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PRESS RELEASE

SODOMITES TRIUMPH AT GAY SPORTS DAY

LONDON, 28 AUGUST – The Olympics may be over but, at roughly the same time as the triumphant British Olympic team was touching down at Heathrow, some highly trained and flamboyantly dressed athletes at the RVT & GMFA Sports Day kept sport, albeit not of an Olympian standard, firmly on the agenda. Few other sporting events see Bears facing off against Fairies, or Trashbags challenging admirers of Blue Peter presenter Konnie Huq. Yes, the Bank Holiday Monday Gay Sports Day, which culminated in sporting triumph for a team of Sodomites, was back on in Spring Gardens, behind the Royal Vauxhall Tavern; bigger and better than ever before.

At first the clouds threatened but an enthusiastic crowd of around 500 gay men and friends arrived to enjoy the spectacle and, with the rain holding off and glorious sunshine arriving by the end of the day, the event was pronounced a 'fabulous' success.

The Sports Day, hosted for a second year by Timberlina, began with an official opening by Angie Meader, Mayor of Lambeth, who threw a golden

handbag into the crowd to get the afternoon underway. Twelve exotically monikered teams of gay men, lesbians, bears, fairies and friends competed in the hope of lifting the prestigious Sports Day cup.

The sporting competition was closely fought. The events included a mixture of traditional school sports day events, such as egg and spoon and sack races, alongside more esoteric sports, such as the drag relay and the 50m mince, which required contestants to wear 'ankle cuffs' and keep one hand on their hips. A very tight competition saw the Sodomites finally see off the challenge from the London Raiders softball team in the final event.

"I remember the Vauxhall Sports Day as a gay institution back in the 80s and 90s and I'm thrilled that it's on the way to becoming one again," said Matthew Hodson of GMFA. "I want to congratulate all of the teams involved for their sports-personship, with a special mention to the 'wooden spooners' from the Fantastic Fairies and Trashbags for so gallantly achieving 'nul points' by the end of the day. And a huge thank you to the RVT for supporting us, to the GMFA volunteers who worked so hard on the day and to the crowds that braved the grey skies, cheered the teams and donated money."

The Sports Day was a fundraising event for GMFA, Vauxhall City Farm and the Friends of Spring Gardens. The Mighty Metamorphic Zebras collected the trophy and certificates for the team that raised the most money overall with a total of nearly £1,000. Altogether more than £4000 was raised to be split between the three charities, twice as much money as was raised at last year's event.

Sports Day was made possible through months of preparation and hard work by GMFA and the Royal Vauxhall Tavern, and with the support of Spring Gardens, Lambeth Council and the Metropolitan Police.

Sports Day will be back again next year and registration for teams will open a couple of months before the event. In the meantime, if you are interested in entering a team into next year's Sports Day please email tim.molloy@gmfa.org.uk and we'll let you know as soon as registration opens.

The event was all captured on video and the film should be hitting YouTube in the near future. Watch this space.

- Ends -

Full report of the competition:

The first event was an old-fashioned egg and spoon race. A close finish saw the London Raiders, a gay softball team with probably the best sporting credential amongst all the competitors, start their campaign with a win, followed by the Sodomites in second and the Konnie Huq Appreciation Society in third place. In all events first place was awarded three points, with two points and a single point going to the second and third places.

Next up was the first round of the tug of war and the brawn of the Balcony Bears, the binliner clad Trashbags and GMFA's own Positive Campaign Group saw them amongst the teams to make it through.

Inflatable fun came next with the space hopper relay. Who could have remembered that space hopping was so tiring? The exhausted Sodomites triumphed with Positive Campaign Group and the London Raiders second and third.

The second round of the tug of war then saw Positive Campaign Group, the London Raiders, the Mighty Metamorphic Zebras and the Konnie Huq Appreciation Society progress to the semi-finals.

Then came the infamous 50m mince, an event light years ahead of its time. Here competitors had to race down the track wearing specially made 'mince cuffs' on their ankles. Keeping one hand on a hip at all times, the Sodomites minced their way to victory followed by the London Raiders and the piratically attired Portholes in a Storm.

Something a bit more traditional next with the sack race, and the same three teams as in the 50m mince occupied the top three places, this time with the London Raiders first followed by Portholes in a Storm and the Sodomites.

By this point in the afternoon it was clear that two teams were likely to be fighting it out to be overall winners of Sports day, with the points totals for the Sodomites and London Raiders putting them both way ahead of the pack. With the semi finals of the tug of war up next, and with the Sodomites already eliminated back in the first round, this was an excellent opportunity for the London Raiders to gain the upper hand. They did not disappoint and duly made it through to the final along with the Konnie Huq Appreciation Society.

The drag relay was the next event, and was one of the more technically (and fashion) challenging events with competitors having to exchange dresses, wigs and handbags at the end of each lap with another member of their team. Unfortunately this event proved to be far too un-butch for the serious sportsmen from the London Raiders as they were eliminated in the heats, leaving the door open for the Sodomites to regain some ground. And regain some ground they did, breaking away from the drag pack to finish first in the final, followed by the Konnie Huq Appreciation Society and Positive Campaign Group.

Maybe the rest during the drag relay did them some good as straight away the London Raiders hit back by beating the Konnie Huq Appreciation Society in the tug of war final. In the third place play off, the Mighty Metamorphic Zebras claimed a consolation point.

Into the final three events and it was still very much a two horse race. The handbag throw saw the Sodomites gain ground by recording the second longest throw of the event whilst London Raiders could only manage eighth. The event was won by Chairman Meow with an impressive throw of 17.82 metres, and third were the saffron robed Dilly Llama team, giving both teams their first points of the day.

The penultimate event was the space hopper equestrian race. Competitors hopped over hurdles and slalomed round cones, but in the end the race had no bearing on the total scores with both leading teams going out in the heats. The Mighty Metamorphic Zebras hopped their way to first place and then two teams recording their first points of the day were Leg Soup in second place and Balcony Bears third.

Nothing separated the top two teams into the final event – the beer relay race. Team members had to drink a glass of beer and then put the glass upside down on their heads one after another until all five had finished. Some teams adopted the 'soak approach', electing to pour the beer over themselves instead of drinking it. This method proved the most successful and it fittingly saw the London Raiders and the Sodomites through into the final to decide the overall winner of Sports Day. They were joined in the final by Leg Soup and Positive Campaign Group.

In a very close finish, and soaked through with beer, the Sodomites beat the London Raiders into second place in the event, and overall. The Sodomites then duly collected their winners' trophy and certificates from Timberlina.

For more information about this or any other of GMFA's campaigns and actions, contact:

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Notes to Editor

About GMFA:

GMFA was established in 1992 and is the UK's leading charity dedicated to gay men's health. GMFA's mission is to improve gay men's health by increasing the control they have over their own lives. We believe that the best health promotion for gay men comes from gay men themselves, and so we use the knowledge and ideas of our 170 volunteers (most of them gay men) to design and plan our thought provoking sexual health interventions. We have received international acclaim for our Sex and Sexual Health website (www.gmfa.org.uk/sex), which was visited by one in three London gay men within a year of being launched. Our other websites include a detailed listing of sexual health services available for gay men in London (www.gmfa.org.uk/londonservices), an information resource for HIV positive gay men (www.gmfa.org.uk/positive) and a guide to gay sports and social groups in London (www.gmfa.org.uk/theguide). All of our sites can be accessed at www.gmfa.org.uk. GMFA produce a range of advertising campaigns, leaflets, postcards and booklets. Independent surveys have concluded that our campaigns reach up to 60% of the London gay population and we are the most reliable agency at reaching gay men. In addition to this we distribute our own health magazine, FS, free to London's gay bars and clubs to further educate gay men about relationships, their bodies, general health and STIs. Over the last fourteen years we have provided courses for over 10,000 gay men, providing safer sex education, life skills and stop smoking courses. We currently provide a range of groupwork interventions across England and Wales. GMFA has Big Lottery funding to create sexual health interventions for Black gay men in London.