Document: 019_RF_Oct09.ps;Page: 1;Format:(210.00 x 297.00 mm);Plate: Composite;Date: Aug 07, 2009 12:44:27

BEATING THE 'TRIAD'

The 'Female Athlete Triad' is an often misunderstood and 'secret' condition, which can have a devastating and long-term effect on the health of female runners.

As the name suggests, the 'Triad' is actually a group of three interrelated conditions of disordered eating/eating disorders, menstrual dysfunction and osteoporosis. Affecting women and girls of all ages and athletic ability it can cause serious health consequences, stress fractures and infertility.

One person passionate about raising awareness of the condition is Britain's most successful female middle distance runner ever, Dame Kelly Holmes, recently backing the 'Supporting Female Athletes Conference' in partnership with England Athletics and her own 'On Camp with Kelly' mentoring initiative sponsored by Aviva. The aim was to help coaches recognise, prevent and treat the 'Female Athlete Triad', a condition which is widespread in athletics, both at elite and grass roots level, far more than is currently recognised.

"I have been surrounded by women with the Triad throughout my career' commented Dame Kelly 'both when I was competing and now through my mentoring of young female athletes. It is a condition which is extremely serious yet worryingly widespread. Many coaches just aren't equipped with the knowledge or skills to deal with athletes displaying symptoms, so my goal with the conference was to raise awareness and give them the support they need to support their athletes."

The conference was made up of a panel of world-class experts including Professor Anne Loucks, consultant gynaecologist Mr Michael Dooley, leading British coach and marathon runner, Bud Buldaro and Dame Kelly Holmes herself. Presenting of real life case studies such as Georgie Clark, the former junior Olympic hopeful, now plagued with injury due to low bone mass, was key to the conference, helping coaches really understand the serious health implications of the Triad.

"It's really important for coaches to be fully aware of the Female Athlete Triad," said Bill Foster, a UKA coach to two 'On Camp with Kelly' athletes 'If female athletes want to have a long successful career, it is vital that they have the correct diet and energy intake to remain healthy and be able to cope with hard training. The conference really increased our understanding and awareness of the issues involved."

Dame Kelly says she hopes that coaches will take the points on board and go on to learn more about what is often an embarrassing and sensitive subject. "It's often a misconception that you'll run faster if you're thin, but women and especially young girls, are under so much pressure to perform, they think they'll go better if they lose weight and this becomes a vicious circle."

www.b-eat.co.uk is the UK resource for eating disorders and provides support and advice for sufferers and their families. For more information about the conference or 'On Camp with Kelly' see **www.oncampwithkelly.co.uk**

WEIRD AND WONDERFUL

The UK's first 'Salt Cave' has opened in Wandsworth, London. The caves claim to provide therapeutic treatment for many conditions including asthma, pneumonia, hay fever, bronchitis, sinusitis, cystic fibrosis, eczema and psoriasis. It might sound bizarre, but natural salt caves have been widely used across Central and Eastern Europe for around 200 years to improve health and fight respiratory conditions and allergies.

Salt therapy is medically proven and claims to have an extraordinarily high recovery rate from respiratory problems in particular. The owners also claim that it can dramatically enhance sports performance by improving lung function and increasing lung capacity and stamina. The 'cave' can also help runners especially with asthma and allergies... or even would-be athletes who are being hindered by their conditions. At a time when asthma and allergy levels - as well as stress -are at an all-time high, the 'Salt Cave' could well be the place to go.

Located in a 100-year-old former church in the heart of Wandsworth, the 'Salt Cave' is relaxing with calming music, soothing lighting and comfortable chairs, bringing the benefits of Salt Therapy to one of Europe's most polluted and stressed-out cities, where one in three people have an allergy and one out of 13 have asthma.

Runner James Vizor from London tried it out: "I must admit I was rather sceptical about how much sitting in a room full of salt would he,"' he says. "Twelve sessions later and I am amazed at how much it has aided me in my running. I now find that I can push myself harder and for longer. I have felt a huge improvement in my running and I am seeing this in my times and recently ran a 10k PB. Prior to the treatment I lived on Piriton for my hayfever. I have not had a pill for the last couple of weeks and my symptoms have almost gone completely'.

The therapeutic 'Salt Cave' recreates a natural salt cave micro-climate, the treatment is natural and 100% drug free.

■ for more details, visit **www.saltcave.co.uk**