



# Countdown to BEIJING



Athletes are not the only competitors at this summer's Olympic Games. **Barry Newcombe**, the SJA chairman, sets the scene for a *Bulletin* special as thousands of journalists head for Beijing

**F**or the European media at the Beijing Olympic Games probably the first consideration is where the Chinese city sits in the world. It is seven hours ahead of the UK, and that time gap remains an unavoidable factor in working in Beijing. It means that every day is two days.

First there is the question of dealing with events through the Chinese daytime. Next, in the early evening in Beijing, the desks of the main UK media are opening up and a whole

new set of circumstances will be decided for the men and women on the ground. There will be no escape because Beijing, fuelled by the fastest internet services ever, will be sending out information and pictures to the world by the microsecond and keeping abreast of that will be a major task.

The most recent Olympics in a similar time zone were Sydney in 2000 and Seoul in 1988 but neither of those cities had anything like the speed and range of information which are available now.

Seoul was famed in many UK offices because it marked the introduction of the Tandy word processor, which was simple, effective, and largely reliable. It was the first time many journalists used a computer and inevitably there were mistakes because of sheer unfamiliarity with the equipment. I can still hear the raging voice of triumph from *Sunday Express* columnist James Mossop when he managed to send some words from his Seoul bedroom to a remote office elsewhere in the city – using rubberised acoustic couplers and buckets of patience.

What did help was the presence of a computer wizard sent with the *Daily Telegraph* team for the sole purpose of helping with Tandy usage. His name was Gordon, he was Scottish and he became known as Gordon McTandy. He helped everyone, and was brilliant and reassuring throughout. But even

## ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CHINA

page 5

the Tandys missed a beat when the Ben Johnson drugs story broke – and everyone came thundering down the stairs in the middle of the night to deal with it.

In Sydney, 12 years later, there was more genuine computer work for the British teams but still no escape from the two-day demand. Stories were legion of journalists sleeping exhausted almost where they fell in the second week of the Games. Beijing, I am sure, will offer more of the same and, having heard on a recent first visit of how fast and how all-embracing will be the timing used in so many events, it really will be a question of keeping an eye on the clocks.

Equestrian team member Mary King, one of the most experienced British Olympians, was saying from the heights of the BT Tower in London at a Sports Journalists' Association

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

lunch that she will be in the showjumping ring in Hong Kong at 1am – perfect for early evening viewing in the UK and something she intended to devote much attention to in the countdown to the Games.

I cannot say much about the Olympic stadium facilities because on my visit in May we saw only the main stadium, the Bird's Nest, which was more than ready for action with a track and field test event happening in front of us and going very smoothly.

All the media positions were in place. In contrast, the vastness of the Main Press Centre was made all the more stark because not a single item of furniture had been installed at that time apart from the 800-seat conference centre, which will stage the daily IOC briefing.

At Beijing airport the new terminal three, which receives most of the flights from Europe, had just opened and was under no stress. Its facilities will be tested to the utmost during the Games and so might the journey into the city, which, on a clear day, something

## BEIJING IS NOT THE FIRST HOST CITY TO ENCOUNTER ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES. LOS ANGELES, SEOUL AND ATLANTA ALSO HAD AIR-QUALITY ISSUES

of a rarity in those parts, is a 30-minute journey at a cost of about £10.

Smog is being forecast as a likely problem and only the days of competition will reveal whether all those initial fears are justified.

As IOC president Jacques Rogge says: "Nobody denies that challenges remain but it is worth pointing out that Beijing is not the first host city to encounter environmental challenges. Los Angeles, Seoul and Atlanta also had air-quality issues. These cities successfully addressed the problem by Games time. Recent data analysis from the test events last summer gives us full confidence that Beijing will as well."

Beijing is being called the Friendly Games. Listening to the excited chatter of the volunteers who will help many of our destinies it is easy to agree.

Beijing is taking a massive sporting and cultural step in hosting the world. The city's pulse will quicken and even by the Great Wall of China, the influence of the Olympic Games will be felt.



Political games: Arsenal and England forward Theo Walcott was one of the sports stars running the London leg of the controversial Olympic torch relay

# Action stations on and off the field



This year's Olympic Games are set to be the most controversial since Moscow 1980. **Philip Barker** reports on the challenges ahead for television coverage

**B**ob will be busy this summer. In the alphabet soup that accompanies every Olympic Games, Bob is Beijing Olympic Broadcasting, the broadcast consortium providing day-to-day coverage of the Games of the XXIX Olympiad.

The spectacular Bird's Nest stadium comes alive on August 8 for the opening ceremony and seasoned observers expect the whole show to eclipse every previous Olympics. The seven-hour time difference might make life tough for viewers in Britain.

Many people were unhappy that the Games were awarded to China and believe it was made purely for commercial reasons. Programme editors face the problem of just how political to make their coverage of the first controversial Olympics in the 24-hour news era that is the 21st century. If the London leg of the torch relay is anything to go by, it looks certain to be driven heavily by a political agenda.

When the flame went on to Paris, San Francisco and Buenos Aires, the British news organisations were still tracking it to cover any trouble. It will be the same in Beijing. The pictures to illustrate any off-the-field stories will have to come from unilateral cameras or news agencies such as Reuters and SNTV.

Mainstream coverage of the Games has always tended to focus on the sports, but this time it will be hard not to draw pointed contrasts as slogans of peace and harmony are displayed in the stadiums.

With an Englandless Euro 2008, the BBC is throwing the kitchen sink at the Beijing Games in expectation of a pre-London 2012 gold rush. It will take about 400 personnel to Beijing and promises about 300 hours of broadcasting on BBC1 and BBC2, with interactive channels bumping that figure up still further. It will be interesting to see if the BBC websites become available in China during the Games.

The BBC has cleared the decks on Radio 5Live, where John Inverdale and Mark Pougatch lead the sports coverage. Veteran political reporter Peter Allen will present the drive-time programme from Beijing. BBC spokesmen insist that this will include plenty of political content.

Is it significant that television commentary on the opening ceremony will be handled by a news presenter, Huw Edwards. It is a controversial choice, because the job is usually done by a sports commentator. Barry Davies was in the hot seat for Sydney and Athens.

The Beeb's news operation will start with a built-in advantage. As rights holders, its reporters have the best accreditation in town.

They can film inside the stadium and village confines. Operationally this makes things much much easier.

Although Sky News is taking its heavyweights as part of its Olympic reporting team, Jeremy Thompson (for the opening) and Kay Birley (for the closing), it will find its progress hampered, simply because of the accreditation it has, or rather doesn't have. Where all the written press is treated equally, Sky News is a non-rights holder, restricted to limited clips of action, which can only be used within a prescribed time window. It will not be able to take cameras inside the venues.

As in Athens, the likes of sports presenter Chris Skudder will have to cajole potential interviewees outside the chain-linked fence. Sky achieved that with some success in 2004, and proves it is possible to provide informative coverage without a frame of official footage. The extra effort, though, guarantees the most gruelling schedule in Beijing.

For Sky and other newsgatherers what happens away from the Olympic ring will be of as much interest. When covering domestic sport most broadcasters instruct their teams not to give prominence to streakers and other intruders on the field of play. Here, though, the issues are not as clear cut. What if there is a sit-down protest on the podium. How will

## □ MOYNIHAN LUNCH

The SJA will be holding a special pre-Olympic lunch with Lord Moynihan, chairman of the British Olympic Association, at Old Bank of England pub, Fleet Street, on July 23. Places will be strictly limited. Contact Trevor Bond for booking details at [trevjanbond1@aol.com](mailto:trevjanbond1@aol.com)

Bob's cameras deal with that? Will the director cut away? Soviet TV zoomed in to a close up of the British *chef de mission* Dick Palmer in 1980 so the world did not see that he was carrying the Olympic rings and not the Union Flag in the most politically controversial Games of recent times.

TV is so central to the success of the Games that the IOC closely monitors every last bit of coverage around the world and chooses the sports that are part of the Games with more than a nod to how they look on the screen. It is a far cry from the early days of the medium in the 1950s, when the then IOC president, Avery Brundage, a man not known for sitting on the fence, offered his opinion: "The IOC has managed without TV for 60 years and believe me we are going to manage for another 60."

As forecasts go it was probably the worst in Olympic history.

## Beijing calls for UK Sport

DESPITE recent injury setbacks, Team GB will be going into Beijing with high hopes of medal success and showing real evidence of performance improvement across Britain's Olympic and Paralympic sports, writes *Tim Hollingsworth, director of policy and communications at UK Sport.*

We have set ambitious targets – eighth in the medal table in the Olympics will be our highest placing in recent times and it will be a tremendous achievement to maintain, and second in the Paralympic table. Performances in August and September this year will be a good barometer of how we are shaping to achieve our ambitions for London in four years' time.

For Beijing, one factor that we have spent considerable time and effort in helping sport to minimise is the unknown element that the city will bring. For example, UK Sport and the British Olympic Association have worked together to help sports develop strategies for heat and humidity – by far the biggest threat to

performance – as well as the inevitable impact of travel and jet lag. When it comes to elite performance, the less distractions the better.

UK Sport will have only a small presence in Beijing for both Games – it is right that we take a back seat compared with the athletes and those who support them.

There is a job to be done however. As well as monitoring performances and seeing the fruits of four years of hard work, we have other responsibilities that require our presence, most notably our international relations work and our role as the national anti-doping organisation. I will be there for a period and will be contactable on +86 1507 720 4705. But if it is comment you are after, we are available through our London press office (020 7211 5108/5106/5105/5174).

We will be running a full press service throughout the duration of the Games, so you will always be able to contact UK Sport for a line or for information on performance and anti-doping matters.



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## Keeping sport out of politics

IT WAS song-writer and comedian Tom Lehrer who said: "I knew satire was dead when they gave the Nobel Peace Prize to Henry Kissinger." While the IOC was never culpable in the carpet-bombing of Cambodia, you do wonder what Lehrer made of desperate Olympic efforts to install Juan Antonio Samaranch as one of Kissinger's Nobel laureate successors.

Samaranch, when governor of Barcelona under General Franco, presided over public garrotting in the city centre. As president of the IOC, he was instrumental in securing this summer's Olympic Games for Beijing, an overtly political decision which has been back-firing on Jacques Rogge and other IOC officials ever since.

Even Lord Coe was forced to decry the hideous scenes surrounding the Chinese-controlled torch relay in London by describing the guards accompanying the flame as "goons". "It is very easy with hindsight to criticise the decision," Rogge has said of awarding the Games to Beijing. "It's easy to say now that this was not a wise and sound decision."

Yet that unwise and unsound decision was made by Samaranch and his IOC acolytes

within months of the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989, when the Spanish grandee donned his bicycle clips to ride around Beijing with the city's mayor.

Mayor Chen Xitong, who authorised the shooting of thousands of students, was presented by Samaranch with the Olympic Order in 1991. A decade later, with the Chinese capital still pitching for the ultimate international endorsement, the deputy mayor Liu Jingmin promised: "If Beijing is allowed to host the Games, it will help the development of human rights." Tell that to the Tibetan monks gunned down in Lhasa this year.

This will be a difficult Olympics for journalists to cover because the political issues concerning China will always be present – hence the high number of our news colleagues making the journey.

When someone points out that freedom protestors in Tiananmen Square are still locked away nearly 20 years on, an Olympic official, or even an apologist from the press box, will mouth something about keeping politics out of sport. The day sport stays out of politics might be a start.

## Photo liaison arrangements

**The SJA has asked committee member Leo Mason to handle any possible ticketing/rota positions for the Beijing Olympic Games. The major photo agencies will have their own BOCOG ticket allocations. Here is his report:**

● BOA website ([www.teamgb.com](http://www.teamgb.com)) is highly recommended. The site goes fully live in August but lots of good info is available now.

● Qingda, where the sailing takes place, is about a one-hour flight from Beijing; Hong Kong about three hours. The wi-fi situation is fluid at the time of writing, and I recommend that you check this with BOCOG for individual needs. Kit Houghton will help in Hong Kong for equestrian, and Richard Langdon will assist at the sailing in Qingda.

● I intend to follow the template I used when

Rugby World Cup photo chief in England and Europe. I have asked one photographer only to represent the various photographic groups in Beijing. The following photographers have agreed to this: Richard Pelham (*The Sun*), who will represent the dailies; Mark Pain (*Mail on Sunday*), for the Sundays; George Herringshaw (Associated Sports Photography), for agencies and freelancers.

● I suggest we have a general meeting on the eve of the opening ceremony in the MPC, when, I will have a clearer idea of our allocations and we can discuss the method of allocating our tickets. In the meantime, it would be helpful if photographers could give me some provisional schedules of which major events they would be most interested in, and their mobile/email contact details

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## *The Bulletin's inside man, Chopper, looks at the movement around the nation's sports desks*

● Three of the *Daily Telegraph's* top sports columnists have left the paper. Sue Mott, John Inverdale and Michael Henderson are the latest big-name departees in on-going changes associated with the arrival as group head of sport of Mark Skipworth. Martin Smith, Midlands football correspondent since 2006, is also going. David Bond has recently become the *Daily Telegraph* sports editor, while Peter Mitchell has been promoted to sports editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*. Kevin Garside, the SJA's Specialist Correspondent of the Year, is to become the *Daily Telegraph's* chief sports correspondent, with Andrew Baker taking over as motor racing reporter. Nick Hoult has been appointed the *Daily Telegraph's* Twenty20 correspondent.

● Ben Clissitt, the *Guardian's* sports editor for the past eight years, is to become head of sport at the *Guardian*, its website *Guardian Unlimited*, the *Observer* and *Observer Sport Monthly*. Ian Prior, Clissitt's deputy, will take over as *Guardian* sports editor. The move comes ahead of the group moving to King's Cross and a 24/7 operation.

● Adrian Drummond, the night sports editor, becomes assistant sports editor of *The Times*. Tony Evans has been promoted to football editor. Katie Scott has been made deputy football editor, while Richard Duce moves from deputy news editor to sports news editor.

● Mike Rowbottom, athletics correspondent at *The Independent* for 16 years, is taking redundancy in the latest round of cuts at the paper. Simon Turnbull, the *Independent on Sunday's* athletics writer, will now write for both titles and their website. Chief sports correspondent Nick Townsend is also leaving.

● Ian Cole, a past chairman of the SJA and still serving as its press officer, has retired from the *Daily Mail* on medical advice.

Send your sports desk job news, moves and advertisements to [chopper@btopenworld.com](mailto:chopper@btopenworld.com)

# ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO

# CHINA

Lyndon Radnedge, the Bulletin's man in Shanghai, provides an insider's guide to this year's host country



**MONEY** China's renminbi is not a freely tradable currency outside of the country, but money and travellers cheques can be exchanged at most banks. Most international bank cards can be used in ATMs. Visa, Mastercard and American Express are acceptable.

**HEALTH** Visitors are required to fill in a health declaration form at customs. Major cities have medical facilities that match western standards, though most hospitals are of a lower standard. Make sure your health/travel insurance covers a range of eventualities.

**FOOD/DRINK** Boil tap water before drinking it. Bottled water and mineral water is sold everywhere, although big name brands can cost up to 15 times as much as the alternatives. Many Chinese drink bottled tea. Maintaining hydration will be very important in the hot Beijing summer. Most Chinese restaurants provide complimentary tea at the table without asking for a drinks order. More expensive restaurants charge separately. Rule of thumb: if you have to order it, you have to pay.

Traditional Chinese meal-times involve ordering a range of dishes and sharing them together, with rice served at the end. Some, but not all, will have English menus or menus with photographs. Using chopsticks is great, but don't stand them up in a bowl of rice – this is what you would do when venerating the dead. Most major international restaurant chains (McDonald's, Pizza Hut, etc) have franchises in China.

**BUSINESS HOURS** Most Chinese businesses operate a Monday to Friday, 9am-6pm working week. Shops are usually open every day, closing at about 10pm. Many banks offer a limited service on weekends.

## Useful phone numbers

### 010

Beijing city code, not necessary for local calls from local phones

### 110

Police (police have English speaking operators; fire/ambulance not)

### 119

Fire

### 120

Ambulance

### 6525 5486

Foreigners Section of the Beijing Public Security Bureau

### 6513 0828

Tourist Hotline

### 6501 2288 (x2346)

Hong Kong International Medical Clinic, Beijing

### 6529 5284

International Medical Hospital

### 8529 6081

British Embassy Consular Section (main number: 5192 4000)

**PLUG/VOLTAGE INFORMATION** China uses 220 volts/50Hz and plug points are for oblique flat blades (V-shape) with a grounding blade. There are many sockets for thin double-pin plugs. Check the requirements for your own electric equipment and the electrical system at your hotel.

**TIPPING** In most instances, tipping is not customary or necessary. Some high-end hotels and restaurants will add a specific service charge. Otherwise it is entirely up to you. Some staff may even refuse to take a tip.

**MEASUREMENTS** China follows the metric system. Some grocers use the Chinese weight – jin – for fruit/vegetables, which is about 500 grams.

**PUBLIC TRANSPORT** Beijing's underground system has been extended in preparation for the Games and a comprehensive bus system covers the city. Rush-hour runs from about 7.30am-

Continued on page 6

## Websites ready to take on the world

ON the face of it, Beijing appears to be the ideal opportunity for newspaper websites in the UK to strut their stuff, writes *Jim Munro, executive sports editor (Online), The Sun*. The question is, how far do you go?

Potentially, at this Olympics we could see the largest amount of live copy being filed by some of the UK's finest journalists, solely for use on the internet.

On *The Sun's* website recently David Facey filed live, running reports from the US Open golf

with a wrap-up at 3.30am every day. Pat Sheehan has posted big fight reaction from the US at 4am on a Sunday on several occasions. With the Olympics though, this could and perhaps should be a daily occurrence.

As you would expect, the likes of the Press Association are offering a one-stop solution to newspaper website editors. A microsite can be built and maintained totally with third-party content, including live results as and when they happen.

It is not only about providing information – the official Olympic website will do that – but also presenting that information in the paper's traditional style, and maintaining its familiar voice for the reader.

Although people talk about the unlimited space for coverage online, a website is limited by its resources, and during the Games it will be about striking the right balance. A rolling report on the first round of the Greco-Roman wrestling is not going to be an internet draw.

Colleagues in Australia and the US are dispatching video journalists to Beijing to send

reports for their Olympic microsites, and video will play a part in the UK coverage too, although it will probably not amount to much more than some journalists making unscripted appearances in front of a hand-held camera and being asked for a quick opinion on an event before running off to pen a few words for the website and then attempting to provide a weightier read for print.

Never mind the national teams in Beijing, the Games provides us with the best opportunity yet to see just how well our newspapers and their associated websites can work together.



# John Jackson

Continued from page 5

10am and 4.30pm-7pm, though the Olympics should keep it busy all day. Metered taxis are clean and reliable. A minimum rate will be specified on the window, usually about Rmb11 (82p). Unmetered and unregistered taxis are best avoided. If you take one, agree a fixed fee before getting into the car.

**OUT AND ABOUT** Pick-pocketing is a problem in the big cities and foreigners are an obvious target. Try not to carry too much cash around. You are required to have your passport with you at all times. Vehicles drive on the right side of the road, and usually have the right of way turning right, so take extra special care when crossing roads. Jay-walking is illegal and is punishable by an on-the-spot fine. Zebra crossings seem to be suggestions – cars will not voluntarily stop to let you cross.

**PEOPLE** The Chinese are friendly, open and naturally curious about visitors. Be careful how you speak about the country. Asking questions will be welcomed, as long as you are not deliberately courting controversy.

## CULTURAL HINTS

- ★ China has 56 ethnic groups;
- ★ Eight is a lucky number, so the Olympic start time of 8:08 on 08.08.08 is particularly auspicious;
- ★ The idea of ‘face’ is very important – if you are involved in a dispute, becoming angry is risky; it may make your interlocutor want to settle the matter quickly but it would be more likely to make them dig their heels in;
- ★ The Chinese zodiac has 12 signs, each one governing a specific year – 2008 is the year of the rat

## wwwwebsite corner

■ To help commemorate the SJA’s 60th anniversary, [www.sportsjournalists.co.uk](http://www.sportsjournalists.co.uk) is carrying a series of features, Tales from the Toy Department, on the great sports events of the past six decades, and how journalism has changed in that time. Live on the site are: Hugh McIlvanney on George Best; John Arlott on Jim Laker; Coe and Ovett by Randall Northam; Barry Newcombe on working at Wimbledon; covering the 1948 Games by John Rodda; and trouble with investigations by Andrew Jennings.

*To find these articles and more, go to [sportsjournalists.co.uk/blog/](http://sportsjournalists.co.uk/blog/) and click on SJA 1948-2008 on the left-hand column*

## Olympics past and my tussle with Cassius Clay

**F**or the first time in more than half a century an Olympic flame will be lit in my absence when the festivities get underway in Beijing. I have been to every opening ceremony since Rome 1960 when, I must admit, the formalities came second to being transfixed by the beautiful young lady sitting immediately in front of me. Her name was Elizabeth Taylor.

I doubt whether Chinese President Hu Jintao will toast absent friends, but I’ll certainly raise a glass towards the TV screen on August 8 officially to close my crammed memory bank from a total of 22 Summer and Winter Olympics. For the occasion I might wear one of the t-shirts acquired on previous trips to China – I Survived China or I Climbed The Great Wall.

Every opening ceremony from Rome to Athens brings back special memories. Perhaps Tokyo 1964 stands out, simply because I momentarily took part. I was then with the Associated Press and assigned to cover all 232 boxing bouts. The draw took place shortly before the opening and, with a young fighter named Joe Frazier involved, I needed to get the full story on the wire promptly.

By the time I finished, the athletes were marching into the stadium, on a route that passed the AP office. I happened to be wearing a bright red shirt and noticed that the massive Japanese contingent had blazers in the same colour, so I joined them. I doubt whether Emperor Hirohito noticed, but once on the track I scuttled toward a group of watching officials.

I am often asked which was the best of my Olympics. It is far easier to name the worst. Simply take the first letter of the alphabet – Albertville 1992 and Atlanta 1996.

The Atlanta opening ceremony, however, brought back treasured memories of my first major Olympic moment. As a young Reuters correspondent at the Rome Games I was dispatched to the Olympic Village to



grab an interview with British sprinter Dorothy Hyman, who had just won the 100-metres silver. This was not easy, when there were segregated villages and men were barred from the women’s enclave.

Panicking, I sought help from a handsome young couple walking hand-in-hand towards me. Luck was with me as the smiling girl was Wilma Rudolph, who had beaten Dorothy to the gold. She immediately offered to fetch her.

Meanwhile, her young boyfriend pinned me against a tree and, seemingly without taking breath, let fly with his opinions: “She’s the greatest runner and will win the 200 [she did]. I am the greatest boxer and will win gold, and you promise now that you will come to see me triumph.” (I did, and he did).

Yes, his name was Cassius Marcellus Clay.

At subsequent meetings we reminisced about our Roman rendezvous, but 36 years on at Atlanta it was heartbreaking to see a trembling Muhammad Ali shuffling up to light the Olympic flame.

At the same time he was presented with a duplicate gold medal for his win in Rome. He had thrown the original into a river in disgust at America’s then racial laws. I was glad to be there for his “double” gold moments, but Atlanta was a long way from the first in Rome’s Palazzo dello Sport.

# Olympic stars make case for gold

It has been a busy 2008 for the SJA: Olympic lunches, golf, a surprise for Morley and the president's audience with the Queen

SJA MEMBERS got a double whammy of Olympic stories at the BT Tower in London with the help of the association's latest partners, BT Vision. First Olympics minister Tessa Jowell and *Chariots of Fire* producer Lord Puttnam spoke about the spirit of the Games as they and other supporters introduced an initiative to support Dame Kelly Holmes's legacy fund (Picture 1).

Then over lunch with our colleagues from the British Equestrian Writers' Association, members met some of Britain's leading medal hopes for this summer's Olympic Games: eventer Mary King, who would be competing in her fifth Olympics, showjumper Tim Stockdale, aiming for his first Games, and Paralympic dressage world and Olympic champion Nicola Tustain. Mike Calvin took the role of MC.

Tustain told of how her opportunities as a child with Riding for the Disabled had introduced her to sport. With hemiplegia, paralysis of her right side, she rides without stirrups and with the use of one arm, "I am in pain 24/7," she said, "except when I am riding my horse. Then the pain just seems to go."

At the end of the lunch, SJA chairman Barry Newcombe presented a framed Kevin Macey original cartoon to each of the riders.

Dave Brailsford, performance director for British Cycling, refused to be drawn on how many medals his team might deliver in Beijing – they won nine golds at the Manchester track world championships earlier this year. But speaking at an SJA Olympic lunch in Fleet Street at the end of June (2), the cycling supremo revealed plans for a £6m British team in the Tour



de France from 2010. "I want to win the Tour de France for the first time with a clean British rider," he told SJA members and guests at the Old Bank of England pub.

Three former sports editors, Tom Clark (*Daily Mail* and *The Times*), David Emery (*Daily Express*) and John Samuel (*Guardian*), were among the 24 SJA members and guests who joined in the SJA's Spring Golf Day lunch and prize-giving at Surbiton GC in April. Other players included Chester Stern (*winner, pictured with SJA social organiser Trevor Bond, 3*),

snappers Hugh Routledge and Patrick Eager, and guest winner Peter Bunn.

Lord Coe, chairman of London 2012's Organising Committee, stopped off at a surprise party in Athens to mark SJA committee member Morley Myers's 40th anniversary association with the Olympic Games (4). Alain Luzenficher, president of the Olympic Writers' Association, attended, as did Adrian Warner, the association's secretary-general, who read a message of congratulations from the IOC president, Juan Antonio Samaranch.

Sir Michael Parkinson, the SJA president, was knighted by the Queen (5) in June. It was Sir Parky's second close encounter with royalty in a few days after attending the wedding of his PR, Autumn Kelly, and Peter Phillips, the son of former SJA sportswoman of the year Princess Anne.

See [www.sportsjournalists.co.uk](http://www.sportsjournalists.co.uk) for full reports

## FITZHENRY RETURNS TO SJA COMMITTEE

MARY FITZHENRY is back. Fitzhenry, our secretary in the second half of the 1990s, was elected to the general committee at the SJA's AGM in April. She replaces John Jackson, who stands down after many years' service. Fitzhenry was press officer for the Sports Council for 12 years and worked for the English Institute of Sport, the Millennium Youth Games and the Commonwealth Games.

Barry Newcombe, who was re-elected as chairman for a third year, said it had been a busy and progressive 12 months for the association. "We have enhanced our events activity," he said. "Both our showpiece events are attracting bigger audiences and reflect the interest in what

we are trying to achieve for our members and guests." Newcombe congratulated Steven Downes on the success of the SJA's website, which was registering a daily average of 20,000 hits. He announced that the association had started a dialogue with London 2012, and "our involvement would accelerate after the Beijing Games."

Downes, re-elected as secretary, called for each member to recruit one new member during the association's 60th year and double the SJA's membership from its current figure of 620.

Treasurer Neil Wilson, also re-elected, appealed for an increase in ticket prices for the two awards to help cut the association's losses.

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# Amazing Grace! It's a girl

**IT WAS** the picture *Hello!* magazine could not buy, writes our family correspondent. Sandra Phillips, who runs the SJA's two awards shows for events company Start2Finish, provided the ultimate start to finish exercise when she gave birth to a daughter, Grace, at 4.36pm on May 29. Grace weighed in at a healthy 8lb 15oz.

Grace is the first child of Sandra and her mysterious financé Julian (mysterious in that no one has ever seen him – well, we take it Sandra has). The only teething problems at the moment appear to concern the parents. Does anyone out there know how to collapse a buggy?



## SEARCH STARTS FOR TOP STARS

The search is on to find the Sportsman, Sportswoman and Team of the SJA's 60th anniversary year, writes *Ian Cole*. Will they be new names – stars of the Beijing Olympics perhaps – or will they be familiar faces?

At the halfway stage of the year the usual suspects have already put down their marker. The previous two men's winners, Lewis Hamilton and Joe Calzaghe, are in the frame again to lift the trophy at the star-studded awards ceremony at The Brewery in London on November 26. Other names include Ryan Sidebottom, a star of England's Test series victories against New Zealand, both at home and away, and Lawrence Dallaglio, who bowed out of rugby after 85 caps and three British Lions tours by leading Wasps to Guinness Premiership play-off success.

Last year's women's winner, Victoria Pendleton, has staked her claim even before the Olympics, having won individual and team sprint gold medals at cycling's world championships.

Sports Team of the Year could be heading for Manchester United for their Premier League-Champions League double, with manager Sir



Alex Ferguson a contender for an award. What about England's women cricketers for retaining the Ashes in Australia, Britain's cycling team or the Wales rugby union Grand Slammers?

Tom Daley, just 13 at the time, became European platform diving champion and then won gold and silver medals at Fina's world series event in Sheffield. Liam Tancock set a world record for the 50 metres backstroke, while in the velodrome Rebecca Romero won a world championship gold medal in cycling's individual pursuit.

The Ryder Cup and Open golf, as well as the Olympics, are likely to add further names to the mix. Voting forms will be posted to all paid-up SJA members in the autumn and will also be available online.

## Dates for your diary

■ **July 23, 2008:** lunch with Lord Moynihan, chairman of the British Olympic Association, former minister for sport and Olympic medal-winner, Old Bank of England pub, Fleet Street. Places will be strictly limited. See SJA website updates for booking details

■ **September 3, 2008:** SJA General Committee meeting, Old Bank of England, Fleet Street, London (by invitation only)

■ **September 15, 2008:** SJA Autumn Golf Day, Muswell Hill Golf Club, London

■ **Wednesday November 26, 2008 :** SJA's 60th Annual Sports Awards lunch, The Brewery, London

■ **Monday March 9, 2009 :** SJA's British Sports Journalism Awards dinner, The Brewery, London

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