

Good sports

International triathlete Deirdre Woods and former cricketer Jonathan Draper have achieved great things in sport – so it's not surprising they treat other sportsmen in their day jobs at the White Rose Clinic in York. **TONY GREENWAY** manages to grab the busy pair and learns about their life and work . . .

And you thought you were busy. When we meet triathlete and sports therapist Deirdre Woods, she is deep into training for the World Triathlon Championships (which were held in Lausanne, Switzerland, in early September) – so she is constantly running, swimming and cycling in preparation for the most gruelling athletic event of her life. She is also rushed off her feet with her twin jobs as an operating department practitioner at York Hospital and a sports and remedial massage therapist at the city's White Rose Clinic. To cap it all, in three days' time she is due to get married to Chris, her partner (also a triathlete), who, she notes, hasn't actually decided on his wedding suit yet.

Ooh, and she has a three-year-old daughter, Erin, who keeps her busiest of all.

"I don't know how I'm fitting it all in!" laughs Deirdre, who was born in Tipperary, Republic of Ireland, and moved to the UK 10 years ago. "I get to the end of the week sometimes and think: 'Where's that gone!'"

The White Rose Clinic was founded by podiatrist Jonathan Draper and a lot of the patients through his doors have sports-related complaints such as hamstring injuries, Achilles ruptures, and shoulder and neck-related problems. "I wanted to start a clinic where the therapists' skills would complement each other," explains Jonathan. "One person can't cure everything, so we all have our specialisms. I'm a podiatrist, so mine is the lower limbs. Deirdre is a sports and remedial massage therapist, and we also have a physiotherapist, Wendy Keefer; so we can all refer patients to each other if needs be. We can diagnose from head to toe."

The White Rose Clinic treats people from all walks of life with any injury, from, say, postal workers with corns to supermarket shelf-stackers with repetitive strain injury. But sportswise, Jonathan, Deirdre and Wendy look after rugby union and rugby league stars, basketball players, top European golfers, footballers from Leeds United and York City, and Durham County Cricket Club players. "Cricket is my main sport," says Jonathan. "I played Yorkshire League cricket to semi-professional level and know a lot about it. But we also treat people who are competing

in the World Frisbee Championships and dancers from the Northern School of Ballet."

In conjunction with the Sport England organisation, The White Rose Clinic also works with Olympic hopefuls between the ages of 11 and 17. "Sport England is trying to help children who are of a standard to start in sports and then nurture them and keep them from dropping out if they receive an injury," explains Jonathan. "We want to develop them and protect them for the future."

Deirdre, for one, knows the importance of sport because she has experienced it at the highest levels. She has always been fascinated by the mechanisms of the body and, when she first started competing in triathlons, received a number of injuries. "I met a few practitioners to get myself sorted out," she says, "but I didn't get very far with them – so I decided to train as a sports therapist. Afterwards I met Jonathan who was just setting up the clinic at the time, so I came in to work for half a day a week. Then it exploded and now I'm getting referrals all the time."

Being a triathlete informs Deirdre's job as a sports therapist. "It's very important for a practitioner to be a sports person as well," she says, "because when someone comes in with an injury, and says, 'I feel SO depressed – I haven't run for a week', you can really empathise with them. Plus, you know exactly where their trouble is."

Manipulation and massage are Deirdre's tools of the trade, although she does use electric therapy machines for deep-rooted problems. She likens finding a knotted injury under someone's skin to feeling a tennis ball under a silk sheet. "I spent some time back in Ireland with Paula Radcliffe's physiotherapist – and he's a god to me. He's amazing to watch. And he had Darren Campbell on the table the day I was there. He said to me: 'Use your hands – it's the best way to diagnose.' So that's what you do. You move your hand along until you find the knot – which is like a lump – and then it's about working on it until it frees up. It can be really painful for the patient, so we do use a pain-relieving gel afterwards."

At the World Triathlon Championships, 33-year-old Deirdre will be competing for Ireland and taking part in a 40K bike ride, a 10K run and a 1500 metres swim in Lake Geneva. But at least, working in the sports therapy field, she knows the warning signs of any possible personal injuries.

"Practitioners are very careless in sports, actually," says Deirdre. "We tend to 'run through' injuries. My big thing is stretching – I'm a big advocate of it, and I tell all my patients to do it. But, if I'm honest, the amount of times I DON'T stretch after a race is quite shocking. But I do know what it is when an ache or pain starts to niggle me."

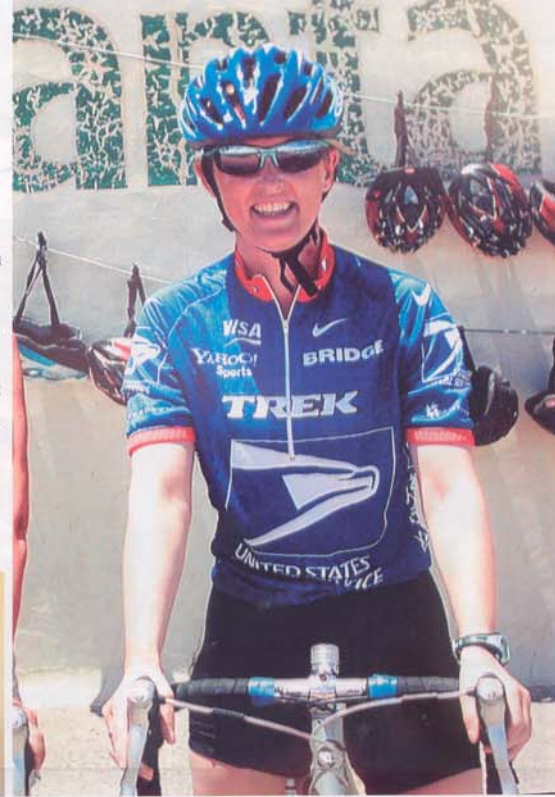
Ironically, when she decided to take up triathlons, Deirdre couldn't swim. "It took me a about a year to learn," she says. "Then our swimming coach told me I had to compete, as part of a team, in a swimathon. I did it and thought no more about it. A few months later I got a phone call to say that we were one of the fastest teams in Britain! That gave me the confidence to continue in the triathlon disciplines." After competing in sprint

triathlon, she was selected for the Irish squad and while cycling is her favourite part of the triathlon, running still leaves her cold ("I HATE running. Detest it!").

Away from the field, Deirdre and Jonathan love working as part of a team and getting people back on their feet. Literally sometimes. "You're learning all the time in this job," says Jonathan. "It's fascinating. And with our specialities and specialist equipment – and the backgrounds we have – the practice works very well. Whether it's a sports person who has just won a major tournament or an elderly person who just wants to be able to walk into town to meet a friend for a coffee, everything is geared to the individual."

■ White Rose Clinic is at 108 Haxby Road, York, YO31 8JP, tel: 01904 622599

Right: Jonathan and Deirdre at the clinic. Far right: Deirdre in action in a triathlon. Facing page, top: Sports therapist Deirdre Woods examines a client. Facing page, bottom: Podiatrist Jonathan Draper is pictured using an orthotic thermal moulding machine.



Jonathan and Deirdre look after rugby union and rugby league stars, basketball players, top European golfers, footballers from Leeds United and York City, and Durham County Cricket players

Outdoor Lighting

The widest choice of modern & traditional lighting from stock

Hull Lighting

01482
320864

Chapel Lane Lowgate Hull HU1 1SB

Open Mon-Sat 9am-5.30pm & Thurs/Fri till 7pm

Between Hull's Combined Courts & St Mary's Church - Customer Parking

www.hull-lighting.co.uk



This Autumn our collections are better than ever before, including a stunning range of classic dining furniture and an outstanding selection of floorcoverings, rugs, curtains, fabrics and soft furnishings.



LEES OF GRIMSBY

222 VICTORIA ST. GRIMSBY.

TELEPHONE: 01472 353251

OPEN MON TO SAT • 9.00am to 5.15pm

CAR PARK • FREE DELIVERY

teesfurnishers.co.uk