



INSIDE 26

STREETS AHEAD

Sprinter Helen Pryer is back in the fast lane against all the odds

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ATHLETICS: SPRINTER IS NOW BACK IN THE FAST LANE THANKS TO NEW COACH Pictures by Stewart Turkington/www.stpix.co.uk

'One injury led to another and I just felt so helpless'

BY STEVE SKERRY
Sports Editor

AFTER two injury-plagued years, Helen Pryer, who once represented Great Britain on the international sprinting circuit, is again one of the fastest women sprinters in country.

The 28-year-old, who trains with strength and conditioning coach John Shirley in Binfield, rolled back the years at the National Inter-County Athletics Championships in Bedford last week by making the most impressive start to a season with a well-earned second place in the 200m sprint event.

Pryer's quickest time of 23.99s, ran in the semi-final in miserable wintry conditions, marks the first time in her career that she has run under 24 seconds into a head-wind and heralded the start of her impressive return to form.

Her success comes hot on the heels of her best-ever performance at the recent Surrey County Championships.

Pryer's winning times of 11.94s and 24.00s, for the 100m and 200m sprints respectively, were the fastest times run by any athlete at any of the recent county championships in England and are narrowly short of her personal bests set against international competition nearly three years ago.

The sprinter's performances have been all the more impressive given the torrid previous two years she has endured when she lost her mother to cancer and acquired a catalogue of incessant injuries.

Pryer finished the 2004 season as the fifth fastest woman in the UK (over her favoured 200m), representing England and Great Britain on the way, and seemed set for a promising career before her dreams of international success were dealt such cruel blows.

Her recent incredible return to form has so far meant she has shot up 30 places through the rankings to re-enter the top-ten in UK sprinting for the first time in almost three years.

Pryer attributes much of her recent success to the hard work she has put in over the winter months with her new coach Shirley from Kinetic Personal Training in Binfield coupled with top-class therapy offered by medical director Jim Adkins at the Berkshire Physiotherapy Centre.

"When I came to John I was immensely upset by the lack of success my injuries had brought me over the previous two years," she told *The Wokingham Times*.

"One injury just seemed to lead to another and I had begun to feel absolutely helpless.

"John performed an intensive assessment and referred me for successful therapy with Jim.

"This teamwork allowed me to start a very specific program of corrective exercise and strength training that has culminated in me enjoying my best ever start to a season.

"John's training and Jim's therapy have been so instrumental in getting me to the top and have enabled me to fully recover from my injuries.

"They have also given me a strength and power base that's better than I've ever had.

"Now I can't wait for the rest of the season as I feel the best is still to come."

Shirley, an expert personal trainer and highly-regarded corrective exercise specialist added: "To see Helen achieve the results she so richly deserves has been the icing on the cake after the difficult time she's been through in the past couple of years.

"It reflects the determination and

strength of character Helen has had in getting to the top and the hard work she has put in over the winter on her corrective exercise program.

"Helen's getting stronger all the time so it's going to be very exciting over the next couple of years."

Shirley's clientele in his personal training business varies from elite athletes such as Pryer to elderly individuals.

He is clear in explaining the ben-

efits of his approach to personal training through corrective exercise.

"Corrective exercise isn't just invaluable when it comes to restoring your health and vitality after injuries," said Shirley.

"It's the most efficient way of creating a sense of fitness and health that you can feel from one day to the next.

"Exercise is only beneficial after all when it's prescribed in the correct manner for the individual.

"What works for one person doesn't always work for another as we've all got our own highly unique body.

"It's my role to tailor the correct exercise programme to every client."

With Shirley's sporting clients coming from such varied disciplines as athletics, golf, rugby and winter sports, there is no end to the rewards he sees in his clients from the improved sporting success they achieve.

Shirley has just commenced work with 19-year-old Sam Cullum from Bracknell, already a world-class snowboarder, ranked number 38 in the world, and an exciting young prospect for the 2010 winter Olympics.



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Back on track: Helen Pryer, with new coach John Shirley (left) has achieved an amazing comeback from injury and last week moved up 30 places in the rankings to enter the top ten in UK sprinting for the first time in three years.

