

Stars

The Ron Pickering Memorial Fund continues to provide charitable support for talented young athletes at the grass roots level of track and field athletics.

More than £800,000 has been raised since Ron died in 1991 and £600,000 has already been used in various ways for the benefit of young people through participation in sport. The fund operates in accordance with Ron's belief that sport can enhance young lives in more ways than the physical.

"Thank you enormously for the grant I received recently. I have been privileged enough to benefit from the fund for several years now and I am hugely grateful for this help. It really does make a tremendous difference!"

Kirsty Maguire (21)

Among the hundreds of youngsters who have received grants towards their training and equipment expenses in their early careers were 33 members of the GB Olympic team in Athens.

Denise Lewis was 'our' first Olympic gold medallist and she has now been joined by Jason Gardener and Marlon Devonish (sprint relay). Our congratulations go to them and to Kelly Sotherton on her bronze medal in the heptathlon event.

As a charity we are able to help young athletes up to the age of 23, whilst still in education, and for many it is the only financial support they receive. Even though the amounts are nominal, the recipients value the recognition of their talent. One of the most satisfying aspects of Ron's fund is the knowledge that many former grant recipients continue to compete in championships around the country.

"The funding will be a great help in my pursuit of international honours this coming summer track season. The fund has supported me over the last few years through injury and illness and the support helps motivate me to try that little bit harder to improve my performances"

Chris Stoves (20)



ABOVE: Kelly Sotherton celebrates her bronze medal in Athens. The fund helps many athletes for several years – in Kelly's case, for seven years from the age of 15.

RIGHT: In Athens Jo Fenn (800 metres), Emeka Udechuku (discus) and Denise Lewis (heptathlon). BELOW: (L-r) Mark Lewis-Francis, Marlon Devonish, Darren Campbell and Jason Gardener of the Great Britain relay team celebrate their 4x400 metre relay win in Athens.



Coaching Clinics

Over the years, the fund has tried various ways to support coaches – from providing training equipment to covering their expenses for attending courses. In recognition of their contribution to the success of the athletes who received grants in 2001, we also enclosed a £100 cheque to be handed to their coach. In many cases it was the first time the coach had received any such financial recognition of time freely given to coaching youngsters.

However, the fund's trustees feel the most effective way to help this aspect of our sport is to sponsor coaching clinics. The recent pole vault seminar with Rodion Gataullin, the Russian national coach, organised by Steve Rippon at Loughborough University is the latest example. Although designed to help our elite vaulters, more than 100 athletes and coaches attended the open day at the seminar. We hope all those who travelled there, some with the help of the fund, will have benefited from the training tips passed on by Rodion during his excellent lecture and demonstrations in the practical session. Further clinics are planned such as a High Jump clinic featuring German National Coach of Germany, Wolfgang Killing, next April.

High Bar
Rodion Gataullin's seminar demonstrated the importance of a high bar to pole vaulters in learning gymnastic skills for the event. As a result, the fund agreed to the request from vaulter Ellie Spain for the provision and installation of a high bar at the Sutton Arena for the use of all those who train there. Thanks to Nick Booth and his family from Continental Sports for their expertise and generosity.

Nick Buckfield
received help
from the fund.

**"Thank you for
your cheque. I have
used the money last
weekend and bought
my first pair of
throwing shoes"
Danny Prew (15)**

Ed Prickett (1983-2004)

Last May the sport lost a promising young athlete, Ed Prickett, in a tragic road accident. More than £4,000 has already been donated to the fund in Ed's memory and more will be raised by a group of his friends from Nottingham University who have been inspired to run the London Marathon. The group will also include Ed's brother Andrew and friends Rob Spalton and James Hodson from his home in Surrey.



Sportshall Athletics

The Fund has kept up the support and encouragement Ron gave George Bunner, MBE, at the start of Sportshall Athletics in 1979. Since Ron died in 1991, his Memorial Fund has spent over £48,000 on the provision of Sportshall athletic equipment around the UK in order to introduce thousands of young people to the fun of athletics. Reebok and Norwich Union have ensured its popularity and a former champion, Mark Lewis-Francis, is its ambassador. The value of Sportshall Athletics is now being recognised and copied in many countries around the world.

English Schools Athletic Association

The results of the English Schools Championships each year are a guide to grants awarded from the fund. The ESAAs lack of a sponsor for the past few years means future championships may not be held. In 2003, Jean persuaded the fund trustees to donate £25,000 in an attempt to encourage former participants and others to contribute towards the £250,000 p.a. needed to save the championships. Although much appreciated, this gesture did not have the desired effect, but the ESAA and UK Athletics are working towards a solution. The value of these championships to the development of our future champions must not be lost. If you want to make a Gift Aid donation to the ESAA, go to www.esaa.net

London's 2012 Olympic Bid



Artist impressions
(from left to right):
The Olympic
Stadium, Olympic
Village and
Wembley Stadium.

Ron Pickering's interest in the Olympic movement began in 1948 when he attended every day of the athletic events at the Wembley Olympics. Come rain or shine, he was there with his then girlfriend and future wife, Jean Desforges, who was to compete in the 1952 Games in Helsinki. They were enthralled by the pageantry of the opening ceremony and the quality and drama of the events as the best athletes in the world competed against each other.

From that time on, his life was devoted to protecting the ideals of the Olympic movement, through the horrors of Munich 1972, and against the boycott of Moscow 1980, which decimated those Games and the ones that followed four years later in Los Angeles.

Although he was closely involved in promoting the Olympic bids by Birmingham and Manchester, he knew that to stand any chance of success, the venue had to be London. In 1968 as the new Recreation Manager of the Lee Valley Regional Park, he envisaged this area offered the best chance for London to once again host the Games.

Now that London's bid for the 2012 Olympic Games is a reality, his voice is sadly missing. Seb Coe, leader of London's bid, has been heard to say: "Where is he? When I need him the most, where is he?" It is not only the sporting spectacle that will inspire the youth of the country but also it give us the chance to show the world that we as a nation can stage such prestigious events. Add to this the legacy the Olympics would leave behind for future generations to practise and strive for excellence in many sporting disciplines.

The provision of sports facilities played an important role in Ron Pickering's life. He made the most of every opportunity to seek out and study the latest innovations around the world, wherever his travels with athletic teams or the BBC took him. The regeneration of Stratford into an Olympic Park with all its sporting facilities would be dear to his heart and success for London in 2012 will give a purpose and a deadline to work towards. Without it, we will continue to cry out for years to come for a national stadium for track and field athletics.

In his name, the Ron Pickering Memorial Fund is backing London's Olympic bid in the hope that Great Britain will once again take its rightful place among the leaders of the sporting world.



"Where
is he?
When
I need
him the
most,
where
is he?"
Seb Coe

Jean Pickering

editorial



“Sport is the most precious commodity we have to hand on to the next generation.” Ron Pickering

For a charity run by geriatrics (Norman Urmston's description!), it never ceases to amaze me that the Ron Pickering Memorial Fund has existed for 14 years and has been able to help so many young athletes to enjoy their sport. It says much for the respect in which Ron was held for the way he tried to protect sport. In his words: “Sport is the most precious commodity we have to hand on to the next generation.”

Sadly, nowadays the young athletes who gain most from his fund will never know him. They will never know how much he lobbied the Government to introduce a National Lottery because he had seen the benefits gained in other countries. Nor do they know how hard he fought against racism in sport and for the sporting boycott of South Africa. If only our cricketers had listened to his arguments then, more sympathy would have been shown by the African nations for the team's recent difficulties over Zimbabwe.

His fight against drugs in sport started in 1964 when he returned from the Games in Tokyo. He tried to warn the authorities then, but was told to “stop dabbling in pseudo-scientific mumbo-jumbo”. With the introduction of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) there is hope that at last this scourge in sport is being brought under control and Ron would have been applauding the downfall of the producers of performance-enhancing drugs and the coaches who distribute them.

What would have pleased him more than anything else is the London bid for the Olympic Games in 2012. This prospect excites me too. With the proposed regeneration of the area around Stratford it means that no future Olympian will have to improvise with home-made hurdles in the school corridor to learn the event, as happened in my case. Mind you, it was 1947 and West Ham Secondary School – which Ron and I attended – had been bombed and battered. However, there was no limit to the school's support and encouragement towards excellence.

That same support and encouragement towards excellence will have been given by the Ron Pickering Memorial Fund to many of the athletes who will be competing for Britain at the 2012 Olympic Games. Those athletes will already be relishing the possibility of performing in front of a home crowd.

Every four years we ask young people worldwide – in the words of Baron De Coubertin – to “push back the boundaries of the hitherto unobtainable”. They have never let us down. Let's make sure that we do everything possible to support London's Olympic bid so that our talented British youngsters cannot accuse us of letting them down by missing this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Jean Pickering

Jean's contact details are: Jean Pickering, 11 Wendover Drive, Welwyn, Herts, AL6 9LT. Tel: 01438 715814. Fax: 01438 714250. email: jean@rpmf.org.uk

Trustees: Jean Pickering, Shaun Pickering, David Coleman, Lynn Davies, John Lister, Tom McNab, Stuart Storey and David Vine.

Fund Administrator: Norman Urmston, 89 Woodstock Road, Broxbourne, Herts EN10 7PD. Tel: 01992 467712. Special thank you to Mark Shearman for his help in producing this newsletter.

Funding dreams

The London Marathon has played a major role in the success of the Ron Pickering Memorial Fund.

The guaranteed entries we are allowed boost the fund by £30,000 each year and we pledge that every penny raised is given out in grants to young athletes.

In January another 350 received their grants for 2005 and the £60,000 given out included every penny of the record £33,667 raised by our Run for Ron team in 2004, even though the team was the smallest in number through injury.

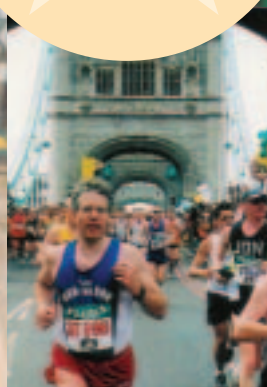
For the 25th anniversary of the event the Run for Ron team of 40 runners promises to be the most prestigious ever to represent our charity. The Rt Hon Richard Caborn MP, Minister for Sport, joined by Dr Dorian Dugmore (his personal trainer), Uriah Rennie (football referee) and Garry Richardson of the BBC, will be running for our charity.

The Pickering name has been associated with the London Marathon since its inception in 1981. For the first 10 years Ron Pickering was part of the BBC's commentary team covering the event. Ron's pride as a Londoner at such a sporting spectacle taking place along the streets so familiar to him gave his commentaries a special meaning and Chris Brasher referred to him as "the voice of the London Marathon". It was an exhausting but enormously rewarding weekend every year for him.

In honour of Ron's contribution to the London Marathon, his widow Jean – a former Olympic athlete herself – was asked to be the official starter of the 1991 event which incorporated the IAAF World Championship. One of her most treasured



"I am very grateful for your confidence in me. I promise I will try my hardest to do your husband's memory justice and make you proud of me. Thank you"
Elliott Price



TOP LEFT: Meirion Morris in 2004. TOP CENTRE: Jim Brown on Tower Bridge in 2001. TOP RIGHT: Jon Ridgeon (fourth from right, front row) in 2000. ABOVE RIGHT: Stuart Storey (centre) in 2003. ABOVE: Lesley Cropper in 1995.

possessions is the flag used on that occasion.

Every year since then, the Ron Pickering Memorial Fund logo has been carried around the course – sometimes by athletes like Jonathan Ridgeon and Jamie Quarry, and by family friends or their children, but mostly by strangers who became friends and supporters of the charity. We salute them for their amazing achievements and thank them on behalf of the hundreds of youngsters who have benefited through their efforts.

Last port of call for sponsorship

The fund seems to be the last port of call for many groups who have exhausted all the official channels to find sponsorship for various projects.



The BUSA teams for the 2004 World Student Cross Country Champions in Turin.

For the past two years, the British Universities Sports Association (BUSA) cross country team have struggled to find sufficient funds to send a full men's and women's team to the World Student Cross Country Championships. They have returned with a medal from every championship so far and, with the help of Ron's fund over the past two years, continued to do so.

In 2004 in Turin, there were doubts the women's team would go at all until the fund came to the rescue once again. In the event, Louise Damen (2nd) led the women's team to victory with support from Kate Reed (4th), Collette Fagan, Faye Fullerton and Freya Murray. The men's team finished in seventh position.

Thanks to...
Cliff Morgan, CBE,
for his interview
with Ron for the
Time and Place
series made for
BBC Wales in
1989. It has been
screened at so
many functions,
borrowed by
marathon runners
who wanted to
know more about
the man they were
representing, and
is treasured by the
Pickering family as
a remarkable
record of Ron's life
and philosophy of
sport. The affec-
tion between the
two men and their
shared passion for
sport is there for
all to see and
remarkably stands
the test of time.

Enfield & Haringey Athletic Club

has been struggling to be self-sufficient ever since the clubhouse was destroyed by vandals a few years ago. A replacement was denied because of the club's prospective move to the redeveloped Picketts Lock Centre.

When the club's junior men's team were invited to take part in the European Club 'B' Final competition in Copenhagen in 2002, they approached trustees of Ron's fund for help for the first time. The experience the youngsters gained from this international competition helped them to become the best junior men's team in Great Britain the following year, and with help from UK Athletics and a small top-up from the fund, they competed in Slovenia where they finished 6th out of eight countries.

This placing saved GB from relegation and Enfield & Haringey AC qualified to return in 2004 at Ostrava, Czech Republic. This time, they gained third place in the competition, only one point short of second position. When there was no contribution available from UKA on this occasion, the club was again given a grant from the Ron Pickering Memorial Fund towards travelling costs.

Knees-y does it!

The costs of an operation on the knee of a talented young hammer thrower were covered by the fund. His knee was damaged in a freak accident while training and needed urgent surgery. He was too young to qualify for UKA's excellent medical scheme but with UKA guidance, the fund was able to help him make a quick recovery.

Pole position

One of our best young talents in the pole vault event needed to join Steve Rippon's elite group at UKA's Centre of Excellence at Loughborough University. The fund helped him relocate there to make full use of the facilities at the new indoor centre. The benefit of the move was realised only four months later with a new personal best indoors.