

Top Stories This Week



Brown set to give multi-million pound boost to 2012 preparations

CHANCELLOR Gordon Brown is expected to give preparations for the London Olympics a massive boost today (December 5) in his pre-budget announcement by agreeing to give British sport more funding to help develop young talent coming through for 2012. It follows calls from Colin Moynihan, chairman of the British Olympic Association, that the Treasury must increase funding for sport in Britain by the end of the month if there is any chance of Britain achieving the target of coming fourth in the medals table in 2012. But there are also set to be further job cuts at Sport England. STEVEN DOWNES, business editor of *Times Online*, reports. [Read more...Page 2](#)



So Proud – Now Oprah jumps on the London bandwagon

HEATHER SMALL has seen her career revitalised since her song 'Proud' was chosen by London officials as the official theme tune of the 2012 bid. It is now set to be a major hit in the United

States after Oprah Winfrey chose it as the music to open her daily chat show, the most popular programme in the US. Small, the former lead singer of M People, has already appeared on the show to sing it live. But it is not just Oprah who is using the song. 'Proud' has also been adopted by HealthPartners, a firm based in Minnesota, for its commercials. In addition, it is currently the theme song for "The Biggest Loser" on NBC-TV, a reality show about weight loss. [Read more...Page 10](#)



Is Harry another Rooney - or an Amy Spencer

HE HAS a tongue

twister of a name, can run like the wind and is already being talked about as a potential Olympic 100 metres gold medallist in London 2012. Carshalton's 17-year-old Harry Aikines-Aryeetey could follow in the footsteps of Wayne Rooney as the BBC Young Sports Personality of the Year on Sunday. The last winner of the award from athletics was Amy Spencer but she has since quit. What fate awaits Aikines-Aryeetey? TOM KNIGHT, athletics correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, investigates [Read more...Page 11](#)

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Brown to flesh out National Sports Foundation

BRITAIN'S sports officials will be taking closer attention than usual when the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, stands up in the House of Commons today (December 5) to deliver his latest Pre-Budget Report, *writes Steven Downes*. For the fate of many "minority" sports may hang on the Chancellor's spending announcement, in which they are hoping that Brown will deliver an additional funding boost of the order of £20 million towards the 2012 London Olympics. Having seen Prime Minister Tony Blair "win" the Olympics for London in July, Brown has also been assiduously courting sport of late, associating himself with the launch of England's bid to stage the 2018 football World Cup. Last week, the chief executives of cricket, tennis, football and both rugby codes met with the sport minister Richard Caborn and Sport England's Lord Patrick Carter, where it is believed they were briefed on the Chancellor's planned announcement.

Most speculation suggests that Brown will flesh out details about a National Sports Foundation, which he announced in his spring Budget, but for which there has been precious little detail since - hardly surprisingly, since the entire landscape of British sport was transformed on July 6 with the IOC's 2012 decision. Any funding announcement on Monday has to be taken in the context of other Government pledges for greater funding from Lottery and Exchequer sources towards 2012, but also against a background of cuts in other areas: only this week, Sport England, the agency responsible for funding grassroots sport, announced widespread redundancies which *insidethegames* understands to amount to about one-quarter of its total workforce, for savings of approximately £2 million per year. Elsewhere, as a result of rationalisation of elite Lottery funding determined after the Athens Games, individual sports have been drastically culling their lists of athletes receiving support. It has been a painful process, resented by many: this week, British Gymnastics president Brian Stocks, who has seen a 45 per cent cut to his sport's list, described UK Sport's "no compromise" model of targeting funds at areas where best medal returns are likely as being "fundamentally flawed".

Lord Colin Moynihan, the new chairman of the BOA, last week lobbied the Treasury to double present levels of funding, standing at £23 million at elite level and £25 million for grassroots. "It is vitally important," Lord Moynihan said. "Governing bodies need to know that the funding will be available for the next six years so they can secure coaches, support staff and identifying the athletes."

Yet the National Sports Foundation may not be quite the panacea expected. Some Westminster sources suggest that Chancellor Brown sees it as an agency whose task is to maximise commercial backing for sport, a sort of sporting Public Private Partnership, rather than simply a means of spending more Government cash. What we do already know is that Brown has earmarked £27.5 million for the Foundation, and, according to Lord Carter, "One would like to see the Rugby Foundation, Golf Foundation, Tennis Foundation... bringing in outside money from sponsorships to be put into the grassroots. The National Sports Foundation should not be an impediment; it should be a mechanism for distributing the money to those people."

Gordon Brown, a master at managing expectations, should enlighten us further by around 4pm today. But as UK Sport's performance director, Liz Nicholl, said recently, "It is a truth universally acknowledged when funding Olympic athletes that there is never enough money." ***Steven Downes is the business editor of Times Online.***

London 2012 gymnastic stars quit

GORDON BROWN'S pledge to help the future stars prepare for London 2012 has come too late for two gymnasts who played starring roles during the bid. Ben Brown, who was pictured vaulting over the Gherkin (right), and Laura Coggins, who starred in the promotional video alongside David Beckham, have both quit the sport and blamed the lack of funding. Coggins has given up because she claimed facilities at her local gym club in Warlingham, Surrey, were not good enough. "It's catch-22," said Lia Borrotzu, a coach at the club. "Because the club is so hard-up, she has not yet had enough training to qualify for the squad which would trigger funding." Laura, of Warlingham, Surrey, said: "People like me need to be given a proper chance." Brown has quit for similar reasons because of lack of funding at his club in Sutton.



Irish premier launches bid for training camps

IRELAND'S TAOISEACH Berti Ahern used the European Olympic Committee meeting in Dublin last week to launch his country's bid to attract teams to prepare there before the 2012 Games in London and immediately found a powerful ally in Jacques Rogge, the president of the International Olympic Committee. Ahern told the meeting, attended by 45 IOC members and 2012 chairman Sebastian Coe, who addressed the meeting on London's preparations, that the construction of a national sports campus would help persuade athletes to base themselves in Ireland before the event. "The staging of the Olympics so close to Ireland in 2012 offers unprecedented opportunity for this country at many levels," said Ahern in a welcoming speech to the 400 delegates. "By that time, Ireland will have a range of modern well-managed facilities of the highest quality in place. Lansdowne Road and Campus Stadium Ireland should be well developed at that stage. Furthermore, given that Ireland and the United Kingdom share a similar climate, this will give us the opportunity to host international teams, their support staff, families and friends, both in advance of and during the competitions."

Rogge backed Ahern's comments. "I think Ireland is perfect," he said. "It's the same culture, it's the same language, and it's the same climate. Many teams don't train and don't spend the last period in the city itself because there are quite hectic transportation issues."

Patrick Hickey, president of the Olympic Council of Ireland and an influential IOC member, claims six countries have already approached him, including the United States, Germany and France, about basing themselves in Ireland before the Games. Much will depend on whether the Irish Government gives approval for development of a new £100 million training centre at Abbotstown.

"It is almost like having the Olympic Games in Ireland - in fact it's as near as Ireland will ever get to hosting the Olympics," Hickey said. "Now let us all get together and move mountains if we have to ensure that we can enjoy the benefits that are to be derived from London 2012."

Irish sport is also trying to establish a "road map" to the 2012 Olympics to ensure that its competitors are as well prepared as they can be. "From our own competitive perspective, the London Olympics will also offer Irish athletes an opportunity to perform at an Olympic Games in a familiar environment," said Ahern. "They will not have to contend with issues such as travel, diet and acclimatisation. In addition, our Olympians will have a chance to make even more use of the facilities that are here while they are training for the games."

Lemley's bitter rival was up for London ODA job

A NEWSPAPER in the United States has claimed that the head of a project severely criticised by Jack Lemley, the newly appointed chairman of the Olympic Delivery Authority, was on the short list to be the organisation's chief executive.

The *Boston Globe* reported that Matthew J. Amorello, chairman of the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, was interviewed for the ODA role in the United States and London. Several leading politicians in the US have called for Amorello's resignation over his handling of the \$14.6 billion Big Dig project. Amorello abruptly severed the authority's consulting contract with Lemley in March after Lemley accused the agency of stonewalling his efforts to determine the cause and extent of the problems. "As a transportation leader in charge of completion of the largest public works project in US history, chairman Amorello was approached by the selection panel for the 2012 Olympic Committee and asked to meet with them here in the US a few months ago," an authority spokeswoman told the *Boston Globe*. "Following that meeting the committee again contacted chairman Amorello to inform him that they had narrowed the field of candidates and that he was among the finalists. At that time he was invited to London for a second meeting."

But Amorello was not ultimately successful and the job was finally given to David Higgins, an Australian in charge of English Partnerships and who was involved in the construction of the facilities for the 2000 Olympics in Sydney. Lemley declined to comment on Amorello's candidacy but told the *Boston Globe* that he has little confidence in the quality of the work on the Big Dig, which Amorello has overseen since 2002. "Boston reinforced for me the idea that quality has to be built into every aspect of job, contrary to what I saw in Boston," he said.



Super sewer solution for sewage threat

A SUPER-SEWER that would stretch for 22 miles under London's network of rivers and cost £1.7 billion could be built to ensure that the 2012 Games do not turn into an environmental disaster with millions of gallons of sewage flooding the Olympic Village.

London's sewers are currently so struggling to cope with capacity that even a moderate summer storm would overflow the drains, sending sewage back up the River Lea on the tide. Computer modelling has estimated that the likelihood of these sewage overflows happening when the Olympics will be in full swing is 99.5 per cent. Currently, two outfalls discharge to the River Lea close to the area that will become the Olympic Park, currently being developed (above). A discharge of storm sewage during the Olympics could turn the centrepiece of the park into a foul-smelling and unsightly mess, according to a paper recently delivered to the Environment Agency's Thames Regional Environmental Protection Advisory Committee authored by Jon Goddard, the Agency's technical manager for the Thames tideway strategy.

"It's an issue we do need to sort out," Goddard told *ENDSreport.com*. He described the larger of the two discharge points at Abbey Mills as being "the mother of all combined sewer overflows". It is the largest of London's storm outfalls accounting for up to 30 per cent of discharges and pour out up to a million cubic metres of sewage at a time. Abbey Mills is close to the site of the proposed 80,000-seat Olympic Stadium. Another outfall, upstream at Wick lane, is close to the Olympic Village site. A large overflow from Abbey Mills, Goddard says, "could turn the lower Lea into a grey, greasy mass of sewage", which would be carried up into the park by the tide. The proposed tunnel would intercept 36 outfalls along the river and store storm water prior to treatment at sewage works in east London. It is claimed the scheme would increase Thames Water's average domestic water bill by around £45 over ten years. The project was suspended last year when Thames Water received no funding to complete detailed plans for the project before 2010. Goodard's report claims that the lower section of the main tunnel and a link to Abbey Mills and Wick Lane could be built by 2012, which would help ease the problem, although there remain doubts about planning consent. "There is a possibility that, with early Government approval, an Olympic Bill and influencing from the Environment Agency and key Government bodies, the planning phase could be shortened," he said. More details of the report can be read at <http://www.endsreport.com/index.cfm?action=report.article&articleID=14656>.

More awards for Coe and London

AWARDS continue to pile up for the team at London 2012 and its bid leader Sebastian Coe. Lord Coe won an award for education and sport in recognition of London winning the Olympics at the ePolitix.com champion charity awards. The awards honour the hard work done by parliamentarians on behalf of voluntary causes and campaigns across a number of categories. To be eligible for an award MPs and peers have to be nominated by a charity for their good work during the year. Other winners included Chancellor Gordon Brown for his contribution to children's charities. Walpole, whose members are 100 of Britain's most prestigious companies involved in the luxury industry, also awarded a Medal of Excellence to Coe. Exclusively Walpole member Asprey designs the awards - a Walpole 'flourish' in Britannia silver on an ebonised plinth. Meanwhile, at the Visit London Awards for 2005, the outstanding achievement award was given to the London 2012 bid team for its work in securing the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games for the capital.

London Assembly to learn from Manchester

MEMBERS OF the London Assembly will visit Manchester today (December 5) to learn lessons from the preparations and legacy of the Commonwealth Games. The visit will form part of the Assembly's Economic Development Committee investigation into the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics. They will meet the Chief Executive and Leader of Manchester Council, who were instrumental in the success of the Games, and the Council's Regeneration and sports teams. They will also have a tour of the Commonwealth Games sports complex.



Jowell promises to crack down on costs as Tories seek tax cap

THE DECISION of the Olympics Minister Tessa Jowell (left with International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge) to send back the design of the 2012 aquatics centre last week after the original £75 million cost doubled came as the Conservatives launched a new Parliamentary campaign designed to cap the cost of the Games falling on London's council tax payers. Tory MPs have tabled amendments to the

Government's London Olympics Bill, which has its second reading in the House of Commons tomorrow (December 6) with the aim of restricting the contributions made by residents of the capital to the £625 million agreed at the time of the successful bid. "Conservatives have consistently opposed the idea that Londoners should have an open ended commitment to finance the 2012 Games," said Hugh Robertson, the Shadow Sports Minister. "Since the bid, it is clear that costs are already rising fast and Londoners, many of whom are already feeling the pain of successive council tax rises, desperately need protection."

The call came as a number of councils across London voted to demand safeguards in the Bill to protect their residents. Although the Olympics are supposed to cost residents 38 pence a week, it has been claimed that new analysis of the draft laws before Parliament revealed Londoners could face far larger tax rises. Hounslow Conservative councillor Mark Bowen proposed a motion at a council meeting last week to protect residents in Hounslow and the rest of London from massive hikes in council tax by placing safety clauses in the Olympic Bill. The council, with the reiteration that the whole country should share the cost of hosting the Games, backed this.

"In the original Olympics bid document, the Government accepted responsibility for any cost overrun," said Bowen. "But that has crucially been divided broadly between the lottery and the Mayor of London. There is no protection in the London Olympics Bill against Londoners having to pick up the tab for funding shortfalls elsewhere, such as if not enough Olympic Lottery tickets are sold. Therein lies one of my concerns. I am pleased councillors' from each group agreed to support the motion. While I hope the 2012 Olympic Games will be a success, I think the Government needs to be mindful of the long suffering council taxpayer in places like this borough."

Bowen claimed the Greater London Authority would be setting a larger levy on London council tax bills, but that this is not capped. Hounslow's Conservative councillors have called for it to be capped because "given the substantial cost over-runs in Athens and Sydney, having no cap could leave Londoners facing a debt mountain."

At the same time, the Conservatives are also calling on ministers to promise that the tax taken from the Olympic Lottery scratch-card games is returned to sport. "It is utterly unfair that the Treasury plans to fill its coffers to the tune of £320 million from a one-off national project," said Robertson. "Sport wholeheartedly supports the 2012 Games but many sports outside the Olympic movement are justifiably worried that money is going to be diverted away from them towards 2012."

Meanwhile, award-winning architect Zaha Hadid must go back to the drawing board to ensure changes that would allow the swimming and diving complex to be built in line with the original cost. "The offices of Zaha Hadid Architects and S&P Architects are continuing to work positively and in partnership with the DCMS, London Development Agency, Sport England and the London Organising Committee (LOCOG) to deliver a truly iconic project for the London 2012 Games - within the budget available and to the appropriate and agreed specifications," said a statement from Jowell's office on Friday (December 2).

The Government are confident that this is just a minor setback and a meeting Jowell had with Rogge in Lausanne last Monday (November 28) lifted her spirits. It was her first with Rogge since London was awarded the Olympics in July. "My meeting left me in no doubt that the UK government is not only fully behind the London Olympic Games and its organisers, but is also enthusiastically embracing all that the Olympic Games can bring in the way they inspire individuals and society at large," he said.

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Scots goalie blasts “parochial attitude” of SFA

THE Scottish Football Association has come under fire from one of its own players for refusing to back a Great Britain team for the 2012 Olympics. Ryszard Gorski, a goalkeeper with Highland League side Huntly, represented Britain at the World University Games in Turkey earlier this year and saw the benefits a united team could bring. “I was fortunate enough to be the only Scot representing Great Britain in a squad of 17 English players, a Welshman and another from Northern Ireland,” he said. “As the only 11-a-side football team to play as Great Britain, the University Games squad could act as a potential Olympic team at London 2012. The closing ceremony was a special moment for me, when I marched out into the stadium along with the Great Britain team to be greeted by 60,000 people applauding us. Playing for Great Britain was an honour and being the only Scottish representative in the team was even more special.”

The SFA are refusing to co-operate with plans to enter a joint Britain team into the Olympic football tournament for the first time since they failed to qualify for the 1972 Munich Games because they fear it would compromise their independence for events like the World Cup. David Taylor, chief executive of the SFA, said that Scotland’s is a “principled objection”. “Scotland not backing a Great Britain team in the 2012 Olympics seems to me to be ludicrous,” said Gorski. “The young talent coming through Scottish football is evident and we should be trying to work together with the other three nations at least every four years to show off this talent to the world. We can’t become the best if we refuse to work with each other and refuse to enter such high-profile tournaments. The experience that I got from the tournament in Turkey was second to none and it can only help me to become a better player. Denying young Scots the chance to play in this kind of tournament suggests to me that Scottish football has no desire to be among the best nations of the world in football.”

Olympic Javelin operator appointed

TRANSPORT company Govia has won the contract to run a new Kent rail franchise that includes high-speed domestic services on the Channel tunnel rail link and will transport thousands of passengers to the 2012 Olympics. Govia is a joint venture between the Go-Ahead company and French transport company Keolis. The consortium beat three other bidders to win the Integrated Kent Franchise (IKF), which will start operating at the beginning of April next year. Trains in the area are currently operated by South Eastern Trains, a subsidiary of the Strategic Rail Authority. South Eastern was brought in after the previous franchise holder, Connex, was sacked in November 2003. Govia will be responsible for running services from Kent and East Sussex into London Victoria, London Bridge, Cannon Street and Charing Cross stations. From 2009 it will operate high-speed domestic services on the Channel tunnel rail link. In 2012 Govia will provide the flagship ‘Olympic Javelin’ rail service that helped London secure the Olympic Games. This will link St Pancras and Stratford in less than eight minutes. The Department for Transport (DfT) said the franchise area had already benefited from almost £700 million being invested in new rolling stock and improved infrastructure. Another £250 million will be invested in the new high-speed trains. Govia has promised to invest around £76 million in passenger and staff facilities, improve performance with all-day trains-on-time targets of 91.6 per cent by March 2010, and oversee the construction of two depots in East Kent to maintain the new and existing trains. From 2009 Go-Ahead will run Hitachi high-speed trains on the line. A total of 28 of the six-carriage trains are likely to be introduced.

More Business News... UNION leaders at Corus hope that the award of the Olympics to London will help persuade the company to keep a steel-making capacity in Workington despite current plans to close it next July...A £300 million rail scheme to link Clapham Junction to Heathrow Airport six times an hour could be operational by the time of the 2012 Olympics, if a plan by Air Track is given approval...ADIDAS has launched a marketing campaign after being named as the official licensee of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. It is the first time the company has won the rights as the official branded licensee of an Olympic Games. The agreement will allow adidas to manufacture and sell products with the adidas logo and the Beijing Olympics mark...NBC TELEVISION, the American network that has the rights to broadcast the 2012 Olympics, has promoted Gary Zenkel to head of its Olympic business unit. He will be responsible for all business matters relating to the Games, including new media initiatives, marketing and promotion, technical operations and strategic business alliances.

The Regions and Home Countries

Yorkshire warned it has only two years to capitalise on 2012

DELEGATES at a conference held at the Galpharm Stadium in Huddersfield last week were warned that Yorkshire has only two years if it wants to raise its profile sufficiently to attract countries to train there before the 2012 Olympics, even though it is unlikely any team will make a decision until after the 2008 Games in Beijing.



David Gent, the regional director of Sport England Yorkshire, told an audience including local authorities, sports bodies, the Department of Health, the Yorkshire Tourist Board and higher education establishments that the Olympics offered them an unprecedented opportunity to promote the region in areas ranging from sport to industry and tourism to culture.

But among the obstacles already identified, he told a conference *Planning for the Games: Yorkshire's Olympic Launch*, to cashing in on the chance was the lack of the country's international profile, despite attractions like York Minster (above right). "There is no doubt Yorkshire has a low profile in the rest of the world and we must rectify that over the next two years if we are to attract Olympic and Paralympic teams to the region," said Gent. "We are further forward than any other area of the country in that we have already undertaken an audit of suitable facilities and have a list of 63 capable of hosting Olympic preparation camps.

"But we must be aware that no one city or area, West or South Yorkshire for example, can stand alone and say they want to host such-and-such a team. We must have a strategy for the region to enable the whole of the area to benefit for what is not only a sporting event but the biggest cultural festival in the world, a major opportunity for Yorkshire business to enjoy a share of the construction work which is needed in London and also a great boost for our tourist industry.

"The only way forward is for us all to work together; we can't have sport on one side and everyone else doing their own thing. We need to talk to each other and find ways of doing this together, maybe by trying new things like raising the profile of Yorkshire through the twinning arrangements which many towns in the region already enjoy. We need to build international relations. There are 2,433 days to the opening of the London Games on July 27, 2012, but we have to be ready for the moment in 2008 when this region can make the most of a massive opportunity."

Dorset and East of England holding Olympic conferences

TWO more areas are organising conferences to try to ensure they are prepared to take the opportunities offered by 2012. Firms in Dorset can learn how to capitalise on the opportunities at a workshop being hosted by Dorset Business and Virtualboard tomorrow (December 6) starting at 9am at the Tank Museum, Bovington Camp. Speakers will include Tim Colman who, as a director of Omega, was responsible for the timing systems for nine Olympic Games. For more details, ring 01202 714805 or email maria.tidy@dorsetbusiness.net.

Meanwhile, Creating Excellence have arranged the *East of England Summit – Rising to the Challenge 2012* – on behalf of the East of England Development Agency and Sport England on Friday (December 9) at the Radisson SAS Hotel, Stanstead Hotel. The summit will provide 80 invited stakeholders from across the region with up to date report from London 2012 and the opportunity to discuss and help shape a cohesive structure and programme of activities in the East. More details are available on www.creatingexcellence.co.uk.

Email us at contact@insidethegames.com

Other news from the Regions and Home Countries

East of England...STEVE CRAM, the 1984 Olympic 1500 metres silver medallist and chairman of the English Institute of Sport, launched the Ipswich Sports Foundation at a fundraising lunch held at Ipswich Town Football Club. He was the guest of honour at the launch hosted by Ipswich's sports ambassador and former Olympic swimmer Karen Pickering. The sports foundation - an idea developed by Team Ipswich and the national charity for sport SportsAid - will provide support and guidance to talented youngsters with the potential to pursue international sporting success. Two of Ipswich's brightest sporting hopes, 18-year-old triathlete Abbie Thorrington from Ravenswood and 15-year-old sailor Hamish Stone from Waldringfield, were presented with cheques for £250, which will help them pursue their dreams of competing at Olympic level.

East Midlands...S&P ARCHITECTS, who are involved in building London's Olympic controversial aquatics centre, have won a national competition to design a new £9.9 million pool for Corby in Northamptonshire. It is part of the master plan for the flagship Parkland Gateway Regeneration project on the edge of the town centre. The 25-metre, eight-lane competition pool will also include a learner pool, leisure pool, health suite, 70-station gym, dance studio, squash courts and café/restaurant. The swimming pool will be the first building constructed on the site, and is scheduled to open in early spring 2008. The same architects recently completed a similar project in Crawley.

North East...LOCAL officials have claimed money earmarked for road improvements in the area could be diverted to help fund the Olympics. The pot of cash allocated to this area for road upgrades is little enough without the possibility of it being snatched to pay for work required to support the Olympics, officials claim. According to local experts the A19 and A66 through Teesside and Darlington are close to capacity. But they point out the provisional budget for improvements to the A19, A66 - and the A1 north of Newcastle - is £8 million a year, enough to build just one interchange.

North West...A SPECIAL Capital of Culture All-Party Parliamentary Group has been set up to help promote Liverpool being the European Capital of Culture in 2008. It was formally launched last Thursday (December 1) at Westminster, with members of the new group including Lord Owen, Creative Industries and Tourism Minister James Purnell and Boris Johnson MP. The 08 All-Party Group also includes Liverpool MPs such as Louise Ellman, who will be Vice-Chair of the group. Knowsley North MP George Howarth will be the Chairman. Conservative Leader Michael Howard, who fought two general elections in the city and is a Liverpool FC fan, is another member of the 08 All-Party Group. "As with London 2012, Liverpool 2008 will be of substantial benefit to the whole of Britain," said Howard.

Northern Ireland...DAME MARY PETERS and Barry McGuigan could be recruited as ambassadors to try to persuade visiting teams to train in Northern Ireland before the 2012 Olympics, officials claim. They believe Ireland's rich boxing tradition may attract some countries to base their boxing teams here, which is of course where McGuigan's influence could be crucial. Peters, whose pentathlon Gold at the 1972 Munich Olympics made her a sporting hero for the Province, would also be to the fore in promoting Northern Ireland. "We see the Olympics as a catalyst for Northern Ireland to improve all sports development opportunities," said Professor Eric Saunders, chairman of Northern Ireland's Sports Council. "We can use the Games as a catalyst to broaden the appeal of sport and increase participation across the board resulting in a healthier, fitter population."

Scotland...THE Scottish Affairs Committee will hold its fourth public oral evidence session on the inquiry into The Potential Benefits for Scotland of the 2012 Olympics at 4 pm tomorrow (December 6) when the committee will take evidence from the Sports Minister Richard Caborn. Among those who have already appeared before the Committee are John Zimny, director of recreation services at Angus Council, Lindsay Macgregor, the policy manager at the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, Julia Bracewell, the chair of sportscotland, and David Williams, the chief executive of EventScotland. Next Tuesday (December 13) the Committee will hear evidence from Patricia Ferguson, the Scottish Executive's Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport.

South East... AN INGUARUAL meeting of the Bedford Olympic Opportunities Support Team (BOOST) has taken place. Among the key points the meeting identified as making it attractive to visiting teams in 2012 is that the town has a good availability of accommodation for athletes. De Montfort University is set undergo a major campus improvement which could see 500 en-suite rooms available in plenty of time for the games. It will also have state-of-the-art sports performance science equipment vital to modern day athletes. "The meeting was productive with people contributing some very good points," said Bedford's Mayor Frank Branston. "The general feeling is that we cannot waste any time. We can't wait until 2012 to get things ready; we have to have things in place by the end of 2007. When we get the rowing lake sorted I think that we could find ourselves being host to a number of teams for specialised events. We could also accommodate a number of smaller nations who may only send ten athletes."

South West... THE head teacher at the Stonehenge School has accused the Government of neglecting rural communities, as he called for more facilities for Amesbury. "It is all very well pouring investment into the cities, as our leaders have done - but small, rural communities are just as capable of putting high-class facilities to the right use," said Nigel Roper. "There is an apparent belief that counties such as Wiltshire are green, pleasant areas of rural tranquillity, with no social or economic deprivation at all - and therefore it is acceptable for the government not to invest in them. The reality is, of course, that aspiring Olympic athletes from Amesbury have to travel miles to get to practice facilities, because they are not available locally." Roper claimed that in many European countries, even small communities had modern sports facilities and modern schools, and he wondered how young people in Britain would compete without the same opportunities. "When the Olympic Games come to London in 2012, most of you will be 23 years of age - close to the optimum age for most athletes," he told school-leavers. "I don't know how many Olympic athletes Amesbury has produced or will produce."

Wales... SWANSEA Council officials are confident that the city will capitalise on the spin-off benefits from the London Olympics, with new facilities such as the £27 million Landore stadium, the sports village at the university and the adjoining Wales National Pool, playing an important role. "We are confident enough in the facilities we can provide here to have this ambition to provide a training camp for an international team during the 2012 Olympics," said Council cabinet culture, recreation and tourism member Gerald Clement.

West Midlands... A NEW team has been appointed to lead the hunt for budding Olympic athletes in Telford. The school sports partnership aims to increase the amount of sport played in schools and get more children involved. It also hopes to encourage pupils to take an interest in healthy living as well as identifying stars of the future - in time for London 2012. Two new partnership development managers will be based at the Madeley Court and Phoenix schools and they have appointed school sports co-ordinators in every secondary school. They will work together to achieve a target of 75 per cent of all five to 16-year-olds taking part in at least two hours of school sport by 2006. "I look forward to seeing the fruits of their labour and hearing about some potential Olympic athletes in Telford in the future," said Councillor Peggie Harrison, responsible for children's services in the Shropshire town.

Yorkshire... A NEW £8 million swimming pool complex has been opened by the Sports Minister Richard Caborn in Beverley. The developments there include a £6 million eight-lane, 25-metre swimming pool, funded by the East Riding Council and Sport England, a new £500,000 changing pavilion, funded by the Football Foundation and the council, a skate park, funded by Sport England, Beverley Town and Woodmansey Parish Councils, an improved Tone Zone, funded by East Riding Council and Sport England's Active England programme, improved outdoor pitches and a refurbished multi-sports area funded by the Active England programme and the Active England programme has provided funding for the post of community development officer for two years. "These outstanding new facilities are set to provide a host of new sporting opportunities for people in Beverley and everyone involved in bringing the project to fruition should be congratulated," said Caborn. "In light of our successful bid for the London 2012 Olympics I hope that we will see sports people from the East Riding, and in particular Beverley, enjoying their sport and perhaps even competing for medals at the Games."

Culture

Oprah follows London and uses 'Proud' as her theme tune

'PROUD', the Heather Small song that became so familiar during London's successful bid to host the 2012 Olympics, has been adopted by Oprah Winfrey as her theme tune for the hugely popular show which regularly draws nearly 20 million viewers. The song has also been adopted by HealthPartners, a firm based in Minnesota, for its commercials. In addition, it is currently the theme song for "The Biggest Loser" on NBC-TV, a reality show about weight loss.

The career of Small (right), the diminutive former lead singer of M People, has been revitalised since London began using 'Proud'. She has become something of a regular booking at Olympics-related events from Trafalgar Square parties to the British Athletics' Writers Association annual dinner at the Royal Lancaster Hotel in London in October. "We should be on to her agent demanding a cut of her royalties," joked a 2012 insider.



Small's profile could now be set to rocket even higher in the United States, thanks to the song's message of hope that will appeal so much to Americans. "A friend of mine shared the 'Proud' song with me several years ago and I thought it would be a perfect theme," said Gary Bingner, president and creative director of Quasimodo Advertising, who designed the HealthPartners campaign. "The song has such an uplifting, encouraging message. It really supports HealthPartners mission to empower its members to take charge of their health and take care of their communities."

New woman in charge at South Bank

HONOR WILSON-FLETCHER has been appointed director of marketing at London's South Bank Centre. Previously the head of marketing at the British Museum, where she was responsible for the establishment of a new marketing department and overhauling visitor communications, Honor will take up her new post in March 2006. "Honor will be joining the South Bank team at a critical time, as we prepare for the reopening of the Royal Festival Hall in June 2007 and the relaunch of the South Bank Centre as a whole," said the South Bank's chief executive Michael Lynch. "She will play a major role in positioning us as a world-cultural destination in the run up to 2007, the 2012 Olympics and beyond."

Waltham Forest arts groups told to take advantage of 2012

ARTS organisations must develop relationships with each other to benefit from Olympic opportunities, a Question Time-style debate in Waltham Forest heard last week. Jennette Arnold, London Assembly member for North East London, said that organisations needed to stop looking to the council for money but that the council had a responsibility to create an environment which would enable them to win funding elsewhere. She said that in 2008 the cultural festival would come to the five Olympic boroughs and arts organisations needed to be ready to take advantage of its opportunities. "The name of the game is partnership, that is the way it is these days," said Councillor Chris Robbins, Waltham Forest's cabinet member for culture, learning and the arts. He said that the council favoured using its £1.5 million annual arts funding to support community groups, festivals and a variety of venues around the borough which could be developed for arts use.

Sports

He's quick and talented – but does Harry have the staying power for London 2012?



Harry Aikines-Aryeetey has a lot of expectations on his shoulders. TOM KNIGHT, athletics correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, assesses if the 17-year-old has what it takes to still be around for the Olympics in London

IN A YEAR when so much went wrong for Britain's supposedly top athletes, the name on many people's lips – if they could but master it – has been Harry Aikines-Aryeetey (above). Among a crop of hot new talent emerging this summer, Aikines-Aryeetey proved the pick of the bunch with his historic double triumph at the World Youth Championships in Marrakech. He won the 100 metres in 10.35sec and then clocked 20.91 to win the 200m. It was the first time any youngster had won the double at the championships and the times placed him fourth in the UK under-18 all-time rankings. His performances in Marrakech also installed Aikines-Aryeetey as yet another British sprinter to watch in the run-up to the 2012 Olympics in London. On the face of it, Britain has much to look forward to from the medal winners of 2005. There is Craig Pickering, the European Junior 100m champion and Simeon Williamson and Alex Nelson, who won medals behind him in the British clean-sweep in Kaunas, Lithuania.

For all that, it was Aikines-Aryeetey's double that stood out. Tall, strong, likeable and, it has to be said, with a sense of humour so-often lacking in athletes, the 17 year-old sixth former from Carshalton, Surrey was rewarded for his efforts with three prestigious awards. In September, the International Association of Athletics Federations named him this year's Rising Star. A month later, he stole the show at the British Athletics Writers' Association annual dinner, where he collected the Junior Athlete of the Year and the Best Performance in a British Vest awards. There could be more to come. Aikines-Aryeetey is among the favourites to win the BBC's Young Sports Personality of the Year Award next Sunday and his appearance on the live, end-of-year show will catapult him into the national consciousness. Previous winners have included Wayne Rooney – and we know what happened to him – and Amy Spencer, another talented young sprinter for whom a bright future was predicted, only for her to retire last year, her talent unfulfilled.

The transition from junior to senior is notoriously difficult and the sport is littered with the names of sprinters who did not make it. The examples of Christian Malcolm and Mark Lewis-Francis, both World Junior champions, show how hard it is. But even that transition is a long time away for Aikines-Aryeetey. With a birthday in August, he is only just 17. The trick for Aikines-Aryeetey, his coach, Matt Favier, his large and enthusiastic family and the performance managers at UK Athletics, is to retain a sense of focus at a time when he is still trying to cope with demands of his academic studies and of simply growing up. From this distance, it is easy for this talented youngster to talk-up his prospects. "I'll be 23 in 2012," he said. "That would be an ideal age to win a gold medal. I'm still peaking. There's still a lot more to come from me. I'm going to be there and I'm going to win for Great Britain. Can you imagine it, running there in your home country with everyone backing you for victory? What more do I need to aim for? I plan on being there. This gives me an even bigger challenge in my career and there's much more to come from me. I will improve."

Of course, it is too early to judge Aikines-Aryeetey's long-term prospects. Seven years is a long time for any sprinter. There have been careers much shorter and, only five years after his breakthrough, Lewis-Francis is already being written off as a genuine prospect by many observers. But where he may lack the natural talent of Lewis-Francis and, more significantly, Alex Nelson, there is no doubting Aikines-Aryeetey's commitment to the cause. While he might have revelled in his newfound celebrity status, Aikines-Aryeetey's demeanour during the IAAF award ceremony in Monte Carlo – where he rubbed shoulders with the likes of Justin Gatlin, Michael Johnson and Frankie Fredericks - revealed a determination to justify the plaudits. "This is just the beginning," said Aikines-Aryeetey. Everyone in British sport will hope that is the case.

Other news from the sports

Aquatics... BRITAIN'S best young female swimmers identified as possible contenders for 2012 travel to China today (December 5) to compete at the Chinese National Championships. The five selected are Lincoln's Jordan Tomlinson and Lizzie Simmonds, Stockton's Jessica Dickons and Jemma Lowe and Beckenham's Ellen Gandy. They will be guided in China by performance director Bill Sweetenham. The athletes will be supported by their home programme coaches to ensure they also gain in experience as the coach's involvement in enabling their swimmers to reach their potential is key. All are part of the Government's funded Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme. The group will also undergo a 10-day training camp in Macau. More news on www.britishswimming.org

Archery... SIMON TERRY, who as a teenager won two bronze medals at the 1992 Olympics, has made a comeback at the age of 31 and risen to third in the UK rankings. "I'm very surprised at how well it's gone, not having touched a bow for well over 10 years but managing to get to number three," said the Grantham archer. "There's still a lot of hard work to do over the winter and I've got quite a bit to work on, but there's something to aim at." After Terry won Britain's first Olympic medal in archery for 80 years he earned brief notoriety when he returned to discover his unemployment benefit had been stopped while he had been competing in Barcelona. More news on www.gnas.org

Athletics... CONTRASTING fortunes for two of Britain's leading 400 metres runners. Daniel Caines believes he has rejuvenated career after moving to train in the United States but Sean Baldock fears his may be over because of injury. "The rate at which I have improved is astounding," said Caines, now based at Duke University under coach Jeff Howser. Baldock, meanwhile, has not competed since the 2004 Olympics because of a knee injury. "There is no way I can continue to put my body through the kind of punishment I have over the last ten years without a break," said the Hastings runner. More news on www.ukathletics.net

Badminton... THE Yonex Irish International Championships return to the National Badminton Centre in Lisburn on Thursday (December 8) until Sunday and with one of the largest prize funds on the European circuit there will be 218 players taking part from 27 nations. More news on www.baofe.co.uk

Basketball... THE Birmingham Bullets have received an invitation to play in a Chinese Basketball Association endorsed International Tournament featuring professional clubs from Europe and China in May 2006. Invited as British basketball's representative, the Bullets will join other European clubs. More news on www.EnglandBasketball.co.uk

Boxing... ANTHONY FOWLER, a cousin of England footballer Robbie, stopped Colin Duggan in the first round of England's international against Ireland in Ipswich. At just 14, the Toxteth youngster has been tipped as a possible 2012 London Olympian. "Anthony is getting better all of the time and this was a great win for him," said Golden Gloves club coach Kevin Smith. More news on www.bbbofc.com

Canoeing... BRITAIN'S Anna Hemmings, the women's world canoe marathon champion, is to concentrate on sprint racing in an effort to qualify for the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. Hemmings won her title in Perth, Australia, after recovering from chronic fatigue syndrome. "It was the worst period of my life but at the same time I wouldn't change it because I learnt a lot about myself," she said. More news on www.bcu.org.uk

Cycling... THREE teams will be representing Britain in the World Cup which starts in Manchester on Friday (December 9). There will be riders in GB colours plus two trade teams – Science in Sport and Recycling.co.uk. It means all three will be eligible to score vital qualifying points for the World Championships in France. "The Manchester World Cup provides us with a great opportunity to race both our young and experienced riders against the world's best on our home track in front of a partisan crowd," said David Brailsford, Britain's performance director. More news on www.bcf.uk.com

Equestrian... THE British Equestrian Federation is undertaking a feasibility study before deciding whether to apply to host the 2014 World Equestrian Games. More news on www.bef.co.uk

Fencing... HIGH WYCOMBE'S Royal Grammar School had superb successes at the regional junior Epee and Sabre competition. The school had 13 entrants and swept the field coming away with eight came medals and three titles. Josh Radvan won the under-14 epee, Paul Dazeley came first in the under-18 epee and there was a first place for Spencer Bullent in the under-18 sabre. All of the fencers will now go on to represent the region at the British Youth Championships in Stoke in February. More news on www.britishfencing.com

Football... GEORGE BROMILOW, who represented Great Britain in the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne, has died at the age of 74. He scored two goals in the 9-0 defeat of Thailand during the tournament, in which Britain finished fifth behind winners the Soviet Union, whose team included the legendary goalkeeper Lev Yashin. More news on www.thefa.com.

Gymnastics... BETH TWEDDLE, a bronze medalist at the World Championships in Melbourne last month, plans to continue competing for the foreseeable future. "It's pretty much about however long you can carry on and I'm feeling fine," said the Liverpool gymnast. "I've not really thought about retirement yet." More news on www.british-gymnastics.org.

Handball... INTERNATIONAL online bookmaker Expekt.com is the new official title sponsor of the IHF XVII Women's World Championship, which open in St. Petersburg today (December 5). Britain is not represented. More news on www.britishhandball.com.

Hockey... GOALKEEPER Ian Hughes, the younger brother of Aston Villa and Northern Ireland captain Aaron, is in line for a call-up to Ireland's squad for the World Cup qualifier in China, the next European Nations Cup and a possible Olympic Games qualifier. Like rugby union, Ireland competes as a united nation in hockey. More news on www.hockeyonline.co.uk.

Judo... BIRMINGHAM'S National Indoor Arena will host the Great Britain Judo World Cup on April 1 and 2 next year. Each year the Cup will alternate between men and women. In the first year the Great Britain event will be for women, which will see British Judo showcasing talent including Athens Olympians Sophie Cox, Sarah Clark, Rachel Wilding and Karina Bryant. Bryant is one of the world's top players and recently won two silver medals at the 2005 World Judo Championships. More news on www.britishjudo.org.uk.

Modern Pentathlon... HANNAH POLAK, a 13-year-old from Burton-on-the-Wolds, has been short listed for the Junior Sportswoman category in this year's *Leicester Mercury Sports Awards*. Polka made her mark by winning the British under-16 title at Millfield School. She also finished fifth in an under-17 Olympic Hopes competition, in Budapest, Hungary. More news on www.mpagb.org.uk.

Rowing... A BEDFORD Rowing Club crew recorded the second fastest time ever at the Evesham Head of the River Race on Saturday. The men's senior three Quadruple Sculls of Michael Hardy, Andrew Hardwick, Chris Hemmingway and Andrew MacCartney finished in 14min 53sec, a time only ever beaten by Sir Steven Redgrave and Sir Matthew Pinsent. More news on www.ara-rowing.org

Sailing... EIGHT of Britain's top Radial sailors are currently competing in the 2005 Laser Radial World Championship title in Fortaleza, Brazil, the first time the event has been held since the class was added to the Olympic programme last year to replace the women's single-handed Olympic class boat. With all of the world's top ten Radial sailors registered to compete, the Team GB sailors, four of which are ranked in the top 15 in the world, will be some of many vying for podium positions. Britain's main hopes rest on Lizzie Vickers, ranked number three in the world. London 2012 hopefuls, Charlotte Dobson who is currently ranked tenth in the world, and 2005 Volvo Youth Sailing ISAF World medallist Alison Young, are also among Britain's team. More news on www.rya.org.uk

Shooting... TEENAGER Craig Latham been awarded a £250 grant by Chippenham Rotary Club. The 14-year-old schoolboy is the British Junior men's 10-metre air rifle champion and at just 13, was the youngest person ever to become British Junior Men's Champion. "Craig is quite exceptional for his age," said Bob Nation, president of the Rotary Club. More news on www.gbtsf-worldclass.co.uk

Table Tennis... KELLY SIBLEY has repaid the faith of Leamington law firm Wright Hassall who have been sponsoring her since she was 11 by qualifying for England's Commonwealth Games team. "Because so many people have supported me I have never had a reason to doubt my ability," said Sibley, now 17. "I have been sponsored for over six years and throughout that time they have helped to pay my expenses." Peter Beddoes, managing partner at Wright Hassall, said due to Sibley's success the company was inspired to sponsor other youngsters. The firm's other young protégés include Naomi Folkard, aged 22, from Leamington, who was chosen to represent GB as part of the women's archery team in Athens last year. More news on www.englishtabletennis.org.uk

Taekwondo... LAUREN GAYLOR, 18, has won the under-59 kilograms British senior title after battling against chronic fatigue syndrome since she was 14 and only returning to the sport during the summer. "I really didn't expect to win," said the Peterborough competitor. "I knew I was capable, but I hadn't been in the ring for ages so I felt a bit rusty. I had a lot of support from my family and my coach, Seelan Rengasamy, who has just been fantastic. My dream has always been to compete at this level, especially the Olympics. I thought I'd lost the chance, but now I know I can achieve it." More news on www.sporttaekwondouk.staffs.org

Tennis... ANDY MURRAY has launched Raw Tennis, created by the Lawn Tennis Association, specifically for 10-18 year olds as a radical new way for young people to take part in the game. The LTA claim it was developed following extensive research into youth culture, lifestyles and trends to make it much more relevant to the lifestyles of young people today. "The great thing about Raw Tennis is that kids can play it anywhere, anytime and at their own pace," said Murray. More news on www.lta.org.uk

Triathlon... HEATHER WILSON, 23, has been selected to represent Northern Ireland at the Commonwealth Games in March next year. "I'm really pleased," she said. "I've put in an awful lot of work. I'm up at ten to five in the morning swimming and I train throughout the day, so I'm delighted to have achieved this. My ultimate aim is to go to the Olympics in Beijing and London and hopefully this will give me the experience to achieve that aim." More news on www.britishtriathlon.org

Volleyball... VOLLEYBALL was the most popular sport at the 2004 Olympics, according to Ruben Acosta, the president of the international federation. According to the Mexican, more than 3.5 billion people tuned in to watch volleyball during the Athens, making it the No. 1 spectator sport of the Games ahead of athletics, swimming, basketball and football. More news on www.volleyballengland.org.

Weightlifting... GEORGIA Black, Scotland's 15-year old British under-23 and Scottish senior weightlifting champion, has been warned by UK Sport she faces a ban under the anti-doping laws because of her failure to comply with the new "whereabouts information provision" system. She was not at the gym where testers called on three occasions. She blames the fact on her unfamiliarity with computers and letting UK Sport know where she is. More news on www.bwla.co.uk

Wrestling... BIRMINGHAM student Sandeep Rai has set his sights on appearing at the Beijing Olympics in 2008. The 18-year-old British champion, a Sport and Exercise Science at Josiah Mason College, has been competing for 13 years after being inspired by his father, who was a champion in India. "Being champion was always a dream for me, I am so proud to keep this tradition in the family and my dad has been a great example to me," he said. "My next dream is to go to the Olympics in Beijing in 2008. It will take a lot of dedication but I would be very proud to represent Great Britain." More news on www.britishwrestling.org

Paralympics

Tennis veteran honoured

FOUR TIMES Paralympian Janet McMorran was presented with a prestigious lifetime achievement award by Wheelpower - British Wheelchair Sport. The 55-year-old Herefordshire tennis player has won seven national and 21 international titles during her career. She is the only female player to have contested all four Paralympic tournaments since tennis was introduced to the Games at Barcelona in 1992. "I haven't finished yet, but I'm definitely leaving the London 2012 Paralympic Games to the youngsters," said McMorran.

The award was made at the 10th annual British Wheelchair Sports Awards ceremony, held in Reading. The individual male achievement award went to wheelchair racer David Weir, who had a superb year, winning the 400 metres title at the European Open Paralympic Championships in Finland, finishing third in the London Marathon and winning both the Great North and Great South Run events.

Up and coming tennis player Lucy Shuker won the women's individual award, while the GB archery team took the team event award and the GB wheelchair rugby team, who successfully defended their European Championships, won the team sport award. Wheelchair racer Shelly Woods, who was second to Francesca Porcellato in this year's London Marathon, was named best newcomer.

Award for Welsh youngster

VERSATILE Bridgend teenager Nathan Stephens, who lost both his legs in an accident on a railway line on his ninth birthday, has been voted Disabled OCS Young Sportsman 2005 and received a cheque for £10,500 from Iwan Thomas, the UK record holder for 400 metres. Stephens, 17, is ranked world number two for the discus, javelin and shot put and holds three British records. The teenager was playing on the railway line when he slipped, became stuck, and was hit by a train. He took up athletics three years ago when he was spotted weightlifting at the Newport Wheelchair Games by coach Anthony Hughes who was so impressed by the 14-year-old that he suggested Stephens should try a number of sports, sledge hockey and athletics among them. He is also the youngest person to represent Great Britain at sledge hockey in the world championships and has already been selected to compete in the winter Paralympics in Turin next March. He has donated some of his prize money to his school, Ynysawdre Comprehensive, to provide new equipment for his schoolmates. He plans to spend some of the rest on a rolling road, a sort of treadmill so he can train indoors when the weather is too bad at home. "Tanni (Grey-Thompson) has got one and she told me it's a real advantage when the weather's too bad to train outside," said Stephens. "They are expensive but it'll be worth it." Grey-Thompson is among Stephens' biggest fans. "Nathan is a great character, a real fun guy to have around," she said. "I've been in a squad with him and he's a real asset. He trains hard and is very committed to sport in general."

Building society sign £1 million deal

DISABILITY SPORTS EVENTS has signed a £1 million seven-year deal with Nationwide Building Society to help identify talent in athletics and swimming during the run-up to the 2008 Paralympics in Beijing and London four years later. "We like to think that our relationship with DSE has been a great example of how organisations can make a difference and we are delighted to be able to expand on our support. "In partnership, we want to assist DSE with encouraging participation in sport," Philip Williamson, the chief executive of Nationwide, told *Sportsbusiness*. This means giving support where the champions start their road to success - at the grassroots level - and beyond."

London Paralympics preparations praised

THE HEAD of the International Paralympic Committee has praised London's preparations for the 2012 Paralympics and claimed its close links to the Olympics will make it the most successful ever. "The London 2012 Games will minimize the planning and operational differences between these two multi-sport events and lead to new commercial opportunities for the Paralympic Games," said Xavier Gonzalez, the chief executive of the IPC. "This is a great environment which will help to get the best results for the Paralympic Games." More news on www.paralympics.org.uk.



Bell Lap

Here's one for Becks Christmas socking...

DAVID BECKHAM was apparently so taken with Jo Ankier during the shooting of London's Olympic bid video he asked her if she wanted to be a guest of his at an England match – and it is easy to see why from this picture, which is taken from a new calendar launched last week, *Ladies of the track, Babes of the field 2006*. It features some of Britain's leading female athletes and is raising money for a number of good causes, including the Ron Pickering Memorial Fund and Genesis, a breast cancer charity. Ankier, Britain's leading 3000 metres steeplechaser, is Miss June who bears a striking similarity to a young Posh Spice. She is better known as the athlete in the promotional video that could be seen running by the landmarks of the capital, an unknown face among a gathering of high-profile personalities like Beckham, Sir Roger Moore, Dame Helen Mirren and Dame Kelly Holmes. Ankier, who comes from Edgware, runs for Shaftesbury Barnet and is based at UK Athletics' Endurance Centre at St Mary's University in Twickenham. In between her studies - she is taking a media course - and training, Ankier works part-time for Sky Sports News as a production junior. She has appeared briefly on screen and was chosen for the London 2012 video after the makers of the film asked around the clubs of the capital for a suitable athlete. A Londoner and a potential star in seven years' time, her coach, among others, recommended her, but there was one person she did not want to disturb between takes: Beckham. "He started chatting to me," she said. "He had heard I was a runner and he used to run when he was younger. England were playing in Manchester and he asked me if I was going to the game. I said no, but he said I should. I couldn't, though." Copies of the calendar are available for £5 by logging on to www.athletics-weekly.com.



Cyber watch – What they are saying about 2012 on the web

"London's programme was gigantic, much more costly than Paris's. We tried to fulfil an ideal for the Olympic Games, whereas London fulfilled its own ambition. We tried to control our expenses and to think about ecology; they just promised more and more swimming pools." – **Bernard Boullé, the marketing manager for the French Swimming Federation, quoted in *The Times* after Tessa Jowell rejected the initial plans for the aquatic centre because the budget had doubled.**

"Say it ain't so, Steve" – **Headline in the *Toronto Sun* after former Canadian captain Steve Nash said he wanted to help coach Britain's basketball team at the 2012 Olympics.**

"You know, Mike, the stars are in alignment to win 2012" – **What former London chairman Barbara Cassani told Mike Lee when she recruited him as communications director, as reported by Mihir Bose in the *Daily Telegraph*.**

Finish line...

"MY dad said that any dump round here is worth 20 per cent more now because of the Olympics" – **Kylie, the new girlfriend of young tearaway Darren Miller, in last Thursday's episode of *EastEnders*. How long before the London Development Agency serve a Compulsory Purchase Order on the Vic and the rest of Albert Square so they can build Olympic Park?**

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