participation figures they stated two areas that they wanted us to prioritise – women and girls plus socially disadvantaged areas. Since then we have introduced the Girls First programme, leisure community challenge, the fit in media campaign, a women and girls media officer and have allocated a stream of lottery money that local authorities can apply for particularly targeted at increasing opportunities for women. Wales has a higher coronary heart disease rate compared to England and this has been one of the big reasons for the push on participation.

There seems to be a commitment to gender equality at the highest levels of the sports council. Has this been important?

I am absolutely committed but so are staff throughout the organisation. When we saw that we weren't going to meet the targets for Girls First I immediately ensured that this became a priority for development staff. We have been successful because we are committed and because we have done things differently.

In what ways have you done things differently?

We take a very pragmatic approach to the issue. We haven't concentrated on policies and paperwork – we're more into the getting on and doing. You can have all sorts of policies in place that allow you to tick certain boxes but that doesn't necessarily mean that they will make any difference to women and girls.

Media coverage is a priority area for us. Tell us about your women's press officer and your fit in campaign

One of the major barriers to women and girls participation was the lack and quality of role models in the press. So we appointed our first women and girls press officer to increase the coverage of women's sport, primarily at an elite level. This has been hugely successful and I'm sure if we went into Cardiff today most people would have heard of Tanni Grey-Thompson and Nicole Cooke. For a disabled female athlete to be so well known would have been unheard of a few years ago. The fit in campaign is focused more at grass roots level and aims to portray physical activity as fun. We have a broad sports remit including dance, skate boarding etc. Most of our work has concentrated on press coverage; television is of course much harder.

Your target is to halve the gap between male and female participation by 2005. Are you on course to make it?

No – we know that because as we've been working on increasing women's participation we've also increased men's participation. We will review that target in 2005. Also, we began our work in this area by concentrating on girls with the Girls First and Dragon Sport Programmes. We know that through Dragon Sport girls take part in as many extra-curricula sporting activities as boys. It may be some time before we start to see the results of this work on women's participation. We've collected participation data from 22,000 adults in 2 years, so we have an excellent monitoring system in place to track any changes.

Would you say that you have adopted a gender mainstreaming approach to your work i.e. do you always split your targets into male/female, do you assess programmes from a gender perspective?

We only have one over-riding target but we do monitor all of our activities according to gender. We have a women and sport advisory committee and several regional forums that we use to advise us on programmes and policy from a woman's perspective. We have recently started some work with the Equal Opportunities Commission on budget engendering, where we are working with 2 local authorities (Gwynedd and Swansea) to measure how their sports spending is distributed between men and women.

What about leadership – have you looked at the issue either in terms of coaching or decision-making?

Our priority is participation not leadership although we recognise that it is an important area, especially coaching. With national governing bodies we have tried to adopt a pragmatic approach. We concentrate on what they are doing not on their make up. Where there are sports like rugby and football, however, where there are no women on their boards that can't be healthy for the development of the game. Coaching is a greater priority, as it is so important in terms of role models. We have used the Community Chest Fund to prioritise any applications for female coaches.

Do you see a role for the Womens Sports Foundation in Wales?

There is now a greater interest than ever before in gender issues. But if we are to maintain the interest of both women and men then people have to see that change is occurring. If we are to make progress then we have to be innovative. This is where WSF can play a lead role, co-ordinating good practice and advocating new ways of working. ■



Adam Pretty/Getty Images

WOMEN IN SPORT OUTSTANDING SPORTSWOMAN FOR AUTUMN 2003

Beth Tweddle of England on the High Bar on her way to the Silver medal in the Gymnastics Women Individual All-Round event at the G-MEX Centre during the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester.

Beth Tweddle

To describe Britain's record in gymnastics as undistinguished would be something of an understatement. For 100 years we never won a single medal at the world artistic championships. The years of mediocrity melted away in August when Beth Tweddle held off strong opposition from China and the Ukraine to win bronze on the

A-symmetric bars.

In front of 18,000 spectators in Anaheim, USA she finished third, ahead of great names such as Russia's Svetlana Khorkina, a two-time Olympic champion.

"Two years ago very few people in British gymnastics would have even dreamed about such a success," said British team manager John Atkinson. "Beth is

obviously now well placed to realise her dream of an Olympic medal next year in Athens."

Earlier in the competition, the British women's team finished ninth overall to qualify for next summer's Olympics.

"The British women's team was the only one out of the 37 teams taking part which went through its programme without a single mistake," said Atkinson. "And that, apart from Beth, was a team of debutants. What our girls achieved in Anaheim was very significant and very timely in view of Athens 2004."

British gymnastics has been improving steadily since lottery funding began being diverted into the sport in 1996. But over the last two years Tweddle, 18, has set a series of new high watermarks.

In 2002 she became our first woman to win a medal at the European championships when she took bronze on the A-symmetric bars. Later that year she became Commonwealth Games champion on the same apparatus and missed out on a bronze at the world championships in Hungary by 0.063 points.

Her success has been achieved despite injury setbacks over the last two years. "I feel absolutely delighted. All the hard work in the gym has paid off," she said.

"I had great support before, during and after the competition, from my coach Amanda Kirby who helped me stay calm and focussed, from all my teammates who were telling me everything would be alright and from all the supporters in the audience."



Adam Pretty/Getty Images

Rowers Cath Bishop and Katherine Grainger followed up their win in the World Cup series by becoming 1,000m world champions in Milan. The pair secured Britain's only gold of the meeting.



Kelly Holmes and Hayley Tullett secured two of Britain's three individual medals at the world athletics championships in Paris. Holmes won silver in the 800m and Tullett took bronze in the 1,500m.

Glasgow University swimmer Rebecca Cooke won three of Britain's eight gold medals at the World University Games. Loughborough student Sarah Bainbridge claimed bronze in the welterweight taekwondo.

Britain's Georgina Harland won her first major international modern pentathlon title at the European Championships in the Czech Republic.



Annika Sorenstam achieved a career grand slam of major titles when she beat Korea's Se Ri Pak by one stroke to win the British Open. The Swede is only the fourth woman in the modern era to have won all four major titles.

British judo player Georgina Singleton won a gold medal in the under-52kg category at the German Open in Bonn.

Heather Corrie, Laura Blakeman and Helen Reeves combined to win Britain's only medal – a bronze in the women's K1 team event – at the world canoe slalom championships in Augsburg, Germany.

Triathletes Michelle Dillon and Jodie Swallow finished third and seventh respectively in the New York ITU World Cup event. The organisers cancelled the swimming stage for health reasons after heavy rain produced unusually high e-coli readings in the water.