

The Dame Kelly Holmes Backing Talent in Kent Event **Sunday 21st November, 2010 – report by the Southalls**

For a number of years Kieran, Frazer and Merrick Southall have all held FANS cards. These are cards which are issued to athletes who have ranked 1st to 10th at a National Competition and in their case this was for **Alpine Ski Racing**. However, it was a complete surprise when they received their invite to the **Dame Kelly Holmes** event called **Backing Talent in Kent**. We weren't really sure what to expect because to be honest it seemed too good to be true. However, we certainly didn't want to miss out on the opportunity to meet Dame Kelly – so we decided to attend as a family.

When we arrived we saw lots of young athletes; many with 'England Squad' shirts. I think in total there were around 100 young talented athletes. The first group we saw appeared to be runners but it wasn't long before we started spotting familiar faces from the ski circuit – which was great to see. We were shown in and the athletes were quickly sorted and taken off whilst parents and coaches were taken into a separate room and offered refreshments before being brought back together for the formal introduction.

The line up of World Class performers who would be working with our children was more than a little humbling. Kieran was put in group 4 and his team leader was Sarah Winckless (Olympic Medallist, Rowing). Both Frazer and Merrick were put in group 1 and their team leader was Tyrone Swaray (International, Athletics). Others who would be working with these groups included Lee-Ann Sharp – Research Fellow at Birmingham University (tutor – Sports Psychology – Mental Skills), Cathy Wood – International Ironman Triathlon (tutor – Communication and Media) and Anna Hemmings 6 x World Champion, Kayaking (tutor – Physical Well Being and Nutrition). In addition to this and perhaps the pinnacle of their experience was a circuit training workshop where Dame Kelly herself (together with a team of World Class Performers) but the children through their paces. I don't think I have ever seen my children look so exhausted!

However, we soon learnt that there was a full programme of bespoke workshops – not just for the athletes but for coaches and parents too – although thankfully we wouldn't be asked to undertake Dame Kelly's demanding circuit training because I am pretty sure I would have needed medical attention. The parents' workshops included Parent Skills Workshops: The Power of Positive Beliefs, Athlete Nutrition and Working with Physios. I can't believe that as well as inspiring the young athletes so much time and energy was given to supporting the parents of these athletes.

Dame Kelly was a true inspiration and despite already investing her time and energy into the event she stayed behind and met the demands of photos and autographs with what seemed unending patience and enthusiasm. She was incredibly generous in nature and made a big impact on the whole family. Thank you Dame Kelly!

For a **report by Cathy Wood and photos of the 'Backing Talent in Kent' Event** visit <http://www.dkhlegacytrust.org/dkh-p-news-n-1.htm>. For **more information** about the Dame Kelly Holmes Legacy Trust see its web site, <http://www.dkhlegacytrust.org>.