

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."

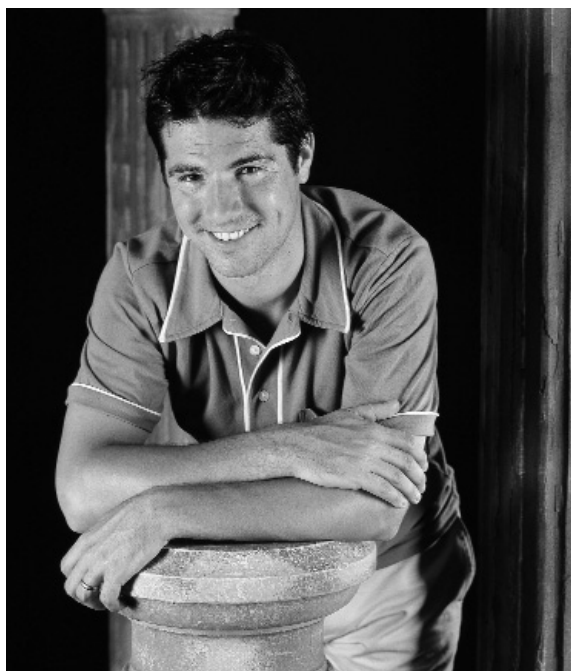
Clare's also optimistic that, despite Athens being given such a bad press in recent months, the hosts will come good and put on an Olympic Games to be proud of. "I know there's been a lot of stuff about Athens and I know there's the feeling that it's going to be a shambles, but I did Latin A Level and 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!"