

Women catch fitness bug

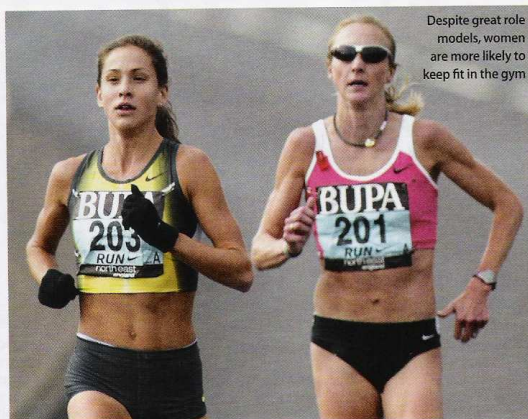
But the results of a Nike questionnaire show that running isn't as popular as you might think

A MAJOR study by Nike involving 10,000 European women has shown that in addition to the physical benefits, playing sports improves your self-esteem, perception of success, pride and sex drive.

But the bad news for athletics is that running only just scraped onto the list of favourite sports. Instead, women prefer to get fit in modern fitness, aerobics and gym classes.

A total of 10,000 women aged 16-30 across nine European nations were surveyed. German women proved the sportiest, with Turkish the least. In the UK, it was found that less women in this age group play sport (45 per cent) than those who do not (55 per cent).

But it is the position of running that will worry fans of traditional sports. The five favourite sporting activities among the UK women surveyed were: aerobics/gym classes (51 per cent), swimming (45 per cent), fitness (36 per cent), dance (24



Despite great role models, women are more likely to keep fit in the gym

per cent) and running 23 per cent). And across the nine European nations, running did not make the top five. Instead, the most popular sports were: aerobics/gym (38 per cent), fitness (35 per cent), swimming (31 per cent), cycling (23 per cent), dance (22 per cent).

More positively and generally, though, the survey showed that sporting participants show significantly higher self-image than non-sporting participants.

And 73 per cent of young women

involved said sport made them a stronger person emotionally.

"What the participating young women like most about sports is getting physical results and the proud feeling afterwards," says Bridget Eliot from Nike UK. "Their favourite outcome is that they feel energised and the main reason to play sports is their general health."

Athletes Kelly Sotherton, Nicola Sanders and Jemma Simpson were among those last week promoting a

campaign called "Nike Here I Am" which is aimed at getting more women to compete in sport.

Speaking of the benefits of sport for women, Sotherton said females were unnecessarily concerned about their bodies appearing more masculine through exercise.

"It's not about being muscularly strong, it's about feeling good about yourself, being more confident and having high self-esteem and it can help in other parts of your life too," she said.

Simpson added: "I think a lot of women athletes are very confident about their bodies and are more driven to train. And if you're confident, you are happier and less likely to suffer from stress."

The nine countries where the survey was conducted were: Netherlands, Spain, Italy, France, United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden, Turkey and Russia.

■ SEE www.nikehereiam.com for more information

Get free footwear analysis

ATHLETES who are worried about their biomechanics are invited to take advantage of a free 10-minute 'walk-in' foot and footwear analysis service from Profeet.

The UK's leading customised insole and sports footwear specialist, the London-based company will assess your footwear and foot characteristics such as: function, motion, foot position, shape and foot type, as well as arch height and whether you are a forefoot or heel striker.

The free analysis offer is available at Profeet's stores in Fulham and Clapham South and has been launched to coincide with the countdown to the Flora London Marathon in April.

Simon Bright from Profeet says: "It is very important to bear in mind that 70 per cent of runners are in the wrong footwear and a high majority of these



running shoes are directly causing an injury. Our technicians will quickly diagnose any foot or shoe related problems that may be occurring, to make sure the correct footwear is being worn and, in doing so, significantly reduce the risk of any injuries."

He continues: "Sadly we see many people that are simply in the wrong size or type of shoe for their running style. Ill-

fitting shoes are the largest contributing factor in running-related injuries. We are obviously keen that people train in the correct footwear and our new free service will help customers minimise the risk of injury, with no cost to them at all so hopefully they will have added comfort for their sport or everyday needs."

■ SEE www.profeet.co.uk

Webwise

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

ONE of the legacy effects of the 2001 IAAF World Championships in Edmonton was the opening of the Canadian Athletics Coaching Centre.

It is based at the University of Alberta, but the information it generates is available for everybody in cyberspace.

The authors of various articles have been vetted, which means the material is trustworthy material. It is pretty comprehensive too.

Dip into the section on biomechanics, for example, and there are different sections for sprinting, jumping, throwing and endurance events.

There are also sections on psychology, coach development, recovery techniques, youth development, planning and periodisation.

Canadian athletics might not lead the world right now. But this coaching website is definitely worth taking a look at, especially if you are a developing coach or a self-coached athlete.

