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## **WOMEN OF 2004: KELLY HOLMES AND JANE TOMLINSON**

by Lia Hervey, PA News

Olympic double gold medallist Kelly Holmes and terminal cancer sufferer Jane Tomlinson were honoured today at this year's Women of the Year Awards.

Holmes was awarded the Good Housekeeping Outstanding Achievement Award, not for running to victory in both the 800m and 1500m races in the games in Athens this summer, but for her "triumph over adversity" and her "gutsy, committed approach".

Presenting the award, Good Housekeeping editor-in-chief Lindsay Nicholson said: "Like the rest of the country I was on my feet and cheering when Kelly won her second gold medal.

"No one had even expected her to win the first one. But this award isn't for her athletic ability so much as her dogged determination through endless setbacks and injury and for the way she confounded her critics and finally triumphed - not once but twice."

Terminal cancer sufferer Jane Tomlinson, who has also been awarded an MBE and the 2002 Helen Rollason Award at the BBC Sports Personality of the Year, received the Frink Award, named after the late Dame Elisabeth Frink, who was one of Britain's leading sculptors.

It was introduced to honour the achievements of women who enrich other people's lives while overcoming difficulties of their own.

Since learning she had incurable cancer in 2002, Mrs Tomlinson has taken on numerous gruelling challenges including three London Marathons, three London triathlons, a half Iron man and three-quarter Ironman triathlon and a cycle ride from Rome to her Leeds home. She is now approaching her £1 million charity fundraising target.

Gayle Morrison, executive chair of the WOYLA (Women of the Year Lunch and Assembly) said: "It is difficult to comprehend the scale of Jane Tomlinson's achievement.

"Since her diagnosis, Jane has completed in event after challenging event, often within days of exhausting treatment.

"She is now very close to achieving her £1 million target of fundraising efforts for Jane's Appeal. She is truly inspirational."

The 49th annual awards, being held at The Savoy hotel in central London and attended by more than 400 guests, celebrate Britain's most exceptional women. The event recognises outstanding achievements by women from a variety of backgrounds.

"I am overwhelmed by their generosity and kindness."

Jane Tomlinson said that her challenges were not about winning awards but to raise money to help normal people.

She said: "It was a lovely surprise to be invited to the Women of the Year Awards. I feel quite humbled to accept the Frink Award whilst also feeling somewhat a fraud knowing the challenge I've been working towards for two years lies waiting for me at the start of November."

"It's not what I set out to do when I started taking part in the races. It wasn't for awards.

"It was to try and help other people and to keep myself positive and to help me give my family some memories and I have certainly done that and here is another one today."

This year's awards were based on the theme of "Women's Voices from Iraq", with Iraqi broadcaster Amal al-Mudarris and Reuter's correspondent Samia Nakhoul addressing the guests.

Ms al-Mudarris, described as the Iraqi equivalent of the BBC's Jenni Murray, has been making live daily broadcasts since the war began. The Iraq Republic Radio presenter said: "I salute this gathering in the name of the Iraqi women.

"My homeland has become a river of blood, bleeding every day, from an explosive charge or a booby-trapped car, targeting unarmed civilians."

Ms Nakhoul, who was wounded when Americans troops captured Baghdad in April last year, also spoke about her time in the capital.

She said: "I am here today to share my experiences with you as an Arab woman and as an international journalist for Reuters who covered the war on Iraq, and became a victim of this war on April 8 last year.

"We were wounded and others were killed when a US tank fired at our hotel..."

"Suddenly from being a correspondent reporting the military advances, the mood of a city facing invasion and its human cost, I became one of the casualties I had so often reported about - helpless and fighting for my life.

"Like scores of wounded Iraqis, I was lying in hospital with the sound of battle thundering around me."

Samia, who had shrapnel removed from her brain, explained how she found Ali, the 12-year-old boy who lost his arms when a missile blew up his home and killed his entire family, lying in intensive care.

His image, which was broadcast around the world, was to become the iconic face of suffering in the conflict. "Such tragedies became and still are part of daily life in Iraq," the journalist said.

"From the beginning we knew that this war would rewrite the history of the Middle East and that we were the witnesses to such history."

Mary Kayitesi Blewitt was awarded the Pilkington Window to the World Award for her work in opening the world's eyes to the Rwandan genocide.

After losing 50 of her own family members in the 1994 genocide she went on to start SURF, the Rwandan Survivors Fund.

Lorraine Clinton, Pilkington Architectural and Glazing Director, said: "Given the stated objectives of the Pilkington award it is hard to imagine anyone who could better fit the description or be more deserving of this recognition than Mary Blewitt. It is therefore with a great sense of honour that we declare Mary the recipient of this year's award."

On receiving the award she said: "By recognising my work today, you recognise the importance of ensuring the survivors, and victims, of the Rwandan genocide are never forgotten.

"This award is not for me. It is for the hundreds of donors and volunteers who have given their precious time and money to ensure that SURF can make a difference.

"It is for the women of this great country who have shown their solidarity with their sisters in Rwanda by acknowledging their plight and supporting our campaign for free antiretroviral treatments for the women survivors of genocide.

"And it is for the thousands of widows and orphans who entrusted me with the only hope they have left: a better future."

Josette Bushell-Mingo was awarded the Craymer Award for Enterprise.

She launched PUSH four years ago, an organisation to shake up the arts world with an annual season of dramatic work performed exclusively by black British artists.

Judy Cramer, who presented the award, said: "Josette has been an inspiration to the performing arts and entire British theatre community. Her enormous energy and commitment to execute her ideas has been extraordinary. She richly deserves this recognition. Many congratulations to Josette."

Receiving the award, the winner said: "I am surprised and deeply moved to be recognised in such a way and to be part of the pantheon of great women who form Women of the Year and its Assembly. Most of all it's a great motivation to continue my work at PUSH, which in turn, I hope, will continue to challenge, nurture and inspire great black British artists and theatres."

The Women of the Year lunch and assembly was set up in 1955 by a group of women headed by Lady Antonia Lothian in order to bring together a cross section of women who had distinguished themselves in their careers. It was set up to celebrate the achievements of women in every working field.