

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.”