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RACE OF HOPE

BY ANDREW RUDKIN

AN ASHTON athlete is racing back to fitness thanks to revolutionary techniques after doctors had told her she would have to stop running and undergo major surgery.

Kiera Steward (*pictured right*) was dealt a devastating blow when just 12-years-old after being told she has the crippling condition, Scoliosis.

For the past ten years the Ashton runner has been fighting the severe condition – which causes the spine to excessively curve sideways.

Scoliosis affects more than four per cent of the population and if left untreated can lead to fatal heart and lung problems.

Kiera and her family had found it tough to find suitable treatment which does not involve huge risks or going under the knife on the operating table.

"I remember being terrified when I was first diagnosed with

Scoliosis," said Kiera, 22.

"I had no idea what was going to happen to me and all the doctors kept saying that I would need an operation to straighten me out.

"I can remember having nightmares and feeling very alone.

"Nobody stopped to explain to me what was going on in my back and everyone expected me to just to agree to going on the spinal fusion surgery waiting list."

Athletic Kiera was dealt more bad news when doctors told her she could not run anymore and she was told to stop taking part in contact sports – which would put added pressure on her spine.

But Kiera soon found that her race wasn't run with hope found in the last straight.

After trying very short-term solutions and facing a major operation involving the insertion of metal rods into her spine, Kiera's parents eventually discovered a revolutionary clinic at the final hurdle.

Founded and run by Erika Maude, who has Scoliosis herself, London-based clinic Scoliosis SOS opened five years ago and has since brought non-surgery related treatment to hundreds of sufferers.

Following on from this treat-

ment, Keira has noticed a fantastic improvement in her posture and physical appearance.

Kiera continues to do half an hour of exercises each day which were designed especially for her by her therapist so that she can avoid the spinal fusion surgery in the future.

She has since been given the go ahead to continue with running, aerobics and contact sports as long as she continues with her exercises.

"I felt like a huge weight had been lifted off my shoulders once I had found the SOS clinic," revealed a rejuvenated Kiera

"For the first time in my life I could see an alternative to surgery.

"I had been suffering with pain for most of my teenage years so to be told that I could be pain free by doing a few simple exercises was amazing."

Kiera hopes many others can share her story of hope.

If you are a sufferer and would like to find out more information about Scoliosis SOS – visit their website www.scoliosisSOS.com – or phone (01394) 389 670.

