

Shoes and kit for Africa

Ready to ditch your sports gear? Don't bin it. Send it to Africa instead

BELIEVE it or not, African athletes do not always run barefoot out of choice. It is often because they cannot afford decent footwear.

In countries like the UK, it would be unheard of for a child to walk or jog to school without shoes, but in many African nations it is commonplace due to poverty.

There are ways, however, to help and reduce the number of people who are without shoes and clothing. Because if you are an athlete who is just about to throw away some gear, then send it to Africa instead.

You may think your shoes have had a life; but it is quite likely they will find another owner who will get quite a bit of extra mileage out of them – quite literally.

The Shoe 4 Africa scheme is probably the best known when it comes to getting athletics footwear out to where it is badly needed and massively appreciated. It started back in 1995 when it was founded by distance runner and author Toby Tanser and since then has broadened its range of initiatives over the years to include sponsored races, training camps, AIDS testing, and athletics scholarships, while continuing its core programme of collecting and distributing donated shoes.

It has produced some amazing success stories over the years too. In 2001, for example, shoes were given to Fabiano Joseph and Francis Robert Ali and the following year the latter won the Commonwealth marathon title in the Commonwealth marathon title while Joseph won the IAAF World Half-marathon gold in 2005.



Supporters of the scheme, meanwhile, include Britain's Steve Cram, Norwegian marathon legend Grete Waitz, Kenya's reigning world cross-country champion Lornah Kiplagat, Kenyan distance legend Moses Kiptanui, plus the Hollywood actresses Natalie Portman and Cameron Diaz.

Shoe 4 Africa is not the only scheme like this, though. British middle-distance runners Becky Lyne and Phil Tulba have set up a 'Kit for Sudan' appeal – and so far it has enjoyed great success.

Lyne and Tulba, who first had the idea while students together at Loughborough University in 2005, have



now accumulated 96kg of second-hand sports apparel, which has been sent out to underprivileged Sudanese children.

Tulba, who is of half-Sudanese descent, said: "Becky and I are delighted with the scale of the response from British athletes."

And following a Christmas trip to Sudan, Tulba discovered one of the recipients had transformed into a world-class junior 800m runner, highlighting how their much-needed support is making a difference.

■ **FOR information see www.shoe4africa.org and www.beckyltne.com/navigation/kit.html**

Webwise

Don't bother surfing around. *AW* will point your mouse in the right direction

<http://marayamauchi.blogzine.jp/english/>

MARA YAMAUCHI is Britain's No.2 female marathon runner of all time and last week she improved her CV further by winning the Osaka Ladies' Marathon in a PB of 2:25:10.

This kind of form has merely increased her belief she can win a medal at the Beijing Olympics. And in addition to British interest, Yamauchi has created considerable attention in Japan as she is married to a Japanese citizen and lives and trains there.

Despite improving her PB by only three seconds in Osaka, her victory was a major achievement – catapulting her onto the front cover of *AW* last week – as it came in one of three of the Japanese Olympic trial races.

Marathon running might be popular in the UK, but in Japan it is literally a national sport, with massive TV audiences whenever there is a major championship or Japanese interest in a major 26-miler.

Consequently, Yamauchi's fame increased significantly overnight. The following day after her marathon win, her website registered an amazing 30,000 hits. "It usually gets about five hits a day," she said.

So now, the modest and quietly spoken Yamauchi has found that the images, stories and opinions on her website are in the spotlight. The site is worth a visit too.

In addition to the usual profile material, there are some excellent photographs of Yamauchi training in Japan, France and Switzerland. There are also some interesting and detailed blogs, tackling all kinds of topics from her Osaka victory to Japanese cookery.



■ **NEXT WEEK: advice for pole vaulters**

Trekking for charity

The Aged are looking for participants for two of their overseas trek events taking place in October 2008.

Trek China and Trek India will offer trekkers the challenge of a lifetime, while visitors to India will be given the unique opportunity to visit a project in the slums of bustling Delhi.

For further information, contact the Help The Aged events team by emailing events@helptheaged.org.uk, visiting www.helptheaged.org.uk/events, or calling 0207-239 1922.



PRODUCT NEWS

When big shoe companies re-release classic shoes, it is always a popular move

NEW BALANCE has delighted its fans by relaunching the legendary 991 model. The shoe, which is made in the UK, was one of the most enduring running shoes during the Eighties and Nineties.

Hand-crafted in Flimby, Cumbria, with premium, full-grain Italian leather complemented with a stylish suede and mesh combination, it is not hard to see why the shoe was so popular.

Jonathan Ram from New Balance said: "New Balance have a history of craftsmanship that dates back over 100 years and the

company's enterprise and innovation has been responsible for landmark developments as the sport made its technological advances.

"We have been hand-building shoes in the UK for over 25 years and those techniques we have developed and now employ has enabled us to maintain the tradition of classic quality. Now, the shoes that were state-of-the-art masterpieces at the time they were first engineered, have been exquisitely refashioned and relaunched as timeless examples of models that broke the mould then to become the original legendary shoes of today. The 991 is a fine example of that pedigree."

New Balance
991

