



The Olympics and Paralympics 2004 from the BBC

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Modern legends will be born

Athens 2004 Olympic and Paralympic Games from the BBC

The 2004 Olympic Games is a meeting of the ancient and the modern. The BBC's coverage, of an event which stretches back into antiquity, will offer the very latest in 21st-century analysis and technology.

The long journey of the Olympic Games began more than 2,700 years ago. In 1896 the first modern Olympic Games was held in Athens and, since that time, they have been on a journey around the world for more than a century. Now, at the dawn of the third millennium, the Games are returning to the country of their birth.

Athens 2004 is a 16-day festival of live international sport – from aquatics to athletics; boxing to badminton; football to handball; sailing to softball; Taekwondo to tennis; and weightlifting to wrestling – taking place from 13 to 29 August. The competition schedule involves 28 Olympic sports and 37 disciplines, held throughout 35 venues. BBC TV will broadcast over 1,200 hours of the 16-day event, bringing British audiences the global stories of ambition, determination and courage, while capturing the excitement, drama and magical moments of the Olympic Games.

“The BBC is proud to have broadcast every Summer and Winter Olympic Games since 1960,” says BBC Sport Director, Peter Salmon, “and, this year, the BBC marks the Games’ return to the country of their birth by offering the first-ever interactive Summer Olympics and live coverage of the Olympics on bbc.co.uk

“At the greatest sporting event in the world, legends will be rewritten, heroes will be made and the BBC will tell every story and capture every magical moment, on TV, interactive platforms, radio, online and via broadband.

The BBC is set to produce more hours of coverage than ever before and more than any other world broadcaster.

“BBC One and BBC Two are planning 250 hours of coverage of the Games, plus over 1,000 hours via the first-ever interactive Summer Olympics TV service offering a complementary schedule. Viewers with digital TV can access four additional streams of coverage to see extended coverage of the 37 events.

“At bbc.co.uk/olympics, for the first time ever, UK broadband users can access high-quality live coverage of the Olympics direct to their desktop. The service includes live simulcast coverage from BBC TV's five streams, as well as comprehensive daily round-ups,” Peter reveals.

As Peter also points out, BBC Radio will also have a massive presence at the Olympics. “BBC Radio Five Live's comprehensive and complementary coverage will broadcast 180 hours; BBC World Service will bring the event to 45 million homes globally, on the English network; and throughout the Nations and Regions, local and regional TV and radio will relay the stories of local competitors – their elation or disappointment, whether

they are medal winners or not – to their home audiences.

“The Olympics and Paralympics are sure to capture the public imagination once again, but Athens is not only a challenge to Team GB but also to the BBC. In 2000, BBC Television won an IOC Olympic Rings Award, a BAFTA, an RTS award and a *Broadcast* award for its coverage of the Sydney Olympics. This year the BBC is determined to be even ‘higher, faster, stronger’.

“Our world class television production team is led by the Sydney duo of Dave Gordon, Head of Major Events, and Martin Hopkins, Executive Producer. Once again, BBC Sport has been recognised at an international level, as one of our top producers, Paul Davies, heads a team producing the global coverage of the tennis competitions and some of the equestrian events for the host broadcaster.

“BBC Sport is proud of its strong team of expert commentators and analysts, including, for the first time this year, the world’s greatest-ever Olympian – Sir Steve Redgrave,” Peter announces.

And, also for the first time, the Olympics and Paralympics are being organised by a single committee following an IOC/IPC agreement. The Paralympics take place from 17 to 28 September.

Peter continues: “There’s another first at the Paralympics. It will also be covered live on BBC Television. BBC TV will make sure the British public can share in the great Paralympic moments as they happen and experience the triumph and tears of Team GB’s Paralympic stars.”

On the evening of August 13, the world will turn its eyes to the Olympic Stadium for the spectacle and splendour of the Opening Ceremony. Approximately four billion people

worldwide will view this historic event, which heralds 16 days of stunning competition. BBC TV will have live coverage of the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, presented by Barry Davies.

Steve Rider and Sue Barker head the BBC’s presentation team with live evening coverage from Athens. On BBC One and BBC Two, Hazel Irvine and Steve Cram start the mornings with *Olympic Grandstand* and Clare Balding and Craig Doyle catch up on all the day’s highlights in *Olympics Today*.

A team of world-class presenters, commentators and analysts will provide intelligent, informative and exclusive analysis. The BBC TV team comprises some well-loved and respected faces, as well as some new names. Michael Johnson, Colin Jackson, Jonathan Edwards and Sally Gunnell will guide viewers through the track and field events, with Brendan Foster, Paul Dickenson and Stuart Storey; Sharron Davies, Adrian Moorhouse and Andy Jameson will be poolside; Garry Herbert, Gillian Lindsay and Dan Topolski will be joined by the greatest Olympian of all time – Sir Steve Redgrave – at the water’s edge; and Richie Woodhall and Jim Neilly will be ringside. One of Sydney’s golden girls, Steph Cook, will bring back the excitement of the modern pentathlon, and former Olympian Matthew Syed will be covering the table tennis competition.

The BBC TV team of roving reporters – Garry Richardson, Phil Jones, Suzi Perry, Jill Douglas and Rishi Persad – will prove indispensable as they get under the skin of the man or woman of the moment.

From Alpha to Omega – comprehensive TV coverage

As Britain's Olympic and Paralympic broadcaster, the BBC holds exclusive terrestrial TV, radio and online rights in the UK. Coverage includes six main strands across BBC One and Two, as well as the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, and four additional streams of coverage available via interactive platforms.

Full day-by-day listings (including interactive listings) will be available from the BBC Olympic and Paralympic Press Office on 020 8225 9900.

Please note: All transmission times are subject to change.

The Olympics 13-29 August

**Olympic Grandstand
7.00am-12.30pm BBC ONE**



Hazel Irvine and Steve Cram start the day with a round-up of all the news from the previous day's competition. Hazel and Steve will rouse morning viewers with all the news, views and reports on Team GB's progress. Having caught up on yesterday's action, Hazel and Steve look forward to the day's main events, with early live action from the track, or join Sharron Davies poolside or Sir Steve Redgrave for the rowing heats.

**Olympic Report
12.30-1.00pm BBC ONE**

Hazel Irvine and Steve Cram catch up on the day's action and events so far, with a look at all the winners and losers.

**Olympic Grandstand
1.40-5.00pm BBC ONE**

Either Clare Balding or Craig Doyle present more live action, joining Team GB's medal hopes on the judo mats or in the Velodrome.

**Olympic Report
5.00-6.00pm BBC ONE**

Steve Rider and Sue Barker take over the baton to present another catch-up on the day's winners and losers; they also go to the pool for the swimming finals and the early evening athletics action.

**Olympic Grandstand
6.00-10.30pm BBC ONE/TWO**

Steve Rider and Sue Barker present live action from the main stadium, as the evening



Clare Balding and Craig Doyle are up late to round up all the day's action and Team GB's performances. They capture the highs and lows of the competition and find out who the personalities are in these Games.

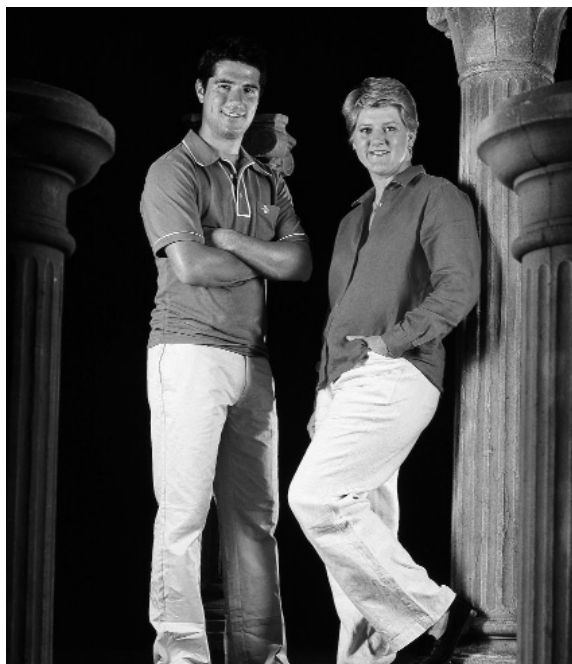
The Paralympics 17-28 September

**Paralympic Grandstand
6.00-7.30pm BBC TWO**

Clare Balding presents live action, for the first time ever, from the Paralympics. Viewers can catch the great Paralympic moments as they happen and experience the triumph and tears of Team GB's Paralympians.

competition begins. Viewers can join them for all the major event finals in track and field, the pool and in gymnastics.

**Olympics Today
10.35pm-12.00am BBC ONE**



Selected highlights and Team GB medal hopes

Friday 13 August

The spectacle of the Opening Ceremony raises the curtain on the 2004 Olympic Games.

Saturday 14 August

Matthew Pinsent begins his quest for his fourth Olympic rowing gold medal without, for the first time, his former team-mate, Sir Steve Redgrave. In the judo, Craig Fallon could take the first Team GB medal of the Games. One of the biggest rivalries in Athens gets under way today as both Ian Thorpe and Michael Phelps begin their Olympic campaigns in the pool. Ian Thorpe, the golden boy of the 2000 Games, will be looking to repeat his success while Phelps will be aiming to avenge defeats he suffered at the hands of Thorpe.

Sunday 15 August

Nicole Cooke won't be stopping to take in the famous Athenian landmarks as she cycles around Athens' roads in the Women's Road Race. James Gibson competes in the Men's 100m Breaststroke and Ian Peel takes his first shots in the shooting competition in the Men's Trap.

Monday 16 August

Amir Khan, Team GB's only boxer in Athens, steps into the ring for his first lightweight bout.

Tuesday 17 August

Richard Faulds, one of the most successful athletes of the 2002 Commonwealth Games,

begins his quest for gold in the shooting – Men's Double Trap.

Wednesday 18 August

Pippa Funnell, one of Team GB's biggest medal hopes, is aiming for both a team and an individual gold as the equestrian three-day event reaches a climax. On the judo mats, Kate Howey is competing in the under 70kg category; and Ian Edmond is in the pool with hopes of a medal in the Men's 200m Breaststroke.

Thursday 19 August

Nathan Robertson and Gail Emms compete in the Badminton Mixed Doubles.

Friday 20 August

Today is the day the action begins on the track at the Olympic Stadium and one of Britain's favourite athletes, Denise Lewis, starts her defence of her heptathlon title. Jason Queally, who brought home Team GB's first gold from Sydney, is in the Velodrome for the Men's 1km Time Trial. Katy Sexton has a good chance of a medal in the Women's 200m Backstroke in the swimming competition.

Saturday 21 August "Super Saturday"

Today's action could see Team GB win four or more gold medals, in what is sure to be a super Saturday. Matthew Pinsent leads the Four, with James Cracknell, Alex Partridge and Steve Williams. Also in the rowing, the

Selected highlights and Team GB medal hopes

Women's pair – Cath Bishop and Katherine Grainger – is competing.

Team GB could see some more gold later in the day – still in the water, but in a very different kind of boat. Ben Ainslie, one of Sydney's sailing gold medallists, competes in the Finn Class and Shirley Robertson sets sail in the Yngling Class.

The Velodrome will be buzzing today as Bradley Wiggins goes for a medal in the Men's 4,000 Individual Pursuit and the GB Men's Team competes in the sprint.

Denise Lewis continues her defence in the heptathlon against rival Carolina Klüft, and, staying in the Olympic Stadium, the USA's Marion Jones runs in the 100m heat.

Sunday 22 August

Paula Radcliffe, one of Britain's most successful and well-liked athletes, takes to the streets of Athens looking to bring home a gold in the marathon. Beth Tweddle is a real medal hope in the gymnastics, on the uneven bars. Mark Lewis-Francis bears Britain's hopes for a medal in the 100m, as he runs in his heat this evening. The Women's Doubles Finals are scheduled today and all tennis fans will be wondering whether the most successful female tennis player of all time, Martina Navratilova, will be in it.

Monday 23 August

In the Velodrome, Britain's Men's 4,000 Team go in the Pursuit.

Tuesday 24 August

Dean Macey begins a long journey in the decathlon, to try to go one better than in Sydney where he narrowly missed out on a gold medal.

Wednesday 25 August

A triumvirate of Team GB women – Jodie Swallow, Michelle Dillon and Julie Dibens – take on the rest of the world – and each other – in their fight for a medal in the women's triathlon.

Thursday 26 August

Tim Don takes on some of the world's fittest men in the triathlon, and Simon Hiscocks and Chris Draper compete in the Sailing 49er Class.

Friday 27 August

Georgina Harland and Kate Allenby compete in the women's modern pentathlon, looking to emulate the success of their former teammate, Steph Cook, who won gold at the Sydney Olympics. Jade Johnson competes in the Women's Long Jump.

Saturday 28 August

Two of Britain's most enduring athletes are competing in the main stadium today. Kelly Holmes runs in the Women's 1,500m and Steve Backley will be in the field in the Men's Javelin. Team GB's sprinters compete in, what is for many, the highlight of the track events, the 4x100m Relay.

Sunday 29 August

Sarah Stevenson carries Team GB's final medal hopes in the Taekwondo under 67kg class.

The Closing Ceremony brings down the curtain on the biggest sporting spectacle in the world.

Please note: This information is correct at the time of going to press.

Broadcasting the Athens Olympic Games: the biggest challenge ever faced by BBC Sport

For the people behind the scenes, delivering the Athens Olympic Games to British audiences will represent one of the biggest challenges ever faced by BBC Sport.

Even for BBC Sport's award-winning duo, Dave Gordon, Head of Major Events, and Martin Hopkins, executive producer of the British coverage of the Games, Athens will be a far greater test than any previous Games.

"We will be broadcasting more hours of coverage than ever before – more than 1,200 hours in total," reveals Dave Gordon. "There will be 250 hours of coverage on BBC One and Two and more than 1,000 hours of coverage via interactive television, where digital viewers will be able to choose from five different events. And, for the first time ever, UK broadband viewers will be able to see the Games – live and highlights – via their desktops."

Dave continues: "Whether we show events on BBC One or BBC Two will vary throughout the Games but BBC One will effectively become the main Olympic channel. Our top priority will be to show all the best Olympic moments live to our audiences."

The amount of planning that goes into broadcasting the world's biggest sporting event is enormous. The BBC's preparations, led by Martin Hopkins, began almost as soon as the Sydney Games' Closing Ceremony finished.

"Co-ordinating the logistics of all the people going out to work on the event is a huge undertaking in its own right and Athens has

probably been the most challenging in my period," confesses Martin. "Fortunately, I am able to rely on a very experienced team who has also worked on five summer Olympics, including senior project manager Penny Wood and engineering chiefs Paul Mason and Steve Goodey, who are committed to keeping the BBC coverage at the cutting edge."

It's a huge venture but Dave and Martin are best placed to take on such a task. They collected the International Olympic Committee's Gold Award for BBC Sport's coverage of the Sydney Olympic Games, an award for the best television coverage in the world during the 2000 Games. This was the second time the BBC had collected the top Olympic broadcasting award. The BBC was also awarded a BAFTA for its coverage of the Sydney Games.

"Undoubtedly it's a great honour to have won such prestigious awards and a tremendous tribute to the team. But we can't keep looking backwards; the onus is on us to move forward. We have to keep developing, innovating and improving the quality of our coverage for our viewers," says Dave.

Martin believes the Olympics is ideal for interactive television, which will, this year, offer digital viewers a choice of four extra events in addition to the main coverage on BBC One or BBC Two. Freeview audiences will be able to choose from an extra two events.

"Before the arrival of digital television thousands of hours of television coverage was

simply lost to the viewer – the Olympics provides well over 3,000 hours of television. Digital television enables us to offer more output and, in turn, give our audiences more choice about that they watch. In effect we are giving the viewer greater control,” Martin concludes.

Both men are confident the BBC’s Sport team will, once again, deliver the best coverage possible.

Martin sums up the aim of the BBC when he says: “I don’t take anything for granted but I’m working with the best of the best and we never lose sight of our main objective – to bring the best coverage to our audiences.”

bbc.co.uk/olympics and BBCi

Broadband

The Athens Olympics will see the most ambitious broadband service ever launched by the BBC.

For the first time, BBC Sport will be offering live coverage direct to viewers' desktops. This footage, both live and highlights, will be available to UK residential broadband customers.

Five streams will carry live footage direct from the Games and there will be comprehensive daily round-ups covering the best of the Olympics and Team GB's efforts to build on the successes of Sydney.

Andrew Thompson, Head of Development, New Media and Sports News, BBC Sport, says: "This is the first ever interactive Summer Olympics. Our broadband service complements our interactive TV offering – allowing us to offer a variety of platforms for licence-fee payers to access the world's greatest sporting event. Broadband take-up is growing rapidly in the UK and I am delighted we are able to offer such a comprehensive service."

The broadband service is the latest addition to BBC Sport's well-established website, bbc.co.uk/sport, which will be offering comprehensive coverage of the Olympics featuring news, reports, medal tables and timetables of events.

In addition to the best of BBC Television coverage, the new Olympic broadband service will enable viewers to hear commentary from BBC Radio Five Live.

Key features of the service include:

- high-quality live and on-demand video from Athens, in both Real and Windows Media Formats
- live action and highlights
- key interviews and venue guides
- surf, play games and catch up with the rest of the action while you watch video
- the best of BBC Sport Academy, where the stars show you how
- plan viewing with an in-depth programme guide
- catch up with the best of the rest of BBC Sport.

BBCi and Ceefax

BBCi will be offering viewers over 1,000 hours of live coverage plus a host of extra features.



Digital television viewers will enjoy unprecedented access to more hours of Olympic action than ever before and the choice of five streams of coverage. Digital satellite and cable viewers can choose from four extra events in addition to BBC One or BBC Two. Freeview users will be able to access two additional events.

Alongside the live coverage there will be a number of additional offerings including the daily schedule, an up-to-date medals table, results and the latest news from the Games. BBCi will also run an on-screen tickertape news service to update viewers with news as it happens.

A new development will be the BBCi schedule tool enabling viewers to navigate their way through the day's events across the five streams of coverage to plan their viewing. The Olympics service will be available from approximately 7.00am to 11.30pm.

For people on the move, bbc.co.uk will provide an Olympics update service to WAP-enabled mobile telephones, plus a highlights service for mobiles that can receive it.

BBC Television's Ceefax service will be offering comprehensive coverage of the Games with updates on the latest news and results. The same service will be available on digital text via all platforms – Freeview, cable and satellite.

BBC Resources on track for Olympics coverage

BBC Resources, the commercial facilities arm of the BBC, is partnering BBC Sport to provide coverage for the 2004 Athens Olympic and Paralympic Games. BBC Resources has been working with BBC Sport and BBC Technology to design the area within the dedicated International Broadcast Centre (IBC), and will be providing staff from all areas of the business including BBC Outside Broadcasts, BBC Post Production and BBC Studios to provide coverage from Athens.

Traditionally, the main coverage of the Games comes from a broadcaster based in the country that hosts the Games. This year, the host broadcast will be provided by Athens Olympic Broadcasting (AOB), contracted by ATHOC. AOB will be responsible for producing the international venue coverage, and delivering the signals (totalling around 80) to the IBC. AOB will then deliver an international signal package comprising 40 feeds to rights-holding broadcasters and unions in the IBC – in the BBC's case, via EBU facilities.

BBC Sport takes the broadcast rights in the UK via the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) which provides technical and operational facilities for its members. As the rights holder, the EBU receives an International Signal Package (40 feeds) from AOB and distributes them to its members, including the BBC.

The IBC, the broadcasting hub of the Games, is located alongside the OAKA complex, which includes the main stadium and several other major venues. The total IBC space is around 100,000 sq m. Paul Mason, Chief Technical Co-ordinator, BBC Resources, has been working with his team over the last two years to design

the BBC's temporary broadcast complex and BBC Technology has partnered DEGA to complete the build on the site.

Facilities in the BBC's 999 sq m area in the centre will include two production control rooms, two sound control rooms, nine VT edit pairs, six non-linear edit suites and 15 VTR record banks, as well as graphics and office areas. In addition, staff across all areas of BBC Resources will be on site in Athens to manage the output for BBC Sport. They will work alongside staff from BBC News, BBC Nations and Regions and BBC Interactive. The Main Production Control Suite will allow venue coverage from the host as well as BBC Commentary from 25 venues. BBC Studios and BBC Post Production staff will be on hand to provide studio crew and editors. In addition, BBC Outside Broadcasts will provide fixed OBs and mobile satellite news gathering (SNG) units.

This year there will be a BBC Interactive Control Room, from which BBCi producers can select up to five of the available sources to route to London BBC Television Centre. There will also be a Production Control Area for BBC Nations and Regions and BBC News transmissions. They will each have their own production and office space within the BBC complex as well as a "stand-up" position with a backdrop of the main Olympic Stadium.

Out in the field, BBC Outside Broadcasts' operation, headed up by Steve Goodey, Engineering Manager, BBC Outside Broadcasts, will provide a major OB at the OAKA complex, including unilateral cameras at athletics and swimming and disk-based fast-turnaround editing. The three SNG units will

be small, flexible satellite-equipped units with the ability to operate out of around 15 venues with pre-allocated compound space, or anywhere else in or around Athens. BBC Sport will also have an Olympic Village Camera. Entirely remote-controlled from the IBC, it will be used to provide interviews with athletes from the British team.

The complete BBC programme for BBC One and BBC Two will originate in Athens. BBCi will also send 4/5 feeds back to BBC Television Centre in London where the final programme will be put together. To ensure that the circuits back to London are reliable, a resilient STM-1 (155Mb/s) fibre from IBC to London has been set up to carry BBC One contribution, BBCi (5 circuits), return vision circuits from London, voice and telephone communications with TV Centre as well as access to the BBC computer network for over 50 PCs. A full-time satellite link from the IBC "Dish Farm" is also being supplied by the EBU carrying contributions for BBC Two and BBC Nations and Regions.

BBC Outside Broadcasts will provide a brand-new satellite links vehicle, acting as a "command and control centre", providing downlinking and communications for the BBC SNG units, a path to London for BBC News and private monitoring vision feeds at locations around Athens. They have leased dedicated space segment on satellite for this purpose.

IBC Installation began on 7 June. A further operation is planned for the Paralympics Games based in the same IBC facility.

Mike Southgate, Managing Director, BBC Resources, comments on the deal: "This is a key year in the sporting calendar with the Olympics being one of the events taking centre stage. BBC Resources is on track to provide BBC Sport with unrivalled coverage of the 2004 Athens Olympic and Paralympic Games."

The complete television team

Ceremonies – Opening and Closing**Archery****Athletics****Badminton****Basketball****Beach volleyball****Boxing****Canoeing****- Flatwater****- Slalom****Cycling****- Track****- Road****- Mountain bike****Equestrian****- Dressage****- Three-day eventing****Football****Gymnastics****- Artistic****- Rhythmic****- Trampoline****Hockey****Judo****Modern Pentathlon****Rowing****Sailing****Shooting****Swimming****- Diving****Table Tennis****Taekwondo**

Barry Davies

Eddie Butler

Steve Cram, Michael Johnson, Colin Jackson,
Jonathan Edwards, Sally Gunnell, Brendan
Foster, Paul Dickenson, Stuart Storey

David Mercer, Gill Clark

Bob Ballard, Stuart Storey

Matt Chilton

Jim Neilly, Richie Woodhall

Garry Herbert

Paul Dickenson

Hugh Porter, Gary Sutton

Hugh Porter, Gary Sutton

Hugh Porter, Gary Foorde

Michael Tucker, Steve Hadley

Michael Tucker

Michael Tucker, Lorna Clarke

Barry Davies, Tony Gubba, Angus Loughran

Barry Davies, Mitch Fenner, Christine Still

Mitch Fenner

Mitch Fenner

Nick Mullins, Sean Kerly

Harry Gration, Nicola Fairbrother

Dougie Donnelly, Steph Cooke

Garry Herbert, Gillian Lyndsey, Dan Topolski,

Sir Steve Redgrave

Richard Simmons

Eddie Butler

Sharron Davies, Adrian Moorhouse,

Andy Jameson

Bob Ballard, Chris Snode

Matthew Syed

Harry Gration, Colin Daley

Tennis
Triathlon
Volleyball
Water Polo
Weightlifting

John Lloyd, Tracy Austin
Stuart Storey
Matt Chilton
Bob Ballard
Dougie Donnelly

Presentation team

Reporters

Sue Barker, Steve Rider, Hazel Irvine, Steve
Cram, Clare Balding, Craig Doyle
Garry Richardson, Phil Jones, Suzi Perry,
Jill Douglas, Rishi Persad

Sue Barker



Name: Sue Barker

First BBC job: Sue made her BBC Sport debut co-presenting the evening programme from *Wimbledon 93*, with Harry Carpenter.

Career highlights: Formerly Britain's No. 1 tennis player and world number three. In 1998, Sue won the TRIC award for Sports Presenter/Reporter of the Year. Sue received an MBE in February 2000.

Olympic experience: 1996 Atlanta Olympics and 2000 Sydney Olympics plus the Winter Olympic Games in 1994, 1998 and 2002.

It's the occasion that welcomes simply the best – and, as award-winning presenter Sue Barker prepares to jet off to bring coverage of Athens 2004, she reveals why she believes the Olympic Games is the most all-embracing sporting event in the world.

Sue, who will be co-presenting with Steve Rider, explains: "There are people like Stephanie Cook, who took gold in the modern pentathlon in Sydney in 2000, who was training to be a doctor and now is a doctor.

"These people have full-time jobs, but are training for the Olympics and winning gold. She was terrific. It's fantastic to be so fit and so good, with a full-time job as well, and that's what's so special about the Olympics."

She continues: "You admire the 'professional' athletes, such as those in the track and field, who are training 24 hours a day, every day of the week. And yet you have these other people who are keeping down jobs and training in their spare time, and are still going over and can become Olympic champions. In which other event could you have something like that?"

Former tennis ace Sue, who was awarded the MBE in 2000, is already flying the flag for London's bid to host the Olympics in 2012.

"I think our chances are very good," she declares. "I was involved in the launch in January, so I actually got to read up a lot about it and about the other cities, and I think we've got a really good chance.

"I think the regeneration of the area in East London is going to be a big plus for us," she reasons. "I think that is what the IOC will be looking at because, obviously, what they want to leave is a legacy of the Olympics."

Realistically, she adds: "I know that transport is a huge problem for us and everyone who commutes knows that. But they're the issues

we've got to address if we're really seriously going to bid for it and I do see it as a sort of Paris-London fight."

Covering an event as huge as the Olympics is, says Sue, "absolutely thrilling".

"I never thought I'd be at an Olympics, especially being a tennis player, because the sport only came in after I'd retired. But I've done Atlanta and Sydney and it is incredible – it's the adrenalin rush. We find that our programme is changing all the time because, although you can have a running order and a programme idea because you've got your schedule for that day, suddenly, someone does something magnificent somewhere else and it all changes.

"Sydney was lovely because Britain did well – it was all so exciting and uplifting. I really hoped that it would boost British sport tremendously and I think it did initially. I just hope they do as well because, otherwise, everything that's written is going to be rather negative and, when you're involved in sport, that's a real shame."

Sue, making her first visit to Athens, is far from negative. She declares: "You do get tired, because it's a long event, but when I'm sitting in that studio in the track and field stadium, watching the greatest, you think, 'how can there be a down part to that?' And if Paula [Radcliffe] is fit and doing well, I'll be at the end when, hopefully, she wins her gold medal and that's going to be an absolute thrill for me."

Sue's predictions for British glory are cautious, but she again singles out Paula.

"I admire her immensely," she says emphatically. "I watched her at the London Marathon and I remember, at 18 miles, she was doing five-minute miles! I was thinking, 'this woman is superhuman'. And the way she

sprinted up the Mall! If I'd have started at the end of the Mall and sprinted with her, she would have won – and that was after 26 miles!

"She's an amazing athlete, but such a normal person – so nice and sweet. She's an absolute dream to interview and always so obliging – she gives sport such a good name. So I'd be really thrilled for her to do well."

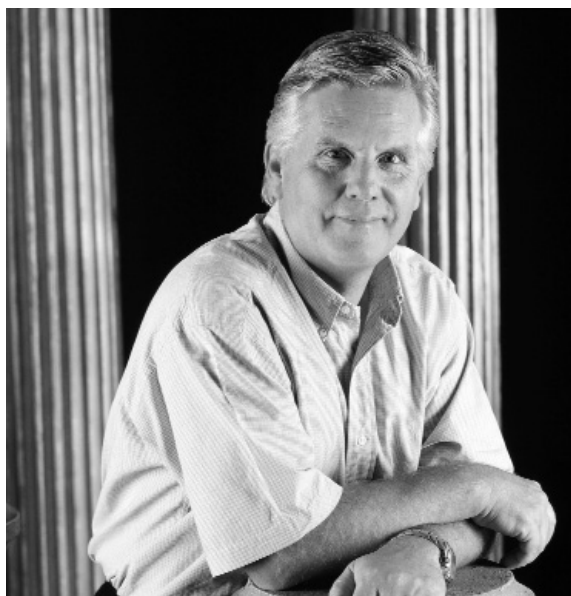
One of Sue's earliest and most treasured memories of the Games is Mary Peters garnering glorious gold in the pentathlon in the 1972 Munich Olympics.

"I always remember when she won her gold," she recalls. "I was watching with my parents and I was quite feisty as a kid. My coach encouraged me to be vocal and, I suppose, a little bit aggressive. This was when I was young – I changed a bit later on!" she quips.

"I remember the manner in which Mary won – how gracious she was. Her smile, and the way she took it on, was infectious to watch. It was someone thoroughly enjoying it, being so nice to all the people she was competing against, and you thought, 'that's the way sport should be'. And I remember my mum turning to me and saying, 'I'd love you to be like her'. It's something that stayed with me and I think I changed my outlook in a way. I've met Mary and she knows she was the one I looked up to and we've become really good friends."

And Sue reveals: "I see her now and she's still my idol – she still works out, she's as fit as a fiddle and she's done so much for sport over in Northern Ireland. I take my hat off to her and I still admire her."

Steve Rider



Name: Steve Rider

First BBC job: Steve joined BBC Sport in 1985, presenting *Grandstand* and *Sportsnight*, before taking over from Des Lynam as main presenter of *Grandstand* in 1992.

Career highlights: Steve has won two Royal Television Society awards for presentation and documentary work and has twice been named Sports Presenter of the Year.

Olympic experience: Presenting at several Summer and Winter Olympic Games

Award-winning presenter Steve Rider is once again at the undisputed pinnacle of world sport, bringing viewers all the drama and excitement as it unfolds in Athens. But this lord of the rings, a veteran of recent Games, admits that helming such a huge event can be daunting.

He explains: "The presenters come in at the last stage of the whole operation. It is a feeling

of responsibility that you are the last piece in the whole jigsaw of planning that's gone on for five or six years and it is the one event on the BBC Sport calendar that gives you a real feeling of a BBC team at work across not only television, but also radio, online and everything else that we do."

An encyclopaedic knowledge of all sports isn't part of Steve's preparation for this marathon project.

"For the presenters who work on it, like Sue (Barker) and myself, it is a different kind of style of preparation than the actual commentators, who need to know absolutely every element of how the sport works. As presenters, you have to know a little bit about everything, and I tend to think that we are the conduit between the commentators and the audience back home who, especially with a lot of Olympic sports, are coming to it fairly fresh.

"So our great safety net is that we can be the ones who ask the naïve questions on behalf of the audience! We have our own ways of keeping in touch with all the development that there is in Olympic sports, but I think it's important to arrive at these events with as clear a head as possible and not weighed down by volumes of research because it then enables you to react a little bit more spontaneously and react as a fan."

Athens, with its great historic significance as the Olympic venue, has had to clear several hurdles under the unrelenting glare of the global spotlight, but Steve remains unfazed by the prophets of doom and their predictions that the city will not be ready.

“It is a nervous time, but every single Games that I’ve worked on in recent years has been prefaced by this blind panic that the wretched thing isn’t going to be ready. Sydney was the same, Barcelona was the same; Atlanta was the only one that expressed any confidence that they were going to be ready but, when the Games came, they weren’t.”

The greatest highlight of presenting such a large event is the clear knowledge, declares Steve, “that you are at the absolute summit of world sport. And when that combines with the kind of occasion that will give you some satisfaction as a spectator in terms of competition, or in terms of British success, then those highs become one of the peaks of your career.”

He adds: “There are things you remember and typical of that would have been Sir Steve Redgrave and the coxless four winning in Sydney because the whole of not only four years’ preparation, but also a 20-year Olympic career reached its climax at that one moment and the whole of our Olympic operation became distilled down to a couple of cameras on the shoreline as they all came ashore.”

Steve, who believes Sydney takes the gold medal for the best Games in recent years, is wary of making advance predictions for Great Britain’s prospects.

“Although,” he confides, “I would love to think that Paula Radcliffe is going to be fit enough to spearhead the whole athletic effort. I think a lot of the satisfaction within the Games depends on her inspirational presence. I think it’s going to be potentially a good Games in the pool, and the likes of Pippa Funnell will give us a lot to cheer in the equestrian events.”

Steve believes that, even in today’s troubled world, the Olympian ideals still hold good.

“The whole ideal of taking part and, maybe, not setting your sights on victory, but setting your sights on achieving something personally that you’ve not been able to achieve before, is all that the Olympics requires of you. The spirit of taking part and the spirit of competition is still as strong as ever.”

The Games pulls armchair viewers across the finishing lines of sporting history and Steve is in no doubt about their appeal.

He says decisively: “The Olympics is the end of four years’ hard work and the audience know that what they’re going to watch is the best in the world. The surroundings in Athens, however many cement mixers are still lying around, will be stunning and the backdrop will be stunning, and audiences will flock to it.”

The BBC’s Olympics coverage has been honoured in previous years by the IOC and Steve comments: “We’re particularly proud of the manner in which we bring the Olympics to the audience and we are the envy of a lot of other broadcasters throughout the world in terms of the scale and the coverage that we’re able to put on in terms of continuous hours, which very few broadcasters around the world are able to match.”

Steve is looking forward to “just about everything” as the Games unfold. “There is nothing at an Olympic level that doesn’t produce excitement,” he says.

Steve’s greatest Olympian of all time is Sir Steve Redgrave, voted the BBC’s Golden Sports Personality last December, and he singles out Mary Peters, who took gold in the pentathlon in Munich in 1972, as “our typical British Olympic hero – a woman-in-the-street kind of character being lifted by the Olympics to do very special things.”

Hazel Irvine



Name: Hazel Irvine

Born: St Andrews

First BBC job: Hazel joined BBC Scotland in August 1990 as presenter of its Friday night sports preview programme, *Sportscene*, before joining BBC Sport as a network programme presenter and sports news broadcaster in January 2000.

Career highlights: Aged 27, she presented *Grandstand*, becoming the youngest person ever to do so. She was also honorary president of Dumbarton FC's Supporters Association.

Olympic experience: 1992, 1996 and 2000 Summer Olympic Games and 1994, 1998 and 2002 Winter Olympics.

Bathed in sunshine in Athens' spectacular Panathenian Stadium last autumn, Hazel Irvine was in little doubt that the ancient Greek capital would take some beating as an Olympic venue. And despite the truly Herculean task that still faces the Games' organisers, the

popular BBC Sport presenter remains optimistic that the home of the first Olympians will provide plenty of golden moments this summer.

"Athens is maddening, it's irritating, it's hot, it's dusty ... and it's absolutely wonderful!" says Hazel, who fell in love with the city when she launched *Grandstand's* Olympic coverage there last year.

"I got a fairly intimate look at what was going on last autumn and I know everyone has focused on the negatives of the situation and whether it will be ready, but when I stood in this wonderful marble stadium built in 300 BC and looked across to the Acropolis, I just thought: 'This is it. This is where it all began. This is why we're doing this.' It was so exciting and inspiring – and if it does that for a spectator, just imagine what it's going to do for the athletes."

Athens, which will host a record 202 competing nations this August, will be Hazel's fifth Summer Games as a presenter, but she's been obsessed with the Olympics ever since Olga Korbut's 1972 success sent her, aged six, cart-wheeling down her street in St Andrews.

"The Olympics was, to me, the ultimate – it shaped a lot of my earliest sporting memories and it certainly shaped the direction of my sporting youth. I was fascinated by the athletes and desperate to be one," recalls Hazel, who got as far as competing at university level as a hurdler, while studying for her MA in History of Art, and is now credited with paving the way for female sports presenters.

"I wasn't dedicated enough, though, and never really had the talent. I also remember everyone

telling me that I could never be an athlete because they don't make any money ... I have to laugh when I look back on that now!"

Indeed, it's the vast sums of money involved in sport today that make the Olympic ideal more important than ever before, says the presenter.

"It's not the winning but the taking part' has long been an Olympic mantra, but I think we often lose sight of that now because sport is such big business," she says.

"Of course, watching people win gold medals and knowing it's the biggest and best thing that could ever happen to a sportsman or woman is a sheer delight. But when you see someone at the Olympics who clearly isn't going to win gold but they achieve a personal best – and you see their pride and satisfaction – you feel a wonderful sense of pride in that achievement as well.

"To me, that's the essential spirit of the Olympics. It's a constant source of stories of courage and bravery, sheer effort and guts. And experiencing that not just as a journalist but also as a sports fan is wonderful."

Among Hazel's most cherished Olympics memories are Cathy Freeman's history-making gold in Sydney 2000 ("I'd never experienced a night of athletics quite like it") and Derek Redmond's courageous performance at the 1992 Barcelona Games. The British 400m runner tore his hamstring 150m into the semi finals – but finished the race with the help of his father, to rapturous applause from the 65,000-strong crowd.

"I still get emotional now when I think about Redmond. He was in agony but he walked to the finish – it meant that much to him and it meant so much more to everyone who was watching him do it. You just don't get stories like that anywhere else."

This summer, Hazel is confident there will be some remarkable stories from the pool, where she kicks off her own Olympic odyssey. Making waves, she predicts, will be 19-year-old American Michael Phelps.

"People are already wondering whether he can be the new Mark Spitz. Can he win seven golds? That's a heck of a thing to ask, especially for someone of such tender years, but I think we're going to get some fantastic swimming from him. The Americans are really going to be up for it this year because the Aussies ruled in the pool in Sydney."

The presenter also has high hopes for Team GB, whom she believes have a decent shot at matching their medal performance in Sydney, when Britain scooped its biggest haul for 80 years, with 11 golds.

"A lot of our athletes have retired or moved on since Sydney but you look at the likes of Paula Radcliffe and Kelly Holmes and we've still got some wonderful talent. I also think the hard work has been done to get sports such as sailing, equestrianism and the modern pentathlon up to Olympic gold standards.

"Individually, it would be lovely to see gymnast Beth Tweddle get a medal ... and you just get the feeling it's going to come right for Mr Pinsent, too!"

Medals aside, Hazel hopes that Britain also will walk away from Athens with a renewed enthusiasm for London's 2012 Olympic bid.

"Something happens to a city when a major Games comes to town, something takes over. People feel differently about their city and there's a tangible sense of pride in it. I think we've already got that spirit in abundance in London and, if everyone gets behind it, that'll be a big selling point for us."

Steve Cram



Name: Steve Cram

Born: Gateshead

First BBC job: In January 1999, Steve joined BBC television and radio primarily as a presenter and athletics commentator.

Career highlights: One of the world's most successful middle-distance athletes of all time, Steve's career spanned three decades since appearing as a 17-year-old at the Commonwealth Games in 1978. His many achievements include six Gold Medals at Commonwealth, European and World Championships. In 1985 he broke World Records at 1,500m, 2,000m, and Mile, all within 19 days, the latter lasting almost nine years. In 1983, he was voted BBC Sports Personality of the Year and in 1986 he was awarded the MBE. He was recently named RTS Commentator of the Year 2003.

Olympic experience: Eighth in Olympic 1,500m, Moscow 1980, Silver medal in Olympic 1,500m, Los Angeles, 1984, and fourth in Olympic 1,500m, Seoul, 1988. Presenter and commentator in Sydney 2000.

When Steve Cram arrives in Athens for the Olympics he is likely to feel a warm, golden glow. This will have nothing to do with the hot August weather, but with the fact that he won gold in the 1,500m at the European Championships in Athens in 1982, his first major sporting achievement. This time, however, he won't be on the starting blocks but in the commentary box, which he calls the best seat in the house, and in the studio presenting. But even though he's front-row centre, he would still rather lace up his running shoes than knot his tie.

"If you said to me: 'What would you rather be doing in August?' I would say, 'I would rather be on the track.'" This doesn't, he hastens to add, detract from what he calls "a great second best" – presenting at the greatest show on earth. The upside of presenting, he reveals, is that he no longer has any sleepless nights.

Which is just as well, because Steve will be very busy at the Olympics in Athens, where he will add his expert opinion and analysis to the track and field events, including the marathon and the triathlon, plus get up bright and early to present Olympic Grandstand with Hazel Irvine. It will give him very little time for anything else, though he hopes to catch some of the swimming, a personal favourite. "Last time around it was all about Ian Thorpe and what he was going to do for the Games and the Australians ... He's not going to have it all his own way this time, so the pool is going to be interesting." He also has hopes that the British swimmers will, unlike in Sydney, be able to win a clutch of medals.

He's not quite as optimistic about Britain's chances in track and field, especially in his area of expertise, the men's middle-distance running events. "We struggle to get people even to

qualify. There is no guarantee that we will have more than one person going into the 1,500, for example; in the 800 maybe not anybody, that's how bad it is." To stress how competitive the men's events are, he says, "To be one of the top six would be really good."

The women's, luckily, is a very different story, with genuine medal chances in several events. "If you take Paula [Radcliffe] out of the equation, you still have Kelly Holmes, Hayley Tullett, who won a medal at the World Championships last year, Jo Pavey and Helen [Clitheroe] Pattinson ... You put Paula into the equation and the women's middle- and long-distance running seems very, very strong."

He also mentions 19-year-old Charlotte Moore, a young and hopeful prospect who ran under two minutes in the 800m at the Commonwealth Games in Manchester. "I hope she makes the team, because sometimes it's not just about winning medals but seeing who will be our medal winners in Beijing [in 2008]. You want them to come to a Games like Athens and learn and get the experience and perhaps scrape into the final.

"So it's not just about looking for the medal winners for me, but who are the next ones coming through, who are the surprises going to be?"

The stars of tomorrow are of particular concern to Steve, who thinks Britain doesn't do enough to nourish its talent. To drive this message home, Steve, dressed immaculately in the uniform of a politician – a blue-grey suit with red tie – is going to Downing Street this very afternoon to talk about TASS (Talented Athletics Scholarship Scheme). The idea is to grant promising young athletes sports scholarships to stay in Britain and study, instead of going abroad.

And it's the very issue of talent that again makes him sound a word of caution about the

London Olympic bid for 2012, even though he thinks it would be fantastic to host the Games. "If we have the Games in London, I want us to win medals. I don't understand why you'd want to have the Games and not the success. My slight concern is that we're ploughing a lot of energy and a lot of resources into winning the bid.

But if we do win the bid at this time next year, we have to think very quickly about how on earth we are going to ensure we win medals because that's not something you can do two years before."

As for Athens, Steve guesses that Britain will win around 20 to 30 medals in its traditionally strong events. "There are lots of individual performances which might crop up but, in terms of strength and depth, it's rowing, sailing, cycling and athletics where we'll get multi-medals. It's just a question of how many and which ones are gold and which ones are silver or bronze."

With a record 202 nations competing at this Olympics, up from Sydney's 199, that is not an unremarkable achievement. Steve puts it into perspective. "Going back 20, 25 years, we had a very strong Eastern bloc Russia, East Germany, the Americans were traditionally strong, as was Western Europe, and you'd get the odd African runner, whereas now you're as likely to get beaten by a guy from Namibia or a guy from Fiji."

Steve, who has a 14-year-old daughter and an 11-year-old son, can't dodge the inevitable question: could they be the Olympians of tomorrow, perhaps in 2012? Steve chuckles, "They'd like to be but my daughter does a lot of other sports; I got them to enjoy sports for what they are and if they end up picking something up then..." He trails off but all the indications are that a runner like Steve Cram doesn't come along every day and maybe not even every decade.

Clare Balding



Name: Clare Balding

First BBC job: In 1993, Clare presented the racing bulletin on Danny Baker's *Morning Edition* on BBC Radio 5. She then moved to BBC Radio Five Live when it launched in March 1994.

Career highlights: A leading amateur flat jockey in 1989 and 1990 and Champion lady rider in 1990. Clare first worked in television in 1994, making her debut at Royal Ascot, following a recommendation from Julian Wilson. She eventually replaced Wilson in December 1997, on his retirement. RTS Sports Presenter Of The Year 2003.

Olympic experience: Atlanta 1996 and Sydney 2000 Summer Olympics.

Clare Balding can look forward to having a lie in in Athens, where, together with Craig Doyle, she'll be hosting a late-night Olympics highlights programme for the duration of the

Games. This is a stark contrast to the show she presented in Sydney in 2000 when, due to the time difference, she was on air at the ungodly hour of 6am.

"Being on after 10pm this time, I think we can afford to have a sense of humour and a quirkiness to the programme, that perhaps the programmes covering the live events can't," says Clare, who is busy preparing for her third Olympics, having also covered events in Atlanta for BBC Radio.

"We're tuning into a different sort of audience at that time of night and we can show events that aren't necessarily the headlines, not just the 100m final, but we can also cover the stories like Eric the Eel and the Venezuelan woman at the Winter Olympics who came out of her luge – I just couldn't stop laughing at that, it was the funniest thing I'd ever seen!"

Clare's also hoping that audience participation will help form the show, as there will be a large interactive aspect, with viewers being able to send text messages and emails as the show is on air. "The nature of the texts and emails we get will, to some extent, dictate the tone. If you're getting a good response from people who are enjoying the show, then I think it really helps. I think it's about making people feel very comfortable and making them feel part of it, and enjoying it in a very British way."

Despite the late nights, Clare is adamant that she will get to see her favourite event, even though it'll mean burning the candle at both ends for a few days. "The three-day eventing is my favourite – I adore it. It's what I always wanted to do when I was young," says the former amateur flat jockey and champion lady

rider. "It'll mean working a long night and getting up very early in the morning, but it's worth it. I just love it, I would be absolutely mortified if I couldn't go," she laughs.

"I think we've probably got the strongest chance of a gold medal in the eventing. We've got a really strong team and I think they deserve all the attention they get. We got a silver medal in Sydney and they did great out there but, ever since, all the team wants is gold. Silver just wasn't good enough for them. They were actually really annoyed about it, which is pretty unusual for a British team – it's usually, 'Oh well done, we've finished second,' but this lot aren't like that – they really expect to win gold and nothing else will do!"

Eventing aside, Clare's also looking forward to seeing the long-distance runners – especially Paula Radcliffe – the rowers and the swimmers in action in Athens. "I think Ian Thorpe will be a big name again and there's bound to be another swimmer who can win a multitude of medals. The British swimmers were a disaster in Sydney but Bill Sweetenham, an Australian coach, has come in and just turned it around. He won't take anybody to the Games who he doesn't think can make a final. He's got some good swimmers on his hands at the moment. The whole attitude of the team is very different to how it was four, eight or even 12 years ago. Not since David Wilkie and Adrian Moorhouse have we had such a good team."

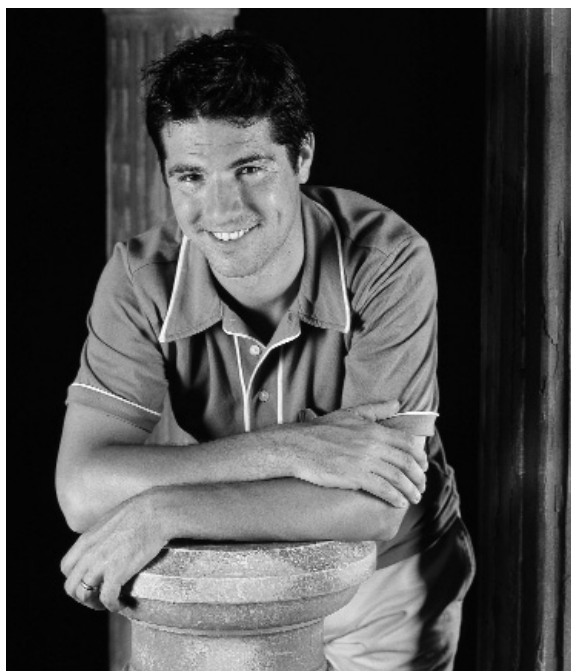
Clare's also optimistic that, despite Athens being given such a bad press in recent months, the hosts will come good and put on an Olympic Games to be proud of. "I know there's been a lot of stuff about Athens and I know there's the feeling that it's going to be a shambles, but I did Latin A Level and have always been interested in classical history so, for me, going to Greece, just to be in the place where the Olympics were founded, where the marathon was first run, will be really

interesting. It'll have a very deep cultural backdrop that neither Sydney nor Atlanta had so, for me, that'll be incredibly interesting."

One other nation that she hopes will be in the running for putting on an Olympic Games is, of course, the UK, and Clare is "hugely positive" at the prospect: "If you think about it, we've hosted a Rugby World Cup, a European Championship and a Commonwealth Games in recent years, but to actually know that, within our lifetime (God willing), we would host the Olympic Games, I think that says more about the global status of Great Britain than anything else can."

"I would consider it a very positive, bold statement and I can't see any reason why it would be bad for London. It's going to create jobs and will create a huge amount of interest, and it would revitalise the tourist industry. I think it would also change the way that we, the public, believe in our own capabilities to stage a major event."

Craig Doyle



Name: Craig Doyle

First BBC job: Reporter for BBC Norfolk in 1994.

Career highlights: In 2004, Craig became a main presenter on *Sunday Grandstand* and was a presenter/reporter on the BBC's Six Nations coverage. Craig has also covered golf, Wimbledon, racing and three years of British Superbikes for the BBC. Until earlier this year, he was the main presenter on BBC One's *Holiday* programme.

Olympic experience: Craig makes his debut at the 2004 Olympic Games.

The Olympic stage is, quite often, a place where dreams come true; for athletes, who somehow manage to push themselves just that little bit further to achieve a personal best or, if they're lucky, win a medal; and for BBC TV presenters, who have been dreaming of fronting sports programmes since they were knee-high.

One such presenter is Craig Doyle who, at the beginning of the year, took over the helm at *Sunday Grandstand*, which, in itself, was the stuff schoolboy dreams are made of: "It's funny, my mother found some interviews from when I got my first job in TV, about 10 years ago, and my dream job was presenting *Grandstand*," says the Irishman who, in 1997, became familiar as the face of *Holiday*, which he fronted until earlier this year. "And I was laughing about it with my mates – I still have the same mates from school – and, apparently, I was talking about it when I was nine or 10, that, one day, I would love to present *Grandstand*."

"Dealing with that is big enough and then they say, 'Can you go to the Olympics for three weeks,' and I can't quite believe it. I'm tremendously excited – I can't wait!"

Craig fronts the late-night highlights programme alongside Clare Balding, an Olympic veteran, who has presented at both Sydney, for BBC Television, and Atlanta, where she was a roving reporter for BBC Radio. "I think Clare's one of the best broadcasters on British television, and I'm not just saying that," he says of his co-host.

He admits that he'll be delighted to see any of the Games' myriad events in Athens but is particularly hoping he'll be trackside for the athletics in the Olympic Stadium. "I'd also love to go down to the lakes and see the boys compete in the fours out in the water – it's an awesome sight when you see those guys in full flight. I'd like to be on the route for the marathon, too."

A keen runner himself (until recently, when he tore the ligaments in his ankle), Craig has taken part in a couple of marathons over the

last few years, his first being in New York, in 2001. "My first marathon was unbelievable. You go through the five districts in New York, so you go over loads of bridges, and the finish line is in Central Park. The crowds were thick all the way through – there must've been a million people en route. The marathon is the first time I actually cried at the end of an event. You're so tired – it's tiredness like you've never felt before."

Despite his exhaustion, Craig racked up an impressive three hours and 40 minutes at his first attempt, but his ankle injury has probably put paid to his marathon career. "It's not even a sports injury," he laughs. "I was over in Australia at the [Rugby] World Cup and I was out having a few jars after Ireland beat Australia and I went over on my ankle. I've been having physio on it and I started running again on an even ground but it was too sore. Even playing golf's a bit tricky. Listen to me, I'm 33 years of age – I sound middle-aged!" he laughs.

Another, perhaps surprising, event that Craig is looking forward to seeing is the weightlifting. "I'd love to go to that. I used to watch a lot of weightlifting with my dad – he loves it.

"Do you know something? I don't really care what the event is, it's the Olympics!" he grins.

While Craig will obviously be cheering on Team GB, he'll also have a keen eye on how the Irish athletes do at the Games in Athens. "We're having a bit of a hard time at the moment. Sonia O'Sullivan is coming towards the end of her career; I don't know if she's going to be able to do much. We've got a chance with some very good walkers, and we've got a very good female hurdler, but I think the standard is just so high in the sprint event. There's a few hopes here and there – we'll see.

"It's great to see the Irish flag raised in the

Olympic Stadium and to hear the national anthem played on an Olympic stage because it doesn't happen to us very often."

Having spent the last seven years travelling the world with both *Holiday* and *Tomorrow's World*, Craig knows only too well what Athens is like at the height of summer. "Athens in August is hellish. It's about 40 degrees plus, humid, smoggy and nasty."

But his travels have meant that, over the years, he's been able to watch various other countries' Olympic coverage. "I watched a lot of American coverage for Sydney – I watched the Opening Ceremony in Florida. It's really funny actually because you find all the commentators read off the same fact sheets. But the Americans just go for it completely.

"It was a bit over the top but they're really into it. High camp. Mind you, not as camp as the closing ceremony with Kylie on the giant shoe! Brilliant – I loved it!"

Jonathan Edwards



Name: Jonathan Edwards

First BBC job: Last year, Jonathan was a regular presenter on *Songs Of Praise* and front man for BBC One's landmark documentary on St Paul. Since retiring he has become an integral part of the BBC's athletics team.

Career highlights: In 1995, Jonathan set a world record in the triple jump at the World Championships with a jump of 18.29m; to date, no one has even come close to this distance. In 2002, Jonathan became only one of four athletes who have held all four major titles (Olympic, World, European and Commonwealth) at one time. Jonathan was voted BBC Sports Personality of the Year in 1995 and was awarded the CBE in the New Year Honours List 2000.

Olympic Experience: 1992 Barcelona Olympics, 1996 Atlanta Olympics (silver medal), 2000 Sydney Olympics (gold medal).

Jonathan Edwards is looking forward to a whole new Olympic experience as part of the BBC's team in Athens – actually getting to see something of the Games!

Though the triple jumper has competed at three Olympics – culminating in his gold medal in Sydney – he admits that he never really took full advantage of his athlete's accreditation.

"I was really just focused on my own event," he explains. "I would have half an eye on what was going on before my event, and even during my event, if there was something going on that I had a particular interest in I'd keep an eye out for it, but once my event had finished I would normally go home to be with my family. So I've never sat through an entire Games, which I will do in Athens – it will be a completely new experience for me."

And he's expecting it to be every bit as tough as when he was competing.

"It's a different challenge and one in which I feel I've still got a lot to learn," he says of his new role as commentator and expert pundit in the BBC studio. "I've the utmost admiration for commentators, it's a very difficult art – and I only do field events which is not nearly as difficult as working on a track event, when you've got to pick out who's in the lead, who's second and so on. I'm looking forward to it but I know it'll be a tough few weeks out there."

He's been limbering up over the past few months presenting *Look North*, the BBC's local news programme for the North-East of England.

"It's been great fun," he smiles, "although the first one I did, I was petrified – it was among

the most nervous I've been. And it seems like a small thing but one of the advantages is that it's just five minutes from home."

That's important to this devoted family man – he and his wife have two young sons – whose feet have hardly touched the ground since he retired from competition at the end of 2003. "It's probably been the busiest seven months of my life since I retired. If you think of the Olympic Games, I'd compete for an hour and a half and all the rest of the time I'm on my own, nobody's making any demands of me. But now I've been travelling away from home quite a lot – more than I was as an athlete. And if I did go away training we would tend to do it as a family, so it's a much more pressurised existence now."

At least that's given him an excuse to abandon his gruelling training routine.

"I've not been in the gym once, apart from to visit people, since I retired," he grins. "I play some tennis, cricket and golf, and we often go to the Lakes and walk ... and that's it."

"But to be honest it's been a gradual process, since the Olympics in 2000 I've taken my foot off the pedal and almost freewheeled in to the end of my career. I really feel I finished at the right time and I've never for a moment wished I was an athlete again; I got every last ounce of juice from my athletics career, I don't think I had anything else left to give when the time came. And it is nice not to have to worry about getting up in the morning and feeling in tip-top condition, thinking what I do now might affect my performance in eight months' time."

His participation in athletics these days is purely as a spectator, keeping track of what's going on in the domestic and international meetings and chatting to competitors and coaches to ensure that when he's got a microphone in his hand, he'll have an insider's feel for what's going on and can give the

viewers information beyond that which they can see on the screen. He also knows a thing or two about what the athletes will be going through mentally as they prepare for their event, and admits that, for him, the Sydney Olympics was a very emotional experience.

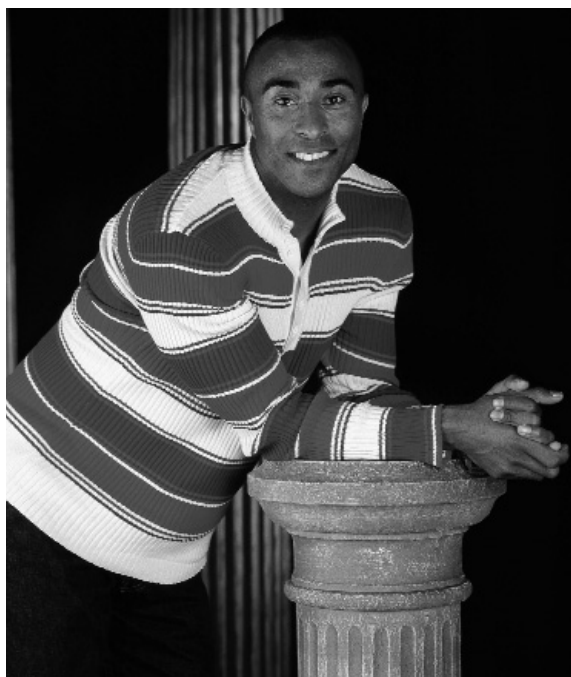
"I thought this might be my last chance of winning a gold medal; I felt that pressure," reveals this normally calm and self-assured man. "I felt very nervous, I can remember in the warm-up wishing I was anywhere else but there."

It all came good for him in the end to give him the rare accolade of the Grand Slam: all four major titles at once – Olympics, World and European Championships and Commonwealth Games – not to mention the world record at triple jump, which he still holds. But how does someone who's universally acclaimed as such a nice guy become so competitive?

"It's just part of my make-up," he offers. "It was enough to be out there and to want to perform to my best – and obviously to win, because I was in a position where I knew I could. When I wasn't the world record holder, when I wasn't winning the gold medal, I was still very competitive but then I reached a level where I expected to win if I performed to my potential."

"Most of the guys you meet off the track are pretty nice guys, it's just when they get into that arena, whether it's a rugby player, a cricket player, a golfer, there's a sort of steely determination which you need if you're going to win."

Colin Jackson



Name: Colin Jackson

Born: Cardiff

First BBC job: Colin kick started his broadcasting career by co-hosting the BBC sports talent search *Born To Win* last year.

Career highlights: Champion hurdler Colin ranked in the world top 10 for 16 years. He was World No. 1 from 1992-1994 and was in the world's top three for the last seven years of his career. He is the reigning world record holder outdoors (12.91secs, World Title, Stuttgart, 1993) and at 60m indoors (7.30secs, Sindelfingen, 1994) and, since setting a European junior record of 13.44secs in 1986, went on to set seven European, eight Commonwealth and nine UK records at 110m.

Olympic experience: 2000 Sydney Olympics (fifth place); 1996 Olympic Games, (fourth place); 1992 Olympic Games (seventh place), 1988 Olympic Games (silver medal)

Sporting superstar Colin Jackson may have hung up his spikes and left his competing days behind him but, with the Olympic Games just around the corner, the former hurdler is heading off to Athens to go behind the scenes and provide expert coverage for the BBC.

“I’m really looking forward to the Olympic Games, and it will be the first time I’m doing the Games without actually taking part,” the 36-year-old Welshman says excitedly. “So I’m going to see what it’s going to be like on the other side, which should be really interesting.”

Having started his preparation for the Games, trying to absorb as much information as he possibly can, without really making it an effort, Jackson is now eager to get to Athens and commentate on and analyse all the action. However, he finds the prospect of commentating a little more daunting than actually taking part in the Games itself.

“From this side, it’s a little bit more difficult. When you’re a performer you only need to think about your performance and nothing else. But when you’re commentating, you have to build up a little case study of every individual that you’re going to talk about and mention, and every individual sport that you’re going to commentate on.”

So, what does Jackson think about our British hopefuls? Who should we be looking out for this year?

“I think Britain has as good a chance as any other nation for winning medals this year. You might think that’s a coward’s way out, but the sport has changed. Years ago there was a structure, and you knew who was going to win the 100m title.

It would be between two athletes, and that was happening in every single event. Now that doesn't exist. Now anyone could win the Olympic Gold in the 100m. If someone performs well on the day, then the opportunity can be taken."

Having said that, Jackson is particularly looking forward to watching his former GB teammate, Paula Radcliffe, run the 10,000m, or the marathon, whichever she chooses to run in.

"Long distance running is phenomenal and I can't wait to see Paula run. I'm also looking forward to seeing a young hurdler, called Felix Sanchez, of the Dominican Republic do very well. He's a world champion and I really do think he has the ability to break the world record."

When asked if he gets the chance for much time off during the Games, the Welsh sports star laughs out loud.

"During the Games? It ain't happening! If you want to do a good job, and be professional, you've got to commit and put a lot of time and effort into it. It's not easy."

Amazingly, Jackson doesn't miss competing at a professional level and is quite happy being behind the scenes this year instead of in the limelight.

"It's like asking a prisoner if they enjoyed their time inside! Seriously though, it was fantastic and I really enjoyed it but, in the end, I found it hard to raise my game and to raise my level, because my intensity wasn't there any more and my mind became very tired of constantly trying to perform, perform, perform. Sometimes in your mind, you think: 'I'm so tired now and I don't really want to be doing this any more. I just want to have some fun.' And that's what I don't miss."

Earlier this year, Jackson acted as expert judge and mentor for the competitors in the BBC One series, *Born To Win*, a sporting competition for 16 to 18-year-olds aimed at finding the sporting talent of the future.

"I really enjoyed being involved in that and learning something new. It's something I'd like to do more of, but I'm not very good at it! I want to practice and get better. I'd quite like to get into the production side of things too."

With thoughts turning to the Olympic Games in 2012, what does Jackson think Great Britain's prospects are for playing hosts?

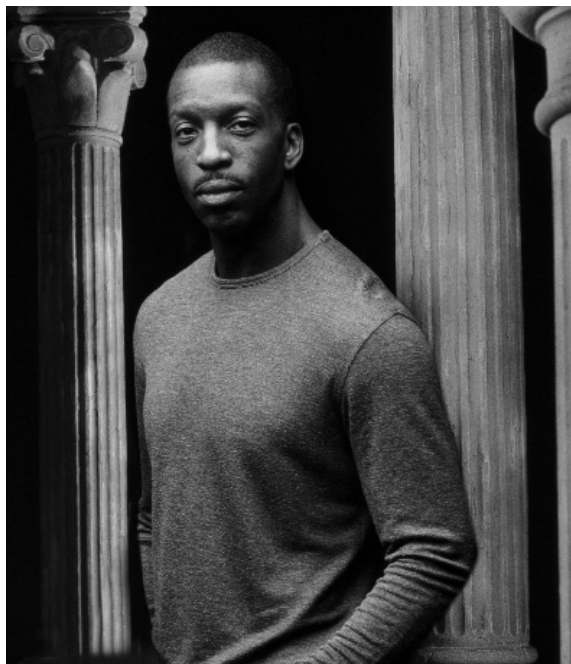
"I'd love us to host the Games in 2012 and I think we're good enough to do that. I'm all for it and it would be wonderful. Having competed in the Olympic Games before, I know what an advantage the home athletes get when they compete in front of a home crowd. It really lifts you.

The earlier we know if we're going to host the Games, the earlier we can prepare. The year 2012 gives us a long time to get the 18 and 19-year-olds ready, to get them just right when the time comes. It would be so great for us as a nation too."

Once the Athens Games are over, Jackson is looking forward to a nice holiday and lots of well-earned rest.

"I'm feeling lucky as I've had lots of things offered to me, so it will give me a time to sit back and reflect. Hopefully, the Games will open up more horizons for me, and I'm looking forward to lots and lots of job offers flooding in!"

Michael Johnson



Name: Michael Johnson

Born: Dallas, United States

First BBC job: Guest summariser at the Edmonton World Championships in 2001.

Career highlights: Johnson had the greatest consecutive seasons of any sprinter in history in 1990 and 1991. No one else has ever been ranked No. 1 in the world in both 200m and 400m. Johnson is the only sprinter in history to run sub 20 seconds for 200m and sub 44 seconds for 400m during a career and in the same meet. He was soon dubbed "World's Fastest Human". He went to the Sydney Olympics in 2000 having won the 400m at the last four world championships.

Olympic experience: 1992 Barcelona (4x400m gold), 1996 Atlanta Olympics (200m gold in world record time of 19.32 secs; 400m gold in Olympic record time of 43.49secs), 2000 Sydney Olympics (400m gold and 4x400m gold).

Unquestionably one of the greatest Olympians of all time and nicknamed the "world's fastest human", Michael Johnson literally sprinted his way into sporting history. Blazing a trail of glory, with an astonishing 18 gold medals, Michael never thought he'd win another award after retiring from athletics in 2001 – but he was wrong. Michael was awarded Best Sports Pundit for 2003 at the RTS Television Sports Awards in London this May. So it seems he'll be in top form when he arrives in Athens for the Olympics, to add his perfect commentating skills to the BBC's own hand-picked Olympics team.

Michael is modest about his achievements off the track when he says, "I don't think I'm naturally gifted to broadcast, so to be able to win an award ... really is an honour." Michael started commentating on a limited basis in 1997 but this is the first time he'll be at the Olympics as a pundit and not as an athlete.

Rather surprisingly, it doesn't sound like he misses being in the thick of competition, under the glaring lights of the stadium and the watchful eye of thousands. "You know, the thing is, if I wanted to be there as an athlete, then I would, because I wasn't forced to retire because of an injury or something. I retired because I had done everything I possibly could and it was time for me to move on. It was fortunate that I was able to accomplish everything in my career that I wanted to and, given that, there was no more motivation for me in athletics."

He may have lost his motivation to run but he certainly hasn't lost his motivation to perform well, so he is looking forward to testing his new skills at these Olympics, which he believes are more open in the sprinting events than

they have been in previous years. "If you're asking today who's going to win the 100m in the Olympics, who knows. Things will start to shape up a little bit now that the season has started but coming into the season there isn't a person who is an overwhelming favourite in any event."

He also confirms an emerging trend that will likely have an effect on some of the traditionally dominant countries at the Olympics. "What we're seeing in track and field particularly is that a lot of athletes, who are doing well and competing well, are athletes from very small countries. The No. 1 400m runner in the world is from Mexico; the No. 1 hurdler is from the Dominican Republic; and the world champion in the 100m is from St Kitts."

Michael points out that often these athletes, who come from emerging Olympic nations, aren't even trained in their own country, but this doesn't bother him. "I tend not to really focus and not really get into, on the Olympic level, how a country does because I think we're starting to get so mixed up now."

"You're going to have athletes in these Olympic Games from countries which they have no real relationship to ... I look at the Olympics in terms of individual performance. For an individual athlete it's a major, major achievement and to go in and be successful at that is something that is the highlight of your life."

For Michael, the most amazing Olympic performance of all time is one he didn't witness in person – Jesse Owens in 1936. "For him to go on to win four Olympic medals under that kind of pressure and that climate he walked into at that stadium was probably the greatest Olympic moment." A more recent standout moment includes watching Cathy Freeman, a personal friend, win the 400m, in front of her home crowd and under immense pressure, at the Sydney Olympics in 2000. Being cool under pressure is something

Michael knows a lot about. When he touches on the terrorist threat that hangs over any major event these days, he says that how it affects the competition will depend on individual athletes. "Whether an athlete is going to be affected or not is going to depend on that athlete and how he approaches his competition. Some athletes will stand on the starting line and if their race is delayed by 10 minutes, they're going to be completely thrown off. Some athletes will take that in their stride and they will still be able to go in and have the same race that they were going to have 10 minutes prior."

There's little doubt which athlete Michael would be. A focused and determined person, it's no wonder he makes one cool commentator. He admits to working very hard on various projects, which keep him "very busy", and he juggles these professional commitments with bringing up his four-year-old son.

Despite all this, he somehow manages to find the time to stay incredibly fit. He points out, however, that he doesn't go overboard, making it to the gym only a few days a week. Still, it's a hard habit to break. "Going out and training every day when you're no longer an athlete is just like anybody else in their normal job, retiring years ago, but thinking, 'I still have to go into the office every day, even though I don't get paid to do that any more and that's not my career any more but I'm gonna go in there, I've just gotta keep going.' That's what I've been doing all my life. It's similar to that."

With this kind of attitude, it certainly sounds like Michael Johnson has one long career as a commentator ahead of him.

Sir Steve Redgrave



Name: Sir Steve Redgrave

First BBC Job: 2004 Olympics

Career Highlights: In addition to his Olympic successes and following four unbeaten seasons from 1993 to 1996, Steve won his ninth World Championship Gold in August 1999 in St Catherines, Canada. His previous World Championship Golds were in 1986, 1987, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997 and 1998. Steve was awarded the MBE in the New Year's Honours List in 1987 and the CBE in the New Year's Honours List of 1997 and following his success in Sydney was awarded a Knighthood in the 2001 New Years Honours List.

Olympic Experience: Gold for the Coxed Fours in Los Angeles in 1984, followed by Gold with his previous partner Andy Holmes in the Coxless Pairs at Seoul in 1988, Gold with partner Matthew Pinsent for the Coxless Pairs at the Barcelona Olympics in 1992, the Atlanta Olympics in 1996 and of course, the famous win in the Coxless Fours at the Sydney Olympics.

He's Britain's greatest Olympian but Sir Steve Redgrave will have a rather different role in his latest Olympic Games.

"I'm Steve Rider's sidekick!" grins the five-times Olympic gold medallist.

"Steve will be presenting the rowing and I'll be with him at the rowing venue on the big days," he explains. "Other days, if we've got some good results in the heats and the semi finals I'll come into the studio in the evenings and talk about what's happened on that particular day."

It all sounds a lot less stressful than Steve's five previous Olympics as a competitor in those rowing events, and he admits that this time he's planning to make the most of being a spectator and see as much other sport as he can.

"I want to pick up on whatever's going on and however the British team is doing and where we've got good medal hopes, because that creates a fantastic atmosphere," he says. "Also I'm mentoring some young athletes and I want to get around and see them compete."

The seasoned competitor wants to pass on his Olympic experience to the newcomers to help them overcome the pitfalls of an event as huge as the Olympics – some of which are rather surprising.

"It's quite easy to overeat and put on weight when you go to the Olympic Games!" he laughs. "The eating halls are open 24 hours a day, training is tapered down, you've got time on your hands so you tend to be sitting around in the eating halls a bit longer. It's easy to have your lunch and go and chat with someone, move on to somebody else, and every time you go and talk to somebody new you get another tray of food!"

Steve hopes his knowledge of these Olympic quirks can help Britain's less experienced athletes cope with the pressures of what is a massive event.

"Most of the athletes that go to the Games will have been to a major championships, but they are just geared up to your event, and your event only. You go to the Olympic Games and there's 28 sports; there are actually 400 events, 400 gold medals given out.

"If you win the Rowing World Championships, you're a big fish in a very small pond, but put that into the Olympics and – although what I have achieved in the sport certainly hasn't been passed by at all – you're only a very, very small element of this big picture. After I won my first Games, Richard Burnell, who won a gold medal in rowing at the 1948 Olympics in London – unfortunately he's no longer with us – came up to me afterwards to congratulate me and he said, 'Fantastic achievement – you're World Champion for one year, but you're Olympic Champion for life.' And that really does sum the whole thing up because the Olympics is something special."

Steve has fond memories from all his five Games and insists he can't pick out just one favourite.

"It's like saying, which is your favourite child? I'm a father of three and they have very different personalities, and it's exactly the same with the Olympics. Sydney was very special, they'd got a lot of the elements right – probably more so than any other; Los Angeles was the first time I'd been to the States, the first time I'd really travelled a great deal, and the razzmatazz was very special indeed; everyone thinks of Seoul as being very bland and not that exciting but we went out to Korea three weeks before the village opened and we had a training camp in Chungchong,

and seeing day-to-day Korean life was fascinating, it was quite an eye-opener in some respects.

"So each Games was special in its own right; they were all very different, different atmosphere and different cultures, but all very special."

As President of the Amateur Rowing Association, Steve still keeps up with the sport, but laughs when asked how much time he himself spends in boats these days.

"I think I went across on a ferry a few months ago!" he jokes. "I went out in a rowing boat four times last year, eight times the year before that, so at that rate it should be twice this year!"

"But I've been doing it for 25 years, every day of my life within that 25 years. I still love the sport and I really enjoy the times I go out, but I used to have calluses across my fingers, awful hands. They're not quite like a baby's bum but they're relatively good now so when I go out I get a handful of blisters. I come off the water and go in the shower and my hand starts stinging... I think, do I really need to go and do this any more?!"

A gentle game of golf is more Steve's style these days – that is, when he has any spare time.

"I have less time now than when I was rowing, and I'm travelling more than I did before. Everyone says oh it must be great, retirement, what do you do, put your feet up and watch TV? I don't get the chance!"

Presenter/pundit tips and Olympic views

Sue Barker

How do you think the atmosphere in Athens will compare to Sydney?

“Every Games has been special for different reasons, but Sydney will be hard to top because the Aussies are passionate about their sport and that came across at every event. Athens has the history, though, and that is important.”

What do you consider the best Games in recent history and why?

“For me, it was Sydney. The tone was set at the Opening Ceremony and that wave of enthusiasm carried through and was infectious.”

How do you think the BBC’s coverage compares with that of other broadcasters?

“Other broadcasters praise the amount of live coverage we do and, hopefully, the quality will be of the same high standard that those before have set.”

Steve Rider

What are your earliest memories of the Olympics?

“Probably Rome in 1960 and Tokyo in 1964. With the Rome Olympics, I had a wall chart at home and I was filling all the bits and pieces in.”

Is there much socialising between the different broadcasting teams?

“I wouldn’t call it socialising but it’s very interesting to see how they operate and we spend the first couple of days nipping into each other’s studios at the International Broadcast Centre. The Americans, for example, are completely self-contained. They bring their own chefs and cooks.”

Do you play any sports?

“I play as much golf as I can. I love working on the golf and the US Masters in particular. Our last trip out to Atlanta was the 21st straight Masters that I’ve presented.”

Hazel Irvine

What’s your view on Athens as an Olympic venue?

“It’s maddening, it’s irritating, it’s hot, it’s dusty ... and it’s absolutely wonderful!”

What do you think of Team GB’s medal prospects?

“I’m quite optimistic. We’ve got some great talent on the track; the hard work has been done to get sailing, equestrianism and the modern pentathlon up to Olympic gold standards; and you just get the feeling it’s going to come right for Mr Pinsent, too.”

Who will be the stars of this year's Olympics?

"Nineteen-year-old American swimmer Michael Phelps is being tipped as the new Mark Spitz. Can he win seven golds? That's a heck of a thing to ask ... but I think we're going to get some fantastic swimming from him. The Americans are really going to be up for it this year because the Aussies ruled in the pool in Sydney."

Steve Cram**What do you think about the issue of security at Athens?**

"You either want to go to the Olympic Games or you don't. And if you go, you make some assumptions – that the [Olympic] Village is going to be there, the stadium is going to be there and that the security is taken care of."

What do you think will be a key event for Britain?

"I think the marathon for us will be a key event. I think we'll have more people watching that event than anything else, with Paula Radcliffe running, plus the marathon is so synonymous with Greece and Athens."

What do you think of Britain's medal chances?

"If you take Paula [Radcliffe] out of the equation, you still have Kelly Holmes, Hayley Tullett, who won a medal at the World Championships last year, Jo Pavey and Helen [Clitheroe] Pattinson ... You put Paula into the equation and the women's middle- and long-distance running seems very, very strong."

Clare Balding**What are your favourite Olympic memories?**

"Daley Thompson winning the decathlon, in 1980 and 1984 I think. And it was pretty good when Roger Black won his silver medal behind Michael Johnson in Atlanta. I remember being in a house with a load of Americans watching it and there were about four of us there from the BBC all cheering for Roger."

"The other, of course, is Redgrave – I was there when he won his fifth gold medal, standing with his wife Anne, and kids and his parents. To be on the banks of that lake at that time was unreal. And to sense that whole build-up and feel that sick! You really worry. I thought they'd been beaten, I thought the Italians had won. They came past us and I was looking at Anne Redgrave and she was saying 'Look at the board, look at the board,' because the angle we were at you just couldn't tell."

Do you socialise much with your fellow broadcasters?

"For Craig and me, with the shift we're doing, we're not exactly going to be hanging around the bar in the evenings, drinking, because that's when we're going to be working!"

"We had a fun time in Sydney, when a bunch of us went off to a casino. That was a mistake!"

Craig Doyle**What's your view on Athens as an Olympic venue?**

"When you go to Athens and some of the old stadia there, it's an incredible feeling. You can

sense the history in there, so yes, on a sentimental note, it's bang on. On a practical note, it was never going to be the greatest city to build a load of new buildings on, simply because there's too much history lying around the place."

What is your favourite Olympic memory?

"Do you know a great memory of mine and one I think sums up the Olympic spirit was Greg Louganis on the high board, in 1988. He whacked his head really badly and was bleeding heavily and you think, 'Is this guy going to survive this?' and then he gets out and he wins gold. He did a perfect dive straight afterwards."

What is the appeal of the Olympic Games?

"It is that ultimate challenge for an athlete. The Olympics is the one event that every athlete strives for – training for five years, just to get there. Young kids have been training before the last Olympics to come to this Olympics and everyone wants to do well, purely for pride and representation of their country, and just to have an Olympic medal. I think that makes it a very special event."

Jonathan Edwards**Any British athletes you're looking out for in Athens?**

"I've got a soft spot for my own event so I'd like Phillips Idowu to do well. He's very talented and certainly gave me a run for my money the last couple of years. I also like to watch the classics – in the men's 100m we've got Mark Lewis-Francis, Darren Campbell and Jason Gardner, so it should be a strong event for Britain."

What's your view on Athens as an Olympic venue?

"Athens has what only Athens can have – the history and the tradition, so I presume the Games will play on those strengths. Hopefully people will go away thinking we've been to the home of the ancient Olympics and seen a great modern Olympics."

Who are your greatest Olympians?

"I'd have to say Carl Lewis – not just for the fact that he won so many gold medals, but the way he won them. Seb Coe – his two gold medals in 80 and 84 were outstanding achievements in very competitive events. Daley Thomson was a great athlete who won his gold medals with a certain swagger ... and you can't talk about great Olympians without mentioning Steve Redgrave. Just to go to five Olympics is some achievement but to win them all is remarkable."

Colin Jackson**Which events are you most looking forward to?**

"Long distance running is phenomenal and I can't wait to see Paula [Radcliffe] run in the 10,000m, or the marathon. The sprints are always interesting because you always want to know who the fastest man or woman is. But who cares about the hurdlers, because I won't be competing!"

Which athletes should we look out for?

"I'm really looking forward to seeing a young hurdler called Felix Sanchez do very well. He's a world champion and I think he has the ability to break the world record."

Who is the greatest Olympian of all time?

“Wow, that’s difficult! Could it be Jessie Owens? Or is it Sir Steve Redgrave, who had five consecutive victories, which was an amazing feat. It was phenomenal.”

Michael Johnson**Is there someone we should look out for at these Olympics?**

“If you’re asking today who’s going to win the 100m in the Olympics, who knows. Things will start to shape up a little bit now that the season has started but coming into the season there isn’t a person who is an overwhelming favourite.”

Why aren’t you competing in these Games?

“If I wanted to be there as an athlete, then I would, because I wasn’t forced to retire because of an injury or something. I retired because I had done everything I possibly could and it was time for me to move on.”

What are you looking forward to seeing?

“I like the individual events more than the team events ... so swimming and track and field; those two are probably the biggest. I’ll watch a bit of gymnastics, diving, but those subjective sports are harder to watch because you think this one athlete did a great job but the judges think something different.”

Sir Steve Redgrave**Where do you think our best medal chances are?**

“In rowing we’ve got Cath Bishop and Kath Grainger who won the World Championship in the pair; they’ve got a very good chance of being our first-ever women’s Olympic rowing gold medal. Our men’s four looks very strong now Matthew [Pinsent] and James [Cracknell] have gone into it. In athletics, Paula’s [Radcliffe] got to be our strongest chance. I know Nicole Cooke has got a very good chance in cycling – I’m her mentor!”

Would you rather be competing than commentating?

“It is going to be odd. Everybody said to me after retiring when I went back to the World Championships, you’re going to find it really difficult, you’re not going to enjoy it and you’re going to feel that you want to be out there but in fact that hasn’t been the case. I am really excited about my new role really.”

What’s your view on Athens as an Olympic venue?

“I’ve been out to Athens three times in the last two years and the sense of history, of the homecoming, of where the Games started from – not just the modern era but more of the ancient times – suddenly hits you and you get drawn into that. I think it’ll be a very special Games.”

BBC Radio Five Live – The Olympic Station

BBC Radio Five Live is the exclusive radio home of the Olympic Games, with over 12 hours of coverage every day coming live from Athens. Some of Five Live's biggest names – Nicky Campbell (below), Victoria Derbyshire, John Inverdale, Jane Garvey and Mark Pougatch – will anchor the coverage from Greece, bringing live commentary, analysis and guests from the Games.



Five Live has lined up a fantastic set of former Olympians, including Mark Richardson, Nick Gillingham and Martin Cross, to complement the network's first-class commentary team, who bring their own unique perspective to the Olympics.

Rob Hastie, leader of the radio team, says: "We have a strong team of experienced broadcasters and experts to bring the magic of the Olympics to Five Live listeners. With such an extensive range of coverage coming from Athens over the 16 days of the Games, Five Live really will be the Olympic Station."

Organising the logistics of such a major event has taken Rob over three years to plan. "I

started planning the Athens coverage sitting by the hotel pool the day after the Closing Ceremony in Sydney! It is a complicated project because not only do you have to co-ordinate all of the coverage of the events and plan the studio complex in the Broadcast Centre, but also all the areas of Five Live and other radio output, such as the BBC's World Service."

Five Live's Olympic programming will be spread across the day:

- Coverage of the morning sessions in Athens starts at 6am in *Breakfast*, presented by Nicky Campbell, then with Victoria Derbyshire (below) taking the reins from around 9am until midday.



- John Inverdale and Jane Garvey present live coverage of the afternoon sessions in *Drive* from 4pm, continuing throughout the evening.
- Mark Pougatch will anchor *Sport On Five* at the weekend, live from Athens, with commentary on all the big Olympic events, and also Premiership Football.

Arlo White, David Croft and Vassos Alexander will be joined by BBC Talent winner Rob Stewart presenting the sport bulletins throughout the day from Athens, and Gordon Farquhar will have the latest on any sports news and controversy. The programmes based in London will all have an Olympic feel with guests and discussions on the Olympics.

BBC Radio Five Live commentators:

Ceremonies: Nick Mullins

Athletics: John Rawling, Mike Whittingham, Sonja McLaughlan, Mark Richardson, Allison Curbishley

Swimming: Bob Ballard, Paul Palmer, Nick Gillingham

Rowing: Alan Green, Martin Cross

Gymnastics: Eleanor Oldroyd

Hockey: Alastair Eykyn, Sandie Lister

Tennis: Jonathan Overend, Sam Smith

Cycling: Simon Brotherton

Equestrian: Alistair Bruce-Ball

Sailing: Juliette Ferrington

Triathlon: Alistair Bruce-Ball

Modern Pentathlon: Eleanor Oldroyd

The integrated radio and sport teams also provide coverage for BBC Radio 4, as Eleanor Oldroyd reports for the *Today* programme and *PM*. BBC World Service broadcasts around the globe and the team's journalists will provide Olympic news for BBC News 24 and all BBC Radio channels – local, regional and national.

Radio OBs – Radio Resources

Radio OB Manager Brian Prior started planning for the Athens Olympics just six months after the closing ceremony for the Sydney Games. He is leading a team of 17 staff drawn from BBC Radio Outside Broadcasts and BBC Radio Resources, providing full technical facilities for 18 hours of broadcasting each day of the Games.

The operation will be based in the International Broadcast Centre (IBC), just across the road from the Olympic Stadium in the OAKA Sport Complex. Five tons of equipment will be transported to Athens, to build the most comprehensive broadcast complex of any Olympic Games. The complex will consist of a Central Control Room, two studios for BBC Radio Five Live, two studios for BBC World Service, a multi-purpose edit/payout suite and desktop editing and IT facilities in the Sportsroom office. For the first time at one of these events, a newly acquired state-of-the-art digital audio routing matrix will be employed to cater for the enhanced facilities now demanded by production teams.

There will be fully equipped commentary positions at all of the major venues including Schinias, to the north of Athens, where Matthew Pinsent is going for his fourth Olympic gold medal. The team will be expanding the coverage of the rowing at these games from the normal facilities being provided by the host broadcaster, to include a high-powered roving radio microphone which will operate from across the rowing lake to capture the excitement of the spectators, and friends and family of the athletes enjoying the competition. There will also be ISDN reporting positions at many of the other sport stadia, all of which will feed into the Five Live control room at the IBC.

In addition to the fixed commentary positions reporters are also equipped for exclusive post-event trackside interviews and there will be another high-power roving radio microphone covering the Olympic Park, adjacent to the main Olympic Stadium. There will be an interview position at the Team GB HQ in the Athletes Village, where the British Team Management and athletes will be able to listen to Radio Five Live. The Five Live output will also be supplemented by a satellite "radio car" to cover the rest of the city of Athens.

John Inverdale



Name: John Inverdale
First BBC job: BBC Radio Lincolnshire in 1982.
Career highlights: John was named Broadcaster of the Year in 1997.
Olympic experience: John has worked at the Olympics in Seoul, Barcelona, Atlanta, Sydney and Athens.

What’s it like covering an event as huge as the Olympics?

“It’s my favourite event of all, but in a kind of romantic ‘peace, love and understanding’ way. I just love being in the place where the whole world is, who are taking part (for the most part) in the wholly unimportant, but hugely uplifting world of sport. The Olympics should be, and usually is, the greatest symbol of sport as a force for good in the world. Walking round the Olympic Village I always find particularly stimulating, because everywhere you look there are a hundred different nationalities and languages. I just look around and say, ‘Wow.’”

How do you prepare for the events, both professionally and personally?

“Personally, I always make sure I have half a dozen cassettes with me, so I can go running round the streets of whichever city it happens to be, listening to music that will then subsequently remind me of those Games. Professionally, I mug up on small-bore shooting.”

What sports/events are you most looking forward to yourself?

“The athletics is the Olympics. Everything else is great – and swimming and rowing have had their moments – but when push comes to shove, my memories will be of watching Lynn Davies in 1964 through to Gebrselassie in Sydney and all points in between.”

Who do you think will be the star of the Games?

“Paula [Radcliffe]? I do hope so.”

Who are GB’s medal prospects to watch out for?

“This could well be the Games when the swimmers become the key figures for British sport. I remember conducting so many interviews over the years about the state of the sport in this country, with everyone bemoaning our lack of quality and depth. Now it’s a sport on a mission with a huge amount of genuine medal contenders. The pool could well be the place to be in the first week.”

What do you think of Athens as a venue?

“I’ll tell you when I get there. But in the back of my mind, there are two thoughts. One: we have this great, ‘Will it be ready?’ debate every four years in certain respects, and

two, how could any venue with the history and the monuments that Athens has, not be a terrific Games?"

Do you play any sports yourself, or watch any?

"Lots, and I take mediocrity to new heights. Maybe small-bore shooting is the next one to try."

What are your favourite memories of previous Olympic Games?

"Being in a coffee bar in Seoul watching Adrian Moorhouse win gold. The television was tuned to the Taekwondo on another channel, and I asked the owner if he'd turn the channel over to the swimming. He reluctantly agreed. I had to stand on a table and explain to the hundreds in this place that I was from the UK and there was a guy called Moorhouse who was going to win gold for my country. They all smiled. When the gun went, all the Koreans chanted 'Moorhouse, Moorhouse', all the way through the race. There was a huge cheer when he won, but five seconds later, we were back on the Taekwondo."

How do you see the UK's prospects for hosting the Games in 2012?

"Good to excellent. We should believe in ourselves a bit more, and I can't bear the negativity from some quarters about the bid. It's now or never, I feel. I can't imagine London staging the Games for another 20 years if we don't get the nod this time."

Who do you consider the greatest Olympian of all time?

"The greatest I've met is Carl Lewis. He walked into our studio in Barcelona, wearing a T-shirt that said 'Show me the guy who comes second, and I'll show you the first loser' Cool. And true."

Mark Pougatch



Name: Mark Pougatch

First BBC job: BBC Essex, 1992.

Olympic experience: Mark has worked on the Nagano Winter Olympics and the Sydney Olympics.

What's it like covering an event as huge as the Olympics?

"Exciting and demanding but it's why we do this job! The Sydney Games were a hugely memorable experience."

How do you prepare for the events, both professionally and personally, for an event like the Olympics?

"If you're covering a sport you don't normally watch – like, say, Triathlon – then it's all about research and reading up."

What sports/events are you most looking forward to yourself?

"Whatever they throw at me!"

Who do you think will be the star of the Games?

“The beauty is we have no idea!”

Who are GB’s medal prospects to watch out for?

“The equestrian team, including Pippa Funnell, and our yachting line-up.”

What do you think of Athens as a venue?

“It’s the spiritual home of the Games and, with luck, it will be idiosyncratically Greek and all the better for it.”

Do you play any sports yourself, or watch any?

“Watch anything and everything and play football, cricket and golf.”

What are your favourite memories of previous Olympic Games?

“Sitting on the steps of the Sydney Opera House watching the start of the triathlon in the bay, tour left and then the finish in front of us in the blazing sunshine.”

How do you see the UK’s prospects for hosting the Games in 2012?

“I think we’re a fair way behind Paris at the moment and if Seb Coe can pull this one off, it will be an even greater achievement than his back-to-back gold medals.”

Who do you consider the greatest Olympian of all time?

“Sir Steve Redgrave.”

John Rawling

Name: John Rawling

First BBC job: Working as a freelance news and sports reporter for BBC Radio Leicester.

Career highlights: He first started working in sport radio in 1983 and, more recently, expanded his duties to include boxing and athletics, on television. He has commented on athletics for the BBC since 1988.

Olympic experience: John has been BBC Radio’s lead commentator at all the Olympic Games since Barcelona in 1992. His highlights include seeing Linford Christie and Sally Gunnell win gold medals in 1992; seeing Michael Johnson break the 200m world record in 1996; and, in 2000, witnessing Denise Lewis winning gold in the heptathlon, Cathy Freeman’s 400m run and Jonathan Edwards taking the gold medal.

What’s it like covering an event as huge as the Olympics?

“The Olympics, for me, is the most exciting event on the athletics calendar. It is the one that the athletes care about, above all others, and the Games have a special atmosphere of their own, with fans travelling from all over the world.

“There is nothing quite like commentating on the major finals. I have been very lucky to have been in the commentator’s seat for Linford Christie and Sally Gunnell’s gold medal runs, and to have seen astonishing performances, like Michael Johnson breaking the world record to win the 200m in Atlanta. This year, I am sure there will be more spectacular feats to leave an indelible imprint on the memory.”

How do you prepare for such a large event, both professionally and personally?

“Professionally, preparing for the event is down to hard work. I am fortunate to work with an excellent statistician, Mark Butler, and I have a fine team of experts and production staff around me. But, in the weeks before the Games, I effectively live the sport as the team travels around Europe reporting on all the major pre-Olympics meetings. Shock results still occur, but not often. By the time we get to the Games, we have a pretty good idea which athletes are likely to take the gold medals.

“Personally, it is not always easy having so many weeks on the road. But I have had the chance to spend time in some of the most beautiful cities in the world and made some great friendships over the years.”

What sports/events are you most looking forward to yourself?

“As a commentator, my favourite event is the 800m. Maybe it is because I grew up in the era of Sebastian Coe and Steve Ovett. It is a test of sustained speed and tactical acumen, and it invariably produces great drama. From a British perspective, I hope Paula Radcliffe can get a gold in the marathon. She has been such a wonderful ambassador for the sport; it would be a great shame if she did not have an Olympic gold medal as a high spot in what has already been a fantastic career.”

Who do you think will be the star of the Games?

“It’s hard to say – possibly one of the Ethiopian distance runners. And I wouldn’t be surprised to see Maurice Greene win again in the 100m. I just hope the whole thing is not

overshadowed by drugs stories. Sadly, drug abuse remains the cancer of the sport.”

Who are GB’s medal prospects to watch out for?

“Very few, I am afraid. Darren Campbell has a great record in major championships and may get on the podium again. Kelly Holmes, even as she approaches veteran status, will be in contention, and Ashia Hansen could be thereabouts if only she can stay fit. Beyond those names, I fear we are looking at possibilities rather than likelihoods.”

What do you think of Athens as a venue?

“Too hot, congested and polluted despite the wonderful history. The facilities will be good, but the city is not a great place to visit at the best of times and it will struggle with an event of Olympic magnitude.”

Do you play any sports yourself, or watch any?

“I watch everything possible, either live or on television. I am a keen golfer, with a 15 handicap but trying to improve.”

What are your favourite memories of previous Olympic Games?

“The first Games on which I commentated was Barcelona 1992, when a never-to-be-forgotten moment was when the Spaniard Fermin Cacho won the 1,500m; the fans nearly raised the roof. In Sydney, Cathy Freeman’s 400m run was everything Australia had dreamed about. But the greatest thing I have ever seen was Michael Johnson running 19.32secs for the 200m in Atlanta. I would not be surprised if I never see that world record beaten. On that day, Johnson was simply incredible.”

How do you see the UK's prospects for hosting the Games in 2012?

"Better now Seb Coe is in charge of the bid. It is a shame he was not fronting the bid from the outset. Paris is the clear favourite, and we have a lot of catching up to do. Transport difficulties count against London and there is certain to be some anti-Brit feeling as a result of the Iraq war. But, with Coe at the helm, drawing on his worldwide popularity, London should not be disgraced and may push Paris close."

Who do you consider the greatest Olympian of all time?

"Carl Lewis."

Mike Whittingham

Name: Mike Whittingham
First BBC job: Started working for Five Live in 1990 at the European Championships in Split, Croatia.
Career highlights: In the 1990 European Championships he coached Roger Black, Kriss Akabusi and John Regis – and they all medalled!
Olympic experience: He's been at every Summer Olympic Games since joining BBC Radio Five Live.

What's it like covering an event as huge as the Olympics?

"An exciting, memorable, demanding, once-in-a-lifetime experience – a great privilege."

How do you prepare for such a large event, both professionally and personally?

"Lots of background preparation and storing up sleep!"

What sports/events are you most looking forward to yourself?

"Athletics, of course, but also canoeing, cycling, sailing, rowing, shooting, Taekwondo, equestrian, judo, swimming, modern pentathlon and women's gymnastics – all the events where Britain can win medals!"

Who do you think will be the star of the Games?

"I think Athens will be a star itself, Matthew Pinsent and probably a swimmer, too."

Who are GB's medal prospects to watch out for?

"I think over 30 [medals] in total. In athletics, possibly Kelly Holmes, Paula Radcliffe, Idowu Phillips, Steve Backley and the 4x100m Men's Relay."

What do you think of Athens as a venue?

"Fantastic – full of inspirational history such as Nikaia, the goddess of success!"

Do you play any sports yourself, or watch any?

"I am still very active. I go running, trekking, kayaking and skiing."

What are your favourite memories of previous Olympic Games?

"In Sydney, Cathy Freeman in the 400m – every round! In Atlanta, Michael Johnson's magical double, and Marie Jo Pereg's double is often forgotten! Firmin Cacho in Barcelona was amazing in the 1,500m. Outside that, Dick Fosbury, Bob Beamon in 1968, Carl Lewis in 1984 and David Hemery's world record was inspirational!"

How do you see the UK's prospects for hosting the Games in 2012?

"I think it will be between Paris and London."

Who do you consider the greatest Olympian of all time?

"Coubertin, for reinventing them! Athlete-wise, we shouldn't compare, as all Olympians deserve our praise as it is such a great achievement to make it there."

Mark Richardson



Name: Mark Richardson

First BBC job: Mark's relationship with the BBC grew as his career progressed. He started off doing interviews and, in time, became a pundit.

Career highlights: Beating Michael Johnson in the Oslo Grand Prix in a personal best of 44.37seconds.

Olympic experience: Mark won silver in the 1996 Olympics and bronze in the 1992 Olympics as part of the Great Britain Relay Team.

What's it like covering an event as huge as the Olympics?

"Covering an event as huge as the Olympics is a great honour. It will be very interesting for me being on the other side of the fence. Instead of competing, I will be in one of the best seats in the house, offering my humble opinions."

"Quite a few people are asking whether I will have itchy feet but the answer is a resounding no. I really enjoyed my time as a professional athlete but it was time to move on. I'm relishing the challenge of getting to grips with the broadcasting and hope that I can add another dimension to the coverage."

What sports/events are you most looking forward to yourself?

"Without question the highlight for me will be the start of the track and field programme. The athletics is the premier sport within the Olympics. It is going to be a huge thrill watching the passion and glory in the Olympic stadium. The athletes will be like gladiators of old, competing for the greatest of sporting honours. I'm sure it will provide a roller-coaster of emotions."

Do you miss competing? Do you still have a fitness routine?

"I can honestly say that I do not miss the intensity of the training required to compete at the highest level. I do relish competition and challenge but I now have that in other areas of my life."

"I do follow a rather loose fitness regime, as I think it is absolutely fundamental to good health. I'm also really keen to stop my waistline from getting out of control! I enjoy going to my health club and working out at a moderate to low intensity, and unwinding

with the help of the spa and sauna after my workout.”

Do you like to get away from sport in your leisure time?

“Quite often my leisure time involves sport. I’m a huge Liverpool fan and like to go to matches when I can. I do enjoy going to sporting events of all descriptions and really enjoy watching big televised sporting events.

“I love going to the gym in my downtime as well. I find doing a workout is a great way to relax.”

Do you and your colleagues socialise with other countries’ broadcasters?

“The majority of the time is spent with British broadcasters from television channels, predominately BBC and Eurosport.”

What do you consider the best Games in recent history and why?

“It’s difficult to look past Sydney 2000. The standard set by the city was incredibly high and it proved to be a breathtaking Games that really encapsulated the spirit of the Olympic movement. It also proved to be a vintage Games for the GB team.

“But I will always have a special place in my heart for the Atlanta Games, as I won a silver medal with the 4 x 400m team at that Olympics.”

How do you pass the time at the Olympics when you’re not working?

“I will probably catch up on sleep. The athletic programme tends to run quite late into the night. By the time you eat and relax, it tends to push on well into the night. It tends to be a very gruelling schedule.

“Obviously I will be aiming to keep fit and it would be great to get some sightseeing in as well. I competed in the Athletic World Championships in 1997 but didn’t really get much of a chance to explore the city.”

How do you see the UK’s prospects for hosting the Games in 2012?

“I think the UK has a really strong chance of hosting the 2012 Games. The 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester highlighted just how competent we are as a nation at hosting big events.

“It is fantastic to see that the London 2012 bid is getting so much support from the Government; it really will prove to be crucial. The London bid is bold, compact (in terms of having the athletes’ village so close to so many key events in the Olympic programme) and inspired. But, best of all, there is a real sense that the whole country is behind the bid.”

How would you feel about the UK hosting the Games?

“I think the UK hosting the Games will leave a sporting legacy in terms of facilities. It could revitalise and bring urban regeneration to parts of East London. In my mind, the biggest impact will be the effect that having the Games on our doorstep will have on young people. I think a London Olympics could inspire and motivate young minds and bring a huge influx of fresh, young, eager talent to all sports.”

Who do you consider the greatest Olympian of all time?

“Carl Lewis, as he inspired me to become an athlete. Watching him make history at the LA Olympics in 1984, winning four gold medals, put me on the path to becoming an international athlete myself.”

Bob Ballard

Name: Bob Ballard

First BBC job: Presenting *Out And About*, the sport and music programme on BBC Radio Medway, in February 1983

Career highlights: A Sony Award for Euro 1996 *Breakfast Show* on Radio Sheffield and commentating on the Sheffield FA Cup semi final in 1993.

Olympic experience: Second Summer Games (Sydney was his first). Two Winter Olympics for BBC TV, including the Canada v USA ice-hockey final in 2002, and, on radio, the Ian Thorpe versus Pieter van den Hoogenband 200m freestyle final in Sydney.

What's it like covering an event as huge as the Olympics?

"It is the Rolls Royce of sporting events for a reporter or commentator, as it is the only event that, genuinely, does bring the world together and you know that you are going to see the best in pretty much every sport. It's a very special experience."

How do you prepare for such a large event, both professionally and personally?

"Thoroughly! There is a lot of preparation for the swimming events in terms of swimmers' biographies, current rankings, previous records, and it's very easy to overlook something important unless you do it properly. You can't cut corners, but have to use the information sparingly."

What sports/events are you most looking forward to yourself?

"I think the swimming will be of a very high standard, as it was in Sydney, and with the US unlikely to send their strongest team to Athens, the basketball could be very exciting, and very

open, with Lithuania and Serbia and Montenegro likely to be in contention for gold."

Who do you think will be the star of the Games?

"I make no apologies for returning to swimming, as the 19-year-old American Michael Phelps will be going for seven gold medals. I don't think he'll equal Mark Spitz's feat from 1972, but he'll give it a good go, and not forgetting Ian Thorpe, who could get six medals himself."

Who are GB's medal prospects to watch out for?

"In the pool I think we have the possibility of a handful of medals, and maybe our first diving medal for 44 years. Mel Marshall in the 200m freestyle, David Davies in the 1,500m, James Gibson in the 100m breaststroke and Ian Edmond in the 200m are our best hopes for medals, along with the women's 4x200m freestyle squad.

"Leon Taylor and Peter Waterfield, who just missed out on a medal in Sydney, should medal in the 10m synchronised diving event, and both have a chance in the individual platform diving."

What do you think of Athens as a venue?

"I have to admit that I'm not thrilled that there will be no roof on the pool – the thought of barbecued Bob doesn't appeal – but it's only right that Athens should get the Games after an absence of 108 years. I'm sure that, despite all the advance negative publicity, there will be fewer problems than anticipated."

Do you play any sports yourself, or watch any?

"I always had a problem with hand-eye co-ordination when playing sport, which made me

totally useless most of the time. My only claim to fame was a wicked serve in table tennis, but if that failed, that was my game gone! I watch loads of sports; there are not many I don't watch, and I like American sports like baseball, basketball and ice hockey."

What are your favourite memories of previous Olympic Games?

"This is only my second Summer Games but Sydney was something special, especially watching the swimming in a venue that housed 18,000 spectators. From the Winter Olympics, commentating on Canada winning the ice-hockey title in Salt Lake City, for the first time in 50 years, was a big thrill."

How do you see the UK's prospects for hosting the Games in 2012?

"I think the IOC owes us one after bailing them out in 1948, but I don't think sentiment will come into it. I see it as a straight head to head with Paris and London. At the moment, it looks like Paris may just get it but, as a proud Londoner, I hope Sebastian Coe can win Rogge and friends round."

Who do you consider the greatest Olympian of all time?

"As the swimming commentator I would have to lean towards Mark Spitz; I don't think seven gold medals in one Games will ever be equalled, but Steve Redgrave would have to run him very close; and, for his guts and dignity in 1936, Jesse Owens has a special place in Olympic history, in my view."

Nick Gillingham

Name: Nick Gillingham
First BBC job: Nick commentated on the Paralympics Games in Sydney 2000.
Career highlights: Winning the European title for three consecutive years and setting the world record in 1989, 1990 and 1991. He was World Champion in 1993.
Olympic experience: Nick won silver in 1988 in the 200m breaststroke; in 1992 he was the only British swimmer to take a medal when he came third in the 200m. In Atlanta, he came fourth in the 200m breaststroke.

What's it like covering an event as huge as the Olympics?

"I feel privileged to be covering the Olympic Games, the biggest sporting spectacle the world can ever witness. As a member of the BBC team, I can't wait to commentate on the epic scale of sporting drama that awaits."

What sports/events are you most looking forward to yourself?

"I am most looking forward to all Olympic swimming events, with particular interest going to the men's 200m breaststroke, an event where I took Olympic silver and bronze."

Do you miss competing? Do you still have a fitness routine?

"I don't miss competing at an elite level, as I had a long and successful career. I still have

personal goals that see me compete at a world masters level. I swim and run three times each week.”

Do you like to get away from sport in your leisure time?

“My leisure time is spent with my children, who love sport, whether that is swimming, skateboarding, football or fishing. I have three very outdoor boys!”

Do you and your colleagues socialise with other countries’ broadcasters?

“I am looking forwards to socialising with other countries’ broadcasters as a number of my old friends and rivals work for the written press or broadcasting teams.”

What do you consider the best Games in recent history and why?

“The best Games in recent history for me was Seoul – not only was it my very first Olympic experience but I also won Olympic silver.”

How do you pass the time at the Olympics when you’re not working?

“The scale of the Olympics shows such enormity, and any spare time I have will be spent visiting different venues and watching all the sporting events.”

How do you see the UK’s prospects for hosting the Games in 2012?

“I believe the UK has a very good chance of hosting the Games in 2012, especially now that the shortlist has been drawn. If I were a betting man I would say a three to one chance of victory.”

How would you feel about the UK hosting the Games?

“As a parent and member of the general public, hosting the Games gives an absolutely fantastic opportunity to witness and support our Olympians; the atmosphere of a home Games is unbeatable. However, as an Olympian, stepping onto the bus or a Virgin train holds less drama and excitement than flying halfway round the world to the Far East or Australia, and it may end the need for all those warm-weather training camps!”

Who do you consider the greatest Olympian of all time?

“To go to the Olympic Games and win a medal is a dream so many children hold; to win a gold medal is the pinnacle but to win a gold medal in an individual event, not once but twice or even three times, is totally remarkable and I have undying respect and stand in awe of all Olympians who have achieved such a personal feat.”

Sandie Lister

Name: Sandie Lister

Born: Halifax, West Yorkshire, 1961

First BBC job: Commentated on TV coverage of England v Holland hockey in 1996; Sandie first worked for Five Live on the coverage of the Manchester Commonwealth Games in 2002.

Career highlights: Playing for the England hockey team at Wembley; getting a bronze medal at the Barcelona Olympics and a European gold medal in 1991; and being on *A Question Of Sport* twice.

What's it like covering an event as huge as the Olympics?

"I have never reported on an Olympics before, so I am very excited about the prospect of covering the games, although I did compete in the '92 games in Barcelona, which was an unbelievable experience."

What sports/events are you most looking forward to yourself?

"I am obviously looking forward to the hockey event but if I can catch any of the athletics, I will be delighted."

Do you miss competing? Do you still have a fitness routine?

"I miss the buzz of the big games but don't miss the gruelling training programmes I had to complete. I still try and keep relatively fit with regular trips to the gym and the occasional game of veterans' hockey!"

Do you like to get away from sport in your leisure time?

"I do watch a lot of sport on TV and I am a fan of Ipswich Town Football Club. My full-time job as a teacher keeps me busy for most of my time."

What do you consider the best Games in recent history and why?

"The Barcelona Games was obviously the most memorable for me, as we managed to win a bronze medal, but the Sydney Olympics will take some beating as a spectacle."

How do you pass the time at the Olympics when you're not working?

"When I commentated at the Manchester Commonwealth Games there was little free

time but if we do manage some in Athens, I would like to go and watch as many other events as possible."

How do you see the UK's prospects for hosting the Games in 2012?

"I think it be fantastic if we could host the Games in 2012 and believe we have a realistic chance of getting the bid. It would be great for the young people of our country to see top-class athletes from all over the world competing live in so many different sports."

Who do you consider the greatest Olympian of all time?

"Our greatest Olympian has to be Sir Steve Redgrave – what an awesome achievement!"

Gordon Farquhar

Name: Gordon Farquhar
First BBC job: Reporter, BBC Radio Cumbria, 1988.
Career highlights: *Breakfast* presenter in Cumbria, Cricket World Cup in India/Pakistan for BBC World Service in 1996, Football World Cups in France and Japan/Korea with Five Live.
Olympic experience: Two Summer Olympics, in Atlanta and Sydney, plus far too many IOC board meetings in between.

What's it like covering an event as huge as the Olympics?

"Challenging! There are so many different threads to follow. It can be exhausting, but don't expect any sympathy from your colleagues stuck back in London. It's also exhilarating. You're part of the greatest show on earth and, putting cynicism to one side, it's a huge feel-good event."

How do you prepare for such a large event, both professionally and personally?

“As sports news correspondent, I have to try and get to know all the major players within the IOC, the Athens organising committee and the BOA, plus the London 2012 bid team who’ll be in evidence in Athens.

“I also need to be aware of all the likely medal prospects in the GB Team, and be ready to respond to pretty much anything and everything that happens around the event, so it’s a broad brief.

“But I love dealing with breaking stories and the unexpected – and there’s always some of that at the Olympics. Athens will be my third Summer Games, and I hope previous experience will help. It’ll be steaming hot in Athens and the hours will be long. Personally, I’m trying to get fit – honestly!”

What sports/events are you most looking forward to yourself?

“I covered the swimming in Atlanta for BBC World Service, and I’m hooked; but great nights on the track, like the men’s 100m final are compelling. I saw the baseball final in Sydney, and I might try and get along to that again – drugs scandals and organisational crises permitting!”

Who do you think will be the star of the Games?

“I think Australian swimmer Ian Thorpe will win every event he’s entered.”

Who are GB’s medal prospects to watch out for?

“We’ll do well in the sailing, and we can expect Ben Ainslie and Shirley Robertson to be

favourites to win gold again. Jason Queally and Chris Hoy are a big hope in cycling. For the first time in ages we should get some medals in the pool – watch out for Katy Sexton in the 200m backstroke. Beth Tweddle could get a rare gymnastics medal.

“On the track, it’s Paula Radcliffe for marathon gold. In rowing, Matthew Pinsent’s on for a fourth consecutive gold in the coxless fours. Jade Johnson’s a great competitor and might just come good in the long jump, and no one will push harder than Kelly Holmes in the 1,500m.

“Overall, it’s going to be a challenge for the GB Team to match the unexpectedly strong showing of 11 golds in Sydney. More than 28 medals in total should be the target.”

What do you think of Athens as a venue?

“I’ve been there three times in advance of the Games, and I’m cautiously optimistic. The city’s historical connection with the Games gives it a great resonance but, at the moment, the dominating sound is bulldozers, cranes and pneumatic drills; I just hope they don’t let everyone down.

“The main Olympic park is a great concept, and should look better than Sydney when it’s finished – a symphony of light and bold architecture. The TV pictures with the ancient Olympic Stadium and Acropolis as backdrops will be sensational – but I’m anticipating a real slog for the media covering the event. The traffic is murder.”

Do you play any sports yourself, or watch any?

“I played hockey, cricket and football, and was decidedly average at all of them. As a spectator, add on rugby and motor sport to that list.”

What are your favourite memories of previous Olympic Games?

“From a historical perspective, what Jessie Owens achieved stands as a great landmark for the Games. There are so many epic moments but, from a personal view, Michael Johnson’s 200m world record in Atlanta, and Steve Redgrave’s fifth gold medal in Sydney were really special.”

How do you see the UK’s prospects for hosting the Games in 2012?

“At this stage, clearly behind Paris, but elevating Seb Coe to bid leader is a bold move. I hope the bid succeeds. Why not?”

Who do you consider the greatest Olympian of all time?

“Dead heat between Jessie Owens and Steve Redgrave. I suppose Pierre de Coubertin ought to get a mention, but not Eddie the Eagle.”

Russell Fuller



Name: Russell Fuller

First BBC job: BBC Southern Counties Radio as a district news reporter.

Career highlights: Being at Wimbledon when Pete Sampras beat Roy Emerson’s record of 13 Grand Slam wins in 2000.

Olympic experience: Russell worked for the BBC World Service at the Sydney Olympics in 2000, where he was wowed by Cathy Freeman’s gold medal in the 400m.

What’s it like covering an event as huge as the Olympics?

“There isn’t another sporting event that can compete with the rich history of the Olympic Games and, when I covered my first Games in Sydney, I was very aware that the events I was witnessing would be discussed 50 years hence. The huge number of competing countries makes it extra special, and a personal best by a swimmer from Equatorial Guinea can be every bit as magic as a world record in the 100m final.”

How do you prepare for such a large event, both professionally and personally?

“There is no way you can be familiar with the favourites for each event – particularly when you are presenting a programme to a global audience on BBC World Service. I try and read as much as I can in the build-up to the Games and immerse myself in the city and the event when I get there.”

What sports/events are you most looking forward to yourself?

“Paula Radcliffe’s attempt to win an elusive Olympic gold medal; I hope she does it in the marathon.”

What do you think of Athens as a venue?

“Having been to Athens in August before, I’m a little apprehensive about the heat and the pollution. But I’m told they’ve made huge progress in reducing the smog, and can there really be a better venue than the birthplace of the Olympic movement, with the Acropolis in the background?”

Do you play any sports yourself, or watch any?

“I run and play golf. I don’t run remotely fast enough to be considered for selection, and wouldn’t trouble the selectors if golf ever became an Olympic sport.”

What are your favourite memories of previous Olympic Games?

“Cathy Freeman’s gold medal for Australia in the 400m in Sydney – I doubt an athlete has ever had to deal with such huge expectations, and I will never forget the roar produced by 110,000 fans in the Olympic Stadium when she hit the front with 100m to go.”

How do you see the UK’s prospects for hosting the Games in 2012?

“A lot of people are running down Britain’s chances – as usual. We may not be the favourites, but I believe we have a genuine chance of closing the gap on Paris in the next year. Of course the money could be spent elsewhere on numerous good causes, but where’s the romance in that?”

Who do you consider the greatest Olympian of all time?

“The achievements of Emil Zatopek and Fanny Blankers-Koen were remarkable; Jesse Owens’s efforts seem even more special because of the

circumstances in which he competed in Berlin in 1936; and Sir Steve Redgrave has to be towards the very top of the list for winning a fifth gold medal 16 years after the first.

BBC News/ BBC Nations and Regions/ BBC World/BBC World Service

BBC News 24

BBC News 24 presenters Celina Hinchcliffe and Mike Bushell, bring audiences the latest news and results from Athens.

There will be regular sport bulletins throughout the Games and, each evening, *Olympic Sportsday* will also be on BBC News 24 from 8.30pm (BST) for the duration of the Games.

BBC Nations and Regions

BBC Nations and Regions programming features the stories of local competitors from across the United Kingdom, medal winners or not. For many, reaching the Olympics is a massive success in itself. The programmes will relay competitors' stories and emotions to their home audiences: the towns and cities where they were born or where they now live.

These interviews and reports will be broadcast across the BBC Nations and Regions network of 14 television and 46 radio outlets throughout the United Kingdom.

BBC World and BBC World Service

BBC World's Olympic Games coverage centres on its *Sport Today* programmes shown on weekdays at 7.45am, 1.45pm, 6.45pm and

10.30pm (BST). *Sport Today* will show how the medals were won, catch up with the latest outstanding performances of the day in all competitions and feature the top stories from Athens.

BBC World's regular hourly sports bulletins at 20 minutes past the hour will provide the result of every event in Athens, with interviews and the latest standings in the medal tables.

The Games will reach a potential audience of 45 million listeners globally on the English Network of BBC World Service, which will broadcast approximately 40 hours of Olympic coverage each week throughout the Games.

There will be two hours of live programming in *Olympic Sportsworld* every day from 7-9pm, kicking off when the action begins and running through to the end of the Games on 29 August.

Sports Round Up will bring news, results and interviews in news bulletins throughout the day.

Sportsworld, on Saturdays from 3-5pm, and *Sunday Sportsworld*, from 5-6pm, will provide live weekend action.

In the lead-up to the Olympics, *Sports International – Olympic Games That Changed The World*, a four-part series presented by Michael Johnson, will be broadcast on Fridays from 23 July, from 1.05-1.30pm. The series focuses on major Olympic issues, including drugs, money and security.

The Paralympics 2004 17-28 September

BBC News will have a substantial team of correspondents covering the Paralympic Games, led by Disability Correspondent Peter White. The Summer and Winter Paralympic Games are the ultimate international competitions for world-class athletes with a disability – and the BBC is offering live television coverage of the event for the first time.

Two weeks after the completion of the Olympic Games, the best Paralympic athletes, who have met strict qualifying standards, will travel to Athens to compete in the Paralympic Games. From 17 to 28 September, Athens will welcome 4,000 Paralympic athletes from some 130 countries, as well as over 2,000 team officials.

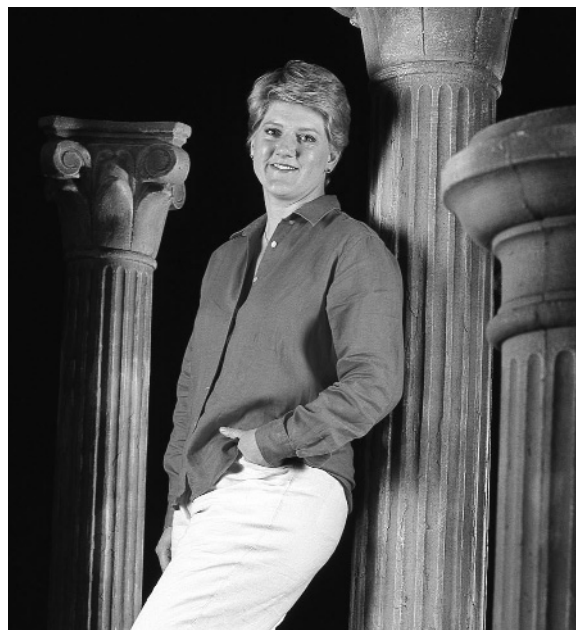
The British Paralympic team arrives in Athens in strong form. In Sydney, Team GB's Paralympians came second in the medal table only to Australia and, once again, there are medal hopes right across the board.

Peter Salmon, BBC Sport Director, says: "The British public can share in the great Paralympic moments and experience the triumph and tears of Team GB's Paralympians – as they happen – for the first time ever, live on television. But coverage is certainly not limited to TV. Audiences can experience the Paralympics on TV, radio, bbc.co.uk and from News and Nations and Regions."

The general philosophy of the Paralympic Games is to follow the rules of the Olympic sports as much as possible. The current Paralympic summer sports are: archery; athletics; boccia; cycling; equestrian; wheelchair fencing; football; goalball; judo; powerlifting;

sailing; shooting; standing volleyball; swimming; table tennis; wheelchair tennis; wheelchair basketball; and wheelchair rugby.

Presenter Clare Balding (below) is joined by commentators Stuart Storey, Paul Dickenson, Matt Chilton and Nick Mullins, and reporters Colin Jackson, Eddie Butler, Jill Douglas, Phil Jones and Nelson Kumah. Expert analysis is provided by specialist summarisers Tushar Patel, Dan Johnson and Paul Noble.



Viewers can see live coverage every evening (6-7.30pm, BBC TWO) and in *Grandstand* and *Sunday Grandstand* during the Paralympics.

The host broadcaster will offer multi-camera coverage of a number of key sports: swimming, athletics, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair tennis, track cycling and football. Swimming and athletics will comprise the backbone of the

BBC's TV coverage throughout the Games, but will be supplemented by coverage of, and features about, not only these sports, but also a range of others particularly relevant to British hopes, such as the Men's Wheelchair Basketball in which Team GB has a strong medal hope.



BBC Radio Five Live will have regular live updates from Athens as well as some live commentary. Simon Mayo's (above) show will come live from the Paralympics for some of the competition, as will *Midweek Sport On Five*. There will also be reports on BBC Radio 4 and BBC World Service.

The BBC's network of National and Regional TV and radio stations will be offering coverage from a more local perspective. The stories of the successes and failures of the local competitors will be told within the 6.30pm Regional TV News Programmes in 14 regions and across the network of 46 BBC National

and Regional Radio Stations throughout the UK. In addition, there will be features on the *Where I Live* sites on bbc.co.uk

BBC Nations and Regions is deploying its largest ever bi-media team to the Paralympics to enhance coverage of the sportsmen and women in Athens.

At bbc.co.uk/paralympics there is a specific site dedicated to the Paralympics where viewers and listeners can find out everything there is to know about the Paralympics past, present and future – the Paralympic sports, Team GB Paralympians, qualification, classification and constantly updated news. There will also be columns and features from leading Paralympians Tanni-Grey Thompson and Ade Adepitan.

An Olympic theme: Olympia – Eternal Flame



To celebrate the return of the Olympic Games to Greece, BBC TV has selected a specially commissioned new piece of music to accompany the programme, which reflects the history, spirit and all that the Olympic Games stand for.

The song, *Olympia – Eternal Flame*, is performed and recorded by the celebrated “world’s first opera band”, Amici forever (pictured above). The song was written by Greek musician/writer/producer John Themis, Rick Blaskey, who has previously been involved in the official music for many of the world’s major international sports events, and Greek poet Avraam Demetriou.

The melody is based on a traditional old Greek dance called the Karagouna. The dance originated in Thessaly, just south of Mount Olympus, abode of the Ancient Greek gods. It was danced by people wearing black (Kara) capes (Gouna) made of bear skins (bears are native to this area), hence the name Karagouna. This social dance is still popular and is danced by Greeks everywhere.

The lyrics of the piece encompass what the Games are all about. The opening sentiment is translated as, “O come young people, all join hands, with one heart, resolve your differences”, reflecting that this was, indeed, how the Olympic Games came about. This is followed by the sentiment, in Greek, which expresses that this is a “song of peace, to the people of the world, for a bright future, Greek spirit of immortality, prosperity and completeness of body and mind”. Ancient Greeks were especially focused on the development of these attributes.

The third section reflects the five colours of the Olympic rings (red, green, black, blue and yellow), as well as five symbolising the unity of the five continents. It also translates as “Arch of Heaven”, a rainbow, signifying the unity of all colours, races and creeds; and as “Time you returned home: welcome back to your birthplace, O Olympiad”.

The Olympia chant that runs throughout the song is a reference to Olympia, the birthplace of the original Olympic Games. The additional recurring refrain of *Eternal Flame* reflects the enduring spirit of the Games that is symbolised by the Olympic Flame and the symbolic Olympic Torch that carries the Flame and the spirit through time.

The song also features the ancient Greek instrument that pre-dates the Olympics. The Pontic Lyra is as old as the Trojan war – when the Trojans won the war, they devised a victory dance performed to the sounds of the Lyra, which sounds like a cross between a hurdy gurdy and a fiddle. The Zither was also used in the piece and, while not as old as the Lyra, the

An Olympic theme: Olympia – Eternal Flame

Greeks use this in a lot of their traditional music and call it a Santouri.

The band has been nominated for a Classical Brit Award for their album *The Opera Band*, which entered the classical charts at No. 2. The inspirational *Olympia – Eternal Flame* will be added as a bonus track to the album from 23 August.

Amici forever will perform *Olympia – Eternal Flame*, live at the BBC's Olympics Media Launch on 6 July.

Backgrounds

Classically trained John Themis has an impressive list of credits as a musician, producer, arranger and writer. As a musician, he has played with Dido, Stevie Wonder, George Michael, Madonna, Craig David, The Spice Girls, Michael Kamen, Elton John, Cher, Will Young, Rod Stewart and many more; as a songwriter, he has written for Blue, Kylie, Sugababes, Atomic Kitten, Blazin' Squad, Charlotte Church and Dolly Parton, among others; and as an arranger, he has worked with a multitude of artists as well as on movies and TV commercials.

Rick Blaskey has served as executive producer of official music for many of the biggest international sports events in the world over the last few years. These include football World Cups (Ricky Martin) European Championships (*Three Lions*) and rugby World Cups (*Swing Low/World In Union*). He has also been involved as a co-writer for some of these major event anthems.

Rick is executive producer for Amici forever, a role he has also played for Russell Watson, Opera Babes and other artists. He has previously worked closely with such international artists as Whitney Houston, Barry Manilow, Cliff Richard and Tina Turner; and he runs The Music and

Media Partnership, a company that puts together music-marketing communications for major brands – his latest is the current international Coca-Cola commercial.

Poet Avraam Demetriou also works full time as a dentist.

Amici forever are Jo Appleby, soprano, from Lancashire; Tsakane Valentine, soprano, from South Africa; Geoff Sewell, tenor, from New Zealand; David Habbin, tenor, from Bournemouth; and Nick Garrett, bass-baritone, from North London.

Olympic facts and figures

As the countdown continues to Athens 2004, here are some facts and figures about the big event.

- Greece was the birthplace of the ancient Olympic Games, with the first recorded event staged in 776 BC.
- Athens will host the Summer Olympics for the second time in modern history. The first official Games were held in Athens in 1896.
- Greek lyric poet Pindar, in the 5th century BC, declared: "As in the daytime there is no star in the sky warmer and brighter than the sun, likewise there is no competition greater than the Olympic Games."
- Athens won the race to stage the 2004 Summer Games on 5 September 1997 at the 106th IOC session in Lausanne, defeating Rome in the final round of the vote by 66 to 41. Buenos Aires, Cape Town and Stockholm fell out in earlier stages, while Istanbul, Lille, Rio de Janeiro, San Juan, Seville and St Petersburg did not make the shortlist.
- Some 28 sports will be represented in 35 venues. A total of 301 medal ceremonies will take place over a period of 16 days. More than 10,500 athletes and 3,000 team officials from 199 countries will participate.
- The first modern Olympics, held in 1896 in Athens, was attended by only 14 national committees. The lowest attendance was 12, set eight years later in St Louis.
- Around 21,500 members of the world's media are expected to cover the Games from Greece.
- The Olympic Village will house 16,000 athletes and team officials during the Olympic Games and 6,000 during the Paralympic Games.
- Some 45,000 security personnel are due to work at the Olympics, with 60,000 trained volunteers from around the world.
- The IOC will give just over \$1bn to the Athens Organising Committee from the sale of broadcast rights and worldwide sponsorship, which is roughly 60 per cent of the Games' operating budget. The remaining 40 per cent will be financed from local sponsorship, ticketing and licensing sales.
- Afghanistan will return to the Games after a suspension in 1999, which was enforced partly because of the Taleban's ban on the participation of women athletes.
- The Athens Games' official mascots are Phevos and Athena, who are brother and sister. Their creation was inspired by an ancient Greek doll. The names derive from two Olympian gods: Phevos, the god of light and music, known as Apollo; and Athena, goddess of wisdom and patron of the city of Athens. The Olympics Games mascot was first introduced in 1968 during the Winter Olympics in Grenoble.

- The Athens Olympic torch is designed to resemble an olive leaf. It weighs 700 grams and is 68cm long.
- The Games' emblem portrays an olive wreath, or kotinos, a branch from an olive tree intertwined in a circle. During the ancient Olympic Games, the kotinos was the official award of Olympic champions, while the olive was the sacred tree of Athens.
- Before the Games start, more than one million large bushes, 290,000 new trees and 11 million shrubs will be thriving throughout Athens.
- During the Games, 50,000 meals will be prepared daily at the Olympic Village, utilising 100 tons of food.
- During the Olympic Games, the Olympic Village will provide accommodation and free-of charge services to 16,000 athletes and team officials.
- A record-breaking number of Greeks are participating in the Athens Paralympic Games: athletes are preparing for 13 sports, while in Sydney, they participated only in five.
- Four-and-a-half million copies of printed material, weighing 55 tonnes, and thousands of parcels of electronic material have been mailed from Greece to 202 countries.
- The Olympic Stadium roof extends over a total area of 25,000sq m, covering the majority of seated areas.
- The maximum height of the Olympic Stadium roof is 80m and it weighs 18,700 tonnes.

**Sources: bbc.co.uk/sport;
www.athens2004.com**

A selection of Olympic-related programmes from across the BBC

Greek Gods And Goddesses: The Odyssey/Jason And The Argonauts Sunday 25 July BBC ONE

Greek Gods And Goddesses sails back in time to revisit the lives of two of the greatest heroes of ancient Greece: Jason, who led his Argonauts on a fantastic quest for the magical Golden Fleece, and Odysseus, whose epic journey home from Troy was recorded by Homer.

Presented by former Olympic athlete Jonathan Edwards, the programmes bring the Greek myths alive and relive the stories that have been a source of inspiration and revelation for generations.

Through dramatic reconstructions, both programmes explore the meaning of these myths and what they reveal about ancient Greek society and their religion.

A Question Of Sport – Olympics Special Friday 6 August, 7.00pm, BBC ONE

Quiz-master Sue Barker hosts a special edition of the popular sports quiz, themed around Olympic Games past and present. Team captains Frankie Dettori and Ally McCoist are joined by Olympic gold medal winners Mark Spitz, Lord Coe, Sir Steve Redgrave and Sean Kerly.

Songs Of Praise Sunday 8 August, BBC ONE

Gold medallist Jonathan Edwards visits Athens to find out how Christians are preparing for the Olympics.

Sprinter Darren Campbell talks about how his sporting life and Christian faith interact; Jonathan meets the Rev Malcolm Bradshaw, an Anglican chaplain, who will provide pastoral care for the athletes; and he visits the new Ecumenical Chapel at the Olympic Village.

Also in the programme, Jonathan takes viewers on a whistle-stop tour of Athens and looks at the history of the Olympic Games.

Music comes from Greek tenor Mario Frangoulis and singer Nana Mouskouri.

Animal Games Sunday 8 August, BBC ONE

Is the flea the greatest jumper in the animal world, or a skittering frog one of the hot contenders for the swimming title? *Animal Games* looks at how some of the planet's most amazing creatures would fare if they were able to take part in the world's greatest sporting challenge.

In an arena filled with an animal audience, and narrated by sport commentators, this is the Olympic Games as never seen before, with special effects scaling the competing creatures

to human size. The tiger beetle, only 20mm long, has a running speed of 800km per hour when scaled up, but does this make it the champion sprinter in the Olympic arena?

Through a fusion of science and entertainment, mammals, fishes, birds, reptiles and invertebrates demonstrate their unique talents in six Olympic events.

Newsround **Weekdays CBBC ONE and** **THE CBBC CHANNEL**

Newsround, the only dedicated news service for children, is viewers' one-stop shop for all the news during the Olympic Games.

In the run-up to the Games, *Newsround* has been given exclusive access to British medal hopeful Mark Lewis-Francis. The programme follows Mark's training, his hopes and his fears as he prepares for his first ever Olympic Games.

Presenter Ellie Crisell will be based in Athens for the duration of the Games, reporting on Great Britain's medal progress and also going behind the scenes of one of the world's biggest sporting events and chatting to local children in Athens.

Newsround will also be giving one lucky viewer the chance to go to Cyprus to report from Team GB's training camp.

Xchange **Weekdays, 7.30am (repeated at** **1.00pm) and 4.30pm** **THE CBBC CHANNEL**

Xchange is going sport crazy this summer! The show that is packed with celeb gossip, music, film, TV news and guests galore will be providing daily updates during the Olympic Games. The usual crew – Ortis, Anna, Sarra, Steve, Joe, Tony, Rhodri and Vinnie the Ferret – are on hand to keep viewers posted on what's going down in Athens.

Xchange will also be celebrating the Paralympics every day in a *Tips & Tricks* feature. *Xchange's* very own Paralympian presenter, Ade Adepitan, will look at a different Paralympic sport each day for the two weeks of the Games, explaining the rules and different skills required for a variety of categories.

Ade's usual hectic schedule of switching from TV presenter to basketball player is hard work and, for the past few months, he's been busier than ever, training hard to compete to be part of the Team GB Men's Basketball Team in the Paralympics. *Xchange* has been filming him in training and will follow the team's success this summer with regular reports from Athens.

Xchange is The CBBC Channel's daily magazine show and transmits live twice a day, five days a week.

**Wheels Of Gold
BBC ONE**

Wheels Of Gold is an observational documentary following the Great Britain Men's Wheelchair Basketball team as they prepare for the Athens 2004 Paralympics. At the Sydney Paralympics, the Great Britain team came fourth, narrowly missing out on bronze in the dying seconds of the match. Four years later, only gold will do. Coach David Titmuss has brought in new training techniques, nutritional advice, sports psychology and expertise from around the world to make sure this Great Britain team is in better shape physically and mentally than any previous squad.

However, their biggest challenge is selection – only 12 players will make it to Athens from a squad of 17.

BBC Sport has had full access to the squad over the last year. The programme follows individual players in their battles against broken bones, learning the sport from scratch and fighting each other for a coveted place on the team for Athens. Through traditionally shot footage and the players' own personal home videos, viewers hear their private thoughts and learn how they juggle family life with the expectations of a demanding coach and tough training regime. The programme also explains the personal stories about their disabilities and how much it means to them and their families to make it on to the team for a shot at gold. As the deadline for selection looms, self-doubt and bad performances creep in for the players as the coach makes his final decision.

This is a programme about a unique bunch of lads preparing for the biggest competition of their lives.

**The Elgin Marbles
Saturday June 26, BBC TWO**

In the year in which the Olympic Games return to Greece, art critic Andrew Graham-Dixon unearths the many layered story which lies behind the greatest artistic controversy of the last 200 years – the Elgin Marbles.

This is the tale of an extraordinary man and the sculptures he took – some say stole – from the Parthenon in the early 1800s. An aristocrat, lieutenant colonel in the Army, elected MP and British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Lord Elgin was a highly successful man, married to a beautiful young heiress and with a bright future ahead of him. Yet his obsession with the marble sculptures was to destroy his fortune, reputation, health and marriage, and create a bitter controversy which continues unabated today.

Filmed on location in Greece, Scotland, Germany and London, *The Elgin Marbles* uses drama reconstruction, computer-generated images and expert debate to tell the story from its origins in 5th-century BC to the present day. The film hears arguments from both sides of the debate, enabling viewers to draw their own conclusions about whether the marbles should be returned to Greece or remain in the British Museum.

**Sunday Grandstand –
50 Greatest Olympic Moments
Sunday 8 August, BBC TWO**

In a special *Olympic Grandstand*, BBC Sport reveals the results of the public's top 50 *Greatest Olympic Moments*. From Jesse Owens winning the 100m at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, to Sir Steve Redgrave's fifth Olympic

gold at Sydney 2000, the Olympic Games have produced countless moments of unforgettable drama.

Hazel Irvine presents the programme live from the Greek capital, with Sue Barker and Steve Rider, and Steve Cram is at the British Olympic training camp in Cyprus. The programme talks to the athletes who are responsible for some of the most memorable Olympic moments, such as Mark Spitz, seven-times gold medal winner at the Munich Olympics; Carl Lewis, four-times gold medal winner at the LA Olympics; Steve Redgrave, five-times gold medal winner and one of the greatest Olympians of all time; Lord Coe; and Michael Johnson, the fastest man on Earth.

The phone lines are now closed, but viewers can still vote by logging on to bbc.co.uk/Olympics

Sunday Grandstand – The Big Interview Sunday 12 September, BBC TWO

Clare Balding speaks to Great Britain's most famous Paralympian, Tanni Grey-Thompson, about her aspirations for Athens, following her success at the last Olympics in Sydney.

Horizon – First Olympians BBC TWO

Two and a half thousand years ago, sport was tough. Few athletes survived the rigours of the great sporting arenas of the Ancient Greeks and only one athlete has survived the ravages of time to offer a unique insight into a remarkable ancient world. *First*

Olympians tells the “Athlete of Taranto’s” fascinating story.

Fifty years ago, a skeleton was found in Taranto in Southern Italy. On opening an ancient tomb, archaeologists found the skeleton with four richly decorated jars in each corner of the tomb, revealing that the owner had an obsession for sport.

In *First Olympians*, scientists explain how the mystery of the tomb and its contents was solved and, using dramatic reconstruction, the programme brings to life the world in which the athlete lived and competed – the world of the ancient games.

My Big Fat Greek Olympic Dream BBC THREE

As a gangly teenager, BBC Radio 1 DJ Nemone Metaxas had two big dreams: one was to become a Radio 1 DJ and the other was to run the 400m at the Olympic Games.

A decade on and she's already a regular on Radio 1 but her other ambition has, until now, been just out of reach. In *My Big Fat Greek Olympic Dream*, cameras follow Nemone in her training as she bids to be fast enough to compete at the highest level.

Gory Greek Gods – Divine Violence/Divine Sex Begins Sunday 1 August, BBC THREE

The Olympians – the mythical Greek Gods – operated like a fantasy family firm of mobsters. While not dealing directly in crime, these ancient-world *Sopranos* were certainly in the protection business ... divine protection.

Presented by Ninia Benjamin of *3 Non-Blondes* fame, *Gory Greek Gods* illuminates the sometimes outrageous world of these mythical Gods and their ancient worshippers.

In this two-part series – *Divine Violence* and *Divine Sex* – rotoscope animation is used to bring to life the world of the Gods in all its gory detail, while the documentary explores the life and legacy of the ancient Greeks.

**Storyville – Track Dreams
BBC FOUR**

In August 2002, to celebrate the end of the civil war, Sierra Leone sent its biggest ever team of athletes to compete in the Commonwealth Games in Manchester. The Games were the first outing for the Sorbonne-educated and newly-appointed Minister of Sport – and he wanted to impress the world.

Instead, by the closing ceremony, 21 of Sierra Leone’s 23 athletes had “disappeared”. Humiliated by a showdown with the British High Commission, the Minister swore never to send a team abroad again. *Track Dreams* is a revealing look at Sierra Leone’s attempt to field a team for the Olympics, uncovering corruption that not only engulfs sport’s hierarchy, but also the talented Sierra Leoneans, who are fighting to compete in the most prestigious competition on Earth.

**Storyville – Selling Greece
BBC FOUR**

As Athens – the birthplace of the “Olympic spirit” – gets ready to host the 2004 Olympic Games, *Storyville* investigates just how

Athenians really feel about hosting the greatest show on Earth.

Following the story of the run-up to the Olympics, the film looks at opinions from everyday men and women on the street, cleverly juxtaposing their down-to-earth concerns with the high ideals of the Athens Olympic Committee, senior politicians and local glitterati.

Two of the main characters are Helena Smith and Geirge Koumendakis. Helena is British, and a foreign correspondent, who is looking for a scoop behind the preparations for the Olympics, and the film follows her endeavours. George is the composer of the music for the Opening and Closing Ceremonies; he is trying to avoid, at all costs, perpetuating the traditional clichés and kitsch that has predominated at similar events in the past. The film reveals his fears and anxieties as he strives to find the right “tone” for the event.

Selling Greece is a fascinating insight into Greek national pride, as Athenians battle with organisational shortcomings, and inbuilt prejudices, to achieve the unachievable.

**Sunday Worship – Olympics:
Run The Straight Race!
Sunday August 15, 8.05-8.45pm,
BBC RADIO 4**

This special service to celebrate the Olympics comes live from the First Greek Evangelical Church in Athens and is led by Jonathan Edwards.

An eclectic mix of people from throughout the world join together for prayers and readings, hosted by the international congregation of this lively central Athens

church. The preacher is Pastor Panagiotis Kantartzis and music is provided by the musicians of All Souls Church, London, who are visiting Athens during the Olympics.

**Olympic Stories
Begins Monday 16 August
Weekdays, 3.45-4.00pm,
BBC RADIO 4**

Diane Modahl presents five fascinating programmes which explore what it is to be an Olympian through the remarkable stories of some very different sportsmen and women.

Programme 1: 1976 – Montreal: Henry Rono. The programme looks at the realities of the lives of African sportspeople. Rono's chances were destroyed by the politics of the time and the boycotts of that year.

Programme 2: 1988 – Seoul: Jurgen Schult and Sigrund Wodards. Schult, the GDR discus medallist, tried to buck the system and was imprisoned for speaking out. The programme looks at how the relationship between athlete and coach was destroyed by the pressure.

Programme 3: 1992 – Barcelona: David Grindley. The programme looks at the highs and lows of a short-lived Olympic career, cut short by injury and lack of interest from sports bodies.

Programme 4: 1996 – Atlanta: Read Ahmed. The Iraqi champion defected to the US and was sentenced to death in Iraq. The programme asks whether the Olympics was used to promote repressive regimes.

Programme 5: 2000 – Sydney: Fatima Gerashi. Fatima Gerashi was the youngest competitor from Bahrain. The programme

examines the Olympic underdogs and asks how being humiliated can enrich an aspiring sports star's life.

**The Odyssey
Saturday 28 August, 3.30-4.00pm and
8.30-10.00pm, Sunday 29 August,
3.00-4.00pm, BBC RADIO 4**

Homer's *The Odyssey* is an amazingly modern piece of poetic storytelling, dramatised for radio by one of Britain's leading poets, Simon Armitage. It's a great sea adventure in which fabulous fantasy mixes with dramatic reality, and a major love story unfolds over 20 years as Odysseus struggles to sail home and the Gods bicker over his fate.

The Odyssey is the fantastic sea-farer's tale of Odysseus (the mastermind of the Trojan Horse) and his struggle to get back to his island of Ithaca, to reclaim his kingdom and his wife, Penelope. Listeners join him in the last month of his journey, after 20 years away: 10 fighting at Troy and 10 buffeted around the seas by a vengeful God, Poseidon. En route, he has many adventures involving sexy enchantresses, the ghosts of his dead war comrades, man-eating giants, six-headed monsters, whirlpools, cannibals, sea nymphs and the enticing Sirens.

Like *The Iliad*, it has big emotional themes, wonderful set pieces of fantastic adventure and all-too-recognisable human dramas of love and betrayal, greed and stupidity. It's a moral tale of men taking responsibility for their own actions (and not blaming the Gods for their misfortunes when it is their own fault).

Simon Armitage is a major contemporary poet and playwright. He has dramatised *The Odyssey* so that it brings the story and the language alive for a modern audience. He has a particularly

direct way with words, full of humour and yet also fully aware of poetic resonance, and has previously worked on Greek classics.

Tim McInnerny plays Odysseus; Amanda Redman is his faithful wife, Penelope; Janet McTeer is the goddess Athena; John Wood is Zeus; Cheryl Campbell is Arete; Benedict Cumberbatch is Telemachus; Adjoa Andoh is Calypso; and Frances Barber is Circe.

The Odyssey is broadcast over a weekend to coincide with the end of the Olympic Games.

A Game Of Marbles BBC RADIO 4

In this play about the Elgin Marbles, Lord Elgin battles to convince the Government of his day that the Marbles are really worth buying.

Sports International – Olympic Games That Changed The World Begins Friday 23 July, 1.05-1.30pm, BBC WORLD SERVICE

Sports International investigates momentous events in Olympic history. Politics, finances, drugs and controversies past and present all come under the spotlight in the four-part series *Olympic Games That Changed The World*.

The series is presented by Michael Johnson, one of the greatest athletes of all time, who made Olympic history by winning both the 200 and 400m at Atlanta in 1996.

Hitler used the Berlin Games of 1936 as a mass rally to promote German supremacy, the first, but not the last, time the Games were

used for political purposes. Other notable examples feature in the programme on Friday 23 July. In Mexico in 1968, Black American sprinters, Tommy Smith and John Carlos, bowed their heads and raised gloved fists in a Black Power salute on the awards stand while The Star-Spangled Banner played. Their gesture reverberated around the world.

Munich 1972 was the first time terrorism ever hit a sporting event. An attack on the Israeli team by Black September shocked the world and left 11 athletes, five terrorists and one policeman dead. In later years, there were boycotts of the Moscow Games of 1980 and Los Angeles in 1984.

The Olympics is now a multi-billion dollar business but that hasn't always been the case. Montreal taxpayers are still paying for the Olympics of 1976. It was in 1984, at the Los Angeles Games, that the big money started rolling in. The role of Peter Ueberroth, who ran those Games, is scrutinised on Friday 30 July, as is the pervasive influence of adidas and its ties with former IOC President, Juan Antonio Samaranch.

The controversial issue of drugs in Olympic sport is investigated on Friday 6 August. In 1998, the world was shocked when Ben Johnson failed a drugs test after winning gold in the 100m.

On Friday 13 August, listeners discover how different the 2004 Games are from those of 1896, the last time they were held in Athens.

Discovery – The Ancient Olympics Begins Wednesday 28 July 9.00-9.30am, BBC WORLD SERVICE

This weekly, four-part series about training, performance, gamesmanship and the special

qualities that make a champion, is presented by Jonathan Edwards.

**Play OfThe Week –
Birth OfThe Olympians
Saturday 7 August 6.30pm
BBC WORLD SERVICE**

Zinnie Harris's play looks at Greek myths from a modern perspective.

***Please note: All transmission times are subject to change.**