



NEWS RELEASE - DRAFT

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SPAR TO SPARK INTEREST IN ATHLETICS

SPAR (UK) has announced that it will be funding a sports park in Birmingham city centre when the European Athletics Indoor Championships comes to the city in March 2007.

The Championships, which will be the most significant athletics event to be staged in the UK before the 2012 Olympics, will be staged at the city's NIA from 2-4 March 2007 and SPAR (UK) agreed to fund the sports park called SPARk so that young people from across Birmingham can be part of the event and to use the Championships as a way of sparking interest in athletics and sport in general.

SPARk is an interactive sports park, which aims to educate and inspire young people as well as celebrating the Championships and youngsters will be given the opportunity to try their hand at various skills relating to athletics.

However it isn't just about getting physical as there will also be challenges relating to technology, nutrition and sports science to demonstrate that there is more to athletics than just the athlete.

SPARk, which will be run by technical specialists and experienced coaches, will be located in Centenary Square from Thursday 1st March until Saturday 3rd March and is completely free. Local schools and athletics clubs will be invited to attend but families will also be able to pop in if they are passing by so that they can enjoy the fun too.

SPARk has been sponsored by SPAR (UK) as part of their 50th birthday celebrations in 2007 as Marketing Controller Simon Fisher explains: "We are sponsoring this interactive sports park to celebrate 50 years of supporting the local communities of Birmingham in

which our stores operate. I hope that young people from across the city will flock to this free event to get a taste of what athletics is all about.”

With SPAR UK's 50th anniversary celebrations in mind, SPARk will also be looking forward to the next 50 years and will be taking a 'futuristic' view of the sport of athletics by looking at leading edge technology and encouraging young people to think about the possible break throughs in clothing, equipment, training, conditioning and nutrition in years to come.

The SPAR (UK) funding for SPARk has been matched by SportsMatch, a government funded scheme set up to help fund grass roots and community sports in England which matches new sponsorship money on a pound for pound basis.

Alex Scott - Bayfield from SportsMatch said: “We are delighted to be able to support this initiative as we feel that it will offer a valuable opportunity for young people across Birmingham to learn new skills and discover more about what it takes to be a professional athlete. SPARk is a great way of using a major event like the European Athletics Indoor Championships to encourage young people to be more active and educate them about the science behind sport.”

Anyone who is interested in visiting SPARk and would like to find out more can e-mail EIAC2007@birmingham.gov.uk.

The European Athletics Indoor Championships is being organised by Birmingham City Council and UK Athletics on behalf of the European Athletics Association (EAA). The Championships will be part funded by the National Lottery through UK Sport's World Class Events Programme.

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- SPAR International is the principle sponsor of the European Athletics Indoor Championships and major European Athletic Association events across the continent.

- The European Athletics Indoor Championships will be staged at Birmingham's NIA from 2-4 March 2007 and will be the most significant athletics to be staged in the UK before the 2012 Olympics. More than 600 athletes from 50 countries will take part.
- The European Athletics Indoor Championships will be part funded by UK Sport's National Lottery-funded World Class Events Programme, which aims to secure events of strategic importance that deliver a range of lasting benefits. These include economic, social and cultural benefits as well as improving sporting performance by home athletes, encouraging participation and leaving a legacy of facilities and development initiatives. Over 100 sporting events have been staged in the UK through the Programme since 1997. More at www.uk sport.gov.uk.