

## **BAC Conference 2004**

Friday the 10th December saw the staging of the first annual conference of the British Athletes Commission (BAC) since it was formed as a limited company in January 2004. It was an opportunity to showcase to the assembled athletes what the BAC can and will be doing for Great Britain's elite athletes over the coming years.

The day began with a presentation to the athletes of how the BAC will operate and its aims and objectives. The main thrust of the presentation was how the Commission aims to improve communications at all levels within elite sport; finding potential areas of conflict for athletes, and resolving them before they become a problem.

For this to happen, effective athlete representation is required within all sports. This is an area that the commission will focus on over the next few months, showing athlete representatives how to be more effective and giving them the support they need to fulfil their responsibilities.

It was also explained how important it is for athletes to be as professional in their dealings with Performance Directors (PDs) and National Governing Bodies (NGBs) as they are about their training, to ensure that their voice is listened to and acted upon within their sport. The commission will be working closely with athletes and their representatives to make this happen.

The second part of the morning was a presentation by Peter Keen on UK Sports' investment strategy and what it means for athletes. This was well received and provoked an intense debate on certain aspects of the strategy. The commission will be in dialogue with athletes and UK Sport as this is taken forward to ensure that athlete's views are taken on board. Sue Campbell then closed the morning session urging athletes to get more involved with initiatives such as changing lives and sporting champions which take athletes into schools to encourage and inspire younger children.

The afternoon consisted of two workshops. The first by Frank Furness, an international speaker and trainer who specialises in marketing, Frank showed the athletes how everyone has a story that is worth selling and outlined how to improve their speaking skills with examples of others who have done the same.

The second session was from Michael Caulfield the former chief executive of the jockeys association, Michael outlined how the jockeys as a group of athletes faced very similar problems to those faced by elite athletes today and showed how the jockeys association overcame those problems and gave the jockeys a strong and powerful voice within their sport. He also spent some time using feedback from the athletes to get a feel for what they would like to see the Commission focussing its efforts on.

The day finished with the AGM and athletes council, which was an opportunity for the athletes to ask questions and give the executive feedback as to the areas that they should concentrate on, as well as some issues that the athletes would like the commission to raise and take forward with the national sport organisations