

News in brief

Staccato reports from the cultural typeface

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Water safety, West African style

Local volunteers living in Cameroon, West Africa have learned essential lifesaving and water skills following to a joint initiative by the Swimming Teachers' Association (STA) and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI). Following an invitation from RLSS Cameroon, the two British charities sent a three-person team to deliver a six-day Swim Survive course that covered basic first aid, resuscitation, safety in open water environments and the technical knowledge and practical skills required to teach basic swimming and survival skills. According to the International Lifesaving Federation, some 1.2 million lives are lost to drowning each year, making it a bigger killer than malaria, and the third leading cause of unintentional injury and death globally behind motor vehicle collisions and falls. World Health Organisation figures show low- and middle-income countries accounting for 96% of unintentional drowning deaths, with drowning death rates highest in the WHO African Region, where rates are more than eight times higher than in Australia or the USA.

Women boxing clever with ABAE

The Amateur Boxing Association of England has launched a new competition for senior female boxers as part of its commitment to investing in women's boxing and providing increased competitive opportunities for women and girls. The Women's Box Series is for senior boxers and is split into three categories: boxers with fewer than 2 bouts, boxers with 3 to 10 bouts, and boxers with more than 10 bouts. Tom Gilbert, national programmes and participation manager, explained: "One of the biggest challenges to women and girls who want to compete in England is getting a chance to get in the ring and box." Whether post-bout, press conference punch-ups were to be part of the programme was not discussed.

But let themselves down in the wardrobe department

Fans of an equitable approach to sport will be pleased to hear that women boxers will have the choice of wearing skirts or shorts in the ring at this year's London Olympics. A spokesman for the International Amateur Boxing Association (AIBA) said their executive committee would vote on a proposed solution to "what has become a controversial issue". AIBA president Ching-Kuo Wu of Taiwan told a world conference on women and sport in Los Angeles that female fighters would not be forced to wear skirts.

Scottish hockey gets cash for coaches

A new sponsorship deal for Scottish Hockey has been hailed as "a model" by SportsScotland chief executive Stewart Harris, who identified the "professionalisation of coaches" as essential. The governing body's president Lee Cousins explained that the "substantial" three-year investment from Aberdeen Asset Management would allow the employment of between three and six performance coaches whose work would have substantial "trickle-down" effects into the grassroots

OPEN WATER SAFETY SCHEME LAUNCHED: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, home of the 2012 Olympic canoe slalom course, has teamed up with commercial safety company Right Directions to develop an open water safety management system to cover the 26 miles along the banks of the River Lee from Ware in Hertfordshire, through Essex, to the Thames at East India Dock Basin which it manages. According to Sam Neal from Right Directions, the idea is to "encourage the use of these types of areas for public enjoyment, and so we need to help organisations ensure the necessary safety measures are in place." The new programme applies to open water such as lakes, rivers, reservoirs and canals, but can also be transferable to general open and green spaces too.

game.

Positive OFSTED report for the IoS

The Institute of Swimming, the training arm of the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA), has received a positive report from OFSTED on the technical coaching provided to apprentices. The report rated the overall effectiveness of provision at Grade 2, which equates to 'good' on a scale that runs from Grade 1 (outstanding) through to Grade 4 (inadequate). The report also details of the Institute's work to date, revealing that since 2012 the IoS has engaged 18 leading industry employers to offer a range of apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in active leisure, learning and well-being. One hundred apprentices are currently on programmes and a total of 369 apprentices enrolled during the 2010/11 period. Colin Huffen, IoS assistant head, welcomed the inspection report: "It's very pleasing, because it confirms we are doing all the right things and highlights just some of the areas in which we are particularly effective. For example, we have high success rates in making sure that our learners do actually achieve the qualifications they are studying for and complete their learning within the planned time... It's also reassuring to know that leisure employers have said that the apprenticeship programmes we provide meet their growing business needs."

More information about employing an apprentice through the IoS is available from a special guide for employers at www.swimming.org
The OFSTED inspection report can be found via www.ofsted.gov.uk

Amaechi backs integrated basketball

Former NBA star and Special Olympics Great Britain ambassador John Amaechi has leant his weight to the launch of the Special Olympics Great Britain Unified Sports programme, which offers people with learning disabilities the opportunity to play sport in the same team as those without learning disabilities for sports training and competition. The programme will see a series of coaching and competition sessions covering a variety of sports, delivered through sport centres, clubs and communities all over the country. Amaechi visited Tower Hamlets College in East London to take part in the first Unified Basketball session of this initiative.

Bureaucrats us? Fie on you.

Sport England have responded to the release of the Department for Media, Culture and Sport Youth Strategy in January 2012 which highlighted the under use of sports facilities on school sites by rejigging its website. At the moment 76% of sports halls, 73% of artificial grass pitches, 29% of swimming pools and 52% of grass pitches in England are located within schools, colleges and other educational institutions; and all too often this means that a lot of the country's sports facilities sit redundant in the evening and at weekends, while sports clubs and teams are desperately crying out for somewhere to play. The nation's sports development agency has reacted with aplomb by moving an advice note "from the facilities area" of its website to the support and advice area.

Torch relay dress rehearsal planned

Political activists keen to warm up for the "greatest protest opportunity on earth" will be able to practice on what LOCOG are calling a "full dress rehearsal to test the operations around the Olympic Torch Relay on 20 April." The rehearsal will take place on the Leicester to Peterborough stretch of the route, an 80-mile journey chosen to represent a typical day in the life of the extended corporate marketing opportunity. The objective is to test the convoy, crew and communications procedures in advance of the 70-day relay so protest groups would be helping if they took the opportunity to glean publicity for their cause.

Contact *The Leisure Review* for details.