

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.

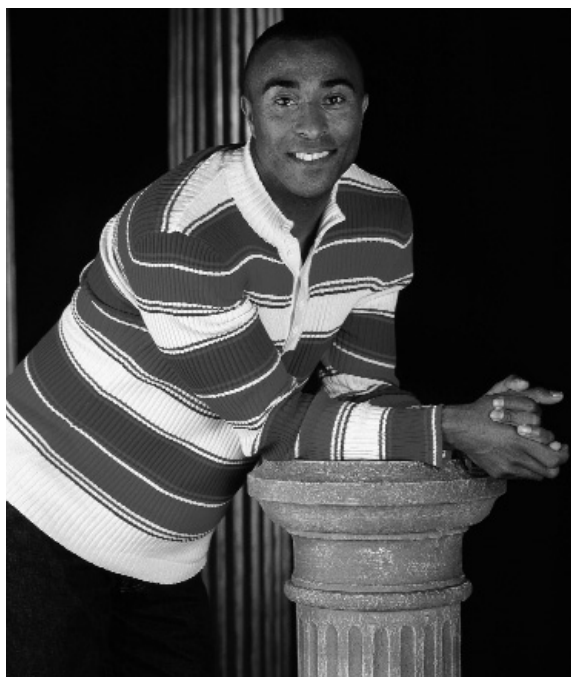
"I thought this might be my last chance of winning a gold medal; I felt that pressure," reveals this normally calm and self-assured man. "I felt very nervous, I can remember in the warm-up wishing I was anywhere else but there."

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!"