

Picture: DANIEL LYNCH

I ACHIEVED MY PAIN-FREE GOAL

WATCHING Jonathan Hunt tackling his opponents today on the football pitch, it is hard to believe that the 36-year-old former Birmingham City and Derby County midfielder was out of the game for five agonising years, incapacitated by back pain.

Jonathan, who is now with St Albans City FC, suffered a tendon injury in his pelvis while training with Wimbledon in 2001. For the next 18 months he struggled to regain his fitness but eventually had to abandon the game he loved. "It was the

A degenerative spinal condition virtually ended Jonathan Hunt's football career and left him in agony until he learnt a technique that claims to reverse chronic pain. BARBARA LANTIN reports

worst moment of my life," he recalls. "Football was my reason for getting out of bed in the morning."

Jonathan never gave up hope that he would one day recover, though he didn't imagine he'd ever return to the pitch.

"I saw neurologists, orthopaedic surgeons, physiotherapists and osteopaths," he says. "I was told I had a degenerative condition in my discs caused by wear and tear from football. The doctors wanted to operate but I didn't want to go down that route."

"I went from being a finely-tuned athlete who trained twice a day to somebody who couldn't sit in a chair. I had panic attacks, felt out of control and became short-tempered. My family were worried about my mental state."

On a visit to Thailand four years ago, Jonathan was told of a woman who practised Hanna Somatics, a mind-body training that claims to reverse chronic pain patterns caused by strain, injury or bad postural habits. After

three sessions, Jonathan was virtually pain free and so impressed that he later travelled to California to train as a Somatics educator. He is now one of only three in the UK. "After one session, I felt as if somebody had let go of my spine," he says. "It gave me an awareness that something had been constricting me and that there was now a lightness in my movements."

ACCORDING to the founder of Hanna Somatics - American philosopher Thomas Hanna, who died in 1990 - repeatedly performing the same movements and postures causes our muscles to remain in a state of contraction.

Eventually, these contractions become so deeply unconscious that we no longer remember how to move freely. This "sensory motor amnesia" makes it difficult for us to control our muscles, which can lead to chronic tension

and pain. Somatics - derived from the Greek word "soma" or body - helps people by teaching them to contract the muscle themselves and then slowly release it. The instructor goes through a tailored programme of movements with clients and gives them a set of simple exercises.

"Manipulative therapies will move you back into alignment but I see myself more as an educator or an instructor," says Jonathan. "I help people to change things from within."

Most of his clients come to him with back, neck or sciatic pain. Many are office workers who spend hours seated in the same position but he has also treated a 10-year-old boy whose back was hunched from six hours a day spent on a games console.

Natasha Gomer, 30, came to see Jonathan after enduring six years of back pain following a skiing accident. "I had tried chiropractic, physiotherapy and inserts in my shoes," says Natasha, who works in online public relations. "Massage brought me temporary relief but it was still not right."

Natasha saw Jonathan three times and now does five minutes of exercise twice a day. "It has

made a big difference," she says. "I can do pretty much everything without pain. The balance of my body and the way I walk has improved. Somatics seems to be more in tune with the way the body works than other therapies I have tried."

After football, Jonathan's other great passion is racing and he is now working with horses to improve their stance and performance on the course.

"Like humans, horses develop characteristic postures, movements and behaviours which can lead to pain and restricted movement."

HE ADDS: "Somatics is a natural, gentle and safe way to treat chronic pain, relax muscles, manage stress and restore movement. Horses can gain numerous benefits."

As for Jonathan, he is thrilled to be back on the football pitch and in his second season with St Albans.

"My body is very different from how it was when I was playing full time. Then it was rigid, now my muscles are relaxed and games don't affect me as they did. I am seven years older and I feel 110 per cent better than I did."

● Jonathan Hunt can be contacted through www.somaticsliving.com or on 07801 440 729. For more information about Hanna Somatics, visit www.hanna-somatics.com

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History's notes of caution



Matt Baylis on last night's TV

IT'S easy, and very appealing to blame City fat cats for the current financial crisis. Lord knows, some of that red-braces-and-wine-bar stuff was pretty unlikeable.

But Professor Niall Ferguson's new series **THE ASCENT OF MONEY** (C4) suggested that slumps, shocks and stupidity have always been part of the folding stuff's story.

In the 16th century, Spanish explorers were overjoyed to find masses of silver in the newly-acquired territory of Peru. The local Inca folk couldn't understand this enthusiasm. To them, silver was the tears of the Moon - it was very pretty but it couldn't do much for you. The Spaniards, however, thought it could do a great deal for you. They turned so much of it into

coinage that the value of the metal plummeted. You needed more coins to purchase the same amount of goods - a situation us modern types would recognise as galloping inflation.

It was daft of the Spanish to make this mistake, seeing as the Mesopotamians - inhabitants of the area we now call Iraq - had cracked the cash problem several centuries before Christ. From excavations in that area, archaeologists have found

inscribed tokens, making promises to pay the bearer some quantity of food or livestock at a future date. Much the same phrase is written on our bank notes today. And like the tokens from the Near East, they have no value in themselves, they're just promises to pay up.

Like all promises, money only works where there is trust - a message the professor hammered home so many times that we started to wonder if his own pension fund had recently disappeared. He went on to demonstrate how this system of trust was the basis of modern Europe.

At the forefront of establishing it were the Medici family, who got round the Catholic Church's rigorous rules against charging interest by calling it commission instead. So adored were these Renaissance loan-sharks - who did

their business behind benches, or banai, giving us the word bank - that artists painted them as the three wise men, bowing at the feet of Christ himself. Nonetheless, in a depressingly familiar turn of events, the Medici bankers got into trouble when they loaned out more than they had in savings, and some of their blue-blooded clients simply refused to pay the interest.

Unless we learn from our mistakes - as history teachers are always so fond of saying - we're doomed to repeat them.

There was a sense of gathering shadows around David Milner, proprietor of one of Britain's smallest department stores, in the Yorkshire town of Leyburn. **DEPARTMENT STORE** (BBC4) captured David on the brink of retirement, and leaving the business in the hands of his evidently capable

daughter and son-in-law. But every time David spoke of this subject, the one thing missing was the business of him retiring.

He spoke about the years he'd spent building up the firm, he expounded the expertise the younger generation would need to draw on. He was plainly terrified of stopping work - so much so that he crept upstairs to do some paperwork at his own leaving do.

At times, it felt like this film might be sending up the small, cloistered world of the shop-floor, with its spats over order books and intrigues over the Playtex sales rep. But at its heart was something serious - a man who, in many respects, was his business, facing life without it.

This modest programme said more about life and human relationships than a dozen dramas.

Picks of the day

HISTORY: Prince John: The Windsors' Tragic Secret, 9pm, C4

Following on from last week's programme about Winston Churchill's mother - Lady Randolph - Channel 4's fascinating High Society season continues. Tonight, the third of four documentaries exploring secret scandals and notorious figures from the higher echelons of British society looks at the tragically short life of John Charles Francis, the youngest son of King George V and uncle of the present Queen. Prince John died in 1919 aged just 13 after a life of epilepsy and autism which has led many people to believe that the young Prince was an embarrassment the Royal Family wanted to hide. Royal historian Christopher Wilson comments on this sad story and sheds light on how a largely forgotten member of the Royal Family was tragically written out of the history books.



CHARLOTTE CIVIL

LIFESTYLE: Miss Naked Beauty, 8pm, C4

Tonight's challenge set by Gok Wan and Myleene Klass (right) sees the remaining seven girls learning some valuable pointers from Vanessa Feltz. She tells them how to handle the media and puts them through their paces with a hard-hitting interview - but can they take the pressure? For those that impress the most, the reward is a glitzy film premiere in full glare of the paparazzi. Only five will make it through to next week's final round.



DOCUMENTARY: Comedy Classics: Duty Free, 10.40pm, ITV1

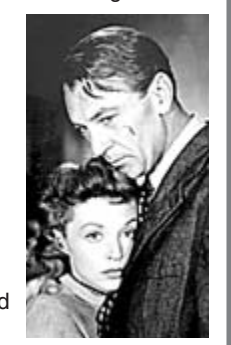
The penultimate episode of this series celebrates the Eighties sitcom Duty Free, starring Keith Barron and Gwen Taylor (right) as married couple David and Amy Pearce embarking on their first Spanish holiday. Rising Damp creator Eric Chappell, who co-wrote Duty Free with Jean Warr, describes how the idea for the show came about and tells how he had never been to Spain when he decided to write it, leaving the pair in two minds whether it would work. But they needn't have worried because their Costa del Sol creation was a smash hit, attracting 18 million viewers a week.



Film choice

Cloak And Dagger, 1.30pm, C4 ★★

Tense, doom-laden tale of wartime espionage with American research scientist Professor Alvah Jesper (Gary Cooper) on a daring mission to ensure that the Nazis do not get their hands on the secrets of the atom bomb. Gina (Lilli Palmer, right with Cooper) is a fervent anti-Fascist who assists in his mission and wins his heart.



MUSIC: Imagine: How An Orchestra Saved Venezuela's Children, 10.35pm, BBC1

Alan Yentob meets the men behind an extraordinary music project that has been transforming the lives of thousands of Venezuela's poorest children. The Sistema was set up in 1975 by José Antonio Abreu to help keep them out of trouble by offering free instruments and tuition at a network of after-school centres around the country. Its astounding success and popularity has touched the lives of 250,000 children and led to the formation of 30 professional and 125 youth orchestras. Yentob also hears the inspirational story of former Sistema boy Gustavo Dudamel (right, with Yentob), now music director of the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra. Yentob catches up with the orchestra during its recent week-long residency at the Salzburg Festival. **NB: 11.35pm in EIRE AND NI**



DID YOU KNOW? In December 2006, Myleene Klass sold the bikini she wore on the reality TV show I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here! in an eBay auction. It raised £7,000, all of which she gave to the victims of the Farepak savings scandal.

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