



PREPARING FUTURE CHAMPIONS

'On Camp with Kelly'

Norwich Union and double Olympic champion Dame Kelly Holmes are continuing their plans to nurture the careers of the next generation of British middle distance runners.

Towards the end of 2004, Holmes took eight of the country's most promising athletes to the Norwich Union funded "On Camp with Kelly" at her favourite training centre in Potchefstroom, south west of Johannesburg. There she supervised their day-to-day training, introduced them to how she prepares on-and-off the track annually for major Championships and became their mentor.

"It's something I discussed with Norwich Union a long time ago and I'm delighted it has come to fruition," said Holmes, "It's something I have always wanted to do - pass on my experiences and get the message across that life in athletics has its up-and-downs as I know first hand, but any problems can be overcome. People forget that when I was a physical instructor in the army most of my time was spent organising training seminars and it was always something I enjoyed. Now I have the opportunity to pass on everything to the future of the sport, hopefully encourage them to stay in athletics, and experience first hand the determination they need to succeed at the highest level."

Due to its success, the initiative has been expanded and has, to date, involved 33 girls in all. Kelly keeps an eye out for all of them and 2005 saw many of them take part in various initiatives to prepare them for life as a professional athlete. "I do not want to stop and just leave the girls," said Kelly. "I have become very passionate about what they're doing and want this to be the start. With the continued support of Norwich Union I plan to work with young British athletes to nurture talent into the future."

In June, Kelly took five girls and their coaches to her European training base in Valencia for a ten day warm-weather training camp. Two get togethers were also organised so Kelly can monitor each girl's progress and one of these was an Army Challenge weekend where they were tested to the limit by the former Army PTI. Holmes and Norwich Union also arranged several races for the girls so they could experience competing at big events.

Several of the girls have already had a degree of success and are breaking into the senior ranks:

- Five girls are now on the Sport England funded World Class Development Programme – Charlotte Best, Dani Barnes, Laura Finucane, Carolyn Plateau and Rachael Thompson
- European Junior Champion Morag MacLarty has been selected to represent Scotland at the Commonwealth Games in the 1500m
- Dani Christmas won the 800m at the Commonwealth Youth Games in Bendigo, Australia in December 2004
- Non Stanford won the 2005 girls Flora mini London marathon
- Jo Finch was the Daily Record's 'Young Athlete of the Year' in 2005

More 'On Camp with Kelly' initiatives are planned in 2006, including a training camp for a few selected girls in Melbourne during the Commonwealth Games where they will experience first hand one of the biggest athletics events in the world.

Simon Quick, director of marketing for Norwich Union, comments: "We are as passionate about nurturing and preparing future talent as Kelly is. We are committed to helping inspire more children to enjoy more sport and who better to inspire them than the double Olympic Champion. Our recent research shows that she is the best female sporting role model in the country and she is using her influence to the best effect – by preparing the next generation of Kelly Holmes'."