

**Athletics**

## Sprinter Helen is set to take on the world

● Former Olympic champion Linford Christie backing Binfield runner for big time



Helen Pryer in action on the track.

BY JOHN SHIRLEY

BINFIELD sprinter Helen Pryer is seeking sponsorship to help her complete a deserved move to international competition abroad after a breakthrough season of record-breaking 200m performances.

Pryer, whose recent results inspired Linford Christie to offer his mentorship, claimed the biggest accolade in the UK domestic athletics league recently winning the season-ending 2008 UK Golden Challenge award – given to the most consistently successful British-League based athlete of the year.

The award follows the sprinter's most successful domestic season to date.

Her success includes national 200m titles in the UK Challenge and Inter-County Championships, a championship record at the Surrey County Championships and a scorching personal-best time of 23.29s in the BAL Cup semi-final in July, where she took more than a quarter of a second from the long-standing Windsor Stadium 200m record.

Pryer's performance has recently earned her a long-overdue selection by UK Athletics bosses to perform abroad next season against world-class opposition.

However, the sprinter, who subsidises her training through work as a fitness instructor, has been told by athletics chiefs that she will need to fund herself for international competition despite posting a strong performance against established full-time sponsored British internationals in the televised 200m final of the Olympic Trials in July.

Her lack of financial support was recognised by the national UK magazine *Athletics Weekly* who described her as "one of the most underrated sprinters around" – she is the only sub-24 second senior elite 200m sprinter who was not given the opportunity to compete abroad in 2008.

Pryer is seeking sponsorship to fund the considerable training expenses needed for overseas competition, which she believes will give her an excellent chance of reaching the World Championships next year.



Linford Christie believes Pryer has "tremendous potential."

Pryer, who remains undefeated in the UK league circuit 200m this season, has shown indomitable courage to progress rapidly through the sprinting ranks in the past two years after the personal tragedy of losing her mother to cancer.

Her progress since has been remarkable and she was acknowledged by UK Athletics as one of the 'most-improved' track and field athletes at the end of last year.

Pryer attributes her progression to her newly appointed support team. "Team Pryer" includes Linford Christie and sprint coach Tony Seville, corrective exercise consultant and osteopath Matthew Wallden from the international CHEK institute, life performance-coach Gill Harvey-Bush, Binfield physical trainer John Shirley from Kinetic Personal Training and medical director Jim Adkins and staff from the Berkshire Physiotherapy Centre.

She said: "My progress over the past two seasons has been fantastic and it's thanks to the hard work I've put in with my new team of specialists."

"But now I need to perform regularly abroad against the world-elite as I'm just a fraction of a second away from Olympic and World Championship qualification standards; the international experience I would gain through sponsorship funding would help me to step-up beyond that level."

"It's exciting as successfully representing my country in the World Championships next year and beyond would be my ultimate dream," she said.

Pryer, who at 29 appears to be a late-developer, is adamant her best is still to come: "We're all absolutely certain I'll be faster again next season with this opportunity as I'm gaining strength and speed at a faster rate than I ever have – just look at Linford for someone who peaked well beyond my age – he won Olympic gold at 32 and that will be near 2012 for me!"

Christie, Pryer's mentor and sprint coach agrees: "Helen has tremendous potential; it's been really exciting to see her progression in the past couple of years and there is clearly so much more to come as her recent training progress has been phenomenal with me."

"With the right backing, I'm confident it is just a matter of time until Helen firmly establishes herself among the world's best sprinters."

To sponsor Helen, contact her through her webpage at [www.helenpryer.com](http://www.helenpryer.com) or email her at [helen@helenpryer.com](mailto:helen@helenpryer.com).