Crystal Palace National Sports Centre – London, UK

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History

In 1852 a magnificent glass building, erected to house the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park, was moved to one of the highest points of London – Crystal Palace. Here it stood towering over South London until 1936 when it was destroyed by fire. When the Festival of Britain was organized in 1951 to commemorate the Centenary of the Great Exhibition, the Government re-developed the Crystal Palace site by building a National Youth and Sports Centre. The National Sports Centre was opened in 1964 by HRH Prince Philip, having been built by the Greater London Council with guidance and inspiration from the Central Council of Physical Recreation. It was the first British sporting centre to have been designed and built along highly practical and aesthetic lines. The Centre is now managed by the Sports Council.

Aims

The primary aim of the Centre was to provide residential facilities for training and coaching courses for as many sports as possible, enabling the various sports to organise centralized intensive sessions in an ideal setting. A second aim was to provide a home for certain sports which had no firm headquarters of their own.

Implicit in these aims was the need to provide first class sporting facilities, hence the Olympic standard swimming pool, the track and field stadium, the indoor arena and the residential lodge. These facilities would also allow Crystal Palace to serve as a local community sports centre for the south London area with

The original 'Crystal Palace' site

high intensity use of the basic facilities.

Location

The Sports Centre is situated in a spacious park six miles south of central London, within the perimeter of the long established motor-racing circuit. It is easily accessible by car and public transport. As the premiere sports centre in Britain, Crystal Palace is a leading competition venue for both international and domestic events. It is the training centre for national squads, clubs, schools and serious enthusiasts and a location for amateur teams to enjoy their sport and a starting point for the absolute beginner.

About 25 000 members attend the Centre each month for various activities. In addition to these, about 25 000 school children as well as 17 000 club members and 4000 people on courses use the facilities each month. These sports-minded individuals are all actively participating in the swimming pools, arena, tracks, astroturf, 5-a-side, ski slope, pitches and outdoor courts.

Facilities

The athletic stadium has an all-weather 'tartan' track and high level flood-lighting. It was the first syn-

thetic track in Europe and was installed in 1968. At some time in their career most of the world's greatest athletes have competed in the Crystal Palace Stadium. It is a major international track and field venue with a capacity of 17 000 spectators. This stadium is also used extensively in the evenings for American football, rugby and soccer, as well as for athletics training.

The indoor facility has a covered 110 m × 10 m training area which is large enough to enable pole vaulters and high jumpers to practise.

Hockey There are both grass and two full-sized floodlit synthetic hockey pitches to accommodate play in most weather conditions.

Football Two floodlit synthetic grass pitches are available. There is also an indoor area, 34 m × 22 m, covered with a carpeted surface.

Netball Six all-weather floodlit courts, in addition to the indoor courts, provide first class facilities for netball.

Tennis Six floodlit all-weather courts are available throughout the year.

Skiing The artificial Dendix Ski Slope, the first seen in the UK, is ideal for pre-ski preparation. This slope with its natural obstacles provides a useful introduction to the real slopes.

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Running track

Indoor facilities

The main sports hall is a glass fronted cube, 87 × 81 × 21 m high, enclosing the pools, arena, cricket hall, tennis and squash courts, and services.

Swimming pool The 50 m Olympic standard pool is 2 m deep and equipped with electronic timing and scoreboards for racing and water polo. A separate 20 m diving pool has a full range of fixed and spring boards and is 5 m deep. It is equipped with a bubble machine for training.

There is a six lane warm water training pool, plus a teaching pool which caters for teacher and coaching courses. There is an extensive programme for mother and baby classes in the warm pool.

Up to 1700 spectators can be seated around the pool in tiered seats. An underwater observation window runs the length of the main pool providing a vantage point for coaches and film crews.

The main arena is large enough for three basketball or netball courts to be placed side by side. It is regularly used for indoor hockey, judo, martial arts, basketball and volleyball. The all maple surfaced hall is ideal for staging national championships.

There is seating for 2050 spectators on the retractable benches. A further 72 people may use the glassed-in VIP boxes which overlook the main arena from one end. Press boxes, and special viewing areas are also available. The north balcony is situated at the opposite end of the arena and has a teak floor marked out for four badminton courts. This area may also be used for other indoor activities such as karate, judo, netball, table tennis and fencing.

The training halls are constantly in use for a variety of activities such as boxing, trampolining, volleyball, aerobics, keep fit etc. The third training hall is permanently equipped for weights and fitness training.

There is a separate heavy weights room fully equipped for power and Olympic weight-lifters.

Treatment and assessment in the Sports Injury Centre

Cricket hall This multipurpose area can house 14 cricket-nets and is also used for movement and dance, weight-lifting, basketball, karate and judo. It is equipped with a PA system and electronic scoreboard and can accommodate seating for 500 for a large lecture.

Education

Each week thousands of children come to Crystal Palace for specialized teaching and coaching by qualified instructors in a variety of indoor and outdoor sports. Residential courses are also available for both teachers and students. Many schools use the Centre to stage their sports days.

Accommodation

The Lodge is an attractive tower block which can accommodate 135 individuals. Meals are provided and there

are common rooms and a staff room. The residents in The Lodge may include school children, teachers on in-service training sessions, coaches and international athletes, all mixing in the communal areas of The Lodge.

Conferences Facilities are heavily booked throughout the year. There are three main meeting areas with seating from 20–150 people. Audio-visual equipment is provided.

Catering The Centre has a wide range of food outlets which operate throughout the day and evening.

Sports Injury Centre

The Sports Injury Centre is situated on the ground floor of the Jubilee Spectator Stand adjacent to the track and occupies approximately 4000 sq feet of space. It is of open plan so that patients may be observed by the therapists during the treatment and rehabilitation programme.

Facilities include three consulting rooms, a large open treatment area, a gymnasium, a wet room, changing rooms, reception area, office accommodation and a staff room.

The large **wet room** is equipped with built-in faradic foot baths, an ultrasound sink, and a mobile Lo-boy Whirlpool bath. There is a large cushioned ice bed which is built at a workable height for treatment, casting for orthotics, and plastering. The wet room is also equipped with a hydro-collator and a large ice machine. A washing machine and dryer deal with the large number of towels and ice towels which are used daily.

The open plan **treatment area** has nine hydraulic treatment couches and a traction unit. Physiotherapy electrical modalities include diapulse, curapuls, shortwave, interferential, diadynamic, ultrasound, faradism, orthotron, multistim and small portable units such as a Q pulse, centicure, rebox, TNS, flowtron pumps etc.

The free **exercise area** is equipped with three low beds and the usual small rehabilitation equipment including rocker/wobble boards in various sizes, a Pro Fitter board for training and rehabilitation, bouncers, weight boots, medicine balls and various kinds of rubber tubing for strength training.

The gym is glazed on two walls for clear visibility. It is equipped with five pieces of NORSE sequence training equipment, a Schnell M3 strength training unit, treadmill, bicycle ergometers, bilateral pulley systems, wall bars, shoulder wheel, wrist roller, weights, a muscle strength testing machine and recorder, together with small fitness testing equipment such

Athletes undergoing treatment in the Sports Injury Centre

as pulse meters, cardiometers dynamometers and flexometers etc. This equipment is used primarily for physical rehabilitation but it is also used for strength and flexibility programmes. The NORSE strength training equipment was, and still can be, used for organised fitness training classes.

The physiotherapist's office has a corner window which allows a clear view of the treatment and gym areas, and may also be used as an extra consulting room. The consulting rooms are adequately equipped.

The Sports Injury Centre has a medical advisory panel of consultants and doctors from the London teaching hospitals. This is chaired by the Medical Director of the Sports Injury Centre who is a rheumatology consultant with wide experience in sports medicine. Diagnostic clinics are held twice weekly, an orthopaedic clinic bi-monthly and a podiatry clinic bi-monthly, when bio-mechanical assessments are video taped and casting for orthotics is carried out.

The doctors attending the clinic are

from a variety of hospitals and thus provide the necessary links with these hospitals for X-ray, CT scans, ultrasound scans, MR scans and further investigative tests through to surgery. They also provide cover for various athletic and other team events at the Centre in their capacity as members of various governing bodies of sport. Nutritional advice is available to all the governing bodies of sport.

Three full-time physiotherapists, together with a pool of nine part-time physiotherapists with a special interest and expertise in sports injuries, work regularly on a sessional rota each week. These physiotherapists work in hospitals, private clinics, or private practice when not at the clinic. They may be present at the clinic for international events at the Centre and travel with teams both at home and abroad. They have diverse backgrounds and there is expertise available in many areas of treatment and rehabilitation.

Administration Four part-time secretary/receptionists look after the day to day operation of the clinic.