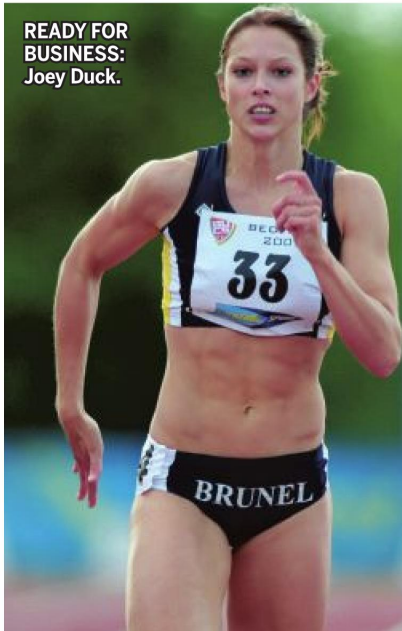


AVIVA EUROPEAN TRIALS AND UK CHAMPIONSHIPS PREVIEW

MK athletes set to shine on UK stage

READY FOR BUSINESS:
Joey Duck.



NINE athletes from Milton Keynes are set for the biggest weekend of the season so far as they take part in the European Trials and UK Championships in Birmingham.

Craig Pickering (100/200m), Mervyn Luckwell (javelin), Hannah Douglas (400m hurdles), Chris Clarke (400m), Rachel Gibbens (pole vault), Greg Rutherford (long jump), Chloe Whalley (100m hurdles) and Joey Duck (200m) will all be hoping for a good show in the Trials for the chance to represent Great Britain in the European Championships in Barcelona next month. Marcin Fudalej (10,000m), who lives in Milton Keynes, will also be competing for Poland.

With the Olympic Games in London just two years away, the city athletes need to take advantage of every major championship event between now and 2012 to stake their

claim for a place in the GB side to perform in front of a home crowd on the biggest stage of them all. The Trials will be a hard-fought event with the top athletes from around the country competing for places on the plane to Spain in July.

The city athletes will be looking to improve on their performances from last year's UK Championships, where Pickering was disqualified from the semi-final of the 60m event and Chris Clarke qualified for the 200m final but did not finish the race. The competition was a success for Gibbens though as she finished 9th in the pole vault.

Meanwhile British number one long jumper Rutherford, will be looking to recreate his fantastic performance in the last European Championships in Gothenburg in 2006, where as a 19-year-old, he jumped 8.13m to land the silver medal.

JR shines at Kids Champs

EIGHT-year-old JR Ellis has got the potential to become a golfing superstar according to his coach David Armor.

Abbey Hill Golf Club's teaching professional has been coaching the young star for the past year and says he has seen all the hallmarks of a future Tour golfer.

The Loughton Middle School pupil took up golf just two years ago and has been a member at Abbey Hill since he was six, fast becoming a sensation.

Young JR, whose favourite golfer is Ian Poulter, recently joined the world's best young golfers in East Lothian, Scotland, for the prestigious US Kids European Championship, which saw more than 400 players from 30 nations compete in Europe's premier junior tournament.

Competing in the U8 category, JR finished 16th out of 30 competitors, leaving his coach pleased with his prodigy's accomplishments.

"It was great to see how JR compared to the other kids," said Armor, who caddied for him. "He hasn't played much tournament golf at all, so I was very pleased with his result. Unfortunately JR didn't putt as well as he can and that was the only difference between him and the winner."

The top five in each age group – from U7 through to U18 – qualified to travel across the Atlantic to the United States to play in the US Kids World Championship at the famous Pinehurst

Resort.

Despite finishing outside the qualifying berths JR impressed organisers so much he received an invite to compete in the World Championships, but is so far undecided on whether take up the offer or concentrate on gaining some tournament experience on home soil.

JR's mother Jo Ellis, said: "We are not totally ruling out the trip to America but we would like to concentrate on as many UK tournaments as we can, so JR is better prepared and ready for America next year."

"JR's inspiration is to win and he loves a challenge. David has really helped to develop him and move him forward. They have a really good relationship and David knows exactly what makes JR tick and knows when JR needs to work on something and some how he is able to do it in a way that makes it really challenging for him."

"We are obviously extremely proud of JR, he has a natural talent and pure determination to be the best. Even at such a young age he believes he will one day be up there and is convinced he will win the Masters and own a Green Jacket."

That may be a bold statement for one so young, but Armor has big hopes for his young charge. He added: "JR has great potential, and has aspirations to become a tour player. To have that hunger and desire at eight is amazing."



SOCCER SHORTS

>> Bletchley Town manager Nick Crossley is on the lookout for new players to join him in his bid for SML Division Two glory next season. Give him a call on 07917 572917 if you've got what it takes.

>> Newport Pagnell Town U11s Lions need a couple of experienced players to strengthen their existing squad in preparation for next season. If you are in school year 6 moving to year 7 in September, then team manager Neil would like to hear from you on 07939 021266 or neil-king@sky.com

>> MK Athletic need players to add to their squad ready to play in U14 Division One of the MK and Border Counties League next season. If you are interested in joining or want further information, then Graham would like a call on MK 643639 or an email at graham.baugh@btconnect.com

>> Newton Longville Blues U13s are looking for a goalkeeper and one or two strong outfield players for the coming season in Division One. They train on Wednesday evenings, so if that suits you call Trevor on 07899 908003.

>> Bletchley Shamrocks are looking for new U14 players of all abilities to join their ranks. If you're up for it call Mark on 07967 979466 or email him at bletchleyshamrocksfsc@hotmail.co.uk U6 and U7 players are also wanted - same details apply.

>> MK Wanderers Ladies are looking for a new manager and coach to run the side next season. The squad play in the Southern Region Premier Division and the club are seeking an experienced coaching duo who can take the team on at that level. They play at Kents Hill on Sundays and train on Thursdays. Wanderers are also looking for a manager for their U7s team for the new season. Anyone interested in these positions should call chairman Aitch White on MK 506402.

>> Southside United are expanding and want year 3 players to join. Call Jim on 07831 331684 if you want to play for a club in the south east of the city. Southside U11s are also looking for new players to join for the step up to U12s next season. Contact Brendan on 07725 183398 for details.

Send your Soccer Shorts to mkSPORT@jpress.co.uk

Award for grass roots heroine



DEANSHANGER Colts have not only enjoyed success on the pitch this season, but also off it as well, with their secretary and treasurer, Vicki Gull, winning the Northamptonshire FA Volunteer of the Year award.

She started out with the Colts as a supportive mum, before stepping up to take the treasurer role four years ago.

Since then, not only does she do a fantastic job with the finances, she has taken responsibility of purchasing all the new kits, as well as negotiating a sponsorship deal for training tops for the whole club. She also organises the club's presentation evenings and takes care of all the little problems that crop up at the club.

Fundraising is also on her radar as she organises and runs bingo

evenings and quizzes. When the club secretary left, Vicki stepped up to fill the void, and now carries out all the secretarial duties as well.

And as if all that wasn't enough, Vicki has even taken over as manager of the club's U13s team for their first ever season playing in 11-a-side football.

Her achievements mirror what has been a great season on the pitch for Deanshanger, with their U11s and U10s side both winning their divisions in the MKDJ7s and next season the club will offer football to kids from under six up to under 14 level.

Vicki is pictured above receiving her award from Northants FA Chief Executive, David Payne. Inset, the club's U10 team celebrating their league winning success.

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